

THE CELEBRATION OF NATURE BY EAST AFRICAN POETS: A FOCUS ON KENYA, UGANDA AND TANZANIA

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Almighty God, for seeing me through; for being there for me through it all.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs to it and is safe" Proverbs 18:10NKJV

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ABSTRACT

This study critically analyzes the manner in which nature has been celebrated by poets from East Africa; specifically, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It is based on East African anthologies in English published between 1960 and 2012.

The study sees a gap in the literary field where the East African poet's regard for nature remains largely unexamined. This is more so a propos associating this theme with the poetic style. In an endeavor to fill this gap, the study aspires to make a faithful representation of the place taken by nature poems in the East African literary canon.

The guiding hypotheses of this study are; one, that harmony of structure and content enhances a balanced analysis of nature poems. A second premise is that the theme of nature enhances a symbolic portrayal of human concerns. Lastly the thematic content of nature poems is seen as the reason for the specific graphic representation on paper.

The study has adopted New Criticism and Deconstruction as the guiding analytic theories. The New Critical paradigm is applied, with close reading and a step-by-step analysis guided only by the text. New Critical tools are used to unlock the meaning of the poems, interlacing content and style. Applying the theory of Deconstruction, a between-the-line assessment of the poem is made possible.

The study sees a close connection between the East African nature poet and poets of the English Romantic movement. It therefore embarks on finding pivotal points which can be termed Romantic in some East African nature poetry, and pointing out any divergence therein.

The study concludes by showing thematic and stylistic findings and recommendations. The study uncovers features of nature which are the most popularly celebrated by the East African poets. It also states findings of the extent to which the East African celebration of nature fits the Romantic model. It also makes a recommendation regarding possibilities of future research.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRESENTATION OF NATURE POEMS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

1.1 Introduction

This study analyzes selected nature poems from East Africa; specifically, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The poetry is written in the English language. It is based on known anthologies of poetry published in East Africa by poets who hail from or have lived within East Africa between 1960 and 2012. This is the only factor determining the period within which the selected anthologies are found. The analytical process interlaces theme and style to unearth the extent to which the East African poet has paid tribute to the natural world.

The celebratory mode is multi-faceted. Some poetic pieces portray the natural world in exclusivity, while others show a symbolic representation of the human world by the natural elements. Some paint an idyllic picture while others reveal some bleak realities of nature. Either way, the reverence for nature is manifest. Paying tribute to nature in an idealistic way is a Romantic quality. The celebratory mode therefore largely manifests itself in the Romantic outlook to life. However, a few poems are unadorned by the idealist inclinations characteristic of Romanticism. The artistic mode used by the individual poets is however, celebratory, and the artistry in the poem is examined.

The exploration would not be complete without breaking down individual poems into analyzable stylistic components to show how the theme of nature has been delivered. A comprehensive inquiry calls for an examination of the stylistic mode the poets engage in. This means that a Formalist approach is used; analyzing both theme and style.

The ultimate aim of the study is to acknowledge the regard for nature by the selected East African poets. Romanticism as a literary movement is the crux of this study, because the inclination to

pay tribute to the natural elements is quintessentially Romantic. The poems studied therefore qualify themselves as possessing a Romantic essence in as far as the term is applicable. Style and form helps to unearth how far Romantic each poem is.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The thesis statement is: The East African poet's regard for nature has not been brought to the fore. Secondly, in the cases where documentation of borrowing from nature has been done, there has not been an association of content; the theme of nature, with the structural elements of the poem, enough to show the relationship between the two. There is need to fill this gap in the existing exploration of poetry from East Africa.

Further still, there is need to point out that idealization of nature renders the poetic style largely Romantic. Therefore, there is need to point out this Romantic tendency in some East African nature poetry. This characteristic is highlighted during the exploration of the theme of nature and the rare discrepancy thereof pointed out.

The thesis statement points to the need to see nature as a boundless resource for the literal and symbolic content of the poems and as a source of inspiration for the poet. This is to say organic elements; that is, features of the natural world, are often a reservoir for many of those East African poets, and there is need to highlight these natural features as a source of the richness of content matter. Alongside the thematic concern, there is need to examine the mold in which this theme has been cast. This is to say that a structural analysis is needed to complement the exploration of the theme of nature.

This dissertation is compiled around the assumption that no deep exploration has been done specifically on the theme of nature and the poetic style which enhances this theme. It sees the need to make a pursuit of the theme of nature in poems written in East Africa, to see how broadly

it has been explored and by whom and what devices of style they have employed for effective communication of this theme.

1.3 Justification of the problem

The artistic impulse in poetry has many and varied sources. Nature has been time again proven to be one of them. It is therefore only right that the literary critic pay attention to this theme; to see how it has been managed by the poets. It is imperative to establish how far our East African poets have had nature enhance their creativity, and also to ascertain how far the likeness goes between them and the Romantics. This fills a specific gap in the literary world, of highlighting this creative tendency in the East African poet.

It is necessary to see how far our East African poets compare to similarly inclined poets, The Romantics, who also had nature enhance their creativity. The English Romantic poets; among them, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge had nature feed their fantasies. They longed to be in tune with nature. Their works are colored by the scenic splendor of the natural world; birds and forests and trees, rivers, oceans and skies. Upon understanding this approach to art by Romantic poets, it is essential to see how far our East African poets have in a like manner had nature enhance their creativity.

It is of the essence to point out in the course of this argument that whether or not the poets have been directly influenced by European Romantic poets their thought-lines are distinguishably "Romantic" in their tendencies. The inclination towards Romanticism did not wane with the movement at the turn of nineteenth century. The Selected East African poets demonstrate that there is an innate tendency to acknowledge Nature as worthy of focus in poetic compositions.

Most of the selected poetic works from East Africa manifest characteristics of Romanticism. Nature seems to mean to them what it meant to the Romantics. “To them it was external Nature—leaves, the green grass, hills, clouds, mountains and lakes” (Leech,138). Secondly, they display “a passionate love of her [Nature’s] beauty, and a sensitive apprehension of her [Nature’s] wonder” [my italics] (141). Thirdly, in their use of simple yet colorful diction, they display “how glowing, how moving, and how imaginative the use of the simplest words could be in the right context” (142). This means they resort to simple yet creative language. Fourthly there is truth to commonplace reality, which Bernbaum calls “...to see the world of Reality, his environment... as they truly were” (Bernbaum, xxvii). This is the reason that the poems pay close attention to reality. They depict natural occurrences in a realistic manner. It is what Suchkov calls the “ideological task” of Romanticism, “that of presenting the real substance” (80).

The Romantic hue also realizes itself in the blending of man with the natural world. Romantics “believed that truth could be attained by tapping into the core of our humanity or our transcendental natures, best sought in our... natural setting” (Bressler, 35). As the East African poet blends man with nature, man sees patterns of out of his own life epitomized in natural objects. The enmeshing is so deep that often, a poem might not even directly mention man. This is what ultimately makes it a nature poem.

Chris Wanjala in Season of Harvest says: “African poets have oftentimes started as imitators of European poets. In East Africa the poet who confessed this influence is Jonathan Kariara” (Wanjala, 81). The revelation that several East African Poets own up to having been influenced by European poets and more so as Wanjala goes on to demonstrate, the Romantic poets, is of particular interest in this study. It is a pointer to the fact that the assumptions made herein about there being a Romantic essence in some East African poems are relevant and justified. For instance, Anne Cunningham, one of the poets studied, acknowledges that the poem “Kenya Garden” (Cunningham, 2) is based on a poem by T.E. Brown (1830 – 1897) Cunningham’s poem

praises the natural elements in her garden,; the roses, the pool of water, the birds, the frogs, the scents and the sounds of her garden. Her poem displays that Romantic influence by T.E Brown's poem on which hers is based.

To further the evidence of obvious influences of Romantic poets on some East African poets, Wanjala says that it was Kariara's avid reading of T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence which led him to discover a tendency to pay attention to the environment in the then Europe. D.H. Lawrence "regarded the values of romanticism as healing forces for the alienation of man in Europe" (Wanjala, 82). Such drawing from nature "to understand man" (Wanjala, 81) are qualities which influenced an East African poet such as Kariara, as Kariara himself said.

"In his *Introduction to EA poetry* (111), Jonathan Kariara writes of demanding pen and paper in a bar and writing down *A Leopard Sits (sic) in a Muu Tree*, almost complete, because a calendar picture of a leopard crystallised in his mind the different aspects of the theme that had been revolving there." (Macgoye, 86). Kariara's reaction to a nature picture demonstrates that some East African poets have in a like manner as Romantic poets paid tribute to the scenic splendor of landscapes. This is not to say that all similarly inclined poets have to have had a physical encounter with nature prior to composing a poem, but, we have no doubt they first have to visualize and then put down on paper what is in their mind's eye.

The need to ground our pursuit in the organic quality of various poetic compositions is also justified by such sentiments as made by Walt Whitman of the American Transcendentalism, a movement whose "beliefs are closely linked with those of the Romantics" (<en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendentalism>) Walt Whitman asserted that: "Nature, true nature, and the true idea of nature, long absent, must, above all, become fully restored, enlarged, and must furnish the pervading atmosphere to poems" (Whitman in Pearce, 38). Whitman's was a call for reintroduction of nature themes in poetry. The purpose of these would be, as he says, to

supply whatever prevailing ambience the poem needed. The subtle opinion detected here then is that this ambience would be a necessary part of the then poetic tradition. He sees deference for nature as a prerequisite to complementing the tradition of poetry writing. Whitman's own poems were infused with this quality that he advocated for. Significantly, the American Transcendentalism ran concurrently with the English Romanticism. A lot of shared traits between the works from either movement are noticeable. Voices from the American Transcendentalism are therefore of interest to this pursuit.

Regarding the need to interweave a thematic study with a structural study, Chris Wanjala points out that "We see the unity of a poem after dismantling its individual images that form its spare parts to create a single organic picture" (Wanjala, 83). This process of dismantling a poem means studying individual devices of style so as to see what goes into making a unified structure. The individual images, for instance would go into forming the larger symbolic meaning of the poem. Other than images, there is a multitude of other devices of style which make up the internal and external structure of a poem.

Henry Indangasi also points out the importance of studying form alongside content. He says "... form and content are opposites that interpenetrate; and they do interpenetrate in the sphere of semantics. What you say is not synonymous with how you say it; but what you say is shaped by your style of saying it" (Indangasi in The Nairobi Journal of Literature, vi). The standpoint postulated by Indangasi: that form and content interpenetrate in the sphere of semantics; that what you say is shaped by the style in which you say it, is the very same angle taken in this dissertation. Analysis of form and content will see each as an independent component and yet it will demonstrate how they interlace in the making of meaning.

Further still, in the words of Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, analysis of African poetry has "yet to present a new *Poetics*, an exploration of the medium and what is being done with it." (Macgoye,

77). This is to say that there is room for more exploration of the poetic world in Africa, in terms of form and content, so as to make a contribution towards a compilation of such a poetics. In terms of content, pinpointing the consanguinity between East African poets and the Romantic poets, at that point where they meet in the theme of Nature would be a significant step towards making this contribution. Regarding structure, the basic components of style in each poem will be scrutinized, to see how they enhance the relevant theme.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to analyze the theme of nature in East African poetry.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- to concur that structure enhances content by using poems focusing solely on nature
- to show how nature poems create a platform for reflection about the human situation
- to demonstrate that content determines form in visual poetry

1.5 Hypotheses

- A harmony of structure and content enhances a balanced analysis of nature poems
- The theme of nature enhances a symbolic portrayal of human concerns
- The thematic content of nature poems is the reason for the specific graphic representation on paper

1.6 Literature Review

Recognition of the importance of the theme of nature in Kenyan poetry is made by Arthur Luvai in the anthology Boundless Voices: Poems from Kenya. In the introduction, Luvai gives

categories of poems, among which is “The Environment: Natural and Man-made.” on this, Luvai says: “unlike the voice in the social and political poems in this category we find poems which do not reveal a definite moral standpoint, if any at all. They merely, as it were, open our eyes to the environment” (Luvai, xvi). Luvai, singles out the theme of nature for its own sake as featuring in the collection of poems.

Luvai goes on to say:

Often poems on nature or environment attempt to capture in words, first and foremost, the visual picture of the aspect of the environment which is being dealt with. This is the subject matter. It could be a lake, a market or a factory. Through the words used and the images chosen, the poet, secondly, tries to get the reader to see that aspect of environment in the same way the poet sees it. Thus the beauty, ugliness or orderliness of the subject matter is sometimes also reflected in the structure of the poem itself. ‘The Tana Turns Ripe’ [85] is one such poem. Notice how the poet captures the idea of “nature tamed” not only through apt imagery of lion and cage, but also through his own “taming” of ordinary speech to yield rhyme, alliteration and well-balanced lines [my ellipsis] (Luvai, xvi).

Luvai acknowledges the attempt by the poets to give visual portraits of the environment. He names this the thematic content of these poems. Concerning the structure of the poem, he says that the poem is able to reflect the qualities of beauty, or ugliness, or even orderliness, by the very use of such elements as rhyme, alliteration and well balance lines. He thus sees structure and theme as working in union to produce the overall intended effect by the nature poet.

Monica Mweseli makes a study of Okot p’ Bitek’s poetry, which is by far the most renowned poetry in East Africa. In her critique, Mweseli observes the extensive use of Nature imagery Okot makes in Song of Prisoner and Song of Lawino, saying: “In Song of Prisoner, images take the reference to insects, animals and vegetable life. Reference to nature in general is what is

applied... Such images add meaning and force to the poem. They also lead to the economy of words used in the poem” (Mweseli, 176). Highlighted here is the observation of the copious references to nature made by p’Bitek. Since p’Bitek’s poetry is East African, reviewing it here is a way of pointing to a long established tradition in the East African poet, to make references of his natural environment, to enhance his creative impulse.

From Song of Lawino, Mweseli quotes a central proverb which also adds flavor and richness to the poem, and enables the author to portray African ideas without distortion: “One example is the image in the proverb central to the whole poem, viz: The pumpkin in the old homestead /Must not be uprooted” (p’Bitek in Mweseli, 175). This is to say that the African thought generally found augmentation from nature imagery, since all around there was nature enacting the play of man’s life.

A close reading of the text reveals similar proverbs such as “The long-necked and graceful giraffe/ Cannot become a monkey” (Ibid, 41) These proverbs rich with animal and vegetation symbols make palpable the resplendence of the environment from which Lawino hails. Constant borrowing from the environment for figurative expressions is a sign of Okot p’Bitek’s celebratory attitude towards the natural world.

Mweseli also emphasizes the importance of style in p’Bitek’s poetry, saying: “Furthermore, he employs rhetorical devices of apostrophe, anaphora, alliteration, and repetition. All are used to secure an effect of forcefulness and persuasiveness about the issues discussed” (Ibid, 176). This is akin to the approach this study seeks to make; studying style alongside the themes since the two in this case cannot be divorced.

Chris Wanjala in The Season of Harvest significantly points out that many poets, East African ones included, have confessed to being influence by the Romantics (82). Wanjala takes a look at

poets, from within and from without East Africa in 'East African Writer and Society' at length.

Among the issues he touches on are:

... the place of African poetry in world literature. The study of literature can be seen as it reflects themes like society, people, Birth, Time and Death, **and Environment** because our concern in literature is man wherever he is. The contributions of poets like D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Thomas Hardy, W.B. Yeats are equally important for our understanding of man's nature as these of African poets [my emphasis] (Wanjala, 82).

Wanjala points out that works by African poets, borrowing as they do from the natural world, play a role which is pertinent to the understanding of man's nature in a manner similar to works written by D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Thomas Hardy and W.B. Yeats. In this way, African poetry is seen as participating in world literature, since it speaks to the reader in a like manner as that of foregoing poets. Thematically it too reflects on the environment, among other fields of existence. The romantic element which Wanjala emphasizes as having had a root in nature is also expounded on by Anna Mwangi in her expose of the use of nature in European writing.

Anna Mwangi in 'The Four Seasons: A matter of Style in European Literature' draws attention to how style enhances content. To this end, she highlights the use of nature in European literature, saying, "The poets have used these patterns of life and linked them to the patterns of four seasons *by employing a wide variety of techniques such as imagery, symbol, metaphor, simile, metonymy, parallelism, contrast, allusion* and so on, to enhance their message, to create a mood or to paint a picture that is vivid and vibrant." [my italics] (The Nairobi Journal of Literature, 3). The varying seasons and how they translate in terms of mood and a general appreciation of life by the various poets, such as Keats and Shakespeare have been demonstrated. The interlacing of style and content is as will be applied in the poetic analysis undertaken by this particular dissertation.

Mwangi uses the poem 'Transformation' by Gunther Grass to sum up man's ability to view his own life symbolically, relating patterns of his life to the patterns perceived in the rhythms of the natural world. Mwangi labels this poem 'extended metaphor. A similar approach to Mwangi's is undertaken in Chapter Three of this dissertation. There are numerous extended metaphors in the dissertation following a similar analysis as Mwangi's. Mwangi demonstrates a penchant for man to think in terms of pictures. She demonstrates the figurative way in which fruits and nuts allude to seasons of the year, and these seasons to stages in life. Man visualizes the fruit of the season, and likens it to the season itself. Plums to him spell summer, and in turn summer spells sunshine. Sunny weather being a more vibrant of the seasons; man sees his own youth reflected in that (16). Style and content interlace as fruits and nuts stand as symbols in place of making an outright mention of seasons of the year. Such an interlacing of style and content is an approach this study seeks to undertake.

On the East African scene, just as is highlighted by Mwangi about the Western world, there is a inclination for man to see his own life enunciated in the environmental fluctuations. One such example is seen in the East African poet, Khadambi Asalache. In 'The Tall Tree' (Asalache, 16-17) Asalache employs extended metaphor as a stylistic device, to enhance the content. He symbolizes the life of a leader in the sturdiness of a tree. Thus man sees the circle of his life embodied in the rhythms of nature, just as is seen in Mwangi's paper. It is fascinating to see further explorations unearth like responses in the tropics to seasons, to gauge what their responses to an even climate have been, and how markedly different or similar they are, to their European counterparts as explored by Mwangi. Also, it makes an absorbing quest to discover whether or not there are any patterns observable in the East African poets' description of any one phenomena.

Further afield, it is of relevance here to examine the manner in which nature has been celebrated by the Negritude Francophone poets. Markedly, these poets draw almost as much on nature as the

Romantics did. Sedar Senghor, Aime Cesaire and U'Tamsi, and David Diop among others have displayed a penchant for nature. Wilfred Cartey in Whispers from a Continent explores Negritude poets' predilection for nature imagery saying, "Negritude attempts to restore a natural order to the cosmos, to restate the basic rhythmical relationships between man and forces, to reassert the harmony of emotions" (Cartey, 297). Negritude poets see nature as restoring equilibrium in man, and so "In the Negritude poets, time, space, and memory flow together in the rhythms of the elements or in the rhythms of life" (219). Cartey goes on to say that "The poets of Negritude ascribe force and curative strength to rivers and waters, accepting the rhythmic pulsations of all the elements" Cartey gives the example of the Congolese, Felix U'Tamsi's poem in which the flow of the river is synonymous with the flow of his life:

I invoke you, ...

Waters of the great rivers and of the wider, brighter seas.

And you, Sun, and you, Moon, who rule the contrary movements of the waters and who mingle them in unity.....

(U'Tamsi in Cartey, 224).

The waters of the rivers and of the seas, the elements: the sun and the moon, all work in unison to form a powerful, cleansing rhythm to his inner force. Thus the Negritude poet has that special place in his works for nature just as will be demonstrated that the East African poet does.

Regarding the Romantic Movement, it is the crux on which this study leans. The Romantic Movement rose to its heights during the period from about 1783 to 1832 (Bernbaum, xxv). Romanticism "flourished in the countryside, in the least inhabited parts of the country—the

mountain, the forest, the desert. It praised all that is simple and natural. It saw mystery everywhere—in a flower, a tree, a cloud, a star” (Priestly and Spear, 373). Romanticism thrived in the countryside where there was space and where landscapes were least interfered with by man’s activity. For this reason, natural sceneries and animals are abundant in their artistry, just as is abundant in the studied East African poets. Idealization of the natural environment, and the love of, and enunciation of its simplicity is also of great interest.

The mystical quality of nature as espoused by Romantics is also an area of significance. Seeing mystery everywhere gave some of their work a spiritual dimension. Burton says “Nature meant to the Romantics the external phenomena of the natural world and the influence of these on the spirit of man. They saw Nature as a direct emanation from God. Its beauty was divinely intended to move man’s soul, and exalt him to new heights of virtue, by bringing him into communion with God” (Burton, 140). This means the Romantics saw nature as divinely intended by God to infuse man with spirituality, so that man may see God’s glory in the resplendence of nature. Wordsworth articulates this in his poem from ‘Tintern Abbey’ (1798)

....For I have learned

To look on nature,

.....

A presence that disturbs me with joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky....

(Wordsworth, in Burton, 140)

Wordsworth's muse clearly dwells amongst the setting suns and living air, the oceans and the blue skies, it is these thoughts, he says here, which fill him with creative joy. Whether or not there is a spiritual dimension to some works by the selected poets in this study is also made apparent. For instance, in 'Evening' Lubega does bring in this dimension, by making an analogy of the Setting of the sun and the death of the Son of God. What is an important resource for this study is Wordsworth's regard for the natural world. It presents an example of the Romantic poet as a predecessor of the East African nature poet.

Concerning the other Romantics, Burton demonstrates that "Even where, as in Keats and Byron, the Romantics are not pantheistic in their approach to Nature, there is a passionate love of her beauty, and a sensitive apprehension of her awe and wonder, that is wholly lacking in the Neo-classicals" (Burton, 141) Indeed, Keats himself is quoted as saying "If Poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all" (Keats in Burton, 141) He, like Wordsworth, favoured the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," (Wordsworth, *ibid*) and deep thought going into their poems, as well as a variety of sources for their subject matter, as Burton says.

On a different scene, F.O. Matthiessen, writer of The American Renaissance, sees the choice of 'visible nature' as subject matter by literary writers as the reason they instinctively thought of art as 'a natural fruit' (157). He talks of landscapes, and the beauty of one's surroundings as a major resource unknown to cities (*Ibid*). This defines the kind of 'visible nature' he is referring to. Matthiessen explores at length Thoreau's seeing "nature as a greater and more perfect art" (154) and speaks of a modern age in America where "men have returned again to Nature" (160), and this, as a source of creativity, both for material and inspiration. He calls this 'The Organic

Principle' guiding these writers from what he sees as an American Renaissance. Some critics such as Gale Cengage (2001) have disputed the validity of Matthiessen's principle; still, it is an essential beacon in studying works with nature themes as it serves as an inspiration to the literary scholar. It must be acknowledged that Matthiessen's chapter titled 'The Organic Principal' inspired the choice of topic for this dissertation.

To illustrate Matthiessen's principle, one extract from the poem: 'Song of Myself,' by Whitman sums up his belief about the scheme of things in Nature and the natural world: "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey works of the stars" (Whitman, 55-56). The speaker in the poem sees all things as interwoven. He sees as much greatness going into the making of a single leaf of grass as does an entire galaxy of stars. Whitman in his poem also sees nature in its simplest form as unquestionably superior to the most complex of human forms. He juxtaposes the simplest organic strand in his hand with complex machinery, saying that the latter is no match for the former. A focus on the selected East African poets would reveal whether or not they display a comparable regard for superiority of nature to manmade forces, or what exactly the overall attitudes displayed are.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The relevant theories in this pursuit will be the aesthetic theories of New Criticism and Deconstruction in as far as each is applicable.

New Criticism provides for the use of analytic tools in poetic readings. New Criticism is a Formalist theory. It insists on finding meaning within the text, laying emphasis on content and form. Despite having been used in the 1930's to 1960's it "still greatly influences twenty-first century literary analysis in its terminology and its understanding of a literary work of art" (Bressler, 66). In this study, it will be seen as providing a basis for using the tools of poetic

analysis because it directly names and recommends the use of them. Also, by emphasizing that in poetry, form and content are inseparable, it underpins the position that this study takes.

Different New Critics place emphasis on different poetic elements but according to Bressler, “Brooks claims that the chief elements in a poem are paradox and irony” (62). Other poetic elements which must be examined to arrive at a poem’s meaning are images, symbols, figures of speech; structural patterns including manipulation of grammatical constructions, syntactic patterns of words, tonal patterns, foreshadowing, theme, point of view, dialogue, narration, setting and any other elements that relate to the text’s dramatic situation.

New Criticism also is relevant in this study since it acknowledges that “to study poetry or any literary work is to engage oneself in an aesthetic experience (i.e., the effects produced on an individual when contemplating a work of art) that can lead to truth” (Bressler, 58). This is to say that it acknowledges the imaginative and creative process the reader is engaged in.

“Because the poem’s chief characteristic is its oneness, New Critics believe that a poem’s form and content are inseparable” (Ibid, 61). This oneness, to the New Critic goes beyond its structure, and is the overall effect that the poem creates. Various parts of the poem combine to create this effect, with each poem’s form being unique. When all elements of a poem work together to form a single, unified effect-- the poem’s form-- New Critics declare that a poet has written a successful poem, one that possesses organic unity. They place importance on diction or word choice, denotations and connotations, to see how irony, paradox and ambiguity are created so that certain tensions are created and ultimately resolved. American New Criticism is wide in scope when applied to poetry because it takes in the ‘internal mechanics’ recommended by Russian Formalism

Deconstruction is the other aesthetic theory applied in this study. It endeavors to show that “what a text claims it says and what it actually says are discernibly different” (Bressler 117). Therefore,

deconstruction will be of particular interest in this inquiry in as far as opening up of a poem to find deeper insights is concerned. "A deconstructor begins textual analysis by assuming that a text has multiple interpretations and that it allows itself to be reread and thus reinterpreted countless times" (126). This principle is useful in this discourse because it paves way for flexible perception of the poems.

1.8 Methodology

The study begins by selecting poems which have a line-by-line involvement with the theme of nature from the various anthologies of East African poetry. The poems are then grouped together depending on similarity of content. There is a surface exploration of the poem for literal interpretation, with the overall thematic concern explained and then an in depth one for the symbolic interpretation, as guided by the analytic theories. All fact finding lies within the poem because each poem is approached with the assumption that it brings forth its own meaning. This is to maintain objectivity. Beyond this, each poem is examined differently depending on what features in it are the most prominent.

The New Critical paradigm is applied. This is close reading of the texts, and a careful step-by-step analysis, while interweaving content with style as guided solely by the text. New Critical tools are used to unlock the meaning of the poems. These are Images, symbols, figures of speech, irony, other irregularities of expression, and foregrounded elements such as the title. The interrelationship between tone of voice, mood and attitude is examined. Finally, the study pays attention to form, in the sense of rhythmic structures and visual arrangement of the poem, so as to see how the graphical presentation is influenced by the thematic concern. The reason for these approaches is to explore the manner in which the text coheres into a unified whole, following the prescribed New Critical paradigm.

Applying the theory of Deconstruction, a between-the-line assessment of the poem is made. By so doing, several levels of interpretation are made; the literal and the symbolic, where applicable, bringing out meanings which are not obvious at first reading. Alongside this is a background illumination of the manifestations of Romanticism.

Various secondary sources are used as references. Critical and analytical texts supply names of the devices of style. They also supply the guiding principles within the convention of the criticism of poetry. This enhances objectivity. Critical works and Dictionary references supply definitions of technical terms. The study also uses secondary references to enhance the interpretation or give supporting evidence.

The study concludes by stating the findings on how the various poets from East Africa display their regard for the theme of nature.

1.9 Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One titled 'Presentation of Nature Poems: Theory and Practice' maps out the strategies that the paper takes. The chapter begins by stating the problem and giving a rationalization of this problem at hand. The chapter also lays down the objectives of the paper and the hypothetical assumptions made therein. It also outlines the guiding theoretical framework, the literature review and methodology by which the analysis of the work has been conducted.

Chapter Two titled 'Nature in Its Purity: Style Enhances Content' demonstrates the different perspectives from which poets have celebrated the wild world. The analytical process merges style and content to clearly reveal the angles from which poets approach the theme of nature. Phenomena marking the wild world are: time, measured in days and seasons; physical elements such as water, mountains, forests; wild animals such as birds, the elephant and the wildebeest. Poems composed about a similar subject are grouped together, even though analysis of style is

guided by the individual poem. The purpose is to reveal the different technique in which any one natural feature is celebrated by different East African poets.

Chapter Three of this study; 'The Place of Man in Nature: A Symbolic Perspective,' makes a selection of poems in which the natural world symbolizes human concerns. The purpose is to make known poems which show man actively involved on the natural scene, showing how his active mind interprets the natural world around him. Since man is emotive, the objective is also to demonstrate that nature poems can be used as a vehicle for human emotions; a major characteristic of Romanticism. These emotions make up the themes under which the various poems are classified. The themes are such as fear, admiration, poignancy, self assessment, and self enjoyment derived from man's relationship with the natural world.

Chapter four, labeled 'Shapes and Sounds of Nature: Content determines Form' uses concrete poetry, lineation and prosody as the most discernible cases of form to demonstrate that the theme of nature can directly influence the graphic design of a poem on a page.

In the final chapter 'Conclusion: Findings and Recommendations' the section lists down the various discoveries made in the course of the study. It places emphasis on the dual nature of the analysis undertaken by the study, exploring content alongside style, to show what this analytical approach has helped to uncover. The section also makes recommendations for further research.

1.10 Scope and Limitation

In the East African region, there are many poems composed which engaged nature as a subject matter, at a textual or sub-textual level. Some of them go deep into their contemplation of the natural world. Many may be said to romanticize the East African landscape. There are many such poems, but a sampling has been made, from those anthologies which greatly borrow from the natural world for the end product. Out of forty Anthologies of East African poetry reviewed, six have been selected as the main sources. The criterion for this selection has been that these

anthologies have at least five nature poems. These five or more nature poems from each anthology have been selected purely based on their extensive and purposeful use of features from the natural world.

The six anthologies which make up the main sources are: Khadambi Asalache, Sunset in Naivasha; Anne Cunningham, This Kenya; David Cook and David Rubadiri, Poems from East Africa; Joy Higiyo, Voice of Silence; Arthur Luvai and Kwamchetsi Makokha, Echoes across the Valley and Andrew D. Amateshe, An Anthology of East African Poetry. These Anthologies contain five or more poems each one of which makes extensive use of the theme of nature. The various poems from these anthologies have been chosen solely for their involvement in the pertinent subject matter, namely: nature as a central design, and nature as a sustained source of imagery.

The single poems available from three other anthologies have been brought in too due to their singular focus on the pertinent theme. These are Cook, David, In Black and White. Luvai, Arthur, Boundless Voices : Poems from Kenya, and Robins P. and R. Hargreaves, A Poetry Course for KCSE. These three anthologies display minimal involvement with nature poems. The single poems are borrowed from them because they complement certain others from the chief sources and are crucial components for elaboration purposes.

The criterion used to choose individual poems of focus is a line-by-line involvement with the theme of nature by the individual poem. The poem must purposefully undertake to make direct mention of the natural world for its symbolic or reflective quality.

The study does not seek to label the East African nature poet as a Romantic, since Romanticism as a movement was characterized by various other features outside of this study. But the study does acknowledge the semblance between the selected works and that of Romantics **in as far as**

they both reveal an acknowledgement of the natural world as deserving focus enough to make poetic compositions about.

A focus on the natural world does not mean that humans do not feature in the occasional poem; they do. In chapter two, while the majority of poems make no mention of humans, where they do, humans appear as a part of the larger cosmic scheme. The concerns in the poem pay mind to the human ingredient only in as far as it complements the universal state of affairs. The prime focus is the natural world. In chapter three of this work, humans are blended in with the natural world. Often, the enmeshing is so extensive that a literal reading of the poem discovers no mention of man at all. Only at the symbolic level do certain poems betray themselves to be addressing human concerns. A good example is Stella Ngatho's 'A Young Tree' (Cook and Rubadiri, 111) which describes a growing tree, and never once makes mention of a human being. Only symbolically is the theme of a human youth uncovered. This is to say that once more, the prime theme is theme of nature.

East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania cover the geographical region chosen for this study. In the literary world the region abounds in nature poems. However, the field is wide, with very many long established and upcoming anthologies containing nature poems. One cannot make a case study of all the Anthologies from this wide region and is forced to choose only a few as one's case study. However, it is hoped that the selected Anthologies are accurate representations of others at large.

Limitations are also guided by the theoretical framework. New Criticism is limiting in as far as it is considered rigid and too objective. It does not take in the reader and the writer, nor the historical or social context of the poem. According to Bressler, "Psychology, sociology, and history do impact both individual writers and their works, helping to fill a vacuum created by examining only the text. Without such analyses, argue many critics, we miss out on some

meanings and purposes” (66). These critics feel that New Criticism is not sufficient to provide all dimensions which add meaning to a work. These dimensions are the details outside the text which the critics feel go to augment the meaning of a work.

Most methods of New Criticism reinforce a number of subsequent theoretic approaches to literature including... deconstruction theory (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Criticism). One example given is close reading. It reinforces deconstruction. Yet, while deconstruction saves the analysis from rigid analysis posed by New Criticism, it is on these same tenets that they are opposed, since New Criticism advocates closed interpretation of the text versus the open interpretation deconstruction stands for. Despite being opposed on some tenets, they complement one another on a number of points. The study has to try and strike a balance, finding the points at which they concur.

1.11 Definition of Operative Terms

These are some of the analytical terms as used in the study:

“Nature” has been used in this work to mean the natural world; the cosmic elements such as the sun, the moon, and the stars; the mundane elements such as water in the form of rain, rivers, seas; landscapes such as mountains, valleys and plains; fauna— birds of the air, animals on land and sea and flora—vegetation of every kind. To describe them, the term “organic” may on occasion be used interchangeably with “natural.”

This natural world is best definable as free of artificial tampering, and is consequently in exclusion of the human element. An example of a poem in which there is no mention of humans, literally or symbolically is Amin Kassam’s ‘Sunset’ (Cook and Rubadiri, 74-75). There are many other similarly inclined poems, more so in chapter two, which make no mention of human beings whatsoever. They are selected to demonstrate the poet’s contemplation of the natural world in its purity.

Romance, or the romantic mode, “describes the ideal, or what ought to be, often in terms of nostalgia or fantasy or longing” (Hunter, 550). The Romantic mode prompting the idealization of nature by the East African poet is akin to the English Romantic mode in as far as Romantic poets display reverence for nature.

Content is the subject matter of the study. It also means the thematic concern of the work.

A Theme is “The central or dominating idea in a literary work. The abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action and image in the work” (Mweseli, 189).

Style may be used interchangeably with ‘structure’ and ‘form’ in this work. It is the method by which the poet delivers the message of the poem.

Form has to do with the pattern of a poem. “...the simplest sense of poetic form involves the literal appearance on the page... Occasionally the words are even shaped like a particular object, as in ... concrete poetry...stanza varieties and rhythmic patterns” (Hunter, 543). This study will point out form where it is significantly used, directly showing the manner in which it enhances or is enhanced by the theme of nature. A good example is found in the last section of the dissertation, ‘Concrete Poetry’ which directly links the themes of nature to the form of the poems.

Structure is largely the inner composition of this poem. “Structure supports form and makes it possible. The order and arrangement of all of a poem’s constituent parts—words, images, figures of speech, ideas, everything—involve structure” (Hunter, 543). For this reason, devices of style are all structural matter. An in-depth analysis will reveal that devices of style; that is, sound schemes and tropes, are woven around the theme of the natural world to achieve the intended poetic effect. Schemes are foregrounded repetitions of expression Tropes are foregrounded irregularities of content (Leech, 74). Examples of sound schemes are alliteration, assonance, consonance and onomatopoeia, idiophones and rhyme. In the words of Leech, they form a

phonological echo. (Ibid) Examples of tropes are imagery: simile and metaphor; irony, and analogy. All other tropes such as paradox, oxymoron, parallelism and contrast, satire and sarcasm are derivations of the five mentioned above. These will be highlighted in the course of analyzing the symbolic quality of the poems.

Poetry has been broadly defined as "...language that says more than ordinary language and says it with fewer words and in less space...Although you could say that poetry is what is written in verse, it is always more than rhythm and rhyme. Poetry... is the most memorable kind of language" (Babusci, 429). This marked quality of poems will make itself self-evident in the course of the exploration. The richness and compactness of poetic language, alongside the rhythmic quality of the poem is often self-evident on first reading, but highlighting subtle details points to a more profound awareness of the poetic devices.

The speaker is the imaginary voice assumed by the writer of a poem. In other words, the speaker is that character who tells the poem (Babusci et al, 845). The term "speaker" has been used severally to mean the poet, more so when there is what Leech calls an ambivalent situation (191) To concur with Geoffrey Leech, in "the world within the poem", often the speaker and the poet are one and the same, unless the subject of the poem is distinctly identifiable as someone different "when one is unable to tell, from the poem, whether the poet is addressing us in his own person, or through some fictional persona" (Ibid). The speaker's tone of voice reveals the attitude in the poem towards the subject of the poem. In an ambivalent case, then, the speaker's sentiments are the poet's own, and thus, the sentiment of the East African nature poet make themselves manifest.

Imagery "is used by different critics to mean three related but distinct things: 1.The mental picture suggested by verbal descriptions in a poem. 2.The visual descriptions in the poem itself; or 3.The figurative language (including metaphors, simile, and analogies) in the poem. In all three uses, imagery is technically a visual term, though other senses and impressions are sometimes

included under its large umbrella” (Hunter, 540). The other senses are touch, smell, hearing and taste.

An image cluster is “A group of similar images concentrated in a short passage (Hunter, 541). In this study, several images which are alike would be concentrated in a stanza.

A Metaphor is “a figure of speech in which a person, an object, or an idea is imaginatively transformed... a metaphor may be suggested by comparison; it is a figure of speech in which an implicit comparison is made between two things essentially unlike” (Mweseli, 186). This figurative comparison of two different things helps to highlight the qualities of one.

Tone is broadly the “creation of attitude in poetry” (Robert and Henry, 574). It is how the speaker sounds when talking about the subject.

Mood, “is the feeling created in the reader by a literary work” (Babusci et al, 840). It is the emotional ambiance in the poem.

A symbol is “anything that stands for or represents something else” (Babusci et al, 847). It is a concept which may not be taken at the literal level.

Motif has been used to mean “a recurring element in a work” (Stern, 155). This means that a certain object is referred to time and again in a manner that foregrounds it as carrying significance in the text.

All other technical terms are explained at initial usage in the course of the analysis. In subsequent uses, the meaning is clarified by contextual inference.

CHAPTER TWO

NATURE IN ITS PURITY: STRUCTURE ENHANCES CONTENT

2.1 Introduction

In this section an analysis of structure is blended in with an analysis of content in poems which exclusively celebrate the wild. Pointing out those structural aspects which obviously enhance content is an adherence to the New Critical principle which “examines a poem’s structure by scrutinizing its poetic elements, rooting out and showing its inner tensions, and demonstrating how the poem supports its overall meaning in reconciling these tensions into a unified whole” (Bressler, 64). This means that to arrive at a complete meaning of a poem, one has to extract the structural aspects to demonstrate how they develop the theme. The reason is that the meaning of a poem is reinforced by the manner in which expressions have been framed.

Structure is used here to mean the internal mechanics of expression: “The order and arrangement of all of a poem’s constituent parts—words, images, figures of speech, ...involve structure” (Hunter, 543). Used in that sense, the term ‘structure’ is synonymous with those devices of style which are called ‘tropes.’ “Tropes are foregrounded irregularities of content” (Leech, 74). Examples of tropes are imagery: simile and metaphor; irony, and analogy. Other tropes such as personification, foreshadowing, contrast, parallelism, juxtaposition, paradox, oxymoron, satire and sarcasm, litotes, hyperbole, pleonasm and tautology, metonymy and allusion are derivations of those three. These structural elements, or tropes, enhance content. The term ‘content’ is synonymous with ‘theme’ or ‘meaning.’ The poets’ regard for nature is proven by the manner in which they blend the images they draw from nature with their artistic genius to give fresh insights on various realities.

All poems in this section focus purely on nature, depicting a “sensitive apprehension of [nature’s] awe and wonder” [my italics] (Burton, 141). Where the human element features, it is as part of a universal scheme, and takes a secondary place to the natural world. Such poems are few in number and far between. Man is not the focal point, but is portrayed as a living creature in existence alongside other living creatures witnessing the wild world unfold.

The natural elements are at their most venerated where they are most vividly exaggerated. In cases where this happens, the poems subscribe to a trait similar to Romanticism, idealizing the elements. The lurid colors and shapes of nature manifest the passion with which the poet appreciates the physical environment. The symbolic quality of the poem is enriched by this

spectacular portrayal of nature. Citing examples from nature poetry, then, the sun takes on a feline form, thunder roars as an unseen giant; flashes of lightening exude esoteric energies, clouds march as colossal armies, and a flitting bird is an exalted rapture. This over-dramatization of natural occurrences is idealization of nature; a trait shared with Romanticism.

Poetry as a genre is marked by a sensory quality. Imagery employed in poetry “appeals to one or more of the five senses (Babusci et al, 837). This is to say that poems with themes of nature are as sensory in their essence as they are visceral since they make use of imagery which is visual, tactile, audio and often olfactory and gustatory. With our mind’s eye, we see, touch, hear, smell and taste objects as we make an instinctive response to the poem. The five human senses are symbolically activated by our reading of nature poems. This appeal to the senses will be of interest in the analysis, to deduce what overall messages are sent by using them.

Sensory qualities help to map out the atmosphere, mood or tone of the poem. “To establish a particular atmosphere, mood or tone, you must pay attention to your reader’s ...sensation” (Stern, 89). This means that appeal to sensibilities is a very important part of studying nature poems. According to Jerome Stern, “atmosphere is not just weather. It is setting... sounds, sights and smells are all part of atmosphere” (Ibid) setting, atmosphere and the reader’s sensibilities are therefore intertwined, and must be seen as part of a whole in the course of analyzing the poems. To add on to Stern’s list, Setting includes time, space, and scope of the poem. These qualities are all very important for the assessment of the overall effect of the poem on the reader.

2.2 The Poet Observing Time

Time as a theme is celebrated in different styles by different poets. The poets’ choice stylistic devices enhance the manner in which the poet portrays the passage of time. The themes covered under observance of time are the general hours of day: dusk, night and dawn; and Seasons of the year. Different devices of style enhance the poets’ enchantment with the concept of time. Sunset appears to be the most greatly celebrated time of day by the East African poets. Each of the studied anthologies has got several compositions on the theme. What is remarkable is that; as will be demonstrated, there is a marked unifying quality in the attitudes, and often stylistic devices displayed by most poets, towards this time of day on the East African Landscape.

Sunset (Amin Kassam)

warm scent
lingers
to mark his passage
through
leaves and flowers
breathing
perfume
as under
the surveillance of
furtive eyes
he
buries
his mane
of fire
in the darkness
of his paws
and
with
bloodshot eyes
stalks
into the grass.

birds
twitter
with anxiety
at the predator
come
to take
his place
for the night.

(Amin Kassam in Cook and Rubadiri, 75)

Amin Kassam's enchanted interpretation of a sunset makes palpable his fascination with the scene of a setting sun. This enchantment manifests the romantic mode he engages in. The theme of Sunset and the gradual process in which this happens is captured in this poem. Slowly, the day is changing from daylight to nighttime. That hour of twilight or dusk is what the Kassam is describing in highly figurative terms.

To be able to make an interpretation of the sun as it moves slowly over the land and into the horizon Amin Kassam has chosen the movement of an animal. He chooses to use the extended metaphor as his style of delivery. Only the title gives the main theme away. Without the title, it might appear that the poem describes an animal, rather than a sunset. The speaker never once calls the sun or the succeeding darkness by their regular names. Rather, allusions about the environment and the contrast between light and shadows are what map it out as the sun. When a comparison between one thing and another; such as the sunset to an animal, lasts throughout the poem, it is called an extended metaphor.

An extended metaphor develops beyond a single sentence or phrase. Once a poet has shown that two apparently unlike things are similar, it is fascinating to see how long the comparison can be continued. An extended metaphor can go on for several lines, or even many pages (Babusci et al, 468).

This particular extended metaphor goes on for the entire poem. The theme of sunset is developed by portraying this time of day as though it were a predator; fearsome, "come to take his place for

the night.” The monster is darkness. It descends on the land. It replaces sunlight. The process in which this sunlight descends on the land is what is depicted as if a predator were settling in for the night. This predator is definitely a lion, since it has a mane and paws. But it is a lion of two colors. Its head is aflame; its tail is dark.

Without the speaker mentioning it, we are left with the impression that the sun has just set as we watch. In the process, two features have been described concurrently, day and night. “In an *extended metaphor*, as in a regular metaphor, the subject is spoken or written of as though it were something else. However, extended metaphor differs from regular metaphor in that several comparisons are made” (Babusci et al, 833). As is the natural order, the light of the sun has at its tail the darkness of night. One succeeds the other in an eternal cyclic motion. The end of one has the beginning of the other in its essence. Since a sunset is a transitory phase, we are caught between the two phases: daytime and nighttime. This is the reason our monster must have in its making the two hues; a fiery head and a darkened rear. Kassam achieves the dual effect by blending the flaming colors of the sun with the shadows at dusk, to give the impression that an animal is stealthily on the move.

By stanza two, with the mention of this lion stalking “into the grass” with “bloodshot eyes” these images give the impression of a predator on the hunt. It is stalking its prey in the grass. It is discernibly a male lion; a ‘he.’ His ‘mane of fire,’ also qualifies him as a mythical dragon with body parts made up of fire. But with his fiery mane buried within its dark paws, we now only see the dark side of him. The kinetic motion produced by this moving predator is creditable. Now we see the animal’s head, now we see him move on so that his hind part appears and settles on the land with its head buried by its paws. The night settles in snugly, as though it were an animal in its lair. He, the night “has come to take his place.” As will be observable, in the course of this study, there is much use of the extended metaphor made by many of the poets studied. Perhaps the richness of the allusive quality of a metaphor allows for much of the figurative effect needed to render a poem successful.

Impactful visual images call to attention details we do not ordinarily pay attention to. One is the illusions of feline movements created by stealthily approaching shadows as the sun “buries its mane in its paws.” The animistic metaphor, “mane” represents the sun’s rays. The “paws” would be the approaching darkness, which follows in the wake of the fading rays of the sun. The animistic metaphor “paws” symbolizes shadows at dusk. These shadows, that is, darkness, appear

to bury the rays of the sun, which have previously spread out like a lion's mane. As the paws of darkness bury the mane of fire, the picture which comes to mind is that of a fire softly quenched.

This poetic impression is tantamount to painting a picture of a night falling at the end of a hot, sunny day. Symbolically speaking, we watch the paintbrush move across the canvass. The colors are fiery oranges and reds for the sun and grey to black for the shadows. The allusion that the day has had a glaring sunlight is made by the mention of the mane of fire, and the bloodshot eyes. These are the colors of twilight. The sky sometimes appears red and orange in color. This is a sign that the sun is sinking into the horizon. Naturally, "the animal," the sunset, has the combined qualities of day and night. The light of day is the head, with a mane of fire, meaning the heat and light of the sun. It moves on, silhouetted now by the night, the rear of the animal, whose paws of darkness reach out to bury the face, so that the light is not seen again.

This mood of suspense is carried in the wording. Anxiety is as much in the "furtive eyes" as in the twittering birds which watch this "predator" as though it might harm them. This mood of suspense is explainable. Having likened daylight to a lion with a burning fore and nighttime to a predator, "predator" which "settles" in in its "lair," reactions from the birds, which "twitter with anxiety", is expected. Both daylight and nighttime are fearful time for different creatures. Some come awake in the day, others in the night. Ironically, the birds rather than get lulled to sleep by the descending darkness, seem to chirp uneasily instead.

The sunset has been endowed with living qualities, it is alive. This is a suitable image because evening is as much seen to come to life as is the break of day. The entire planet has a nocturnal life, and a diurnal life. Diurnal life figuratively speaking goes to sleep as the nocturnal life comes awake. Some of the animals symbolizing the diurnal life are the "furtive eyes" which watch the sun set. They are anxious about the coming night because it does not favor their wakefulness. "Furtive eyes" is an image which appeals to our sense of sight. We can see what the "eyes" see, the colors at dusk which are orange-red and fire-like. Beyond this we hear birds twitter with anxiety. This is an auditory image. It appeals to our auditory sense, even as it creates suspense. We grow anxious with the birds, not knowing what this drastic change time will bring with it. The auditory sense is suitable for a darkened atmosphere since, not being able to see in the dark the visual sense has become less important.

Calling the night a predator is significant metaphor. Night is symbolically the larger predator because it presents occasion for lesser predators, the animals, to move in on their prey. Birds here could be seen as symbolic of other creatures of dusk such as crickets, frogs, hyenas and wolves

and other hunters, which stir in their lairs with the coming of the night. It is an impactful record representative of animal responses, since the night often comes alive with all manner of danger lurking within it. This picture of the night as a predator is also reminiscent of a tropical dusk in the marshes, where activity suddenly seems to spring to life at twilight. After a long languorous afternoon, there is a sudden awakening and increased noises until nightfall when it gradually subsides.

The olfactory imagery is strong in this poem. An image is a word or a phrase which appeals to one or more of the five senses (Babusci et al, 837). The olfactory image appeals to our sense of smell. Our sense of smell is activated by the mention of the scents which mark the evening. These fragrances give the sunset an intoxicating ambience: “warm scent/ lingers/to mark his passage/ through/ leaves and flowers/ breathing/ perfume.” These leaves and flowers have been warmed up by the sun’s rays to give off the musk peculiar to each of them. The speaker implies here that evening brings along with it certain scents peculiar to it, like the perfume of flowers and leaves. In this sense we literary smell a sunset, and not just see it.

In a larger sense the East African poet, Amin Kassam, is celebrating the passage of time. That is why he makes use of such diction as “passage,” and “with its passing” it is the passage of time marked by the changes in the elements. The sights and sounds of this poem, ‘Sunset,’ are evocative of the sights and sounds of Stephen Lubega’s ‘Evening.’ ‘Evening’ is another poem which venerates the ‘death’ meaning the setting of the sun at dusk. It also marks the transitory moments from daylight to nighttime.

Evening (Stephen Lubega)

Never has the death of a poet

Been tolled by all the world,

God’s work on earth, though,

Has its universal funeral in the west,

Recurrent grave of day’s mighty soul.

Never was a victory so trumpeted,
As that of the sun climbing his fiery way
And then in gorgeous colours falling,
Trailing stars.
Life and death, water and aridity
Bow to his passing ray.
With his passing death stirs in the thicket.
In church the bell is tolled.
In barracks at the last bugle note,
Soldiers like ants file.
The busy woman scolds her child,
Drunkards like sick dogs retch homewards,
The night voice is a harsh guitar.

But on the hill among the *musizi* trees
Sweet nuns sing litanies,
Of that virgin whose Son we know.
Priests like lamp-posts in a graveyard,
Stoop over the breviary.
There's a piping of crickets in the bush,
And a bellowing of frogs—
All sing the ancient elegy

For the sun that has died in the West.

(Lubega in Cook and Rubadiri, 92)

Lubega's passionate appreciation of a sunset is evident in his style of delivery throughout the poem. He uses a series of metaphors to describe the prominent celestial presence of the sun in the universe. This series of highly idealistic metaphors is what gives the opening of the poem such force: "God's work on earth, / Has its universal funeral in the west, / Recurrent grave of the day's mighty soul." Calling the sun "God's work on earth" shows God as an artist who has crafted it. The sun becomes a work of art, crafted by God. This metaphor gives the poem a spiritual dimension. It gives the sun an otherworldly quality where we see God's hand as actively involved in creating it. Lubega wants the reader to see how unique the sun is in that it did not just come to be, but was purposefully created by God.

The second metaphor, "universal funeral" creates the impression that the entire world stands at attention to observe a dying sun. It projects the importance of the sunset as an occurrence observed by the entire world. It also communicates the forlornness felt by the world at sunset, because the sun has not just gone down the horizon, it has ceased to be, creating the illusion that it has died. Calling the sun "the day's mighty soul" shows great regard for the sun's rays, because the connotation made is that without the sun, the world is left soulless, that is, without life. It hails the sun as a giver of life. Both images; one of the entire earth as holding a funeral for the sun, and one of the sun as the soul of the day, are highly effective. They achieve the speaker's intention, which is to capture the magnitude of the phenomenon called sunset.

A Parallel is drawn of the death of a poet, with the apparent daily 'death' of the sun. A poet, according to the speaker, does not achieve the heights of fame, upon his death, on an equal magnitude as does the daily setting of the sun in the western skies. By putting the death of a poet side by side with a sunset, the speaker makes an allusion to the fact that a poet is a great entity. He likens the greatness of the poet to that of the sun. He highlights in an understated way the irony that so great an entity as a poet should not be mourned when he dies by all the world, that his death should not be marked by all the world, as the sun, which is, to the speaker, almost of an equal standing, is. He means to extol the greatness of a poet by comparing him to the sun, and yet to extol the sun by highlighting the unsurpassable position of importance it holds in the world.

Humans in the poem are part of a larger scheme that's the universe. The animal and the human world are interlaced with the universal elements because they are a part of "all the world" meaning the entire world, which is "tolling the death of the sun." this implies that the world is unified at sunset in sounding a death knell to mark the demise of the sun.

In this poem, the sun stands in contrast to the one in Kassam's poem, 'Sunset,' in that here it is endowed with human rather than animal qualities. The 'he' is not categorized as animal. Notably both 'suns' are called 'he' suggestive of the gender. But this one has a funeral held for it, so it most decipherably comes across as human. Humans and animals alike heed the passing by of the sun, just as the universe heeds the sun's metaphorical 'passing on.' Also in contrast to Lubega's 'Evening,' Kassam's 'Sunset' suggests that there is continuity of life at night because darkness merely comes to take its place for the night. But Lubega's 'Evening' shows the sun as dying out altogether, leaving the night soulless.

The setting of the poem is clear. It is the entire path along which the sun rises and sets. This would be the entire earth. This is quite unlike Kassam's sunset which appears to cover a smaller space of land; with the line that the sun "stalks into the grass," connoting a grassland. In the poem, 'Evening,' humans are as mentioned earlier, a part of the universal scheme of things. To contribute to the symbolic sounding of a death knell, there is considerable distressful response by the humans. Some are prompted to hurry on home, "The busy woman scolds her child /Drunkards like sick dogs retch homewards" we notice how negative their reactions are to the passing of the sun, there is no joy in the air, rather gloomy images of sour women pressed for time, to salvage what remains of the day, growing impatient with offending children, while the inebriated also realize that there is no more light to guide them home and so they force a passage home. Other sets of humans grow more forlorn, and mark its passing somberly

"Priests like lamp-posts in a graveyard, /Stoop over the breviary." This simile draws a picture of monks standing somberly chanting prayer within the monastery, which, like the convent, is on the hill. This practice, of chanting their prayer for them marks the end of the day. In a literal sense, the sun is no longer with them. It has gone down, by setting in the West. So the priests do what they habitually do to mark the close of the day; they say their prayers.

Little wonder then that Lubega chooses these symbols; one of nuns singing hymns, and one of priests saying their prayers, making it appear as if a death has occurred. He wants to bring out the symbol of the 'death' of the sun, to represent the setting of the sun. Since death is commemorated by certain religious rites, sunset, the symbolic death of the sun is now commemorated by the

rigors of the clergy. It is as if the priests now sing a requiem, in a burial, in keeping with the religious rites.

Figurative language is strong. The human world and the animal world all stand at attention (epitomized by the soldiers who form ranks like ants "Soldiers like ants file" in acknowledgment of the passing sun. Humans, compared to ants appear small and insignificant in comparison to the grandness on display. The display of the shining sun is so spectacular that "Never was a victory so trumpeted, /As that of the sun climbing his fiery way." This alludes to the radiance of the sunshine in the prime hours of day, the only other thing as great is its setting.

There is a reason that the poet chooses the specific imagery he does. Of imagery, it has been said, "The symbolic use of imagery reaches its zenith in metaphor, the most intense form that imagery can take"(Burton, 109). The overall metaphor is one of a sun being referred to as "God's work on earth" bequeaths the poem with an obviously religious overtone. Put alongside the theme of prayer by the nuns and priests, and the allusion to the Son of God, it all ties up very well with the image of Christian rites at a graveside. This wake is attended by all creatures of the earth, and is presided upon by animals and humans alike, some incanting prayer, some singing elegies others just showing their poignancy in their wretchedness.

This setting of the sun influences the choice of images of death in several ways. It is that symbolic "burial" in the western side of the universe because the setting is termination of the day. The west, where the sun sets has been called "Recurrent grave of day's mighty soul." The west side of the world is where the sun appears to die out. "Recurrent grave" aptly captures repetitiousness of the poignant action; happening every single day. The sun is that "mighty soul" which gives the day life, and so with its setting, the day is always left "soulless." The deeper allusion here is that the night is as death. It is no wonder then the use of the image "With his passing death stirs in the thicket." The night is getting ready to visit its morbidity on the creatures. The night is lesser than the day in that it lacks the glories brought about by the sun. Daylight symbolizes life and night symbolizes death. So stately is the sun that "Life and death, water and aridity/ Bow to his passing ray." This means that the rest of the elements are subdued by it, and it is no wonder so, since it is the sun which dictates the being of all other entities mentioned.

The reader's attention is called to a unifying element in these two adjacent poems. This is the attitude of apprehensiveness with which is held the setting of the sun. This is made obvious by the reactions to the nightfall. In 'Sunset', night is a predator come to hunt for prey; in 'Evening,' night causes 'death' to 'stir' in the thicket, suggesting a likelihood of the loss of lives in either

poems, with the looming darkness. This, therefore, does make a commentary on the attitudes to nightfall, by the two East African poets. As mentioned earlier the poets are observing time, and nightfall appears not to hold too welcome a promise.

In further poetic examples, we see the same apprehensive tone and mood manifested in Khadambi Asalache's 'African sunset.' Images of the aggressive quality of the night that is about to fall are how this imaginative piece opens. The drama unfolds right from the very start, and with force.

African Sunset (Khadambi Asalache)

night falls

violently

awakened from its

sleep

the heat of the day

waved away in a hurry

to run away from a blinding flash

a sting in the face

an open wound

held by a dark hand

in a dying light

that brings pain

on the crimson face.

It closes its eyes

as darkness

unfolds like a stream

a cold wind that blinds

an army without a direction

moving under cover

scurrying along with its eyes of a torch

to shoot, roll and spread darkness

on the tropical face

to purple it into sleep

leave it with an autumnal touch

dead leaves

shadows

fallen in battle

defeated

(Asalache, 29)

Subjugation and defeat is the manner in which Asalache visualizes dusk. Images of aggression open and close this very colorful poem. Despite a tone of aggression, Asalache's composition is romantic through and through. It describes a fantastical scenario where the night is portrayed as a heroic usurper of the day's position of power. The opening line speaks of a "violent" awakening of the night and the last one speaks of the day as having "fallen in battle." In between, darkness is at war with daylight during that brief spell of dusk, with the result that sunlight is subdued and defeated by darkness.

Due to the noticeably many related images Asalache uses, there emerges a pattern to them. These patterns are image clusters. An image cluster is "a group of similar images concentrated in a short passage" (Hunter, 541). There are several concentrations of similar images in several, sometimes subsequent lines. The first noticeable cluster is: "waved away in a hurry/to run away from a blinding flash/ an army without a direction/moving under cover/scurrying along." This cluster has the meaning of the speed at which daylight moves away from the land, at dusk. It alludes at a short lived sunset. The sun appears to be running away from the darkness which has come to take

its place. The sun has suffered defeat, so it runs away like an army without direction. In other words, it has been scattered, each ray of light running its own direction for cover. Such is the siege of the day by the night.

The second image cluster is “a sting in the face/an open wound/ that brings pain.” The words “sting,” “wound,” and “pain” are related. They refer to the same sensory perception. They are tactile images. They appeal to our sense of touch. The reader imagines the discomfort of the daylight, which is being stabbed away, it is being forced to make a retreat in this “battle” with daylight, and is losing, since it is suffering injuries, it is banished for the night. The “open wound” must be the impression left by the shadows of sunset; it is as if where there was apparent “flesh” of light there is now a “gush,” created by the impression of nothingness which is created by the apparent dark void of night.

The reverse motion of victory and defeat is what must happen at daybreak, when darkness is in turn defeated and banished to make way for the light of day. But for now, there is, as in the third cluster of images, a daylight which has been besieged by its contender, the night.

Raided by the night, the waning daylight is now “held by a dark hand/in a dying light/It closes its eyes” The leading image in this third image cluster sounds a lot like Amin Kassam’s ‘Sunset,’ in which daylight is said to be held in the dark paws of the predator: the night. Kassam’s is an animistic image, alluding to the animal that is the night. But here, the image is a humanizing image. It is also what is called personification because reference is made to the human hand. “.. a dark hand.” This obviously refers to the shadowy lighting at twilight, which must give the impression of fingers spreading across the land in the spaces where the rays of the sun are faded. The waning light is also called in the poem “a dying light” Since the light is weak, it appears to be dying. It has lost its vitality, so it is as though its life is ebbing away. Again these are living qualities. Consequently, daylight, and nighttime continue to be given living attributes. Daylight, now in a weakened state, “closes its eyes.” We can no longer see the light. The “eyes” which were the sunlight have been “closed.” Daylight goes to sleep, so to speak. The sun has set in the horizon.

The fourth cluster of images refers to the night. “as darkness/a cold wind that blinds/to shoot, roll and spread darkness/ to purple it into sleep/leave it with an autumnal touch/shadows.” Notably, while daylight has “eyes” which it closes, darkness “blinds” meaning it is blinding. It is an accurate juxtaposing of light and dark, “seeing eyes” and “blinding cold,” daytime and nighttime.

The hues which suggest nighttime are “darkness” and “purple” and “shadows.” These aptly give impression of a faded sunlight. The day is not brightly lit any more.

The metaphor “Autumnal touch” connotes that gray season when there isn’t enough lighting in the land, due to foggy weather. It is an animistic metaphor. An animistic metaphor “attributes animate characteristics to an inanimate” (Leech, 158). The metaphorical touch of autumn is an appropriate equivalent for that time of day, when lighting is poor. Autumn, though a season, is also a familiar symbol given to that period which comes just before the final phase of any occurrence. Here, that semi-final phase is sunset. The final phase is the night, for which the analogy of winter which is only hinted at by the mention that evening is autumn. Midday would be summer and morning would be spring. That way, seasons in a year would make equivalent representation of hours of a single day. Notably they too are related to movement of the sun across the sky, only, a day is a miniature of a year.

The image cluster which described daylight as it must have looked in its prime is “the heat of the day/...the tropical face/ on the crimson face/ with its eyes of a torch.” Here, daytime is radiant. It’s “tropical face” which is warm sunlight, has “eyes of a torch.” The sun’s rays glow like a fire. A variant color of day is crimson, meaning bloody red as, towards sunset, it begins to figuratively speaking “suffer ghastly wounds” from the warring night. Literary speaking, crimson is the color some tropical sunsets might experience after a hot day. It is a spectral illusion.

Asalache’s poem is evidently reducible to discussed five image clusters. Yet, these clusters are so cleverly blended that they do not sound repetitious. Each image is juxtaposed with the other to procure a continuity of motion. No time is wasted between the “waking up of the night” to the “fall of day.” The night, which is seen to have woken up with a “violent start,” that is, with an aggressive swiftness, is propelled into action and loses no time taking its place on the land. In a word, the period of sunset is short and dramatic. The drama is in the apparent ousting of the incumbent force and change of guard, so to speak. The ultimate theme achieved is that darkness replaces sunlight.

Asalache is able to prolong the concept of sunlight/darkness, articulating them in so many different ways that each image sounds fresh, and like it is saying something new. It could all compress into five lines. Notably, that theme of night taking the place of day is sustained all through the poem. It makes up action in the poem. All events revolve around it. There is no mention of a geographical setting, even though we get a perception of space. This is different from Asalache’s subsequent poem, ‘Sunset in Naivasha’ where we visualize the landscape on

which the sun is setting. In 'An African Night' the setting is significantly in terms of time. What we imagine are colors and shadows struggling for dominance in the vast space that is the universe.

In the coming poem, a close examination uncovers what lies behind an illusion of a mellow tone when celebrating the night. The opening line of Anne Cunningham's poem, 'African Night' has a more reserved tone than Asalache's 'African Sunset', in which the night falls decidedly "violently." In her opening line, Cunningham holds back instantaneous responses, and merely observes the glow of the sun. The image "glow" is mild, not glaring but muted in its brightness. Just like most other poets, she too begins with the setting of the sun as the most significant marker of the start of a new phase in time. The next natural marker of the drastic change that comes with the passage of time is diurnal birds. Their activity comes to a sudden halt at the suggestion of darkness. They settle in for the night. Other poets who have made use of the bird motif are Amin Kassam in 'Sunset' and Samwiri Kisa Mukuru in 'Night.' The opening scenes by the three poets match due to this motif. All three poems have a moderate opening, and a bird motif.

In Cunningham's African Night, the speaker at first chooses to let the unfolding events of the night speak for themselves rather than s/he, the speaker, voicing an opinion. The mellow opening of 'African Night,' appears deceptive. There is nothing apprehensive happening in the first five lines. This quality makes this poem different from the instantaneously apprehensive Kassam's and Asalache's poems. In 'African night,' all appears to be settling in peacefully, and the opening mood is calm. The birds feel safe in the trees. But this apparent peace only lasts a moment. Not long after, the speaker displays the marauding and roving nocturnal creatures. Hereafter, the speaker strikes a different note altogether.

African Night (Anne Cunningham)

The glowing sun sets beyond the hills,

In the short-lived twilight

The birds with their songs and trills

Give thanks for the coming night.

Now safe in the trees

They can await the dawn and another day in peace.

The clear call of the nightjar,

The many-voiced frogs,

The shrill chirrup of cricket and cicada,

The sweep and pipe of the bat,

The barks of distant dogs,

The hyaena's weird wail that

Heralds approaching night.

Night, lit by a thousand thousand stars,

Flooded by a late-rising moon

That throws slanting shadows and mars

The peace, wakens the prowlers,

Who with wail and yelp and roar

Bring terror to the smaller things,

Rushing about their nightly chores,

Finding the wherewithal to live.

The owl hoots and the hyrax screams,

A sleepy dove coos and returns to its dreams.

The city never sleeps, they say,

Forgetting that in the wilds night is day

To those whose life it is to prey.

And to us these myriad sounds

Have been built into our daily schemes

With all that makes this the land of our dreams.

(Cunningham, 11)

Crickets, Cicada, owls, hyrax, hyaenas and bats; these are all denizens of the night. For them “night is day.” This paradox means that the animals are awake at night as though it were daylight. Their instincts are attuned to being on the prowl in the dark. This paradox of nighttime being day time for the nocturnal animals conjures up a picture of an oddity, an irregular situation. Diurnal creatures mark the end of daytime by retiring; these, ironically have only just began their productive hours.

The concentrated abundance of animal noises conveys the wakefulness of the jungle at night. This, to the speaker is the appeal of the jungle. It is these myriad sounds that make the place the land of her dreams. The enchanting sounds of the land are from the jungle animals. Frogs croak in “many voices” meaning they are numerous in number, each more loudly heard over the others. While the frogs croak, the cricket and cicada let out a shrill chirrup, bats pipe, hyaena’s wail and prowlers yelp, the owl hoots and the hyrax screams, and a sleepy dove coos. This is truly a vocal assortment of creatures. It is evidence of Cunningham’s intrigue with the sounds of a jungle night. These sounds are reminiscent of Stephen Lubega’s summative line in ‘Evening’ that “the night voice is a harsh guitar.” The sound is describable as “harsh” because pipes and shrills and yelps are abrasive sounds. Put alongside the softer staccato of the cooing doves and hooting owls, the effect of the cooing and hooting is not moderating but haunting. There is nothing reassuring about a cooing dove where there are yelping predators.

Setting or atmosphere includes time, space, scope, sights and sounds and smells (Stern 89). setting is very important here. We are aware of the clandestine activities in the forest, because under the cover of the trees, animals are sniffing each other out. While some are tucked away in their hideouts, others can see in the dark. Time means everything, because for some darkness presents the security of finding food, and for others, the insecurity of being eaten while on their own forage. The coming of daylight would halt all this, and thus mean different things for the

different animals. In this manner, atmosphere in the poem is stimulating and all senses are activated.

The emphatic expression: "The night is lit by a thousand, thousand stars" tells just how ablaze the sky is with the twinkling of the stars. It is also suggestive of very clear night skies where the light from the very many stars is visible. This, coupled with the irregularity of the forest being full of nighttime activity, just as though it were daytime makes an apt juxtaposition with the oddity that is the human city; the superficially lit human habitation which is just as busy as this jungle. The likeness of the two settings causes the speaker to compare them in her mind, and come up with an insight: "The city never sleeps, they say, / Forgetting that in the wild night is day."

A reader always looks out for irony in a literary work of art, since it is the crux of artistry. In this poem, there are two kinds of irony; verbal irony and irony of situation. Verbal irony is in the line "the city never sleeps they say, forgetting that in the wild night is day." Irony is in man thinking himself the most active creature in his own superficially lit environment, thinking that the lights in a city would cause life to continue being awake and active. Cunningham proves that actually, there can be greater levels of wakefulness in the wild, in the natural light of the moon and the stars, which man overlooks to make his own artificial lighting. Irony of situation is chiefly in the over-activity where calm is expected. Too much activity in the dark is peculiar, since most life ought to be asleep. This strikes an odd note in the poem. It is the irony which is at the core of the poem.

It is noteworthy here that that the audio image is what stands out the most, over the visual and the other senses. We hear more sounds than we see the sources of them. This is because in the darkness of night, vision comes secondary to hearing, and perhaps to the sense of touch. We rely on sounds that we hear to map out what we cannot see.

There is an attitude of fear for the smaller foraging creatures. That is why there is a marked tone of terror. It is set by the insecurities that the night seems to hide for the foraging creatures is especially encapsulated in the one line "Prowlers with their wail and yelp and roar bring terror to the smaller things." The small animals hear these noises and are terrified. The speaker's tone is one of empathy for the small animals afraid for their lives in the face of predators.

Night (Samwiri Kisa Mukuru)

night awoken
bats eyes as sun
extinguishes in green
grass and rich soil, gray asphalt
and cigarette butts night lets loose
settling like silk sheets,
on arrival stands around
awkwardly, embarrassed
by street lights
hanging around, closer than
closed eyes, it sought a companion
but only the owl and alike paid mind.
Too busy playing with lights
to notice night is starting to lose
nocturnal focus, yet in the meanwhile
night lives alive with blackness that ripples in moonlight,
with cricket and crawler sounds
echoing as night wind whistles
discover the night life,
the carnival it holds in the stars, be free
to explore the night rivers, filled

with toads calling,
come hither
come hither
listen to crickets at play
light soprano into the folds
of night, as moon plays bass and
ruffle of an old newspaper
fluttering in the wind in duet with
a restless apple core rolling along,
it's the song of eve
as the ants on evening fill
raid the pantry perhaps an old owl
minus a few mice maybe a jackal
is on the prowl but it all lasts for a while
until the sun asks for more as it is born,
in the morn, rising from
green grass and rich soil,
gray asphalt and cigarette butts,
the night evaporates crying with tears of shadows
as the sun comes laughing with
a mouthful of rays.

(Mukuru in Luvai and Makokha, 26-27)

The theme of the passage of time in this poem presents itself as sunset to sunup. Mukuru conceives of the night as esoteric. The mysteries that the night holds are demonstrated in the course of the prolonged hours of nightfall till dawn. To convey this sense of mystery, Mukuru tightly packs the poem with images which, though at first abstract looking, tie up to form a consistent scene of the passing time.

As the sun comes up, an after-effect of great variety of imagery lingers on, giving the impression of a night which has been very busy. Ironically, at a closer look this is not so. What is it that has been happening in the night? Bats wake up, there is a silhouette of an owl against the light, there is moonlight, there are crickets and crawlers making sounds, frogs croak, stars shine on, ants forage for food, an old owl looks for mice, and a jackal is on the prowl. Finally, the night fades away as the sun rises. When all is said and done, not much has happened on this night. And yet the imagery creates an illusion of an activity-filled night.

The first episode of the night is that of bats waking up and opening their eyes. This is hyperbole since in the literal sense, bats do not really use their eyes to see at night; rather, they mark their position by use of sonic waves. But their unseeing eyes glow in the dark like cigarette butts. Mukuru achieves Pun by placing closely together words which sound alike. "Bats" puns with "Butts." The glow in the dark effect of the bat's eyes and of tip of the cigarette butts is also alluded to. The two become similar as images of the night. The intensity of darkness contrasts sharply with the alluded glow of the bat's eyes and cigarette butts.

The poet Juxtaposes cigarette butts on gray asphalt, with the sun getting extinguished in green grass and rich soil to create a comparison of the manner in which the sun appears to get extinguished. It is as if the sun too has been crushed underfoot into the ground, just as a cigarette butt is extinguished. This is litotes. It is an understatement of an otherwise grand setting of the sun in the horizon. The opening litotes of the sun being extinguished is repeated at the end of the poem when the sun comes up, rising out of the same green grass and rich soil. It is as though it had been buried there. This repetition of the opening and closing image ties up the beginning of the poem with the end. It marks the time setting within which the poem takes place, which is between sundown and sunup.

The poem is laden with litotes but it also has some hyperbole. "In so far as they mainly apply to evaluative meaning, hyperbole and litotes serve to color the expression of personal feelings and opinions. Which may be either of a positive or a negative kind (enthusiasm, disgust, etc)"(Leech, 170) hyperbole is exaggerative, while litotes has a downplaying effect.

Hyperbole is in the invitation of the audience to witness the “carnival” which the night holds under the stars. It is an expression of appreciation of the festive way in which the stars twinkle at night, and the moon shines, and the crickets sing. Sounds of festivities which suggest a carnival atmosphere are the musicality of the toads’ songs and the crickets’ high-pitched tones which sound like sopranos, and the moon whose half light suggests that it is playing bass. This suggestion that the moon is playing continual note is prompted by the moon’s unremitting lighting as compared to stars which flicker on and off. There is a rustling sound of paper in the wind, symbolized by the ruffle of an old newspaper. With so many kinds of sounds and so much lighting the night appears as festive as a carnival.

The ironical import is seen, for example in the entire tone of voice of the poem. It is an ironic tone because it is nonchalant and yet at the same time committed to events transpiring. There is nonchalance in the casual juxtaposing of the moon, and an old newspaper. These two objects are incomparable in size, and yet they are said to contribute notes equally to the song of evening. A simultaneous show of commitment is in the description of the ruffled old newspaper which, fluttering in the wind, is said to play “duet with a restless apple core” causing it to roll along. Commitment to detail displays keenness.

In another image of artificiality darkness is juxtaposed with street lights. The night is personified as standing next to the street lights and being embarrassed by the street lights. It therefore stands around awkwardly. Presumably the artificial lighting makes the night feel that it is not welcome on the street. This is litotes, downplaying the immensity of night as compared to the insignificance of street lighting. Litotes being an understatement has the effect of downplaying an action or an object. The immensity of the night is downplayed, perhaps to create the muffling effect of darkness, where events often occur in muted tones. “Because of its two-layer significance—superficial indifference and underlying commitment—litotes is often treated as a category of irony.” (Leech, 170) Ironic import is in personifying the night as able to feel embarrassment. It makes the night seem a smaller concept than it actually is. It also gives the night character. Darkness has been given the trait of hanging around the street idly. The image ties well with that of the cigarette butts on grey asphalt. It suggests a lingering around the streets to drop cigarette butts.

Further litotes is in the personification of the night as seeking a companion with whom to hang around the street. This is just as an idle person would do. The only companion it finds is the owl, which does not pay night much attention since it is playing with the street lights. An attitude of

nonchalance makes itself felt in the tone of voice. This is what the regular litotes achieves. "Litotes is typically used in disparagement" (Leech 17) Mukuru has achieved a mild form of disparagement in his nonchalant approach to the setting in of the night.

There is also regular juxtaposition of the natural with the artificial. Cigarette butts, silk sheets, street lights, newspapers, the pantry, these are all oddly artificial. They are unlikely comparisons. They create an impression of incongruity. They provoke deeper thought as to the subject of the poem. For instance, the settling in of night's darkness is compared in a simile to silk sheets. Silken sheets are smooth and soft-flowing. They settle lightly on the surface. The tactile image creates the effect that darkness settles softly on the land. Just as silken sheets fall in thin layers, darkness comes in layers and not all at once.

The night "begins to lose its nocturnal focus." This is an appropriate image typifying the waning hours of night. It suggests the blurring of darkness such that nothing is clearly defined any more. It creates the impression of the passage of time. After the bats wake up, other night creatures begin to be seen around. These creatures are certain constants which to the tropical mind mark the end of day, the depth of night, and the break of day. Frogs, crickets, owls and the jackal are typically heard in the depth of the night, when darkness is at its deepest. Bats may be seen flying around in the half light of evening and dawn. Mukuru places these creatures in their appropriate hours to mark passage of time.

Even though there are several classes of imagery, the humanizing kind takes the larger share. Instances of it are: "until the sun asks for more as it is born/in the morn," "night evaporates crying with tears of shadows," The vanishing of darkness is expressed as "night evaporates" it simply fades away. But what is humanizing is that it goes away crying with tears of shadows. The dark night is not as cheerful as the bright daylight. It is an apt image to show night as mournful because it is fading away after all. "as the sun comes laughing with a mouthful of rays" The sun is born asking for more. It is more demanding than the night. There is more lighting at day, therefore more activity is put in. The sun also comes laughing. The cheeriness of daytime is suggested here. It has a mouthful of rays. This image of the bright rays of the sun ties with the cheeriness of laughter.

The Expression "The night rivers" is metonymy. Metonymy is "a figure of speech that consists in using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated" (Webster's Dictionary, in Leech 152). "Night rivers" gives the regular river an identity, as though they only flow during the night. In reality, it is meant to suggest that certain activity happens in the rivers

only during the night. It marks the activity as different from day time activity. The nightly activity suggested by the metonymy “night rivers” is that of croaking toads which sing “come hither / come hither.” This simulation of the repetitive sound of the croaking frogs is only heard in the rivers during the night.

‘Sunset in Naivasha’ (Asalache, 37-43) is yet another of Asalache’s commemoration of dusk. It is the title poem of his Anthology. It runs for several pages. In the poem is displayed the stretch of the Rift Valley landscape at sunset. Naivasha is in the Kenyan Rift Valley, geographically, it is the area which hosts the volcanic mountain of Longonot. While the title promises to focus on time; sunset, space is a vital factor. The poem takes a panoramic view of the landscapes of the rift valley; all of that area around Naivasha. The mountain, Longonot, being the most prominent feature makes up the main motif of the poem. It is the focal point because even as the sun sets, it cannot be ignored that it is setting most significantly around this pronounced feature.

For Asalache, it is evident that a sunset is nature’s work of art. It is up to the poet to capture as much of this art work as possible, on paper. Asalache also communicates the sense that nature as a work of art is a powerful force. His choice of imagery demonstrates his determination as a poet to make the audience realize this powerful presence of nature. His meticulous descriptions are meant to project to the audience what might not be decipherable with an untrained eye. Intricate detail makes up the sum total of an awesome piece. A quick composition would suggest a swiftly passing event. The reverse is true in Asalache’s poem. Nothing is left unexamined. Even an invisible wind has its place in the grand design. The gradual build up of night has to appear as mighty an undertaking as possible in the western skies of an East African landscape.

Sunset in Naivasha (Khadambi Asalache)

Longonot,

like a figure risen up from ruins

its frame the feature of death

a mere skeleton

forced to stand in the air before it

no thanks for its static state

but caught

in the harsh scheme of things

where flames fill the sky

a form of amoral taunting

the abstraction of evening

This is the first stanza of the lengthy poem. Seemingly incongruous metaphors are used to describe Mount Longonot at sunset. The metaphors are incongruous comparisons with a mountain. "When a metaphor compares things which seem radically unlike, but which can be developed into a striking parallel, it is called a conceit" (Hunter, 540). Paying attention to the sort of conceit applied is always a sure pointer to the sort of attitude projected: "Longonot / like a figure risen up from ruins /its frame the feature of death/ a mere skeleton". The most conspicuous metaphors are "ruins" "death" and "skeleton." Typically, these images of death and destruction are not the natural pictures which form when thinking of a mountain. This makes the radically dissimilar comparison a conceit. To the discerning eye of the speaker, however, they strike a parallel. The equivalence of Longonot to a skeleton and to death, presumably rises from its exterior look of a barren landscape. It does not promise much life in the way of vegetation cover.

One who has knowledge of the visual appearance of this mountain in the rift valley, assuming it is the object of description, might see a connection between the cragginess of the mountain and the images applied to it in the poem. Its vegetation is sparse, scrub and yellowed grass. The mountain top has been blown off to leave a gaping crater, so that it looks like a shell. No wonder, then, Longonot might appear like a ruin. It is as though the walls did collapse in a volcanic eruption to leave that sunken depression. What's more, the bare rocky slopes have a scrawny look, like a skeleton of a mountain. Devoid of rich soil cover, it is the bare rock which forms the galleys that define its slopes. One might say that the picture drawn here is quite accurate, and captured in only a few words too. The conceit is quite successfully administered.

The subsequent lines read "Forced to stand in the air before it /no thanks for its static state/but caught /in the harsh scheme of things /where flames fill the sky/a form of amoral taunting/the abstraction of evening." The words: "flames fill the sky" is the first suggestion of the sun. Its blazing rays appear hot and orangey, like a furnace. This lurid tincture acts as a backdrop of the

poem. It remains in the back of the reader's mind through other occurrences. "The abstraction of evening" suggests that not much is left of dusk, despite the glaring sun. There is a severity about the environment which has been referred to as "the harsh scheme of things." This would have to do with the arid climate referred to in the earlier lines, and the gaunt appearance of the mountain itself.

The mood of gloom is enhanced by the bleak choice of images: "ruins" "death" "forced" "harsh" "taunting" these are ominous words. They make an austere opening to this lengthy piece. When one is looking at images of death and ruin and a harsh environment, it is a joyless moment. This joylessness is supposed to enhance the eerie feeling aroused by sunset. Still, grave as this moment appears, it is a phenomenon which leaves its mark on all the land. It is the grandness of the evening which is once again being celebrated by Asalache.

In the second stanza, the mountain stands stolid, impassive, unresponsive to events in the atmosphere, it is a figure of stoical indifference:

it stands high
head high up in the sky
pretends to take no sides
to pay the coinage in kind
in this heated atmosphere
that blazes down every corner
no acts of love this
seeing the aimlessness of the rift
but only a precaution roused
here where clouds
which first welcomed the sun at its birth
now rush away like migratory birds

moving fast towards the west
foolishly into the arms of that sun
which is violet, violent even
pretence swept aside in the heavens
and some dormant hills
now suddenly ripen up from sleep
then slope away quietly into silence
away into the distance in fear
to hide the nakedness of their positions

The graphical description begun in stanza one continues in stanza two. While the description is spatial, anthropomorphic or humanizing metaphors have been used. The anthropomorphic (humanizing) metaphor “attributes characteristics of humanity to what is not human” (Leech, 158). These may accurately be defined as personification since they are uniquely human attributes. The mountain “pretends to take no sides.” This is metaphor is meant to capture an air of nonchalance which characterizes the mountain, standing as it does, alone as the only feature erect in an ironically low land on the sunken valley floor. The transference of meaning facilitated by the humanizing metaphor is effective. It appeals to human empathy for this mountain. Since it stands all alone on the rift valley floor, the only picture which can bestow it with some sort of dignity is one of aloofness. Otherwise Longonot would qualify as lonely and deserted. So, to cover up its isolation, it would assume a look of inner strength, and so it; “pretends to take no sides.” Stoicism is how one might categorise this “pretence.” The mountain is “longsuffering” in its isolation.

Noticeable is the change in tempo in the line beginning “here where clouds/ which first welcomed the sun at its birth/ now rush away like migratory birds” The focus is drawn away from the mountain to the skyline. There are clouds swiftly dispersing towards the west “like migratory birds.” The exaggerated speed of birds used on otherwise slower-moving clouds is meant to draw attention to the now swifter movement of the clouds across the sky. The day has been overcast,

since the clouds are said to have welcomed the sun at its birth. This humanizing metaphor of the sun being born refers to sunrise. Yet another one of clouds which welcomed the sun" connotes cloud cover which surrounded the sun in the morning hours. Morning clouds are known to alleviate the heat of the sun upon the land.

Stanza three goes back to include description of time, saying:

then comes a golden moment

that looks like peace

or imitation of peace

a setting

with undertones of intimacy

the aimlessness briefly forgotten

in beauteous colours

In this stanza there is a sudden burst of color, in contrast to the glare and starkness we have seen in the first two stanzas. What "golden moment" this is must be those brief minutes when, before the sun sinks, it appears like a glazed, colorful orb, and dew drops in a moisture-laden atmosphere act as prisms refracting light, so that the sky appears to be filled with every imaginable color. In drier horizons the sun might look like a fiery orb, just hanging against a mellowed sky. Still, the colors are arresting. With the sharp edge taken of the tropical glare of the sun, the effect is mollifying. This is the moment which the speaker thinks looks like peace, or imitation of peace. It appears that a calm has descended upon the land, albeit momentarily. The reason is that it is actually just a ceasefire. A drastic change is about to come with the looming nightfall. The brevity of the moment must be the reason it has been called a "golden moment." It is in literal sense a precious moment. It is not precious just because of the golden hue it forms in the sky, it is also that time when all hang on dearly to diminishing daylight hours, savoring each one. This is the actual moment that the sun is taking a dip into the horizon. It has been called "a setting."

The expression "in beauteous colours" is the one rare direct acknowledgement of beauty of the land by the speaker. He thinks the moment spells fondness and loveliness. In contrast to this mellowed tone, the speaker has been in a reserved mood so far, not displaying forthright

admiration. In contrast these last lines of the third stanza display sentimentalism different from the rest of the poem.

the sun looks out in a gaze
and brightens the hills in its gleams
Longonot stands in this maze
its head bright with a forced dream

We meet the sun in person now. We can see its face, peeping as though from a “window in the sky” to see the effect it has on the landscape. It has again been personified. It has eyes, and it can gaze at things. Longonot is also humanized with its head looking bright with reflection from the sunlight. It is also dreamy in this luster.

some winds trail the clouds
to organise a resistance to the rays
but the effort is quickly caught in arms
of the sun battling a feeble day.

Yet again, as in the poem ‘African Sunset’ Asalache reaches out for images of war, siege and defeat. “the sun battling a feeble day.” The day’s strength is waning, it is now frail. The sun is rendered quite powerless. The resistance organized by the winds and the clouds against the sun is a needless exercise. It is unnecessary to fight an already weakened foe. The sum of all this aggression is to make the point that the night is approaching with ever increasing strength. They make us visualize the ever waning shades of daylight, and the ever strengthening hue of night. The concept of time is significant. Prolonging the length of time taken for the day to wane and the night to set in is a statement on its own. Asalache means to impress on audience just how spectacular this transition of day to night is, on the landscape of Naivasha.

the valley stands as host
to wait for the night coming with speed
its surrender killed hopes

the dark face shows its new feeling

This time, unlike in Asalache's other poem, 'The African sunset,' it is the valley which surrenders to the night and not the day to the night. Daylight metaphorically gave the valley hope, but now, these hopes have been "killed," they have been disappointed. There will be no more joy of light. The valley has to surrender to the glum of night. An apt image "the dark face shows its new feeling" refers to the shadowy valley floor. A darkened brow suggests gloomy emotions.

and some mountain ranges

and rocks run the shore of the valley

kissing these fiery flames

which light their way

to reach the contours hiding on slopes

A silhouette is drawn of the mountain ranges cutting against a lurid sunset. These mountain ranges and boulders form serrated edges. They must be the walls of the rift valley. They run all along the "shore of the valley." The shore in this instance means the edge. The same fiery flames mentioned at the beginning of the poem are carried forward as a constant backdrop for the landscape described. The reason that the speaker keeps on referring to these fiery flames is that they are centermost in the poem. It is the setting sun, which, after all, the poem is composed in honor of. The speaker therefore brings this image forward through the poem until the last moment, when darkness finally falls on the land.

why have they turned from green

these fields out on the left and right

their faces trying to screen

truth of their will to fight?

The stretches of field are no longer green, only we are not told what color they have turned to. Presumably it is the yellow color of grass on the valley floor. It is savannah landscape with grass which always looks half dry. Now the speaker calls these patches of grass the faces of the fields.

In their turning from green to the unidentified color, they “try to screen truth of their will to fight.” The grass is not yet dry, but it appears that way. The will to fight would be manifested in green color. Now they have masked this will to fight by appearing not to retain moisture. They are not wilted; this is their perennial look. Paying heed to that quality of the grasslands is further evidence of the wholeheartedness with which the observer takes in the view.

down there

a lake

claims kinship with the landscape

silvery with a smile

lies underneath long shadows

shadowed yet pretends participation

like a poet that pens praises

under chain for his captors

The simile “Like a poet that pens praises,” reveals a distinguishing idiosyncrasy in Asalache’s compositions. The regular reference to the poetic impulse in several of his poems draws attention to itself. “Poets sometimes develop a highly specialized and personal set of Private symbols – words, objects, and phrases which take on specific meanings as a result of repeated use by the poet in poem after poem” (Hunter 542). Asalache displays a predilection for seeing the poet, and verse, behind actions. The words “like a poet that pens praises,” are evocative of words in his other poems such as comparing the wren to “a new born verse” in ‘The Wren’ and ‘A Poet’ which celebrates the poetic process.

In the case of this poem, the lake is compared to a poet who writes praises without the will to do so. The reason is that the lake is overshadowed by the mountain. It does not have as prominent a presence as the mountain, but remains in a subdued position. The lake therefore figuratively “claims kinship with the landscape,” which must mean forms an alliance with other low-lying land around it. The implication is that it firmly belongs in the valley. It is an unquestionable part of the scheme of things. This lake, which must be Lake Naivasha, from the context of the poem,

appears to participate in the phenomenon that is the sunset, but, as the speaker says, this is only a guise. It does not form an active part of the sundowner because it is eclipsed by the mountainous uplands, and cannot bask in the spectacle of the evening sun. The lake is not as prominent a feature as the rest of the landscape. It is “silvery with a smile” this “silvery smile” connotes a coldness of emotion. It is not a smile of joy, but of aloofness. After all, it is all the way “down there.” It remains like an overlooked part of the valley basin.

The feigned interest of the lake which “pretends participation,” or a mountain “pretending to take sides,” is used twice. Landscapes; both mountain and lake, look like they are irked by the transpiring events, which seem to embarrass them by drawing attention to their isolated immensity. They are not literally aloof; it is the observer who notices their apparent seclusion because they look so different from everything else on the land. For this reason, the observation that physical features are pretending to be active participants in the sunset alludes to the noticeable isolation of these large physical features.

along its vast journey
the valley is bright with farewells
its corridors clustered with rocks
survivors from past surrenders

some lesser peaks that nudged the sky with elbows in daylight
now keep stone faced
play the game
those minor overlords standing on the perimeter
to fence their own positions

There are various types of attitude coming across all around. Every physical feature has got an attitude of its own. Asalache keeps us in touch with our emotions, giving the poem a sensory quality where there might have been none. In stanzas eleven and twelve our sensibilities shift

from the disdainful lake, to the joy of the valley. The valley “is bright with farewells.” The rocks are the ones bidding the sun goodbye. This is a cheerful image. The sun has got an audience of stones. Stones normally glitter in the sun, and this is the bright reflection referred to as “farewells.” They appear to salute the sun in its descent into the horizon. Even then, the valley is a conquest of the sunset, since these rocks which cluster “its corridors” are “survivors from past surrenders.” These stones have suffered much aggravation from the sun. They have had to surrender time and time again to the will of the sun. The image of surrender must refer to the weathering process by which rocks are broken down. Weathering is largely a result of the sun’s heating up the rocks. Regular contraction and expansion causes rocks to break. Weathered rocks from the cliff faces of the rift align the valley sides. This is the image Asalache makes a portrait of in stanza eleven.

Not every feature of the landscape is as “emotion filled” as the rocks on the valley floor. “Some lesser peaks” or smaller hills on the valley bottom communicate nonchalance, just like the larger mountain before them. They too stand in physical isolation away from each other and anything. During the day they have “nudged the sky with elbows” as though in communication with it. This means that low-lying clouds floated around them, touching them lightly. But now, since these clouds have dispersed and the sky is clear, the small peaks now assume a reserved air, and “keep stone faced, and “fence their own positions.” Infused with war-like imagery, the physical features stand either in surrender, or protecting their territory. These symbols of war, of being in power, of subjugation of a foe are also largely private symbols. “Poets sometimes develop a highly specialized and personal set of private symbols -- words, objects, and phrases which take on specific meanings as a result of repeated use by the poet in poem after poem” (Hunter, 542). Asalache displays a penchant for a war-like situation. There is almost always subjugation of one natural feature by another. The feature which towers above the others is always regal. Others of lesser stature are always in a state of subjection to the larger one. This is not only true of the mountainous features, but also of vegetation, as is evident in ‘The Tall Tree.’ Lesser trees try to scheme against it but it remains regal. It is the same with the mountain peaks in ‘Sunset in Naivasha.’ The unquestionable ruler is Longonot, standing dominant over the land. Smaller peaks seem to want a share of the power. In their own smaller way they claim their territories.

their stand

chill the skyline with colour

to show out the majesty of their thrones

but this stand is late

the sun is dying

its power declining down the horizon

and the hills braving a last stand

come up from their hiding

mass themselves high

like forts

and Longonot caught

in this new showing stands out of its grimness

but too late

and resignedly

its face gets dark to cover

its own hurt feelings

The Animistic metaphor, "The Sun is dying," stands out. An animistic metaphor attributes animate characteristics to the inanimate (Leech, 158). This particular animistic metaphor sums up the attitude towards sunset. As the sun sinks in the horizon, "its power declining down the horizon" the vivacity of the land goes down with it; emotions sink with it, and as darkness settles upon the land, it lays on an oppressive feeling. According to Leech, an animistic metaphor is in generalized terms often referred to as personification, (Ibid) but often the defined quality might stand for animal rather than human attributes. The term "animistic" is therefore all-inclusive and is rightly applied to the idea of a dying sun.

A show of might between the smaller Mau Ranges and the immense Longonot, is almost comical in its effect. They all begin contesting to show who is mightier but too late, they have no one to show because the sun is already sinking, and in the darkness, no one can see this contest. This is a lighthearted moment. It is a rare moment where every other instance is made up of solemn drama.

With countries of East Africa being flanked on several sides by the up warped and down warped folds of the rift, and the volcanic mounds, there is variety of mountainous scenery. The poet is seen to take advantage of these picturesque sceneries, of Mau hills and Mount Longonot even when describing an occurrence as unrelated as a sunset. It is the dominant presence of the mountain ranges which give variety to the drama of the setting sun.

a distance away
at last Mau hills
now probe the darkening air
but soon are shadowed
and so shelter away from trouble
to pursue a new line in peace

the valley grows cool
heat fades away from the air
dissolves away like crystals in the rain
to withdraw from this scene

From stanza eighteen the human habitation begins to make its presence felt. Previously, the hum of the town blended in as though a part of the land. Silence now makes itself felt. The contrast is sharp; between the hum and the gradual quietening down. Quietude is prompted by the calming down of the valley, after the sun sets. Somnolence comes over the land.

out in Naivasha silence now comes
as sounds in the town die out slowly
while in the neighboring lands
herdsmen stand to watch this folly

they look at the changes

staring at these colorful lights

their faces caught like ghosts

in these fires bringing night

their faces seem flooded with riddles

puzzled by this change

first the rift

now darkness posing new hurdles

to stunt everything to its will

For Asalache, Nature does not seem to readily yield up its secrets. Nature is esoteric, and needs puzzling out. This secretive side of nature, is a commonly visited motif. Features, such as mountains and trees stand aloof for the viewer to unravel the secrets which lie beyond the remoteness. For example, in 'The Tall Tree' the tree stands firm, and watches its would-be opponents weave themselves into an embarrassed defeat. Here, in 'Sunset in Naivasha' there is an air of secrecy in the uncommunicativeness displayed by the physical features. It is as though assurances of superiority rest in remaining reserved and uncommunicative. Now, the herdsmen watch this "folly" with puzzled looks. They are puzzled as to what must be going on in the mysterious skies. The presence of the herdsmen is diminished by the grandness of natural phenomenon which they are unable to fathom.

A sudden break in the silence creates shock value in the poem. All activity has been quietening down, when suddenly there is commotion from the upper ridges of the valley. A road, "coming with speed" makes its winding path across the valley floor. A road suggests speed, and more so, when it runs downhill. This road, a man-made feature, is purportedly in a hurry to get away from all this. The speaker says:

and coming with speed

moving round rocks and running

in curves to avoid bushes

twisting like a stream possessed of anguish

the road from Nairobi

its face white

as if in agony

This sudden suggestion of swift motion gives the impression of kinesis. Not only is the road moving speedily around the bends of rocks, and running in curves to avoid bushes, it also twists like a stream. A stream is in constant motion. We do 'see' the road in motion. Diction is very important. "Diction means word choice" (Stern, 120). Asalache chooses a peculiar expression: "coming with speed." It is deliberate use of a non-standard expression. The ultimate intention of this Kinaesthetic image (Burton, 112) is to let us witness the road symbolically coming towards us, and to pay attention to the quickness of this action. Sudden motion suggested by the road contrasts with the stillness of the unmoving landscape.

Apart from the kinetic impact of the "speeding" road, a strong impression has by now formed of the images of pain, of puzzlement, of austerity in the reception of the changes taking place in the land. Ostensibly, this mood is an extension of the landscape itself. The mood of pain complements the severity of the land. This is an austere landscape. And this austerity is manifested in the agonizing groans of a road which has to pass through such a territory. It also manifests itself in the bewildered puzzlement of the herdsmen. They are befuddled by the incongruity of the newfangled lighting created by man, to light up the night within the town. The herdsmen see it as a "folly," quite as mad as the spectacle they have witnessed in the heavens as the sky was changing lighting from one hue to another, and throwing strange color spectra on the land.

The last stanzas are summative of earlier events. The attitude remains one of aloofness and uncommunicativeness. The hills wear "frozen smiles." A frozen smile is cold and distant. It communicates a refusal to warm up to the other party. The sky has long made a "withdrawal." It did not just disappear, it withdrew. This too is a detached attitude. The image means the sky is no

longer visible. The mood remains ominous. The landscape is described as “doomed.” “Doomed” means it is either ill-fated, or condemned or disaster-prone. Doomed to what, is not stated. The darkness must be impenetrable, giving the land this ominous feeling of doom. The land is doomed in its subjection to the darkness of night. Subjugation and defeat is felt when all in the land “at last surrender to the darkness/ at last after Longonot / yielded out some time before” The long-forgotten mountain lies out there in the dark in silent surrender, and now the rest of the land has just acquiesced to the darkness. This is what the setting of the sun means to the land. It spells defeat. A new, palpably oppressive era sets in.

In keeping with animal imagery by East African poets, an evening does not seem complete without birds. Only one poem, Asalaches ‘African Sunset’ does not mention birds at twilight. But this one, by the same poet, does. Observably, birds carry forward the mood established. The prevailing mood being ominous, the birds now sound “Voices of caution.” They caution that the night is an uncertain time for the land. Birds’ reactions become a static symbol of dusk.

this valley
and its doomed landscape
hills with frozen smiles
the sky’s distant withdrawal
.....
together with the birds whose voices warn caution
at last surrender to the darkness
at last after Longonot
yielded out some time before

(Asalache, 37-43)

What a brilliant work of art. ‘Sunset in Naivasha’ attains near-epic levels, by its length, and by the heroics displayed by the Sun in the sky. Asalache manages to paint a mental picture of something immense and spectacular happening, with every element extolled. Clearly, this is a watcher with a discerning and a familiar eye. He is familiar with the landscape. He has watched many such sunsets. Each stanza, sometimes a cluster of stanzas could make a complete poem on

their own. They stand independently in their meaning. For instance, stanza one is a complete statement on its own, depicting Mount Longonot stand against the backdrop of a flaming evening. The cluster of smaller stanzas from stanza five to seven bear their own complete message of the sun sending out its last feeble rays upon the valley.

As mentioned at the introduction of this section, there is something noteworthy about the attitude towards dusk on the East African landscape, as an hour of transition from day to night. All the poets studied without fail have displayed a leaning towards sobriety of tone and mood, when describing Evening. Even as Asalache, Cunningham, Mukuru, Kassam, and Lubega recreate the grandness of a sunset, the acknowledgement of this grandness is tinged with an attitude towards this time of day as a bringer of forlornness. The mood of the poems is rather somber. As demonstrated, the elaborate imagery communicates that eerie feeling of twilight. Still, grave as the moment is, it is a phenomenon which leaves its mark on all the land. It is this magnificence of evening that each poet means to commemorate.

If a comparison were to be drawn between the attitude of the reviewed East African poets and the West African poet, Sedar Senghor, a marked difference might be found. Sedar Senghor's evenings and nights are said by Wilfred Cartey to be purely enchanting. Senghor describes the grandness of the African night with a tone quite optimistic and quite different from the forlorn ones by Kassam and Lubega. Wilfred Cartey talks about "The beauty which Senghor ascribes to African night..." (Cartey, 302). "Senghor's Negritude in his 'Songs of Shadow' and his 'Nocturnes' celebrate the softness of shadow, the beauty of blackness, and so the poet sings the praise of African night": "African night my black night, mystical and clear and black and Shining/You rest attuned to earth, you are the Earth and the harmonious/Hills. /Oh classic Beauty in no way angle but elastic elegant willowy /Line!" (Senghor in Cartey, 301) In Senghor's poem, there is a tone of blatant adulation of the night. Even though in some ways it is akin to Lubega's 'Evening' and Kassam's 'Sunset,' Senghor displays unconcealed praise. There is no reserve in the speaker's words as he sings fulsome praises for the night. In this way he manifests a sustained optimism. In the East African poems studied imagery is often ominous and it has a bearing on the attitude. While there is definite awe of the phenomenon called night, the tone of praise is reserved, with poets visibly refraining from outright joy.

In summation, the critical evaluation of night poems establishes a marked predilection for East African poets to regard the night with a trace of apprehensiveness. As demonstrated in the conclusion of this evaluation of poems bearing the night theme, this reserved praise for the night

is not necessarily a standard attitude. There are other poets, such as Senghor, who might look to the untainted joys of evening, and exalt them without inhibition. Despite the East African poets' tremendous awe at the turn of events which evening brings on the land, none of them is palpably sentimental about it. Theirs is a reserved Romanticizing of nightfall.

A new theme of the appearance of dawn brings in a refreshing angle from which to perceive time. 'The Dawn' is markedly outnumbered by the numerous poems written on the theme of the night. It is an examination of how dawn is received on the East African front. It is one of the rare poems about dawn written by an East African poet. It is ironic that dawn is not as much sung as dusk is, despite its promise of a new day. A likely reason could be that few are awake to witness sunrise, while most are there to watch sundown.

The Dawn (Lillian Ingonga)

In the twilight (sic)

The first bird sings a melody

To break the darkness silence

The chirping sounds that

Drown the fading songs of the crickets!

The morn is here again

Herald the new day born

In the twilight (sic)

The first sun's-rays

Light the still dark grey sky

The deep dark blue sky

Swallows the stars as they

Twinkle, twinkle their last!

The rays in stray

The night shadows behind cast

In the young day born

The dew shines on grass blades

Throwing kaleidoscopic rays

The cock crows

The sun peeps

From behind the clouds

Starts its pilgrim across the sky

In the morning light

Still wet and grey with mist

The bird's song grows loud

The flowers upon beauty display

The dew on fresh blooms

Shines as the bird's song rings

(Ingonga in Amateshe, 80-81)

In all appearance, sunup is a reversal of sundown. This time, rather than seeing the last of the rays of the sun, they are now seen as the first of them. This time around, it is signs of the night which are seeing their last, such as the stars which twinkle their last, and the crickets which trill their last. Otherwise, the rays of the sun are the first of the day, the sun takes a peep as if seeing the day for the first time; the bird's songs are the first, and the cock crows its first. There is a freshness of the dew, of the light, of the flowers which now display their "beauty." Beauty of flowers at morn is invariably a sign of hope.

Thrice, the mention of dew is repeated. One reason for this repetition to show that dew is everywhere in the morning. Dew settles on every blade of grass and every leaf of tree. Dew is a sure marker of the morning mist settling on the grass. The other sure marker of a rising morning is the bird's singing, and this too is repeated thrice. The effect of repetition is to cause one to imagine there are bird's songs heard everywhere. Repeated mention of the bird's singing also creates the effect of mingling of the bird's songs with the freshness of the breaking day. "Accumulation of details" (Amateshe, 81) is such that events start from the early morning stars, to the earliest birds, to the later-rising cock, to the sight of dew on blooms of flowers as the visibility gets better and better.

Other than the birds' songs, and the sun's rays, buildup of action finds fullness in the mingling and fading away of colors. The colors of the morning are deep dark blue, then dark grey, before the sun finally brings brightness. There is a mood of hope in the poem, as the day turns from a bleak non-visibility of an inky blue to brighter lighter gray hues, to the "kaleidoscopic rays," which means that the colors of the rays of the sun are always changing. The image of a kaleidoscope of rays is peculiar in that it gives a lurid picture of the rays as multihued prisms. It is a promise of a brightly lit day and that is why the poem communicates a mood of hope.

The Morning Sun (Elizabeth Gathoni Wokabi)

The morning sun

never lasts the day.

Each ray that illuminates the earth ,

that blinds the waking eye and

warms the the saddened heart fades at dusk

Dusk...the final stage of a worn out ray.

Putting to rest the blossomed roses,

The heavy heart and clogged mind.

(Wokabi, in Luvai and Makokha, 25)

The introductory lines are stated with finality. "The morning sun never lasts the day." This declaration is laden with conclusiveness. It is not an idea one can develop further. This recycling of an idea is semantic redundancy (Leech, 132) To begin with, it is a morning sun, named thus because it is found in the earlier parts of the day. As a matter of course it never lasts the day. Such a redundant phrase is called pleonasm. Pleonasm is "an expression which is semantically redundant in that it merely repeats the meaning contained elsewhere, in what precedes or follows it" (Ibid). Pleonasm helps to draw attention to the tone of regret that that particular sun does not last longer. There is an undeclared sense of loss that it could not last the length of the day.

The opening declaration about the morning sun brings attention to that label "the morning sun." One wonders what is unique about it, since it is the same element, the sun, which will shine in the afternoon and evening. It is called a morning sun because it has qualities unique to it. Perhaps it is in the mildness of its warmth or perhaps the softness of its glow. Whichever the reason for the label, the allusion is that the sun shines differently in the early parts of the day from the way it shines in the latter parts of it. In the morning it is welcomed as a new spectacle, so it is deemed fresh. By evening, Wokabi calls it "the worn out ray" the vibrancy with which it shone in the morning is no longer there. The sun no longer glows with a fresh warmth but radiates a dull heat.

Even though the poem is hinged on that first line, where events begin, with the theme of daybreak, it manages to bring out the cyclic motion of the hours. There is opening and closure. The rays of the morning sun bring much to life, while later in the day, dusk brings closure. The warmed up heart of morning is put to rest at dusk, contrary to its being earlier activated by the morning sun.

2.3 Deluge and Drought

Inundation is called thus to classify all water bodies such as Still Water, River Flow and Rainfall. Water in its many forms is markedly presented as a giver of life, poets present it with much hilarity. Moments of dearth which spell scarcity are colored by a mood of intense longing, sometimes reaching a dreamlike state.

Each form of inundation carries some meaning for the observer. In Yusuf Kassam's 'The Splash' still waters of a pool epitomize peace. When this is broken, the disharmony is catastrophic. We see the physical as well as psychological dimensions a deluge can touch on. 'The splash' is a poem which can be interpreted at a literal and a symbolic level as demonstrated in the analysis:

The Splash (Yusuf O. Kassam)

Under warm sunshine,

A pond of water rests, calm and serene.

The blue sky inhabits the middle of the pond,

And its sides reflect the greenery,

Spotted with the yellow and the red,

The red and the violet.

The water, the sky, the vegetation,

Hand in hand convey harmony and peace.

Then comes the splash!

And a tremendous stirring surges:

Reflections distort,

Giving way to a rushing flow of ripples,

Ripples concentric,

Ripples innumerable,

All fleeing from the wound.

Time elapses,

Ripples fade,

Reflections regain their shape,

And once again emerges the pond

Smooth and tranquil.

But the stone!

The stone will always cling to the bottom.

(Yusuf O. Kassam in Cook and Rubadiri, 83).

Calm, serene waters are suddenly rent by a stone. The pain of this “gash” is rendered physical, as the “concentric rings” of water are seen “All fleeing from the wound.” The waters cannot withstand this fissure. They move away from it with a surge. The theme is that of a sudden interruption of tranquility in a natural set up. There is contrast between the calm before the splash and the disturbance thereafter. Each phase has its own symbolic bearing.

The calmness of mood takes the first half of the poem. This mood of calm takes a significant portion. The ultimate effect is that it makes tranquility a significant part of the poem. Nature is at its most harmonious when left undisturbed. The calmness is also implied in the setting of the poem. The setting is “Under warm sunshine, /A pond of water rests, calm and serene.” These are the waters of a peaceful pond on a sunny day. Then there is a dazzling display of color in the pool, which further intensifies the mood of tranquility.

In the pool there is a reflection of the sky above and the vegetation on the ground. “The blue sky inhabits the middle of the pond,” it is not just a reflection, the sky inhabits the pond, the two are as one, the firmament and the ground, that is how clear the reflection is. The sides of the pool reflect the greenery, “Spotted with the yellow and the red, /The red and the violet.” A visual is easily formed of the multicolored portrait, with blues and greens, reds, yellows and violets. All elements are in harmony: “The water, the sky, the vegetation, /Hand in hand convey harmony and peace.” This still image in the pond, of the sky and ground, captured as though in a picture frame,

depend on the stillness of the water. The water must continue to be calm for the perpetuation of the picturesque scene.

The prevailing calmness of mood is the reason that the sudden disturbance is so shocking. It is the significant moment in the poem and that is why the title 'The Splash' preempts it. It foreshadows the disturbance of an ordinarily calm place. "Then comes the splash!" This splash comes unexpectedly out of nowhere. (quite significantly we are not told from where the splash comes, and only learn at the end that it was caused by a stone, whose thrower we do not know. Perhaps the reason is that this concern is secondary to the action in the pool) after this shock It is no wonder the protest of the waters is just as dramatic: "And a tremendous stirring surges" the waters have been stunned into a pandemonium.

The result of this chaos is that "Reflections distort" the beautiful still image earlier observable on the surface of the pool has been ruined. After this we notice a certain repetition of the series of motion the water goes through in the form of ripples: there is a "... a rushing flow of ripples, /Ripples concentric,/ Ripples innumerable," noticeable is the repetition of "ripples" thrice drawing attention to their concentrated numbers. It is the line "All fleeing from the wound," which communicates the attitude in the poem. The metaphor, "wound" "meaning "an injury" creates a tone of protest in the poem. It suggests that what has happened to the pool is injurious of the previous serenity it rested in. It ties with the foreshadowing effect created by the title "The Splash" since it is this splash which renders significance to this moment in the irony it creates. The irony is in the spoiling of perfect peace.

Over time, calm is restored in the pond except now there is an addition to the pool. It is an unrelenting rock, clinging to the bottom, immovable. An ironic twist is created in that the presence of the rock at the bottom of the pool is enunciated with such a strong exclamation as "But the stone!/ The stone will always cling to the bottom." By this interjection, the rock is highlighted to look like an irritant, an intrusive presence which will not blend with the waters, as it will never move when the waters move, it is not going anywhere; it will always be there, fixed and quite "insensitive" to what else is happening.

The last concept of the immovable stone at the bottom of the pool makes the poem appear open to multiple interpretation. The strong observation that the stone will always cling to the bottom, and the concept that this is the same stone which came in to cause such unrest, gets the reader to wonder whether the poem is not about more than just waters in a pool. The poem appears symbolic of a person who comes and causes chaos, and remains unmoved. The stone could

symbolize an unbendable trait in one who initiates chaos; the culprit remains unmoved and unperturbed by the agitation around. The stone could be representative of a stubborn will: “But the stone! / The stone will always cling to the bottom.” Here there is suggestion of obstinacy, perhaps insensitivity. But the line is left open to interpretation; nothing is said beyond this observation. It is a clever way of enlarging an otherwise insignificant presence, an unseen stone at the bottom of the pool. Imperceptible though it is, it has now become a noteworthy part of the pond.

A different kind of barrage from that mentioned in previous poems is depicted by Wangusa. It is the flow of a river. The river starts as a spring and ends up voluminous, emptying out its waters at a coastal estuary. a mood of pain is foreshadowed by the title ‘Death.’ It is the pain of the gradual waning of a onetime vigorous stream.

Death (Ayeta-Anne Wangusa)

On the top of Elgon I stand

Looking at you

As you issue out of mother earth.

You pierce through the rocks

As you race downhill.

I see you rolling with boulders

Like thunder you roar.

I stand and peer at you.

Tributaries emerging

Embracing you,

Loaded with pebbles and sand

Suffocating you.

I see you stagger

As you meander through swamp.

Hunch-back, you struggle

In gait.

I see the feather-like waves

Swing you like a slow pendulum.

I see you hit the weathered banks

This way and that way.

Then with my outstretched eye I see

You splitting into three

Blood oozing out

You collapse

With your withered body,

I see you collapse.

You make one last kick

And descend to your predestined home,

The sea.

(Wangusa in Luvai and Makokha, 31)

Melancholy is a tone which colored many Romantic works. A Romantic might compose an ode to an inanimate object, such as Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' (Bernbaum, 873-4) this ode, paying tribute to a natural element uses the first person address, which is apostrophe. Apostrophe automatically endows an inanimate object with living qualities. In this ode, 'Death,' Wangusa demonstrates that just as animals and trees die, so can a river. The long river which sprouted as a

clear mountain spring at the foot of the mountain Elgon comes to its death at the sea, possibly the Indian Ocean. The speaker follows it along its winding path, mournfully watching its gradual loss of vigor and the ensuing sluggishness, until it comes to a “death,” its “life ebbing out,” meaning its waters empty out into the sea. This delta is the terminal stage of the river. It marks the end of the existence of the river, much as old age marks the end of life for living creatures.

Apostrophe is an appropriate voice for Eulogizing. Apostrophe is “the figure of speech in which a person or personified idea is directly addressed” (Mweseli, 134). Apostrophe is used when expressing strong emotion about the object of address, whether animate or inanimate. In Apostrophe, the bereft addresses the departed as if s/he could hear. Here in this poem, the speaker laments the “death” of the river, meaning the termination of the river. She addresses the river as if it could hear her. She says “I see you...” This direct address has the effect of bringing the moment to the present time. Apostrophizing therefore “brings the dead to life” in that they are “kept alive” in the memory of the bereft. The living memory of the terminated river is thus acknowledged by the speaker.

Apostrophe is also a refusal to let go of the deceased, showing how greatly valued s/he was. It is a denial of death. Denial comes when the pain of loss is too intense to be acknowledged. The speaker laments the termination of the river because it is a valuable asset on the landscape. It carries fresh water on the land. Joining a saline sea is having its fresh waters salted, nullifying its use to the land. Speaking thus to the river, in apostrophe, it is as if the speaker were recounting events of the “deceased” river’s past life to the river itself, so that the memory of its greatness stays with her. She has seen it from formation to its journey’s end, and must now be recounting the memorable moments of the “life” it has had.

The speaker takes a bird’s eye view. She sees the purity of the clear spring waters, piercing through the rocks. Unencumbered thus, it rushes on, with speed. Its energy is so great that it goes “rolling with boulders” and roaring like thunder. It is unstoppable. It is only after the spring begins to encounter the impure embrace of tributaries, laden as they are with debris, of pebbles and sand that the suffocation begins. The shock manifests itself in the reduced speed; the river begins to “stagger,” clogged under the weight of silt and debris. It has lost its ebullience. From then on, the mood of the poem changes from cheerful to despondent as the river undertakes a labored journey to the sea.

The visual image of speed produced by “rolling with boulders” comes from the apparent motion of big rocks which are characteristics of mountain streams. The mountain side is often speckled

with boulders and the swift spring waters often hit into these rocks along the river path, and swirl past them, appearing to give them motion, in effect they are quite stationary. The dramatic effect of the spring waters “rolling with boulders” complements the thunderous roar in the inverted simile: “Like thunder you roar.” Great volumes of water hitting against boulders does produce a “booming” noise, like thunder due to the impact. Sometimes roaring rivers can be deafeningly loud, especially after the rains. The simile makes an effective auditory image because our ears are trained to the noisome river.

The mood of the poem quickly moves from joy to agony. The tragic turn of events is described by the metaphors which come thereafter. Once the tributaries join the stream, and burden its water with pebbles and sand, the “suffocation” begins. “Suffocation” is an adequate metaphor for the clogging up of the river channel which results. The water cannot move as swiftly as it used to in its upper gorge. The speaker says that he sees the river begin to “stagger.” Again, this humanizing metaphor which means to walk unsteadily is the best one to conjure up the slackened pace of the water. The water flows in an uncertain manner, having lost the sure speed it had before. It is as if the river has now acquired a lurch in its gait, tottering on its journey to the sea.

Anthropomorphic metaphors do not stop in the lines seen previously. The river continues to take on human qualities: “Hunch-back, you struggle / In gait.” Bathos is achieved in the speaker’s use of images which deliberately provoke sympathy for the dying river. Bathos is achieved “when writers have tried so hard to make their readers cry” (Stern, 90). In Wangusa’s poem, bathos achieves a dramatic effect. The reader empathizes with the river in its agony. The river appears visibly bent over and unable to flow. “Hunch-back” is metaphorical for the meandering curve of the river. Large rivers often form an ox-bow shape when they get to a flat land, because their velocity is greatly reduced. This ox-bow is befittingly called a “Hunch-back” consistent with the personification of the river. Sympathy is drawn from this suggestion that the river is ailing, and hardly able to move.

The choice of metaphor now changes to animistic. There is need to capture the image of the weakened surge of the river. The speaker portrays the weight of the waves. Big heavy waves would suggest forcefulness and powerful speed. But the metaphor: “feather-like waves” communicate how ineffectual the river is in its tide. It is in keeping with the poor health suggested in the previous lines which say the river is suffocating and that it is hunchbacked. This poor health the river is in prepares the reader for the ultimate demise of the river. The staggering river which by now “swings like a pendulum” splits into three. This branching off of a river is

characteristic of a river delta. The mouth of the river dovetails as it joins the sea, since the water can barely make its way as one channel and has to create smaller channels.

Typically, the color of the water is a reddish brown. It conjures up the image of blood. Consequently the metaphor used is "Blood oozing out." The fatally ailing river is now in the throes of death. The speaker continues with the tone of compassion: "You collapse/ With your withered body, / I see you collapse. / You make one last kick / And descend to your predestined home, / The sea" This last group of lines sums up the theme of the poem, which is the theme of death. It is the death of a river, which in literal terms may be called a decrease or simply the end. Figuratively, the image of mortality is the natural choice to maintain consistency of imagery, where humanizing and animistic metaphors have been applied all through the poem.

Poems on nature do not always necessarily have double meaning like Kassam's 'Splash' or Wangusa's 'Death' does. They might simply be reflective, rather than symbolic pieces. (See Macgoye, 49). This quality is demonstrated by the preceding poems on rainfall. Rainfall does not have to stand for something other. It is a complete phenomenon in itself. It is a bringer of life.

This coming collection of poems about rain is largely an appreciation of the cathartic effect a brewing storm can have. A storm gives the impression that it is a combination of several spectacular elements, but actually there are only two of them: the wind and the clouds. But it is the force with which the raging wind blasts away at everything in its path, and the darkening effect of the clouds which creates an exaggerated effect. The clouds with their electric energy cause sparks that are flashes of lightning. The uproarious sound of expanding air which is thunder is as a consequence of the lightening. The raindrops; falling in patterns of single gigantic drops, then showers and then a torrent makes the peak of the extended process. The process being thus is why there is so much drama, in the formation of a storm. This drama has not escaped the poet's eye and has been replayed from as many angles as there are observers. Some of the poems are placid in their approach, others are more uproarious.

Rain (Joy Higiyo)

A rainbow- a majestic arch, with multiple colors.

Both arms flow gracefully to the ground,

With a grip so strong they cling to the ground,

Like prisoner's handcuffs that never let go

Until the deed is done

It is a sign that will never change.

Black-grey clouds loom over the horizon-

They march to and fro

Like a colossal army,

Thunder claps with multiple sounds

Brassy, a sound so deafening;

Lightning flashes here and there-

Slashing its way through the clouds

Like glittering swords in action.

Piercing the soft sky;

Battle advances and grows to a crescendo;

Swat drops, tear drops of the victor and loser (sic)

Come tumbling down

To quench the thirsty universe below

(Higiro, 21)

A tempest is observed in its making. A parched land personified as 'thirsty' is in dire need of water from the rain. But it is the drama unfolding in the skies before the downpour which is the making of the poem. Higiro uniquely concentrates on the spectacle in the sky, rather than on the land. This perspective is quite different from the others in this selection. The rain is heralded by a spectacular series of happenings such that when it comes, it is as though a stage has been set beforehand. Even when the rain falls, we never really leave the sky, because we see it falling "to

quench the thirsty universe below.” The ground is thus seen from an aerial view. The spectacle in the skies, of the clouds, thunder and lightning is what takes center stage.

The precursors to the rain are: a magnificent rainbow, black clouds, thunder claps, slashing “swords” of lightning. “A rainbow- a majestic arch, with multiple colors. /Both arms flow gracefully to the ground,/With a grip so strong they cling to the ground, /Like prisoner’s handcuffs that never let go” a temporal prism is given more lasting qualities. Past the deceptively calm splendor of colors by the rainbow, comes an ominous feel that it’s “arms” hold so fast to the land to the land that they will not let go easily. The simile, “Like prisoner’s handcuffs,” shows exactly how firm its grip is. The rainbow remains relentlessly on the land “until the deed is done” suggesting it is there for a purpose. It has a mission. And that mission is to herald the rain. And that rain is not going to come in peace. The timelessness of the rainbow is alluded to in that “It is a sign that will never change.” This is a lot like the sun, which in ‘Evening’ dies in a “recurrent grave.” It falls and rises every day, only to fall again. The rainbow is also a recurrent blend in the making of a storm. The rainbow is one of nature’s sure markers of humidity in the air. In the poem, the rainbow’s colorful prism is seen to arch over the land, suggesting that it will rain.

The black-grey clouds, as if on cue, now make their entrance in the horizon. These clouds, with their vigorous action, contrast the picture of docility associated with clouds. “Black-grey clouds loom over the horizon/They march to and fro/Like a colossal army,” Comparable to the image of clouds marching back and forth like a big defense forces is the simile in ‘An African Thunderstorm’ by David Rubadiri. Rubadiri describes lightning as producing a smell of fired smoke, and the storm as marching. These images are reminiscent of Higuro’s mention of the military formation of the clouds, which look like a large army marching back and forth.

Phase three of this parade is marked by “Thunder claps with multiple sounds/Brassy, a sound so deafening;” a brassy sound is in keeping with the cymbals an army would be marching to. So the clouds are trumpeted as they march on.

In accompaniment is the lighting effect, so that “Lightning flashes here and there-/Slashing its way through the clouds/ Like glittering swords in action. / Piercing the soft sky;” the reader gathers that the army of clouds was not just marching for display, it was preparing for “battle.” Naturally this adds on to the theatrical effect of the brewing storm. The sky, in contrast is ‘soft’ defenseless against the sharp swords which come “lacerating” it, as they “slash” their way

through. The suggestion of this image is that now, havoc has been wreaked in an earlier peaceful sky.

The culmination of this buildup is thunderous “clash” of the “armies” of clouds with their swords of lightning. Resulting from this momentous war are the teardrops of both victims and victor clouds. The rain, portrayed as “tear drops” do not just fall, rather they come tumbling down “To quench the thirsty universe below.” The hyperbolic effect of “universe” in place of “land” complements the magnificence of the splendor up in the firmament.

All through the poem, menacing imagery has been used, “prisoners handcuffs” “army” “deafening,” “slashing,” “swords,” “piercing,” “teardrops,” “victims,” “tumbling” . These metaphors and similes communicate the idea of just how threatening the storm is as it brews in the sky. The concept of violence in the brewing storm is what is being emphasized by these terms. Captured in the images is also the magnitude of it. This is a storm of an enormous scale.

The potent mood created is one akin to that in ‘An African Thunderstorm.’ At the beginning of this storm, precursor to the rain is the wild arrival of the wind, carrying on its back heavy rain clouds. Similes liken the furious wind to a plague of locusts, and its haphazard blowing to a mad man chasing nothing,. Clouds are likened to dark sinister wings. They appear threatening because they are about to unleash upon the land below a heavy deluge. The mood before the rainfall is chaotic. The wind is “turning sharply” and “whirling” “tossing things.” So undecided is its direction it conjures up the image of a deranged man. Its mindlessness is threatening because it can find anything anywhere and blow it away, irreverently. It blows everywhere, rather than in a decided stream. This is going to be a violent thunderstorm.

An African Thunderstorm (David Rubadiri)

From the west

Clouds come hurrying with the wind

Turning

Sharply

Here and there

Like a plague of locusts

Whirling

Tossing up things on its tail

Like a madman chasing nothing.

Pregnant clouds
 Ride stately on its back
 Gathering to perch on hills
 Like dark sinister wings;
 The Wind whistles by
 And trees bend to let it pass.
 In the village
 Screams of delighted children
 Toss and turn
 In the din of whirling wind,
 Women--
 Babies clinging on their backs--
 Dart about
 In and out
 Madly
 The Wind whistles by
 Whilst trees bend to let it pass.
 Clothes wave like tattered flags
 Flying off
 To expose dangling breasts
 As jagged blinding flashes
 Rumble, tremble, and crack
 Amidst the smell of fired smoke
 And the pelting march of the storm

(Rubadiri in Amateshe, 52)

As noted, this poem makes remarkable use of similes to attain a figurative effect. "A simile is a direct, explicit comparison of one thing to another and usually uses "like" or "as" in drawing connection." (Hunter, 541). Four similes are used in the poem with quick succession. The first one enables a visualization of an otherwise invisible wind. "The wind/ turning /sharply/ here and thereLike a plague of locusts." A swarm of locusts forms a dark cloud which may extend for miles above ground, and yet, all move as one coordinated organ. Comparing the wind to a swarm of locusts makes the direction and the speed of the wind perceptible. Locusts fly swiftly,

sometimes making sharp turns as their direction changes. With this picture presented, conceptualization of the wind is possible.

The second simile shows the pandemonium created by the wind. it goes "tossing up things on its tail /Like a madman chasing nothing." Comparing the wind to a madman creates an apt impression of confusion. The wind is tumultuous. It throws thing around in a disorderly way. It moves in random directions rather than in a decided way, just as a deranged person would do.

The next simile describes the clouds which perch up on the hill "like dark sinister wings." This means that they look blackened and threatening. They appear so because they are laden with rain and being widespread have caused low visibility, casting darkness over the land. For the third time, a simile captures the effect of the wind on objects. In the wind: "Clothes wave like tattered flags." The wind is so strong that it lifts the clothes off people's bodies, just as easily as if the clothes were worn out flags on masts. The wind at ground level has a powerful enough velocity to lift off clothes.

There is a reason that three out of four similes describe the effect produced by the wind. The wind is a motif. "A motif is a recurring element in a work" (Stern, 155). Repeatedly the reader can 'hear' the whistle of the wind. This is because the shrill sound of the wind is all over the place. the wind is blowing fast and forcefully, carrying in it sounds and objects . So much revolves around the wind because it is the most important natural element in the entire poem. Its speed, its strength, its propulsion of the clouds, effect of its motion on the environment: that is what the better part of the poem is about. It is the wind which causes all the drama in the poem. There is a lot of action. Most things happen concurrently. The reader feels that there is a lot to see. The sense of sight is greatly engaged as the eyes look from one commotion to another. There can be seen trees bending in the wind, children screaming delightedly, babies strapped on women's backs, women's loose clothing being lifted off their bodies, and the women themselves scurrying around confusedly. Most of the drama is attributed to the wind.

In the last three lines the reader's most active sense is no longer just the visual sense; the olfactory and the gustatory senses also come alive. There is a lot of jarring sound to be heard from the children, the wind and the thunder. In the earlier lines of the second stanza, the reader's ears ring with screams of happy children. The screams rend the air, and appear to be all over the place, carried as they are in the tumultuous wind. As if to complement this upheaval, nature joins

in and gives the frenetic people a show of “jaggeder blinding flashes.” These are brightly lit waves of electric currents in the sky sparking off and exploding into lightning. Lightening is heard to “Rumble, tremble, and crack.” This is the roaring, shuddering and clapping sound of thunder. The thundering lightning has three effects, it can be heard roaring, an aural image; felt trembling, a tactile image; and seen lighting, a visual image.

Concurrently, there is the “smell of fired smoke.” The smell of smoke must be from the lightning flashes which heat up the air. At this point the olfactory image is activated. It appeals to the reader’s sense of smell. Ultimately, events seem to take on some order as one sees and hears and feels the falling rain, which has been called a “pelting march.” To pelt means to bombard, or to pour heavily. And to march is to advance. The rain gradually encroaches upon the land, pouring heavily.

Commotion is captured in cacophonous sounds. Cacophony is disharmony of sound. Dissonant sounds are captured in rhythmically mismatched words. They are found all over the poem but are especially accentuated in the lines “Dart about/ In and out /Madly” and “jaggeder blinding flashes /Rumble, tremble, and crack.” Cacophony is best captured in the grating sounds of words which begin with consonant sounds: “Dart” “Madly” “Jaggeder” “Blinding” “tremble” “crack” these words begin with strong consonants.

A creation of a sudden storm, by Mugabi, shares marked contextual features with Rubadiri’s ‘An African Thunderstorm.’

A Sudden Storm (Michael Vincent Mugabi)

Sable clouds

Like factory chimney smoke

Menacingly float

Riding upon chariots of howling wind

Blinding flashes of lightning

Incessantly light the skies;

Since the natural order of events in Africa is that before a storm, clouds form and there is a strong wind. Inevitably, the poet capturing the drama of a brewing storm has to begin with these two elements. Darkened skies are also characteristic of storms. Since the sky is overcast with clouds, the sudden contrast brought in by the flashing lightning forms a great impression. After the elements make their spectacle, a response from the living creatures follow.

This particular storm is unfriendly, to the animals, humans and the landscape. Images of the threat posed by the storm characterize the poem from beginning to end. It is not just the humans but the birds as well which respond to the turn of events. As mentioned, in the poems studied, birds' reactions are often used to reflect the general atmosphere of the poem. In Mugabi's 'A Sudden Storm' "Frightened birds vacate the unfriendly skies. The fright in the birds is symbolic of how inhospitable the skies have become. It is dangerous for a bird to fly up there, so they seek cover on the ground. Unfriendliness of the clouds is denoted by the word "menacingly." This means that they look threatening as if they might do damage. This opening of the poem has a foreshadowing effect. It foreshadows the devastation about to be wreaked by the storm. It is ironic that clouds which are usually wispy puffs in the sky now look forbidding. More Connotation of the alarming physical appearance of the clouds is in the simile "like factory chimney smoke." Factory smoke is associated with a negative impact on the environment. It makes the air unbreathable.

More things which frighten the birds are the howling wind which carries the clouds. It has been called "chariots of howling wind" in other words, the force of the wind gives it the feel of fearsome, and heavy locomotives tramping the sky. This metaphor portrays the overwhelming strength of the wind. When thinking of chariots, none can stand in their way. They are unstoppable. There are also the unfailing "blinding flashes of lightening." The light is so bright that eyes cannot look directly into it. These occurrences render the firmament uninhabitable for the delicate birds. To further the insecurities brought along by the storm, it is not just the birds which take cover "kids scamper into houses for safety" the poem says. They go in not for shelter, but for protection. This suggests that there is danger in being out in the storm. All images are consistent with the threatening mood being built up around the brewing storm.

Frightened birds vacate the unfriendly skies

Kids scamper into houses for safety

As the robust limbs of wind

Pick clothes off lines,

Dry leaves from the ground

In coffee-brown clouds of dust.

Trees painfully sway, coaxed

To dance to the rhythm of the wind's

Bitter song. Adults grumbly

Collect utensils and clothes

Before they are through.

There are several ideas in Mugabi's poem 'A Sudden Storm' which tally with Rubadiri's 'An African Thunderstorm.' The reactions of the children and adults to the brewing storm in all three poems match. Children react excitedly, running for cover, while adults are weighed down by responsibility, in a bid to ensure that property is secure. Adults react more somberly than the children. This reaction is evident of the potential damage of a rainstorm. It is furious and can cause damage to property. Mugabi the poet is different in this aspect in that he demonstrates the damage to crops and houses. In the last stanza the speaker says: "the storm builds on /Laying waste crops, houses and granaries" this extensive damage is the ironic twist to the tropical storm which, though it is expected to bring relief, in that the rain is a welcome phenomenon, Mugabi says it brings great suffering to the people.

Always, the effect of the wind is distinctly graphical. Since we cannot see the wind itself, being only air, it is the objects the wind acts upon which mark out the wind's motion, speed, and position on the ground. Mugabi, like Rubadiri and Higiyo, takes time to describe this spectacle by the wind, in vivid and figurative terms. The speaker sees the wind picking things up off the ground and flinging them here and there and decides that it is a strong wind. To concretize this strength, he talks about it as having "robust limbs." Our imagination is drawn to the picture of stout hands, with strong muscles, able to lift up and push things out of its way.

In the flurried drama, the wind picks clothes off lines, and dry leaves from the ground and pushes the trees so that they bend. This picture of the trees swaying in the wind is another recurrent one in several poems. Trees become a constant landmark. They are also high off the ground and their branches are flexible. They are eternal gauges as to the direction and strength of the wind.

Rubadiri says "The Wind whistles by whilst trees bend to let it pass." In Mugabi's poem, even more drama is added to the movement of the trees. The speaker says that the trees sway painfully. There is an anthropomorphic feeling added. The suggestion of pain communicates the idea that they are being forced to bend over beyond what their suppleness can accommodate. There is an allusion to their brittleness. They do not readily bend over, they are forced by the strength of the wind to do so. These swaying trees have been "coaxed to dance to the rhythm of the wind's bitter song." The blowing of the wind is a "bitter song." This is a synaesthetic metaphor. A synaesthetic metaphor "transfers meaning from one domain of sensory perception to another (Leech, 158). We hear the song, which is at the olfactory sensory perception, and we taste the bitterness of it. Bitterness is at the gustatory sensory perception. The bitter song of the wind refers to the intensity of the harshness of the blowing of the wind. This wind is harsh on the trees, forcing them to bend over to breaking point.

The mention of "dry leaves" and "coffee-brown clouds of dust" allude to how dry the ground is before the rainfall. Both the dry leaves and the brown dust are so lacking in moisture that they are light in weight and are easily swept up by the wind. These pictures give us a precise mental image of how dry the land is before the forming of the storm.

The image of the color of the dust cloud; "coffee-brown" is a singular and therefore isolated description. It does not blend in with the generalized mention of the leaves and trees and clothes. No reference to color has been made before this, yet this one is strangely precise in its description. Rather than a generalized brown, the speaker is specific about the shade of brown, he names the hue "coffee-brown." The dust stands alone as a luridly visible. The powdery particles of the dust cloud also stand in sharp contrast to the texture of the clothes and the trees and the leaves. It also stands in contrast to wetness of the rain. Both images, of the cloud of dust and of the wetness of the drizzle are tactile. One suggests a suffocating lightness being blow upwards by the wind while the other suggests a pounding heaviness coming down onto the ground. This glaring contrast makes one think of both images with equal gravity.

It is always ordered that the last part of the poem shows the eventual falling of the rain, which is the reason the wind and the clouds have been brewing. Rain is the culmination of the storm, and therefore it is always seen to come last, as the outcome of the tempest. Significantly used idiophones give the rain a vivid phonic strength. "Ta" "Ta, ta, ta,ta" these idiophones capture the manner in which the raindrops fall; at first, there are a few scattered raindrops which gradually increase in number and gather momentum, leading to a heavy downpour. This is very realistic

portrayal of the fury of the raindrops just before a downpour. Warning of rain always seems to come in that single drop, the precursor to many. Raindrops are at their loudest when falling on an iron-sheet roof, but even on the soils, they do make an impactful sound, “ta!” enough to announce the downpour.

A drizzle—ta!

Another—ta!

Till the ta-ta-ta-ta-tap

Upon the rooftops build on

Like the work of a myriad palms

Pounding a sole drum.

Thunder like guns of war explodes

The phonic quality of the falling rain is captured not just in the idiophones, but also in the two highly effective similes. The raindrops pounding on the rooftops begin to sound like the palms of many hands beating a drum. This is the crescendo of the pelting of the rain. The intensity of the drumming sound is loud to the ear. One drum being bitten by many palms is even more intensely loud than several drums by several palms. The deep resonances drawn from this drum reach an uproarious scale. The raindrops bombard the rooftops thus. The second auditory simile is “Thunder like guns of war explodes.” We can hear just how loud the thunder is. This simile has got two significant qualities in it. First of all it is an inverted expression, a rare yet impressive poetic device even in this selection of poems. Thunder blasting the skies in explosion is evident. Secondly it is like Higuro’s ‘Rain’ which makes references to war; comparing clouds to an army, and lightning to swords.

As the storm builds on

Laying waste crops, houses and granaries

Inviting immense suffering to humanity

When rain should have showered

Blessings.

(Mugabi in Luvai and Makokha, 26)

The last part weighs the aftereffect of the storm. Mention of the human suffering is a pointer to the immense scale of the storm. It was very strong, with the outcome that it ruinous in its effect. While a rainstorm is expected to help crops to grow and bring a sense of restoration and preservation of life, this one has done exactly the opposite. It has uprooted crops. The severity of it is that it even destroys houses and granaries; food storage facilities. The speaker ends on the melancholic note that while people talk about rain as a shower of blessings, since it brings prosperity, this one has wreaked havoc. We get to see the grand scale of the storm and are awed by the havoc it can wreak.

The calmness of mood in Cunningham's 'A shower of Rain' is markedly different from the preceding three poems, by Higiroy and by Rubadiri, and by Mugabi. Cunningham's rain is a shower, suggesting that the rain is light in its nature. It therefore falls without the drama of the previous four rainstorms. Thematically, the poem focuses on is the effect of the rainfall, rather than the process of its making.

A Shower of Rain (Anne Cunningham)

The rain came.

The parched land

Sent out its greeting

In the warm scent of dry earth

Welcoming the touch

Of long-awaited relief.

The leaves swelled,

The spring ran strong,

And life goes on

Because the rain came.

(Cunningham, 13)

A sense of restoration comes upon the land because “The rain came” meaning that there was rainfall. Events in the rest of the poem are built up around this one line: “The rain came.” That is why the line is enough of a statement, such that there is a period at the end of this first line of the poem. Notably, repetition of the line makes a closing of the poem. In a nutshell, all begins and ends here; for the rest of the poem, it means everything that the rain came. A mood of relief permeates the poem. Because the rain came, the dry land finally finds respite; because the rain came, the leaves swell out with life, because the rain came, the brook now has a revitalized flow of water, and because the rain came, ‘life goes on.’ In brief, there is rejuvenation all around, all due to the downpour.

Tactile and olfactory metaphors add force to the resuscitation felt on the land. This renewal of strength was so direly needed that even the “thirsty” land sends out “its greeting/ in the warm scent of dry earth/ welcoming the touch/ of long-awaited relief” the land senses the rain even before it falls and sends out a scent to welcome it. The scent is in literal sense that red dust whose earthy smell precedes the rain after a long dry and dusty spell. It is the smell of oxidized iron in the soils. This keen observation sets our noses tingling. As we catch the scent, our longing for the rain is heightened, because the smell keeps us in a suspenseful mood, in anticipation of the drizzle.

A sanguine mood pervades the poem. Everything fills out; or drinks up to the fill. “Leaves” symbolize all vegetation. The land is green again, as the “leaves swelled.” The leaves are now turgid with water, where they must have been frail and withered before. This upbeat mood is carried on to the land itself. The rivers fill up as symbolized by “the spring ran strong.” “Life” symbolizes all creatures which get sustenance from the land, both vegetation and animals. That is how much “Shower of rain” can mean. In other words, in that brief shower, the very existence of life is encapsulated.

As earlier pointed out, Cunningham does not go into the drama of the rain falling but rather looks at what it means, for that rain to fall. The same mood is carried on in her next poem on a similar subject. In the title ‘The End of the Drought’ is alluded fact that there’s a falling of rain. Thematically, Cunningham’s two poems are similar to the last three studied, by Mugabi, Rubadiri

and Higuro, in that they all talk of the falling of rain. However, Cunningham's goes beyond the moment of the falling of rain, and visualizes the reception of the rain by the land. She therefore dwells on the immediate effect of this rain on the land in 'A Shower of Rain' and 'The End of the Drought.'

Even though both poems have the common theme of the end of a drought, the poem 'The End of Drought' is more spectacular than 'A shower of Rain' because we live out the period of suffering. 'End of the Drought' displays a longer waiting for the rain and a feeling of greater catharsis when the rain finally falls.

The subsequent poems center on the theme of drought. Drought represents the ferocities of nature in the absence of water. The celebration of nature can take on a different tone, not just idealistic. The poet's regard for nature causes the poet to acknowledge the dire state of affairs. The poet does not idealize the situation. Instead, there is an artistic projection of bleak reality.

In Cunningham's 'Drought,' water is longed for. In the wild, rain is the major source of sustenance. Its absence spells a looming death. The desire to live on is tantamount to the desire for rain. This acute need stirs up a dreamlike quality. It is a manifestation of the mood of longing created by fatal thirst. The poem demonstrates what lack of humidity can mean to a landscape.

Drought (Anne Cunningham)

The trees stand stark and gaunt,

Leaves hanging dejectedly,

Soon to join their fellows

On the dust beneath.

The sun has blazed

For weeks and weeks –

The wind has tortured

The suffering trees

And burnt the shrubs and grass to tinder.

The birds flit hopefully

Looking for a scrap to eat:

The shrews have died mid-track,

The insects are dying before they're fledged.

Beside the shrunken rivers no blade is left,

The larger animals wander hungrily

Far and near, desperately

Reaching ever higher into trees and bush,

While the young subside and fade away

Before life has begun.

The sun blazes on and on,

The mares' tails sweep the sky,

The wind howls across the dust-laden plain,

Gathering speed into the hills,

Where branches clatter and fall,

To join the debris beneath.

.....

No respite is found by the living creatures and plants in this poem. Rain remains a dream. Acute thirst culminating in death intensifies the desire for rain in those barely left alive. This mood of longing is so intense that there is dreaminess in the speaker's tone of voice. The overall effect is to create a feeling that creatures are all parched. There is a gustatory appeal, with the awakened desire for a taste of water, the sustainer of life.

The olfactory quality of "The scent of rain on dry earth," fills our nostrils as we dream of rain falling. It sharpens the longing for a rainfall. To deepen this mood of longing is the speaker's

series of Rhetorical questions: "How long," She asks repeatedly "how long before the clouds/Will mass and bring the elixir of life, /The rain?" "How long will this remain a dream?" Usually, repeated rhetorical questions are a sign of distress. Two kinds of mood; one of distress at the lack of rain and one of intense longing for a change for the better are ably communicated through this questioning method.

Rays from the scorching sun have bombarded the earth for weeks on end. As the sun scalds the atmosphere, ridding it of all moisture-laden clouds, the speaker likens this to horses' tails brushing the sky clean. This is both a visual and a tactile image. She says, "The mares' tails sweep the sky." If ever the sky was flecked with clouds, it is now clear of them. We conceptualize the brush made up of a horse's tail pushing off the clouds from the sky. The clouds did not just fade away, they have been "swept" away. In a literal sense, all moisture has evaporated.

The result of this parched atmosphere is that the vegetation, represented by trees and grass, is stripped bare. One can feel the mood of suffering as life is on the verge of giving up the fight in the lines: "Leaves hanging dejectedly, /Soon to join their fellows/On the dust beneath." Life, symbolized by leaves, is suffering desiccation and without water to replenish them, they will soon crumble into dust. The pattern of dejection and eventual death in the leaves is repeated in larger life forms such as the trees, and animals. Rodents, such as the shrew, are caught by death in their tracks. The shrews are seen to have died mid-track, their last action fossilized in death. They set about searching for relief, but it is an effort in futility. They die while still struggling to search for sustenance.

There is a heightened sense of tragedy at the sight of insects dying before they are fledged. They do not even leave their cocoons. Life is being cut off mid-step, before it 'has begun,' which in literal sense means before it has fulfilled its purpose. This idea is developed further in the line: "...the young subside and fade away." This is a visual image. Life does not stop in a defined moment; it just caves in to hunger and grows fainter and fainter until it is no more. When life ebbs out of a being, the inability to cling on, which is alluded to, points to a creature robbed of its will power. There is not stamina with which to fight on to life, rather, the creature just gradually withdraws from life.

The sight of big-sized animals roaming about hungrily communicates an even deeper sense of helplessness. There is a certain death since there is not a blade of grass to eat, not even on the

river beds. It has all been eaten up and no more is growing without water. “Shrunken rivers” is metaphorical for dried out rivers. They lack the volumes of water required to sustain life.

Only the birds are seen to hop about hopefully in search of scraps of food. Perhaps for them, the dying life around is able to provide enough carcass to scavenge on. Perhaps, too, the hope they carry with them is only an extension of the longing for food, as is in all other searching creatures. The latter conclusion might be more accurate because if the birds had enough, they would not be hopping about hopefully. They would appear satisfied. Rather, they move from tree to tree, continuing with the search. Once again, birds have not been left out of yet another nature poem, as exemplifying the prevalent feeling in the poem. For instance Kassam, Cunningham, and Asalache all use the symbol of the birds’ frailty, and the birds’ unwavering response as a gauge to the atmospheric changes in a sunset and the coming of night.

In contrast to the present aridity and dejectedness, Cunningham demonstrates indirectly just what the falling of rain would imply on the land:

How long, how long before the clouds
Will mass and bring the elixir of life,
The rain?
The wonder and joy,
The scent of rain on dry earth,
The springing green, the joyous song
Of water over stones, the glistening hides
Of parched animals—
How long will this remain a dream?

(Cunningham, 10)

The speaker says that the clouds would mass together and bring the “elixir of life” which means life-giving-rain. She imparts on rain mythical proportions calling it the “elixir of life,” to indicate just how important rain is to living creatures. “The elixir of life also known as the elixir of immortality... is a legendary potion, or drink, that grants the drinker eternal life and/or eternal

youth” (< http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elixir_of_life>). The importance of life is so magnified that the speaker only sees befitting this allusion to it as bestowing never-ending life.

She goes on to demonstrate that it is this rain “which brings wonder and joy/...The springing green, the joyous song/Of water over stones,/ the glistening hides/ of parched animals” in these three images she has managed to communicate that vegetation would grow, rivers would run and animals would drink. The flow of the river has been metaphorically termed as the happy song of water flowing over stones. It communicates the mood of relief which would come to the land. More mood of relief is communicated in the synesthetic metaphor “the springing green.” The green color which is springing up is from the plants which are growing, shooting up from within the ground. Unfortunately, during the season of drought, this remains a dream. No such respite is evident in the dry land.

The End of the Drought (Anne Cunningham)

Weeks of weary waiting,

Watching for the signs

That portend the rains.

The seeps and springs running stronger?

Faint pink blush at dawn?

Clouds massing all around?

Only to blow afar by midday

On the everlasting wind.

Then came the dawn

When the sky glowed pink,

The clouds descended,

The stillness unbroken

By even a breath of wind,
The hot and burning sun on high.

And the raindrops came
Gently spattering the dust-
Kindly, slowly, sweetly,
Easing the pain of the long-dried land.

Only a promise?
Is that all?

The showers all around
Brought gusts of high wind
To scatter leaves and branches—
Once again the spirits fall.

Water this, sprinkle that,
Clear away the dead things,
Cut back the dying,
When will this weary waiting be done?

.....

The sky holds in it the ability to raise hopes and dash them just as easily. In stanza three, what appeared in Stanza one and two to be a promise of rain remains just that; a promise. The speaker asks the questions, to make clear her agony, “Only a promise?/Is that all?” The prosaic nature of

most of the lines qualifies the poem as reflective. By this straightforward question she means to show that she had hope for more rain. By the pale pink color displayed at dawn, and by the gathering clouds, the sky had created the impression that more rain than that brief ineffective shower would fall.

“Once again the spirits fall,” the speaker says. The spirits, meaning the mood of expectancy has been down for as long as the skies have withheld the rain. As always, of course, the weary waiting is by the living creatures. Life is in several phases, on the speaker’s garden. There is the living which needs to be sprinkled with water, so as to continue living. Improvisation by man simulates nature, when rain does not fall, man must step in and improvise, acting in place of nature. One sees nature subscribe to harsh principles. A half-life is undesirable. The speaker says in the absence of enough water, there will be cutting back of the dying. The dying are a drain on the living. They are cut off. And then there is the non living stage which must be gotten rid of altogether. “Clear away the dead things,” she says. Nature has only space for the living and the useful. Those ceasing in existence must make space for the newly living.

Life is cyclic and once again, periods of plenitude come to take the place of the stretches of dearth:

The thunder rolled,
The clouds massed dark
And out of the once-clear sky
Came the real rain—
Pouring, pouring, pouring,
Soaking into the still-damp earth,
Washing clean the dust-laden plants,
Rushing down the gulleys and the gutters,
Carrying away weariness and despair.
(Cunningham, 15)

Rain falls in abundance, “carrying away weariness and despair.” What has been demonstrated by the poets’ decrying periods of draught, is the degree to which rain in the East African landscape is the single most important sustainer of life. With its prolonged absence, chains of existence are broken. Should it rain in too great an abundance, as Mukuru shows in ‘A Sudden Storm,’ it wreaks as much havoc as if it did not rain. Extreme brings severity. Moderate weather is ideal.

Seasons (Innocent Karamagi)

Conditions unfavourable

Hopes crushed, daydreams

Drought scarred land

And we...

Settle

Seeds hidden

Inactive

Seasons change

Daydreams, grown hope

Rain, fertile land

And we...

Burst forth

Sharp green spears

To cover the land.

(Karamagi in Luvai and Makokha, 24)

‘Seasons,’ like Cunningham’s ‘End of Drought’ mark a period of struggle for the land, before relief which comes with the rains. The point of view is important in this poem. The plants speak

in the first person pronoun. They talk about themselves, “we.” This is a unique perspective from which to illustrate the life of plants. It is personification. In personification, humanizing metaphors are the prominent feature. The plants are endowed with self knowledge. They are able to express thoughts and emotions. The plants feel that their hopes have been crushed. These must be their hopes to sprout and grow into lush plants. Right now the plants are at the dormant stage as tubers underground. They have not sprouted onto the ground. They harbor hopes to grow into mature plants. Their hopes are manifested as “daydreams.” Presumably, these are daydreams about self actualization in growth and development into full-grown plants. This aspiration is no different from what a human being hopes for when as a child, he dreams of an accomplished future. The poem seen thus, is open to dual interpretation. The plants could be literary understood as fauna, or they could symbolize the human life.

Conditions are unfavorable. The plants cannot grow. So instead, they bury their potential in the soil. They keep their seeds dormant. This latent stage is a self-preservation stage. They do not expose themselves to the scorching effect of the sun or waste their energy unnecessarily, struggling to grow where there is no rain. If this poem were to be given a double interpretation, the unfavorable conditions could be an unsuitable social or economic environment for a human being; lacking in finances or hospitable treatment. A human being might choose to lie in wait for a better time when s/he can thrive and be better accomplished. In the meantime the human might choose to remain out of the way of a wrathful social climate. Still, this interpretation is based on value judgment. The plant could be just that, a plant, and the unfavorable conditions could be just the harsh sunshine and lack of rain.

The first person point of view is very significant in that it endows plants with importance. Karamagi, by giving the plants a voice of their own, enables us to “listen” to them, and therefore pay closer attention to them. They know what stimuli they react to and how. Their natural impulses are here figuratively shown as self knowledge and a sense of self preservation. “And we.../Settle/ Seeds hidden /Inactive.” The plants lie dormant and bide their time. This is exercising patience. It is a trait living organisms are endowed with in many forms. For animals it is hibernation, and for plants it is just the dormant stage. These periods of patience enable self preservation.

With time, the seasons change, the plants can now start hoping again. The reason for this hope is that the rain begins to fall. The land becomes fertile. It can support the growing plants. From here on, the plants are seen to speak with a rejuvenated vigor, saying “And we... /Burst forth /Sharp

green spears/To cover the land.” The plants are reacting to the rain and the new richness of the soils. They burst forth, meaning they sprout through the soil onto the surface of the land. The metaphor of “sharp green spears” is a well chosen. It makes vivid the motion of the seedlings as they pierce the soils as though they were sharp spears. They seem to form a carpet on the land, and yet each seedling stands alone. Together they seem to “cover the land” since they take up a lot of space and all the eye can see is the green spread stretching out to far distances.

The plants have sprung forth where before, one might have thought there was nothing underneath the dry soils. They have made their presence known, and it is no wonder Karamagi endows them with a voice of their own, such that they are the speakers in the poem. They speak about their trials and tribulations, and their problem-solving skills, their dreams deferred, and the accomplishment of their hopes. Plants have been rendered important entities.

The elliptical phrase “And we...” stands out because it is used severally. The plants are asserting themselves as central to these unfolding events. The ellipsis are a sign of a contemplative mood. The plants weigh up their place amidst the alternation of the seasons. They show what their responses are to the changes. That is why they appear to ponder, signified by the incomplete phrase, “And we....” The repetition of “hopes” and “daydreams” is in a like manner a show of the plants struggle and ultimate fulfillment in the changing of the seasons. At first their hopes and aspirations are dashed by a harsh season, and then they rise up again in the favorable season.

Seasons are cyclic and they mark elapsing of time. Where there is drought on the East African landscape, the land is bare, and nothing seems to grow. On the same landscape, the turn of the seasons brings the rain and the land is replete with greenery. These are the cycles captured by Karamagi in ‘Seasons,’ Tusingiirwe in ‘July’ and Cunningham in ‘End of Drought’ and ‘A Shower of Rain.’

July (Jotham Tusingiirwe)

The thirsty earth gapes wearily at the heavens

The limp dry grass droops to the earth

Dry banana leaves rustle and crackle in the heat

Chaff, dust and paper swirl in the white sand
Iron sheets clatter and clang, grass thatches scatter
Skirts rise and flutter in the air
Trees creak and screech and shriek.
Fleeing monkeys chattering in lament
The swamp papyrus their home on fire in ruins
Papyrus-head embers fly in the smoky air
Perching on and setting nuts and bushes aflame
Hillsides black with fire, vast destruction
Cows and sheep roving in vain for grass

Solitary eagles sailing high in the sky
Streams and wells deserted and lifeless
Mudfish and crabs dead and stinking
Ladies on verandahs sipping banana brew
Heaven blue with a few scattered white clouds
The glaring sun scorching and burning
Farmers clearing and ploughing the land
In preparation for the September rains.

(Tusingiirwe in Luvai and Makokha, 28)

Before the rains fall in September, sheer agony is unleashed upon the land. Suffering is the main theme of the poem. Evidently, there is no more torturous condition on the land than waterlessness. Seasons without rain have time and again been commemorated in poems seen

previously, such as Cunningham's 'Drought' and 'End of Drought'. As a matter of fact, Tusingiirwe seems to summarize some of the themes of anxiety and desperation caused by dryness, as are found in both of Cunningham's poems.

The ground is personified. It is parched like a human, and it is capable of looking up with despair: "The thirsty earth gapes wearily at the heavens." If the very ground is desperate then the living creatures are even more helpless.

July proves to be an unforgiving season. Where there was life in wetter months it has now been quelled. The vegetation is withered. The withering is symbolized by the wilted grass and desiccated banana leaves. "The limp dry grass droops to the earth/Dry banana leaves rustle and crackle in the heat." The grass drooping to the ground has been robbed of richness of life. The banana leaves are dead altogether, and they crunch and screech in the heat to indicate how brittle they are. With desiccated soils, the food chain is broken. The vegetation wilts away, and waterways dry up. The life forms which depend on them are robbed of their sustenance. Images of death begin to speckle the land, with "Mudfish and crabs dead and stinking." These are creatures which ordinarily would live on minimal amounts of water. They signify just how dry the rivers bed is. In the previous line when Tusingiirwe talks about streams and wells being deserted and lifeless, it is because they do not have even a drop of water in them. The line "Streams and wells deserted and lifeless" tells a story of the streams and wells during periods when they hold water. These water spots are normally bustling with life. Now, because there is not even a drop of water in them, no living creatures assemble there. They are desolate.

The theme of protest against severity of the dry weather is manifested in both animate and inanimate objects. This is a distressful situation painted by Tusingiirwe. "Trees creak and screech and shriek. / Fleeing monkeys chattering in lament." Sounds of protest are heard in the air. The creaking, screeching and shrieking sound from the trees are made by the dry boughs bending in the wind. They are near breaking-point. The chattering of the monkeys signals anxiety. Usually when monkeys chatter, it is an alert that something is going wrong. Indeed there is something going wrong, since it turns out that a fire has broken out.

Fire becomes a recurrent theme, found here in Tusingiirwe's poem as will be seen in Cunningham's 'Forest Fire' and 'Fire on Marmanet'. Due to the dry air, tinder catches fire and passes it on easily to the surrounding land, with the dry vegetation fuelling it on. Papyrus are found in swampy places. But now the water has evaporated. The monkeys chatter and flee because their swamp lands which hosted them are on fire. It is meant to amplify just how dry the

land has become. "The swamp papyrus their home on fire in ruins /Papyrus-head embers fly in the smoky air/Perching on and setting nuts and bushes aflame/Hillsides black with fire, vast destruction." Fire wreaks destruction and renders creatures such as the monkeys homeless.

A suspenseful situation is drawn line by line, with the intensifying suffering from the "scorching and burning" heat of the sun, until the very last line which promises a respite, with the mention of "September rains." This is the only indication that some hope lies ahead for the living creatures on this land. Evidently, tropical lands rely only on rain for sustenance of life. Prolonged spells of drought shake the foundation for life on the land. The devastation is immense. That is the reason the phenomenon of drought has been acknowledged by the poets. It is not just that the land dries up, the waterlessness has far-reaching consequences.

2.4 The Landscape

The natural landscape is presented in its variety. Specific themes covered by the various poets are: mountains, forests, and the plains. The predominant geological feature sung by two poets, Khadambi Asalache and Joy Higiro, is the mountain. Mountains being of towering heights dominate the land on which they stand. The mountains' grotesque protrusion is dramatic enough to provide a curiosity for the literary composer. East Africa, being both a volcanic and fault region is replete with different types of mountains, each with its own distinct attributes. The poems studied in this section reveal this fascination of the various poets with this geological feature.

Asalache's poem 'High Mountain' is apostrophic in style among other qualities. Apostrophe is addressing an inanimate object as if it could hear you. It could also mean speaking to someone in their absence. The speaker addresses an inanimate feature, the mountain, giving the impression that he is speaking to it in an immediate sense.

High Mountain (Khadambi Asalache)

You stand like a sculptured idol

Your face untaken by surrounding passions.

You watch with unconcerned indifference

These storms assembling in conference.

You show a blue front, blind
To the sky's changing moods
To swaying nature's armies
Drifts of rivers, noises from skies
Flooding and shaking their way.
You stand high, modest
A dreamer, an unannounced king
Poising your unprotected cheeks
Against the kingdom of streams, winds
Weaving bent stories in their wings.
You wait, patient, silent
In midnight hours you crown head gleams (sic)
Bright to moonbeam owls
To reveal their hidden speed
From storm laden-clouds (sic)
Shaking treetops from a pretentious smile
To soak their leaves into submission.
Your silence is like a shadow
.....
To stand high above these gathering storms.

(Asalache, 31)

The speaker addresses the mountain in the second person pronoun calling it “you.” This direct address qualifies the poem as an ode. An ode is a poem dedicated to a person or an object, or a “solemn poem” (Macgoye, 120). The speaker dedicates the poem to the mountain by appearing to look at the mountain and talk to it. Further still, it is as though the mountain were alive, and listening, and could hear him. Odes are apostrophic in nature. Apostrophe always carries a lot of irony. For one, the mountain cannot hear him. Secondly, it endows the inanimate object, the mountain, with human qualities. For instance, he tells the mountain, “Your face untaken by surrounding passions / You watch with unconcerned indifference.” What these two lines suggest is that the mountain has got a face, like a human being, and that it has got eyes, and can see the places around it, and thirdly, that it is capable of forming judgment and now stands with an unconcerned attitude. Apostrophe, in addition, therefore attains the double effect of personification, endowing the mountain with human qualities.

Images in this poem are a lot like those in Asalache’s other poem, ‘Sunset in Naivasha.’ In fact the introductory lines are remarkably similar. This high mountain is said to watch the surrounding region “with unconcerned indifference.” Longonot in ‘Sunset in Naivasha’ stands high, “pretending to take no sides.” As stated earlier, an attitude of aloofness seems to be the poet’s style of creating an impression of regal authority. The mountain, towering as it does above other physical features is in command, and to bring out this idea of its majestic presence, it is painted as looking nonchalant.

This poem is apostrophic unlike ‘Sunset in Naivasha’ which is descriptive. It uses the second person address “you” to talk to a mountain. Apostrophe bestows the addressee an immediate presence. A connection is formed in the here and now. The mountain appears present at the moment of address. Apostrophe also bequeaths the subject with an importance which indirect address would not have. We get to know that the subject is significant to the speaker. The speaker likens the mountain to a king. “You stand high... an unannounced king.” He is of the impression that the mountain is dignified, standing regal like a king. Mountains have been seen to have an imposing presence over the land, due to their great heights as compared to the lowlands. When they tower above the rest of the landscape thus, they have often given the impression that they are reigning supreme.

Kilimanjaro (Joy Higiroy)

The shy mountain

You sit all dressed in white

And black laces at your ankles

Where do you go when we come?

Do you sink and rise at your leisure?

What do you do?

Where do you go?

Times and days we wait

Not a white-peep.

Where do you go?

When we come across the seas, mountains and plains

To offer you our praise,

Shy not from us

(Higiroy, 42)

The poem, ‘Kilimanjaro,’ is a highly rhetorical one, asking many questions about the mountain’s appearance and apparent subsequent vanishing in the horizon, “Where do you go when we come? / Do you sink and rise at your leisure? / What do you do?” The puzzled tone of voice communicates an attitude of wonder at the ever changing face of the mountain, which appears to bob up and down, appearing and disappearing in the horizon, as though it had sunk into the

ground and then risen back up. The speaker's tone of voice also communicates concern about the retiring qualities of nature. She personifies the mountain, calling it "The shy mountain." It is as though the mountain were timid and introverted, unable to withstand the gaze of the onlooker. It therefore appears to withdraw; hiding from close scrutiny.

This use of rhetorical questions is an artful way of bringing across the information that sometimes the mountain is covered by clouds in so that it is no longer seen in the misty horizon. The speaker uses repetition of the rhetorical question, "Where do you go?" at the beginning of every stanza, indicating that this is the main theme of the poem. This is theme of the sporadic disappearance of the mountain. She puts the point across that the mountain is not always visible to the naked eye. She expresses concern as this puzzling evanescence of a natural feature.

Naturally, the natural occurrence is such that it is not just that the mountain disappears, other features come into play too. The speaker brings to attention the coordinated action of the rest of the environment around the mountain. It is the cloud cover which conceals the mountain. These clouds are also ephemeral, often covering the mountain, and then evaporating. This remains an unspoken fact in the poem that, around the Kilimanjaro, there is often heavy cloud cover. This cloud cover shrouds the mountain and lifts off in alternating sequence. She also says that the mountain tends to go away when people come to it. This draws attention to the fact that the closer one gets to the mountain, the less visibility there is. The onlooker is now also shrouded in the mist and cannot see far beyond the immediate vicinity.

The physical appearance of the mountain is fascinating. It is personified. The speaker relates to it as though it were a person, probably a lady, who sits "all dressed in white/And black laces at your ankles." The theme of the snow-capped tropical mountain is thus articulated. The snowy surface of the Kilimanjaro is peculiar, lying as it does so near the equator, and in a hot savannah land. The foot of the mountain is rocky grassland, rather than forested. It is the reason it gives the impression that it has a ribbon of black color. The contrasting snowy white and the black bottom of the mountain make it a striking feature to look at. This is the reason the poet pays tribute to the mountain's visual appeal.

The human voice is secondary to the vividness of the scenery. The first person point of view is only brought in to enhance attributes of the mountain demonstrating that the mountain has an admiring audience, which looks out for it for days on end at a time, sometimes without seeing it. Great irony lies in the speaker calling the immense mountain "shy," as though, towering as it does over the land, such a feature could be associated with timidity. Apostrophe in poetry is just a

personal way of acknowledging the presence of a certain physical feature, and ascribing it certain importance in the speaker's life.

Notably, both poets address the mountains directly as though the mountains could hear them. Asalache's mountain is unnamed, but Higuro's is the Kilimanjaro. Mountains being of towering heights dominate the land on which they stand. They have often been seen by humans as forces to reckon with, and this could be the reason for the direct address.

On the East African terrain, poets celebrate the forest as the predominant pattern of vegetation. The theme of the forest as an enchanting place is visited by Anne Cunningham in the poem 'The Forest.'

The Forest (Anne Cunningham)

The sun throws a black shadow

Across the red-brown sand

And shines through the tree trunks—

The heavy, dark green leaves

Are flecked with lightest green

And shafts of light come through.

The older leaves

Turning back to brown

Are framed against the blue

Of the sky above.

(Cunningham, 17)

It is possible to conceptualize what the speaker sees because details are described with sharp clarity. The forest does not come to be so multihued all by itself. It is not just the vegetation in the forest that produces the scenic beauty. It is a combination of the sun, the shadows created by the

sun as its rays hit the tree canopy, the sand on the ground, the leaves, the firmament. They all combine to produce the breathtaking moment that the speaker is entranced in.

One might even say that this is a moment captured in the forest, and not just a representation of the forest itself. It is a moment of extreme calm, when nothing, not even the wind, disturbs the quiet. In the stillness of the forest, there is a pervading mood of tranquility. The theme of harmony is the ultimate message communicated by the poem. The stillness of the forest symbolizes a serene state of mind. For the speaker to be able to appreciate such details with such fine clarity, she herself must be in an equally composed state of mind. A person sees what a person wants to see. We all judge the outer world from our inner state of being. If she were in turmoil, the place might look lonely. But because she is at peace with her inner self, then what she reads around her is harmony. Harmony is in the synchrony of the elements to create an idyllic scene.

This picturesque piece brings to mind a framed picture of a scenic place. Indeed the last line says exactly that, that this scenery is “framed against the blue.” This is the blue of the sky above, perhaps also seen through the tree tops. The attitude of appreciation in the speaker is clear. The speaker is as one taking in details of the splendor before her. She makes observation of the differentiated shadow and light, and the various shades of green, and brown, and blue. She makes a note of the colors of the sand, the trees, the leaves, and the sky above.

Cunningham makes an illustration of the theme of the forest in its purity, without even animals or water bodies or the wind. And yet, even with simple detail, of trees, the soil and the sun, there can appear to be such complexity in a site. The manner in which Cunningham manages to create a wide variety of colors with four items is that each item has got its own spectrum of colors on offer. Leaves have several hues: “...dark green leaves/Are flecked with lightest green... The older leaves / Turning back to brown.” The sun is itself creating shadowy colors, while in places it shines through the trunks of the trees. In some places, only shaft of light come through, so one can see the thin beams streaking the forest. The sand is both red and brown in color. In these intricate details there appears to be much more detail to this forest than just the four items mentioned therein.

Sometimes the forest is not imbued with peace and calm, presenting a tranquil picture to be enjoyed passively. Sometimes there are accidents occurring all on their own; through the sheer fire-fuelling energy in the atmosphere. The wind is a catalyst, the fuel is all dry tinder all around,

and before long, the inferno has built up to uncontainable heights. Such is the spectacle in the reflective pieces ‘Forest Fire’ (Cunningham, 12) and Cunningham’s ‘Fire on Marmanet’ below:

Fire on Marmanet (Anne Cunningham)

The wind has roared for days and days,
And now flames have swept high over ridges,
Down valleys, across the plains.

The forest gave life to countless birds and animals,
Large and small---

This perfect habitat is a smoking inferno,
The sky is disfigured by billowing clouds
Of hot brown smoke,
Towering to meet the blue
And tells of death and horror.

The ground is covered with white ash
And beneath the soil the roots smoulder
To ignite the fallen trees and branches
And still the wind roars on.

The looked-for rain is as far as ever—
A feeling of suspended life and hopelessness
Broods over all.

The beauty, the life, the value of the trees

Cannot be counted.

Without a deluge there can be no end

To this evil thing.

There is not a cloud to be seen,

Not even one 'the size of a man's hand',

And the wind roars on.

(Cunningham, 13)

As though in continuation of the action Cunningham's other poem about fire called 'Forest Fire', 'Fire on Marmanet' now shows the fire several days on. What started as a small spark off some bits of litter, has now soared into an environmental phenomenon in 'Fire on Marmanet.' This, just like Cunningham's 'Drought' is an artistic rendering of a natural catastrophe. Nature is seen to suffer. The mood is one of distress. The poet's sympathy with the plants and animals suffering the scourge of fire leaves no doubt as to her love of nature, and her woeful feeling as to the wastage of life.

What was once home to forest creatures has been reduced to ashes in a raging inferno. The craftsmanship behind this poem is in its vivid imagery. The incredible loss of life, to both the trees and the denizens of the forest has been captured in one summative phrase: "death and horror." There would be little need to go beyond these three words.

The fact that there is no hope for respite in the near future is in the dryness of the air, "There is not a cloud to be seen / Not even one 'the size of a man's hand.'" This means that the sky is clear of even the smallest puff of cloud decipherable to man's eye. This is a reiteration that there is no sign of rain. The repetitive expressions that "there is not ...not even a..." is emphatic in its effect. This promises that the much needed rain will not fall soon, yet the urgency of the matter is such that "Without a deluge there can be no end/To this evil thing." The line presents an image of "evil." It recaps the images in the previous lines, "horror," "death," "hopelessness," emphasizing as it does, that the lack of rain produces the effect of malevolent forces at work. It is as though nature were scheming against the very existence of life. Nature has withheld the prime sustenance for the creatures. So harsh can nature sometimes be on its very own.

Impactful visual and aural imagery of a complete annihilation of life is in such lines as “The wind has roared.... flames have swept high,” “roots smoulder....the wind roars on,” cause us to simultaneously hear the uproar and see it build to a crescendo, even as we see the ground grow too hot to burrow into. We can almost feel the singeing effect of the flames. This dry wind roaring on, carrying scorching flames with it, is smoldering hot. The blast of air created is intense, and unbreathable. There is no escape into the skies either because “The sky is disfigured by billowing clouds/Of hot brown smoke,” The picture of a disfigured sky, blemished by the hot smoke. All fresh and visibility is gone. So no surface is left untouched and there is nowhere to run to.

The consequential mood of despair is built up in “A feeling of suspended life and hopelessness / Broods over all.” Life is suspended, meaning that all activity ceases. All creatures withdraw into themselves, as if in hibernation, storing whatever little energy there is inside, lest it ebb out altogether. With the worst expected, that the life might be lost at any moment, anxiety is in the air.

To crown it all, the desperation is such that there is not a cloud to be seen even one “the size of a man’s hand.” Attention is drawn by this prosaic comparison to the miniscule size of such a cloud as the watcher would be looking out for in the sky. It contrasts the small size of a man’s hand with the immensity of the need for “a deluge” to communicate the enormity of desperation for rain.

As stated earlier, these two poems are reflective rather than symbolic. Imagery is used minimally. Rather, what is central to the poems is the mood of terror, as nature experiences the destructive impact of its own energy in excess; flames of fire.

The playful side of nature is the substance of the poems in this subsection. Notably, Christine Mpaka’s poem is from the chapter ‘Nature’s play’ in Echoes Across the Valley. It, even more than others in this section, brings out the qualities of the playful nature of the elements; in this case, it is a “playful” wind. The lighthearted mood is infectious.

Wind in the Leaves (Christine Mpaka)

Hush!

The wind is playing in the leaves

A whisper, caress, rustle

A turning over

And over

Silver, then green, then silver then green

Over and over again

Secret divine play.

(Mpaka in Luvai and Makokha, 19).

The frolicking of the wind is made visible by the motion of the leaves. The leaves turn now this way, now that, to reveal their own silvery downside and green topside, so that it is the wind which appears to have these colors as an acquired trait.

We “hear” a “whisper,” “a caress,” “a rustle.” A whisper is mild as a form of communication. It is meant to be soft. A whisper can be as soothing to one’s ear as a caress is to the skin. These three images complement each other. They allude to mildness in the blowing of the wind, which is simultaneously heard and felt. The wind is gentle. It only mildly touches the leaves so that they produce a rustling sound. But it is not a passing wind. It lingers on “to play” with the leaves. Being a breeze, it appears to whisper. With its caressing movement, it turns the leaf this way and that, gently, so that each leaf only flips over, rustling and, standing on edge, gets swayed to the other side; now this side, now the other. Figuratively speaking, the wind is having fun among the leaves.

“Secret divine play” is how the speaker sums it up. The image “divine play” is open to the interpretations of heavenly or delightful fun. We can feel the heavenly delight of the secretive wind. It attributes mysteriousness to the wind.

The idiophone “hush!” calls on the listener to be quiet, not to disturb this serene moment. It is in keeping with the mood of quietude which pervades the poem. This is a suspenseful moment with a suggestion that the wind could desist with its amazing activity should it be given cause to. It is as though the wind were living and could shy away from watchful eyes. The entire extended metaphor makes the wind appear alive and able to communicate with the world around it. It is capable of feelings of merriment. It is capable of being scared off by commotion.

Mpaka's poem 'The Wind in the Leaves' is akin to Higiro's 'Nature at play,' in that both poets acknowledge the playful side of nature. Figuratively speaking, nature is not always so severe, portending either life or death; it has its light sided moments.

Nature at Play (Joy Higiro)

When the sea yawns

And send waves and ripples to the shore ,

When the trees dance to the wind

And strew their leaves to the ground

When the wind blows

And sweeps the earth,

When the heavens grunt at the earth below

And teasing showers fall,

When the sun shrinks behind the hills

And leaves a multicolored sky,

When the dark evening sets

And the dark face of the night scares

When the moon and the stars shine and twinkle

That is Nature at play.

Oh! Mother nature! That is you,

Your beauty attire

That is you at play

.....

(Higiro, 9).

The poet sees the universal design of the elements as nature's way of having fun. To play is to fool around, or to amuse oneself, or to engage in recreation. Nature is personified as able to keep itself entertained. The tone of this first part of the poem is cheerful since it describes the occurrences lightheartedly, in keeping with the theme of playfulness.

There are a variety of activities which nature is figuratively depicted to engage in for its own entertainment. Notably, Higiro brings in many facets of the natural world. She mentions the sea, the trees, the wind, the sky, the sun, and the moon. In keeping with the animistic idea of playfulness, there are living qualities to most of these features. The sea yawns, the trees dance, and the heavens grunt.

The yawning of the sea refers to the ebbing and flowing of the ocean tide. Sometimes the tide rises, sometimes it falls. When it rises, it "sends waves and ripples to the shore." This means that the shoreline gets covered in water. The inconstancy of the sea level is a source of much variety. This inconsistency is interpreted as the sea's need to create enjoyment for itself.

Other features which create similar fun-filled moments are trees dancing to the wind and thereby strewing their leaves to the ground. Trees dance to the wind and spread their leaves on ground. The wind blows and sweeps up objects off the ground. Thunder claps are heard in the skies making it appear that the "heavens" are grunting "at the earth below." Showers of rain are said to tease the ground. Even the sun makes as if it is growing smaller, as if it "shrinks behind the hills." This illusion is interesting. As the sun sets it also leaves a multicolored sky, and colors are fascinating to look at. The moon and the stars shine and twinkle, which also looks playful. There is always something interesting happening in the universe.

Figuratively speaking then, Nature, it appears has many methods of keeping itself entertained. It does not seem to have an idle moment. Play is not harmful. So what we see is the gentle side of nature. That is why there is a peaceful mood. Harmony comes to be as one element acts upon the other. The wind acts upon the leaves, the sky upon the earth, the sun upon the sky, and the moon upon the night sky. None of the elements seems to work in isolation. The theme of an interactive nature is made manifest.

The speaker goes on to lament that nature plays tricks on humans, causing them to age with time. This playfulness is cheeky and she begs nature to "let us alone," that is, to leave man untouched

by its playful hand. The speaker's plea connotes that nature may continue playing with other entities within it, but not to meddle with the humans.

Repetitious quality of the first stanza creates the impression of Free verse. "Free Verse is poetry that has no regular rhythmic pattern and no regular rhyme scheme. Usually, free verse uses the sound and rhythms of natural speech to create its own unique musical quality. One way free verse creates rhythm is by using a similar word-order pattern from line to line." (Babusci et al, 532). Higuro's poem has similar word-order pattern in each group of two lines of the first stanza. Each two lines open with the words "When the .../ And...." Repeated thus six times produces musicality. The effect of this musicality is to draw attention to the repetitive patterns nature produces when certain phenomena recur. The poem falls into a contemplative mood. As the repetitious patterns of nature unfold, deep thought is drawn to the reappearances. Time and again, nature does one thing or another. Tides turn, trees shake in the wind, and thunder roars, the sky changes color, and stars twinkle at night. These happen regularly enough for observers to notice. It is the reason the speaker mentions them in repeated sounding lines, creating musicality.

Beauty (Anne Cunningham)

Tonight the full-blown rose has velvet petals
And heart of flame.

Tomorrow

The velvet will be scattered on the earth,
The heart bared to the heat of day.

Rather should Beauty fade in the cool of night,
Not put to shame by the brightness of day:

In the cool of the evening, then,
Let the gardener sever the bloom,
To lie intact and unblemished,
Returning to its beginnings.

(Cunningham, 3)

This poem has a light hearted theme. It is the theme of the display of the petals of a rose flower. It brings the milder side of nature associated with roses. That is why it is placed in this category. It is a display of nature's colorful side. Flowers are deliberately the colorful way by which nature attracts other living creatures to them. The scattering of the flowers is not loss to nature but a way of replenishing itself. Phases come and go. But to the human eye, the rose petals, when they fall off the stem are lost. That is why the speaker thinks that they should be severed while still in bloom, so that they are preserved this way.

Cunningham is fascinated by the velvety feel of the rose petal, and the rich hues. One can almost catch the musky scent which comes with the richness of color in a rose petal which has a "heart of flame." She appeals to the reader's sense of sight, and of touch by talking of velvet petals. She lauds this moment which lasts only a short while. The petals are delicate and soon scattered by the wind. The reader can feel this delicateness due to such metaphors as "beauty fade in the cool of the night" and "heart bared to the heat of the sun." The petals are sensitive and can neither withstand the cold temperatures of the night, nor the hot temperatures of the day. She desires that this moment when the rose is in full blossom should be preserved by severing the bloom and conserving it one way or the other.

2.5 The World of Animals

In the coming poems uncovers East African poets' fascination with various animals' instinctive response to the world around them. Poets pay attention to the animals' instinctive responses to the world around them. Joy Higiyo, Khadambi Asalache and Valerie Cuthbert display an observant eye for behavioral patterns of animals in their environment. Whether they are hatchlings or adults,

the animals in the poems are attuned to nature. They respond to it either with an attitude of caution or joyful abandon.

Khadambi's 'A Wren' makes a dramatic display of independence by a full grown little bird. Asalache captures the stirring motions of the wren at the early hours of morning before sunrise. How it takes possession of its environment and takes charge of the day is embodied in the flurried activity of this miniscule bird.

A Wren

(Khadambi Asalache)

its eager voice

coaxes sunrise

.....

an exalted rapture

runs

past the leafy branches

up and about to dart

its solicitous authority

like a newly born

verse

(Asalache, 50)

The delighted motion of this bird of the morning makes very cheery reading. The atmosphere in the poem is as vibrant as the leaping bird. Images, such as “exalted rapture” and “solicitous authority” show a high-spirited bird in complete jubilation throwing its little weight about the bushes amongst which she dwells.

To define a wren:

Wrens are stocky, restless birds that are easily recognised by their rich brown plumage and short cocked tail which they flick repeatedly. The upperparts and flanks have dark barring and the pale eyebrow (supercilium) is prominent. The under parts are paler with grey barring. The bill is brownish and the legs are flesh-brown.... What the Wren lacks in size, it more than makes up for in voice and chances are that you will hear its amazingly loud song before you see it.... Wrens often enjoy singing ... sometimes at 4 AM (Gains, 1999-2012).

The vivaciousness of the small bird which is described by Gains is captured by Asalache in the poem. The speaker in the poem hints at the wren's predilection to wake up and sing early in the morning, in the lines "its eager voice coaxes sunrise." This metaphor "coaxes sunrise" means that it is the little wren which urges the sun to rise. The suggestion is that if the bird does not rise up early to sing, the sun might not rise. Therefore, since the wren is already up and singing, it is eluded that the sun would feel hard pressed to come out and shine for the world. Some creatures are already up anyway, so why delay any further. That is the picture that is drawn here. The world has the wren to thank for the early rising of the sun.

the melody

like some mad torrent raging

strikes at nature's

secret hideouts

beyond the rosebush

The loudness of the eager little wren's voice is brought out in the lines "the melody / like some mad torrent raging." This simile compares the musical notes of the bird to some "mad torrent raging." This means that its staccato sounds like a violent rush of a flood. It is meant to demonstrate how loud the bird's song is. This image is hyperbolic in its effect. It amplifies the loudness of the bird's song. Ironically, in reality, as loudly as the small wren might sing, its notes would naturally be a trifle as compared to a violent flood. The exaggeration, however does give us a clear auditory image of just how loud the speaker conceives the bird to be. This concept of loud and cheerful singing is reminiscent of John Keats' 'Ode to the Nightingale,' that 'light

winged dryad of the trees" which being too happy in its happiness, "singest of summer with full throated ease" (Keats, in Bernbaum, 818). It is the same cheerfulness seen in Asalache's wren, singing so loudly as to wake the sun up.

More hyperbole is in that rather than call it a bird, the speaker calls it "an exalted rapture." This image put into literal terms could only mean something close to "a highly esteemed delight." It is as though the speaker were calling the bird, a bundle of delight. It appears this way because so greatly infused is the wren with vigor and energy that, for one, one can barely make out its shape for the speed, rather, all one can make out is an exuberant form flitting about. Secondly, its little body is the embodiment of delight and joy, hence the metaphor "rapture" meaning ecstasy. This way the mood of delight at sunrise is embodied in the pleasurable activities of the little wren.

The wren swiftly moves about the leaves of bushes as in the lines "runs/ past the leafy branches/ up and about to dart" all the while it exudes a "solicitous authority." The wren has a powerful presence. It is not one to take second place; it is in charge here amongst the rose bushes.

To sum up all the energies it has displayed so far the wren struts about "like a newly born verse." Clearly Asalache, the poet, sees poetry everywhere, even in the 'raptures' meaning ecstasies, delight or joy of the little bird, the wren. The personified, "new born verse," meaning newly composed poem, conveys the quality of the freshness of a poetic composition. The verse's thrust would be felt by those reciting it, who would marvel at the vibrancy of lines. The way the poet sees it, this wren struts around as though it has just been created. It is full of vigor and energy, which it has not exhausted.

How zealously a small creature can take possession of the natural world within which it exists is the dramatic irony which strikes the observer. Asalache shows a keen observation of the incongruities of the small size of the bird, with its large presence as it even coaxes the very sun into wakefulness. More dramatic irony is created by showing the miniature bird's early morning song as sung purposely to persuade the sun to rise in the morning.

Comparison is here made of two poems with bird themes in them. Asalache's 'The Wren,' shows a small grown bird—a wren—which dwells among the shrubs and quite free of all inhibitions, Higiro's birds in the poem below exhibit a lot of domesticated caution. They live in a nest up a tree, wary of falling to the ground below. They display anxieties of tender life not fully fledged into active living. The birds in the nests are actually chicks. They have not yet learned to fly. The mother and father birds therefore have to provide the needed shield until such a time as the birds

can leave the nest. In the meantime, what is fascinating is the familial patterns which might strike a familiar note in the world of the humans.

The Birds (Joy Higiro)

High up in the trees

They nestle in feathery nests

With gentle motherly care

And a fatherly guard.

High up the tree

A heaven for fine birds

That shriek and play with mama bird

While data bird watches on.

They live high up a tree

Below them they watch

It is cold and wet there.

It is dangerous ground.

(Higiro, 40-41)

This poem is a purposeful endeavor to portray the nurturing characteristic of nesting birds. The parent birds provide great security for the growing chicks. The parental protectiveness is a phase in every bird's life, since chicks are born quite dependent on the parents. In this manner, birds are not unlike humans. An attitude of caution is communicated. The birds are wary of the dangers on the ground below. They fear to fall out of the nest and have to feel the "cold and wet," down below the tree. The mention of cold and wetness are not unlike the overexposure a human child

would face in the outer world, were he to stray from home. The watchful eye of the father bird makes complete this family unit.

In one scene observed familial patterns of the wild are observed. A sense is communicated that the wild as a feeling world, complete with all the resources needed to demonstrate these feelings. The resources are: the warmth of love, "With gentle motherly care"; the playfulness, they "shriek and play with mama bird"; the protectiveness, "While data bird watches on", "a fatherly guard" the cautiousness "Below them they watch / It is cold and wet there." The instinctive building of the nest high up on trees is to avail the birds of the needed creature comforts, such as a warm and dry nest and security from the dangerous ground below.

The Meaning of Life (Anne Cunningham)

The eaglet—

Inside this scrawny bundle

Of eyes, beak, hunched quill-covered skin and bone

Is the beauty of soaring flight,

Keen eyes, freedom of spirit,

Which is the eagle.

The cub—

The ball of fluff

With twinkling eyes, clumsy paws,

Swinging tail,

Harbours the sleek sinewy body,

Flashing speed, ruthless cunning

Of the hunting lioness.

The child—

Large head, soft down, guileless eyes,

Soft helpless body, tiny grasping hands,

Feet waving aimless in the air,

All these can become a tall straight man,

With keen eyes, clever hands, agile feet

To run, dance and walk at will,

A brain to master the intricate detail

Of sophisticated human life.

The final picture is there at conception.

Along pre-destined lines

Each individual creation moves to completion.

.....

(Cunningham, 24)

This poem proves a point made at introduction. Where the human element features, it is as part of the world of living creatures. The “child” is part of the universal language of conception, animal kingdom, human, all follow the same universal design. All creatures right from their fragile fledgling stage possess that potential to grow into sturdy maturity. This potency is latent at the embryonic stage: “The final picture is there at conception.” This observation indicates that the creature does not change, but merely unfolds to its full potential.

Life as coming from small beginnings is the main theme of this poem. Everything starts off in fragility. no creature has developed to full potential at birth. But inside that fragility is

encapsulated the force that will burst out to a vivacious end-product, the flying eagle, the hunting feline, the dancing human.

Thematically, the poem is akin to Cunningham's other poem: 'The Beginning of Life.' At introduction, concerns raised in the poem of focus: 'The Meaning of Life,' are much the same as those raised in 'The Beginning of Life' where it says:

The first faint tinge of green comes after rain

The burgeoning of life—

In green and fleshy shoots

Growing with the sun.

The splendor of life—

The leaves the flowers, the fruit,

Coming with the sun, rain and gentle breezes—

Is there for all to see.

(Cunningham, 16)

These opening stanzas of 'The Beginning of Life' celebrate flora while 'The meaning of life' celebrates fauna. Nevertheless, the message is the same. Life springs from small beginnings. It bursts forth to make a splendid display. At its prime, it is at its most colorful: "The leaves, the flowers, the fruit" are all manifestations of nature at its ripe stage, just as is the soaring eagle, the hunting lioness, and the sophisticated man. Nature does not hold back. It blossoms to a full functional stage. This is life at its prime.

The opposite of this prime stage is the sort of deterioration at death, captured by Cunningham's 'On the Death of a Friend' (4). Here, metaphorically, leaves drop off the tree, brown and brittle. They are symbols of life at its terminal stage. They stand in contrast to those 'leaves' in their luscious green and bright stage. This would be life in its youthful stages, its vitality figuratively evoked as juicy and succulent.

Migration: Zebra and Wildebeest (Valerie Cuthbert)

Pounding hooves, dust flying;
heads held up high, manes toss.
Stripes blending as bodies surging;
eyes starting, teeth baring.
Cams with foals, startled, running
sharp hooves dusty grass beating;
horns tossing. Glimpses so fleeting of
brown and striped bodies blending, meeting;
blundering together, pushing and shoving.
Fear is the spur-off they go thundering
terror behind, setting ground trembling.
see the vast herds, roistering, flowing
pass out of sight, dusty grass flattening.
Then—all is still. Red dust is settling.

(Cuthbert in Luvai and Makokha, 34)

Sometimes, life is on the move. The theme of Cuthbert's poem is journeying animals. Across the East African plains, there is one marked phenomenon which has gained international attention in the 20th-21st Centuries. This is the annual migration of the wildebeest across the Kenya-Tanzania border. Valerie Cuthbert captures this trail, the motions the animals go through, accompanied by their loyal allies, the zebra. The animals move in search of water and green grass. They move with the seasons, leaving behind dry grasslands for wetter regions.

Highly effective imagery is employed in "Pounding hooves, dust flying; /...manes toss/ Stripes blending as bodies surging. " The enormous herds appear as one big mass of hooves, manes and stripes. One can barely make out individual zebra and wildebeest as they pound their way along a

dusty trail. The sheer force of these herds on the move can be heard in the auditory image of pounding hooves. We also see the dust flying, and get a feeling of motion. The animals are on the move, and there is speed to their movement, along a well beaten path, that is why they are raising dust.

A vivid chiaroscuro is painted across an imaginary canvass in the reader's mind's eye. There is an arresting contrast of white and black color, created by the zebra's stripes, the dark brown and black, bodies and white horns of wildebeest and the flashes of eyes and teeth of all. They all mesh into a confusion of black and white colors, confusing the observer's eye as to which animal is which. Clearly, the self-protective instinct causes these animals to bundle up together for camouflage. They offer each other protective coloring and strength in their numbers.

Drama is created by the sudden and short lived mood of fear. Sudden spurts of movement erupt as some animals get startled and run, while others push and shove each other, "blundering together." Something has caused a stir among the herds. When a few are startled the distress spreads around since they all instinctively get wary. The jostling creates a picture of an orderly disorder. The animals are all faithfully on the same trek, but there is no order in which they move. They all fight for spaces on the path. The shoving and pushing gives us the impression that they are crowded together as they trudge on. Probably, they fight for the middle and safer positions from the predators.

It is the image of the thundering sound which is most impactful. As said, fear spurs them into motion: "Fear is the spur -- off they go thundering/ terror behind, setting ground trembling." This is a stampede; they get frightened into a run making a rumbling sound, like thunder. The ground is left trembling. They actually cause some seismic waves, since the land vibrates under their hammering, grinding hooves. "Terror behind" says that the trek is not always safe. They experience threats and have to run for their lives, to get as far away from the threat as possible.

The animals run until they are soon out of sight. In this expression we get to visualize the vantage position from which the speaker must be watching the herds. She is stationary, she is not moving with them. This way she watches them disappear out of sight. The stomping animals make a spectacle as they stampede on: "see the vast herds, roistering, flowing/ pass out of sight, dusty grass flattening. / Then — all is still. Red dust is settling." As they run, they appear to form a stream of rippling motion, when their numerous bodies bob up and down as they thrust forward and upward and forward again. Soon the animals are out of sight, and with their moving on, the

dust settles. The only evidence that they passed that way is the flattened grass, evidence of the path they beat.

The contrast of the stillness after the noisome rumble almost leaves the reader's ears ringing. It is also evidence that the noise has been accurately described. Accuracy "refers to how well writers have observed the world. It means showing respect for the most minute details and deepest truths of your subjects." (Stern, 79). Accuracy is in the motion and the noises in the air. This is a successful portrayal of a migration, convincing enough to leave the reader feeling that one has just witnessed a large procession of animals move in and out of sight. Time is not of the essence. It might have taken a short while or a long time. But what is captured most is the large numbers of them, and the congestion of the trail. These facts are captured in the depiction of dust they raise and the manner in which they throng together, shoving each other. One might say accuracy is the ultimate effect.

Sometimes a watcher of nature can observe a lone creature from afar. The observer might even wonder what communication with the lone creature would bring into fruition. Anne Cunningham makes such a scrutiny of the elephant, the largest known land mammal on the plains of the East African Savannah, and the world, as it were.

The poet looks at the animal from a refreshingly different angle. The speaker tries to get into the mind of an elephant, to try and understand what it carries in its memories. The speaker asks a lot of questions to communicate this introspective mood:

The Elephant Never Forgets (Anne Cunningham)

What does an elephant remember?

The taste of fresh thorn twigs?

The tang of the bark in a drought?

We have all had moments when we have had questions which seem to have no answers. This is one such moment. The poem has an introspective quality. The speaker is in a brooding mood; mulling over this and that about an elephant. Attempts to understand it would definitely make the elephant less of a mystery. And to show just how mystified by the elephant the speaker is, she uses a distancing term of reference on it, calling it "the pachyderm." This use of the scientific term is hyperbolic. The purpose it serves is to highlight qualities of an elephant as beyond ordinary. It is more than just the common creature known in the layman's language, 'the

elephant,' no, it is even more esoteric than one can imagine. It is a "pachyderm," large and mystifying; not to be taken for granted.

The taste of fresh thorn twigs?

The tang of the bark in a drought?

The bite of the sap in a baobab tree?

The miles and miles of wandering about?

Notice that in this introspection we decipher the daily undertakings of an elephant. We get to know what its day is like, walking great distances "the miles and miles of wandering about" looking for food and water. We get to know what its diet is like, eating fresh thorn twigs in times of plenty and the barks of baobab trees during drought. We know that it experiences pains such as getting sore from the stinging sap of the baobab tree when it eats the bark for lack of grass and leaves.

It is not just the elephant's diet and itinerary we get to know about, in the musings of the speaker, it is also the landscape it traverses in its searching rumblings:

Here there is water and plenty.

There are miles of scrub,

And now there are stones of lava,

The swish and lash of flickering camel thorn.

In the anticipated thoughts of the elephants, we get to see the geological features of the landscape through which the elephant passes. We get to see the molten lava rocks so typical of the East African rift valley. Geographically, we get to see the large water bodies which must be the rift valley lakes and the rivers such as the Tana. We see the "miles of scrub" which is what characterizes the semi-dry savannah. The vegetation is made up of the camel thorn trees as well. These trees swish with the wind and flicker, meaning "gleam" in the sun. In this way, we are able to visualize the "pachyderm" on its journey across the savannah land.

All the while, we are wondering what the enormous mammal must have running through its mind. We can only guess, along with the speaker:

How long does memory serve one?

Is it all pleasure

Or pain?

The pachyderm could tell you --

If you waited enough

He'd explain!

(Cunningham, 20)

Finally we are left in an inconclusive mood, one of suspense, that “If you waited enough/He’d explain!” All the observer needs is time for the elephant to begin communicating what’s on its mind. Knowing that such a day would likely never come, obviously “long enough” is litotes, an understatement, to mean an eternity. It is an ironic way of saying that we can never know what goes on in the mind of an elephant. It remains mysterious and distant to us.

Clearly, East African poets have given ample creative attention to the terrain and the life forms it sustains, as well as time and space. The poems reviewed are a testimony to the varied use of structure to convey the messages. The poets’ enchantment with the pristine environment around them is self evident.

CHAPTER THREE

MAN'S PLACE IN THE NATURAL WORLD: A SYMBOLIC DIMENSION

3.1 Introduction

The selected poems in this section make extensive utilization of organic symbols even as they center on essentially human concerns. Man's ability to see his own life epitomized in the patterns of the natural world is made manifest in the poetic compositions in this unit. Nature as a theme has been utilized through the entire poem in most cases. The demographic element takes second place to the natural element. The voice of the speaker is often muffled while the theme of nature is foregrounded. This is what qualifies the compositions as nature poems. Ultimately, even though the content might not mention man, deduction reveals the poem to be innately about human affairs.

Ultimately, all works of art are symbolic, since they are written representations of the physical existence. But, symbolism can be used in a broad or a narrow sense; a word or an entire work. A symbol is "anything that stands for or represents something else" (Babusci et al, 847). A tree may symbolize a human being, or an overcast sky may stand symbolic of downcast emotions. In no place does Deconstruction come into play in this work then here, where the operative tenet is that "What a text claims it says and what it actually says are discernibly different" (Bressler, 117). When the poem appears to talk about a natural element but is actually alluding to a human trait, such a poem is of special interest in this unit. Certain devices of style are seen to go into making a poem symbolic. It might be by the employment of a simple image, or a simile, or analogy, or the more complex style of the extended metaphor. In all cases the manner in which symbolism has been crafted is explored.

The Romantic hue in the poetry cited in this unit realizes itself in the blending of man with the natural world. Romantics "believed that truth could be attained by tapping into the core of our humanity or our transcendental natures, best sought in our... natural setting" (Bressler, 35). This means that man gets to understand himself better by looking to nature for answers. The East African poet is likewise seen to depict man contemplating his natural environment. In the poems in this unit, man sees himself in a tree, in the very leaf of a tree; a mountain represents greater forces within himself and the moon; a glowing orb in the sky, carries his dreams or nature draws certain emotions out of him. In this manner, the East African poet manages to depict nature symbolizing a human situation.

Even the occasional poem whose tone is not romantic, such as 'The Desert' (Kassam in Amateshe, 112-113) takes on a contemplative hue, in the mood of dreaminess, wistfulness, abandon, or wrath. By the virtue of man's involvement with his natural world emotions become an important part of the poems. It is tantamount to the Romantic trait, where "emotions are emphasized" (Mweseli, 188). Contemplating the natural elements, man feels closer in his essence to nature. This is what Daily et al call "our divided nature, half earthbound, half spirit" (Daily et al, 273). This is to say that a human is at once mundane and ethereal. Therefore, from the earthly elements, he draws spiritual inspiration, and reflects on his own position.

3.2 The Illusive Quality of Nature

The occasional illusion produced by natural features is the reason man is able to read and interpret things his own way. This is where the symbolism lies. Man is seen to come to nature with his own imagination activated so that he interprets the situation in his own unique way.

The moon at night is the stuff of dreams in the following three poems. The moon is that natural element which creates illusions at night to leave lasting impressions upon the speakers' minds. Even though the poems are so dissimilar in their quality, the illusions by the moon make the speakers stop to reflect on the specter. The mood in the poems is directly linked to the atmosphere the moon creates. There is a definite longing for and to be in tune with nature. This is a similar nostalgic longing for, and to be in tune with the elements as that which characterizes Romanticism.

The Moon in Flight (Joy Higiro)

Sitting all alone

On two cold cement steps

Shrouded in semi-darkness

I looked up in distraction

Never knowing the sky was lit

I saw the moon in flight

In the still air of the night

I did not stir
Lest I distract the moon;
So I sat while the world slumbered
And saw dreams fade out of sight
In the chill dew
Of the raw cold morning
(Higiro, 6)

The theme of contemplative dreaminess forms from this scene. The speaker sits quietly on the verandah of her house watching the moon one cold evening. She gets the impression that the moon is moving across the sky. She watches it in a half distracted state of mind. She is caught up in her own thoughts. Gradually, her thoughts merge with the illusion of movement of the moon.

A deconstructive line by line analysis of 'The moon in Flight' reveals an underlying mood of apprehensiveness in this seemingly peaceful scene. "Sitting all alone" paints a picture of isolation, presenting the possibility for deeper concentration, setting the scene for attention to detail "On two cold cement steps"- "cold" a tactile image, suggests a mood of sharp alertness, not warm and snuggly but cold and therefore upright "Shrouded in semi-darkness," "shrouded" completely enveloped in half-darkness creates a mood of detachment, the speaker is as one lost in her own world, cut off by darkness from the world around her. The concrete metaphor "shrouded" attributes concreteness to darkness, solidifying the distancing effect of the lack of lighting. One enveloped in darkness is not in communication with the world around.

"I looked up in distraction," says that the moon is given half attention, suggesting there were other reasons the speaker is out in the dark, not to see the moon. "Never knowing the sky was lit" suggests one so lost in thought that one is just vaguely aware of the change in time and in the scenic qualities of the sky above. Then comes the animistic metaphor: "I saw the moon in flight" "flight" connotes "escape," as opposed to plain moving in such an expression as "the moon travelling across the sky." Here the moon appears to be fleeing. This metaphor draws attention to the speaker's frame of mind. Why, the reader might wonder, does she choose the image of flight, rather than simply "moving"? "Fleeing from what?" would be the next question. The reason is

that flight suggests fear. This gives the line a psychological dimension. An observer of events interprets them according to the state of mind one is in. the reader therefore looks out in the course of reading the rest of the poem to see whether there are any other clues which might give away the speaker's state of mind, in connection with the mood of apprehensiveness just given away.

The image of stillness in "In the still air of the night," makes a contrast of the motionless air to the apparent motion of the moon. It heightens the contrast of the motionlessness around her with the movement of the moon, increase the speed of the moon. "I did not stir," the speaker remains still, being the only way she can take in the apparent activity in the sky. "Lest I distract the moon" this is a humanizing metaphor, suggesting bated breath lest the moon should notice her and stop moving. It is as if all of a sudden the speaker is aware of another existence which needs as much peace to complete its action as s/he needed for her thoughts in the dark. "So I sat while the world slumbered," the rest of the world is motionless / languorous, to draw a contrast to the 'active' moon

"And saw dreams fade out of sight" What would be the meaning of this concrete metaphor here? Abstract dreams have been concretized by the moon. Her longings, symbolized by "dreams" are moving away with the moon. The moon carries the dreams away with it as it goes across the sky. When dreams fade out of sight, it presents feelings of disappointment. She is in a dejected mood. She feels unfulfilled. The motion of her thoughts and the flight of the moon unite to symbolize her unfulfilled longings. It is no wonder she formed the apprehensive impression of the moon fleeing away.

"In the chill dew / Of the raw cold morning" here is a repeat in mention of the cold. She insinuates that she has been up all night watching the moon. She feels cold in the night, the moon is silvery white, suggesting a coldness of color. , the visual image of the cold of a silvery moon and the tactile image of the coldness of the air, as well as the cold of the slab she is seated on, all reflected in each other to suggest she is shrouded in this frost from skies to the ground. To complete this picture is the "coldness" meaning "frigidity" of her own emotions as she perceives her own "dreams fade out of sight."

So is it just the moon in flight? Or time? Evidently, flight symbolizes also the passage of time. It is a cold passage which brings her no hope. Time is "fleeing" from her since she has not accomplished something she would have wished for. A "fleeing" moon represents many angles to her particular human condition. In reality the moon is stationary, but the sky creates the illusion

of motion. Even so, why does the speaker form an emotional connection with it? Why at this moment when she feels forlorn? The world slumbers, but she does not, meaning everyone else is at rest, but she is not. Why? Why is she up all night? A passable answer to this question might be that it is her state of mind keeping her awake. The stone cold moon is a reflection of her own sense of isolation. Quite unlike a warming sun, the moon bathes her in cold instead, inwardly and outwardly.

Yet another answer can be read behind the metaphor “shrouded.” She sits alone shrouded in semi-darkness. A shroud is a cloth often used as a symbol of death, since, traditionally it wrapped cadavers. Linking this metaphor to that of the “fleeing moon” in a cold and dark night sky, one can see the allusion of the spirit flying out of the body, watching dreams fade out of site, which suggests her life has faded away. Interpreting the images thus, Higuro’s poem acquires a metaphysical dimension.

We see how nature mingles with the speaker’s personal reaction so that one might think back to John Keats’ ‘Ode to a Nightingale,’ in which the speaker longs that the bird should take him/her with it into the woodland. Fading away into the woodlands is symbolic of mentally going to a place of bliss, where the “light winged Dryad of the trees” has known none of man’s troubles. (Keats in Bernbaum, 818). In Contrast to taking flights to an imagined place of bliss, the apparent passage of the moon across the sky; for the speaker in ‘The Moon in Flight,’ is one which seems to carry away her dreams, causing them to “fade out of sight” an allusion to the fact that they will never be realized. She has not lead life to the fullest. The “passage” of the moon marks for her the passage of time, and so its movement is not a source of dreaminess as is the nightingale but the source of faded dreams, waking her up to painful realities. While the moon enchants her, her inner turmoil is such that it leaves her no hope for the future; ultimately, perhaps, no future at all, going by the second interpretation of death. The image of a moon moving across the sky therefore symbolizes bleakness from each dimension.

Comparable to this moon-lit night is yet another half-lit one in a poem by B.Tejeni found in David Cook’s In Black and White. Here, the moon bathes the hillock making everything look enchanting. But there is also the glaring light of day, when the speaker is able to compare visions in the night to reality at day. To quote Cook, “The poet sees a hillock by night and is moved by its beauty. In the light of day of course [in] the glaring realities ... it is not quite so enthralling as it was in the light of the moon, which hid much, and revealed only the silhouette” [my parenthesis] (Cook, 15-16).

Night Illusion (B. Tejani)

Coming by last night

We were charmed by

Silvery moonlight over

Vast green tea-fields.

The road was a ribbon

Of white with darker shade

Of the tea-fields

Round the bend lay a

Small hillock, rounded

And soft like man's buttock

It slept there so quietly

We must come and see it

Again tomorrow

The next morning , the purring of the

Car's engine was harsh.

It disturbed the stillness around

The road was sandy and hard

In the glare of the sun

And seemed to disturb

The great green tea-fields.

Round the bend lay our hillock

But look! Who has wrenched

My heart and made me

Stand still?

A great gray gash has been

Torn into the side of the hill

As if a lion had sunk its

Gray teeth in the soft human

Flesh and torn a great chunk out

Bald and uglily grinning

It stands, helpless, like an

Old grey man with a toothless face

This is the sand-pit for

The tea factory over there

The emerald of the grass shines

And stretches

But cannot hide the

Man-made nakedness of its side.

(Tejani in Cook, 14-15)

The speaker opens with the narrative words: Coming by last night we were charmed by silvery moonlight over vast green tea-fields.” The speaker’s narrative mode makes this a narrative poem. In terms of form, “narrative poetry is poetry that tells a story.” (Babusci et al, 436). The opening prepares the audience to hear the story of the subsequent events after this one. The speaker’s narrative tone grips our attention straight away. Therein lies the power of the poem. Everyone enjoys a good story, and the vivid detail in this one makes it one of them. The narrator, upon setting the scene, astutely moves onto description of the trail in the light of the moon. He holds us in a dreamlike state created by the bright glow of the moon. The speaker then leaves us in a mood of expectancy, that we shall once again witness this dreamlike vision the day after. He says, “We must come and see it/ Again tomorrow.” This anticipation about recreating the event at a future time symbolizes the hope that the landscape will remain as enchanting as it appears now.

The speaker’s disillusionment in the light of day is made palpable by his tone of voice. In stanza three, his protest rings in the air: “who has wrenched my heart and made me stand still?” the image “wrenched my heart” means his emotions have been wounded. It is as though someone has torn his heart out of his chest. He feels hurt. He stands still, frozen by surprise. He is unable to make an immediate reaction. These responses are prompted by the sight before him. To concur with David Cook in his commentary on this poem, the speaker wakes up expecting as fine a day as was the night, to drink in some more of the beauty by the hill side, only to find glaring imperfection and bareness (Cook, 15) His expectations have been dashed. Human interference has rendered the hillock scar-faced. Human activity, that is, digging up of a pit on the side of the hillock, now make themselves manifest in the imperfection of the hill. The light of day has revealed this defect.

The night illusion lingers in the reader’s memory. It is as though even the reader was there walking in the light of the moon, looking at the hillock in silhouette. The dreaminess remains with one, in the same way as Higiyo’s moon “in motion” does. And one can see how the speaker might be eager to see the same landscape in the light of day, to see whether it is still as enchanting. Tactile imagery of the smoothness of the hillock, looking as it does like a buttock, renders it a perfectly molded quality. One’s expectations are therefore crushed when the following morning, not only is there no peace and quiet, what with an engine of a vehicle rending the air, but also everything looks hard and uninviting. What’s worse, the seeming perfection of the hillock was deceptive since it has a gash of a sandpit torn off its side.

The speaker, while delighting in the fulfillment he derived from looking at the scenery in the night, is also decrying the ruination of the same scenery by the revelation daytime brings. Night illusion symbolizes a covering up of destructiveness. It symbolizes a protest that things are not as they seemed after all. Daytime reality brings home a hard truth to take. The destructive hand of man has ruined the natural landscape. What begins with a tone of satisfaction and bliss ends with a tone of disenchantment.

Cook also makes the commentary that “to write simply and yet with such strength that your words seem to matter: that is a great part of the art of writing” (Ibid). Beyond the simplicity and strength of the poem, Cook admires that it has little adornment, no excitement, it has realistic description, which he calls “nothing too much; nothing too little.” In other words, he feels that there is no over dramatization, neither is it dull. He sees these qualities as the moderating influences on the message. The calm pleasantness at the opening of the poem is balanced with the disappointment thereafter. The human need for quiet of mind, versus the brutalization of this is the dynamic being explored.

More nightly illusion impressing itself on the mind of man is seen upon examining Higuro's second composition about the moon:

Moon Reflection in the Pond (Joy Higuro)

Shattered by the throwing of stones

The water merely surges,

Producing hollow sounds;

But it gradually

Settles on you still

See the face of the

Moon reflection,

Shimmering in the gleaming

Water surface.

The fragments of the split moon

Reunite, fall back.

(Higiro, 19)

When the water is disturbed, the reflection of the moon appears to break into fragments. The speaker gets the impression that she is watching the real moon in the sky break into pieces. This theme of illusion is created in a pond of water at night. The illusion is evidence of how clear and lifelike the reflection in the pond is. This illusion is a strong visual, but our sense of hearing is also activated. We listen to the squelching sounds of the water, surging, producing hollow sounds. Simultaneously, we watch the quivering waters slowly settle into stillness again.

All along, within the pool is the changing scene of the moon, whose shimmering face appears to split into shards, then, with time, the contortions come together to form a wholesome sphere. What remains in the observer's memory is that glowing orb of the moon. A sense of order, of peace is restored once the waters calm down. This poem could symbolize that calm will always come after a state of unrest. The human mind has desire for order, for restoration of peace. That is why "the fragments of the moon" significantly "reunite, fall back." A sense of wholesomeness is restored and it bears significance to the human observer.

There is also drama in that one gets in touch with a moon which is high above and untouchable, but can now symbolically make shapes with it, not to mention the double advantage of having 'two' moons, one up, and intact, and one down, on the 'canvass' of the water, which one can mold and experiment with. The satisfaction which an exploring human mind gets from this is significant. While the reflection is not the real moon, ironically, it has brought the unreachable closer down to the observer. This is a reflective piece about the resplendence that nature has on offer.

The image of the disturbed waters of a pond throws us back to Yusuf Kassam's 'The Splash' as examined in the previous chapter of this work. The portrayal of the rippling waters which have suffered a 'gash', pitted against the stillness of the stone which tore these waters apart may symbolize disturbance of status quo by an immovable will power. Man's mind has a natural proclivity towards calmness. The lack of harmony suggested by disturbance of waters impresses itself on the observer's mind as peculiar because that is not the normal state of affairs, in the

environment or in the social set up. The disturbed rippling waters in 'The Moon Reflected in the Pond' and the consequential wait for restoration may symbolize a disturbed peace of mind the resultant need for wholesomeness in life.

3.3 Nature Reflecting the Inner Man

Thinking in symbols, man might see his own nature reflected in a tree, or an animal, or a landscape. The poems in this section capture that introspective quality, where man aspires to point out the similarities between himself and the natural world around him. In this way, nature poems merge the life of man with patterns from nature; there is a fusion of man with nature.

Representation of the life of man in the life of a tree is here explored by Stella Ngatho's 'The Young Tree' and Khadambi's 'The Tall Tree.' Ngatho's poem symbolizes a youth, while the other, Khadambi's symbolizes a person of high status, perhaps an elder, but the poets, using the symbol of a tree, give their poems double meaning, since the poem can be interpreted in two ways, the literal and the figurative.

A Young Tree (Stella Ngatho)

Alone in the vast forest of elders

A young tree grows

Dreaming of days she'll be accepted

Surrounded by her silent mates

And beardy elders

She is gay and sad and happy, yet

Not knowing why.

Among the majesty of beardy elders

Wrapped in tottering beauty
Tinged with grey
Knowing for once and all
She never will be happy with her lot
Till her branches touch the blue

Alone with her silent mates
Alone among beardy elders
Her mind meanders across
Broody shadows of time growing old,
Time arrested at dawn
Reaching out for peace
Amidst the elders of time.
(Ngatho in Cook and Rubadiri, 111)

Clearly this poem, just as the subsequent one, is not about a tree. Ultimately, it is symbolic of a person. The life of man is often visualized by many to take the growth patterns of the tree, from the sapling stage to old age. Since the tree, like man, is a living organism, which grows out of a seed, and is fertilized by the soils on which it grows, emerges from the soil a sapling, and grows tall and slender in its early days to become a stouter adult tree, withstanding the elements, it is easy to see how man might see his own life likened to that of a tree.

At the figurative level Ngatho's poem reads as an extended metaphor. "Metaphors are often extended because, in describing a thing in terms of something else, a metaphor often implies a detailed and complex resemblance between the two, one which may not be obvious at first glance" (Babusci et al. 833). Individual metaphors here combine to make the one prolonged

metaphor. If the tree is symbolic of a young person, then the forest of elders in which it grows, would be the adults.

Each growing person is alone in their pursuit of self actualization. That is the message coming across from this "young tree." She stands "Alone in the vast forest of elders," "Dreaming of days she'll be accepted." She longs for a time in the future when she will become a significant part of the fold. Acceptance comes in many ways such as maturing, becoming accomplished materially. In the literal sense of a tree, it would mean growing tall and robust. In human terms the former is true. She, the youth symbolized by the tree, has peer. She is "Surrounded by her silent mates." They too do not speak much. Symbolically it could mean that the youth do not have much of an opinion to give as they too are busy biding their time for that moment in future when their word will count. "She is gay and sad and happy" she has got mixed feelings which characterize phases of youth. "Knowing for once and all/She never will be happy with her lot/Till her branches touch the blue" The action of branches touching the blue (sky) could mean that self actualization mentioned earlier, of material wealth, or of social status. "Tall", is that metaphorical sense in which human life is interpreted to signify being in an advantaged position.

This sense is well brought out in the subsequent poem, 'The Tall Tree' by Asalache. He too talks about a metaphorical tree which this time is in its mature stages. If the tree is already mature, the tallness of it, rising above others, would have an extra meaning of power, wisdom, or material prosperity. Its invincibility is in that it stands firm, unshaken by the test of time.

The Tall Tree (Khadambi Asalache)

Stands firm.

its leaves shake off sounds

that rush through the day

to preach the downfall, the end

of the tall tree

Winds mark the pathway

it stands, in their rush

in the afternoon;

just one of many moves.

It welcomed the winds' coming

by bowing, a risk

and risking, showed its strength

The sun rises and

it salutes its coming.

It stands unyielding in the rain

to bide for time

an all weather muse.

Leaves have broken down through strain

fallen in hushed whispers

dead voices of dead leaves

dead protest

Stands up to the storm.

Stands silent and remote

up there. Its eyes

with wider view than ours

see out beyond

see into the distance.

The moves to uproot the tall tree

fall short, some silenced

after seeing the solitary strength.

Others who came to witness the fall

are blown away in the wind

like mourners who arrived

early, many years to wait

in the wings of a long shadow

(Asalache, 16-17)

The theme of superiority of one person over other people is made manifest in the symbol of a tall tree towering above the shorter trees. A tree has often been used to suggest immovable, unshakeable, which is a symbol of physical strength. When the same tree is said to be taller than other trees, it projects the image of a ruler. Strength and might, whether physical or emotional is the demeanor a ruler is often imagined to cast, more so in traditional patriarchy. This particular ruler is at variance with the larger community, though, since the speaker appears apprehensive that there are "sounds/that rush through the day/to preach the downfall, the end /of the tall tree." Perhaps the ruler feels that he is in a threatened position, and that those around predict his ousting from his position. But this 'tree' weathers the storm, of whatever danger there was, it goes unscathed. It "Stands up to the storm/Stands silent and remote/up there. Its eyes/with wider/view than ours/see out beyond /see into the distance." Mention of 'eyes' gives an even stronger impression that this is a human, a figure of authority, whose 'eyes' can see far, symbolizing perceptiveness and perhaps wisdom. The figure stands silent and remote, perhaps as a way of exuding an air of authority.

In an extended metaphor, there are often numerous figures of speech until we arrive at one concrete feature (Babusci, 468). In 'The Tall Tree' however, the extended metaphor opens with that one concrete feature, which is the tree, and then the numerous figures of speech revolve around it. As said, symbolized by the 'tree' is someone in a position of eminence. Most likely it is a ruler. The poem, therefore, has a political tinge to it. With the 'tree's' resilience, meaning the character's preservation of position, the cowardly enemy seems vanquished and are rendered silent: "The moves to uproot the tall tree/fall short, some silenced /after seeing the solitary strength" this enemy is likened to mourners who arrive early, with many years to wait for the funeral." This is a sarcastic way of describing the scoffers. The concept of coming to "mourn" could easily be replaced with the concept "jeer" or "deride."

Obviously this poem is a satire. It is made in mockery of the enemies of an incumbent authority figure. In many African situations, Nature imagery was employed to attain a satirical effect. It was a subtle way of mentioning the culprits without really naming names. It was safe yet effective, since the meaning was never lost to the intended. A reader in East Africa would not normally take this poem, 'The Tall Tree,' at its literal level. It is too heavily laden with meaning to be anything but metaphorical.

With satire as the main device of style, there usually come the accompanying devices of style, of irony, sarcasm, paradox and oxymoron, and all the accompanying absurdities of expression (Leech, 140) to project the intended tone of disapproval. Irony is in the thwarted actions of those who attempt to uproot the tree, but are met with an unexpected strength behind the silence. The tone is rife with sarcasm, when the very same enemies are ascribed the simile: "like mourners who arrived/early, many years to wait." These have been parodied in that their situation is now ludicrous. A paradoxical situation arises when the tree "welcomed the winds' coming/ by bowing, a risk/and risking, showed its strength." It is self contradictory that just at the time the 'bowing' or yielding to the "force of the wind" meaning others in power, the tree's strength might have been disputed, but rather it increased in magnitude, because this show of humility revealed an inner strength rather than fear on the part of the "tree" the ruler figure. "Dead protest" is the oxymoron which depicts strength sapped out of an opposing force. In this manner it is conveyed that the resistance is quelled.

On the Death of a Friend (Anne Cunningham)

The leaves drop off the tree

and flutter back to earth

where they belong

Some are green and bright

and one wonders why

so soon they came to die

others are shaken by the wind and the tenuous hold

of gold

is loosened and they lie

in their beauty on the green

beneath the tree

the brown and the brittle at last

release their grip

of life that long since

ceased to please,

and with a sigh

they came to lie

in peace and quiet

at rest beneath the tree.

(Cunningham, page 4)

The poem 'On the Death of a Friend' is an ode. An ode is a "solemn poem" (Macgoye, 120) This ode is composed in tribute to the fond memory of one close at heart. The deceased is likened to a leaf on a tree. The demise of such persons, then, is aptly drawn as a leaf falling from a tree, and onto the ground, "where it belongs" Saying that a leaf belongs to the ground is prescribing to the common belief that since vegetation is nurtured by the soil, it belongs back there when it withers. The same image is applied to humans, who are seen to go "back" to the dust, when they are interred in the soils.

Like Stella Ngatho's and Asalache's poems in this section, Cunningham's too is an extended metaphor. There is no literal mention of the intended meaning, but the poem directs the reader as to how to read it on order to decipher the intended meaning. Without making any mention of humans, the natural objects used in their stead display the humanly traits. The poem is left open to be read at the two levels; symbolic and literal. At the symbolic level it is an elegy. An elegy is "a poem lamenting and praising a dead person" (Mweseli, 184). The person in this particular elegy is symbolized by a leaf.

Since Cunningham's elegy is composed in honor of a friend, the speaker's discreet tone refuses to let on the age at which the friend was before she passed on. Instead, the speaker ponders all the stages of life at which a person may "fall off the tree" meaning pass on out of life. Ambiguity in honor of the privacy is created by first wondering why some leaves in a tree fall off and yet they are green: "Some are green and bright/ and one wonders why / so soon they came to die" what these three lines symbolize, of course, is the demise of the young, who, in metaphorical terms are thought "succulent" meaning they are full of the vigor of life, and yet they "so soon .. came to die." Their lives are cut off prematurely.

The images used here make an instantaneous impression. As stated in chapter one, imagery becomes its most symbolic as a metaphor (Burton, 109). A metaphor is therefore the most effective sort of image. When people are metaphorically referred to as leaves, an image is formed of them as having been attached to a tree. Therefore, falling off a tree is the next likely image. Life is what is symbolized by the concept of the tree. The image of Leaves falling off a tree immediately represents the concept of cessation of the life of the people. Cessation of life is synonymous to death.

The speaker goes on to contemplate that "others are shaken by the wind and the tenuous hold/ of gold/ is loosened and they lie/ in their beauty on the green / beneath the tree." "Gold" here would suggest that prime stage of life, which middle age is thought to be. It is equated to gold in color,

which is the color of a leaf in its middle stages as well, but in literal sense, it is a stage in life when persons are presumed to be at their most productive. They might be at their peak knowledge-wise and career-wise.

A mature stage comes, which in seasons up in the northern hemisphere might be called the “autumn” of life. Here it has been symbolized by a browning leaf, brittle to the touch: “the brown and the brittle at last/release their grip/of life that long since/ceased to please.” Notice that the withered wrinkly stage brought on by old age in all living creatures is perceived to be the least gratifying, for the beholder as for the observed. To convey this idea the speaker uses the literal expression “of life that long since ceased to please.” This phrase could have two meanings. One meaning is that life has long ceased to please the subject of the poem because she has outlived the excitement of youth. The other meaning could be that at the age the subject of the poem was at, she was less accepted by community on account of her wilted appearance. For this reason, there is an air of resignation with which the subject of the poem passes on, in the lines saying: /“and with a sigh/ they came to lie/ in peace and quiet/at rest beneath the tree.” Here then the “tree” acquires a larger sense of “the tree of life,” or simply, “life.” They are all buried beneath the “tree,” which is life, which sustained them and gave them living breath, and of which sooner or later, they lost their grip and came to die.

Elegies are tinged with reminiscences of the life of the deceased, which reverberate with sadness. Cunningham’s tone and mood do not fail. The reminiscent mood of stages in life by the deceased are visualized, and the accompanied melancholy of tone is right up to par. This sort of remembrance is made out to an older rather than a younger person, recounting stages of life until such a phase as was the friends. By the profundity of the remembrances, then, the elegy gives itself away as being dedicated to one who was elderly.

The Last Leaf (Joy Higuro)

Cling to the ground

Wait not in the current,

Wait not by the shore,

Wait not by the roadside.

You are ever sought
By the sweep of the corrupt current
That will sweep from the high seas
To the damping (sic) ground
That is the common destiny
For all that take no heed,
For all that wish to be like so,
Ordinarily sought, it is the easy way out, so they say
(Higiro, 10)

Higiro, like Cunningham also makes a commemoration of that image of “the leaf.” Whether read Literally or figuratively, the poem would still attain a fullness of meaning. However, the figurative dimension in poetry can never be overlooked and is here given prominence, to further demonstrate that humans see patterns of their life expressed in nature. Apostrophe is the main device of style. The “Leaf” is addressed directly as “you,” in the line: “You are ever sought” All advice in the poem is directed to it. The supposed leaf is the last one remaining. It is left to the reader to deduce from the context the sense of where it is that the leaf is left as the last one.

It is obvious that the “leaf” is a person. This person is being cautioned to remain steadfast in his or her morals. He is being cautioned that there is a “corrupt current” which comes from the high seas, which seeks after the likes of this person. The “last leaf” could be a young person, then, perhaps last amongst his or her peer, who succumbed to the corruption forces. The “corrupt current,” therefore, would assume the meaning of immoral persons who come in search of impressionable youth for their own gratification. Figurative language has been used extensively to give advice. Figurative language Has the ability to phrase delicate messages in a subtle way. The subtlety of figurative language in this instance ensures that advice is given gently. It does not offend the sensibility of the subject to whom the advice is directed.

The “leaf,” symbolizing a person, is advised to “Cling to the ground.” This phrase has the sense of holding fast to the one spot where the leaf is fallen. This is as opposed to being swept up in the

air, or clinging on to the places mentioned in the lines hereafter. One such place is in the waters: "Wait not in the current," the metaphor "current" means the flow of the waters of an ocean or river. "Tide" is another word for "current" the leaf is advised not wait in the water tides, perhaps because this is shaky ground, constantly shifting, so that it does not offer as much stability as the solid "ground" would. A theme of the need for stability for the metaphorical "leaf" is here established.

More similarly shaky grounds which the "leaf" must be wary of are the shore and the roadside. In a tone of caution it is told "Wait not by the shore, / Wait not by the roadside." The curiosity which arises from the reasons that the "leaf" must not wait by the mentioned sites is quelled in the subsequent stanza.

The second stanza tells a story, clarifying the cautionary attitude in the first stanza: "You are ever sought/By the sweep of the corrupt current/ That will sweep from the high seas/To the damping (sic) ground" The caution is expressed wholly in figurative terms. "Figurative language (that is, language that uses figures of speech) includes the use of simile, metaphor, analogy, and personification." (Hunter, 541). Here, the most important figure of speech is the metaphor. "A metaphor pretends that one thing is something else, thus making an implicit comparison between the things. The metaphor of the "corrupt current" is a notional metaphor which involves transference of meaning. It can be classified as a humanizing metaphor since it attributes characteristics of humanity to what is not human.

The last four lines of the second stanza are of a prosaic nature. "Prosaic" means "of or having the character or form of prose rather than poetry" ("Prosaic" Dictionary.com, 2009). The prosaic nature of the last four lines surprisingly does not strike one at first reading. This is probably due to the preceding figurative expressions. The prosaic language begins at: "That is the common destiny." This expression means that a similar fate has been suffered by many. Many people have been as susceptible to the corrupting forces as the subject now is, and have succumbed to this corruption. This destiny, or fate is brought about by a certain mindlessness, "For all that take no heed/For all that wish to be like so, / Ordinarily sought, it is the easy way out, so they say." The outcome of being heedless of one's actions is making the wrong choices. The effortlessness of the chosen pattern of life causes many to desire it, and yield to it.

These last four poems, by equating man to a tree or to a leaf, demonstrate a truth that man and other living organisms pattern themselves after the same rules. That is why one life form is able to symbolize the other. They are governed by, and obey the same rules of nature. The tough

endurance of one last leaf clinging on to a tree is acceptable as the symbolic representation of the tenacity of a person clinging on to life, when all other people in his circumstances have succumbed under the pressure, and perhaps died or failed in an endeavor.

Rain (David Kihara)

A bundle of rain
Anywhere, when it rains.
Understanding this
Is meaningful life
To a mind once hopeless

In my mind,
Thin threads of raindrops
Fall from the sky
Confident about the terminus.
Aware of each other's competitive nature
Yet, for the same speed, unaware;
Strong wind sometimes
Diverts the bundle to diverse objects:
Roof tops,
Balcony,
Grass and tree-leaves
Where destructive hopelessness dwells.

Same speed,

Same thread-thinness

Where all reign as Gods

Or just common raindrops;

Balm of hope,

Meaningful to a mind once hopeless.

(Kihara in Amateshe, 98).

Hope is projected in the falling of rain. But rain is not just rain here, it represents the patterns of human life. The rain drops are aware of each other's competitive nature, and yet they fall by the same speed. This could easily mean that humans are competitive, but they are all leading the same life. They all move in the same tempo, responding to the same rhythms of seasons and changes in time. All are responding to the same stimuli. Individual patterns may vary, like the raindrops which get diverted by the wind, falling on rooftops, the balcony, or the grass and trees, human lives vary, in terms of occupation and lifestyles. The realization about this inevitability is comforting for the observer. That is why the speaker concludes as "Balm of hope,/ meaningful to a mind once hopeless." This particular mind might have thought itself alone until it observed patterns of raindrops, likening them to itself, and realized it was not all alone after all. The human mind gains a deeper self understanding by observing the natural elements.

It is not just trees and leaves or rain which may be seen to carry man's inner spirit in a figurative sense. Animals too, have through the ages been seen to represent humans, in terms of their impulses, and exterior and interior demeanor. A.D. Amateshe uses extended metaphor of the animal, the tortoise, but he is likening the speaker's cautious actions to the slowness of a tortoise. He says:

The Tortoise Song (A. D. Amateshe)

Mine is a slow rhythm

through the ecstasy of life,

treading my foot upon
blunted, harmless rocks.

mine is a cautious pose
amid the shots and boots,
retrieving my head
into the trunk of safety.

let the ostrich run
endless distances
to destinations which
spell unexpected doom;

let the eagles fly,
their wings full of pride,
to mindless skies
which mock the giant-

mine will be a slow pace
through the tunnels of emotion
retrieving my head
when reason fails others.

The theme of the poem, safety by caution, is communicated through Parallelism. Caution is highlighted by juxtaposing an animal, the tortoise, which projects an image of caution and safety, with the ostrich and the eagle which project a carefree demeanor and risk-taking. Animistic metaphors are used to demonstrate the manner in which man might see his own responses to life symbolized by animal impulses.

The tortoise, slow and retiring in motion is pitted against those animals which project as abrupt and mindless, vainglorious, even; the ostrich, and the eagle. The tortoise in its slowness is the epitome of caution against danger. It is therefore thought by the speaker to possess wisdom. The eagle and the ostrich on the other hand are unguarded in their mindless ways and lack watchfulness. Notice that those animals which appear impetuous are air-borne (the ostrich's plumage suggests flight, even though it is quite earth bound) so it appears frolicsome, as though it has other goals, making spirited sprints across the plains of the savannah.

The ostrich musters terrific speeds, rendered propulsion by its feathers. This way, it gives the impression of being so lacking in sense as to "spell unexpected doom" for itself, in its endless distances. The eagle is perceived to soar up high, above all other birds. This self-preservation instinct is perceived by the speaker as pride. The speaker calls it flying with "wings full of pride/ to mindless skies." This action is here portrayed as a display of self-importance. It is perceived as a deliberate display of might, to "mock the giant." A giant would be invincible in its stamina, but the eagle's indomitability is manifested in its ability to fly up higher than any other creature. The wisdom behind caution; the ultimate message, is seen as a more powerful weapon than physical displays of vitality. The images of the animals carry this message home with brevity.

The talk of the eagle soaring to mindless heights is evocative of Alfred Lord Tennyson's 'The Eagle' (Cengage, 2012). But in clear contrast is the solemnity of Tennyson's eagle, set as it is about its own weighty business. That eagle's sense of purpose is quite unlike the vanity in which Amateshe's eagle is enwrapped, soaring high to boast of its abilities.

Standing in sharp contrast to the aloofness of the eagle is Joy Higirow's poem "The Birds" as seen in chapter one. The coziness of chicks snuggled up against their mother, under the watchful eye of the father contrasts the lonesome quality of the lone eagle. The phase in life marked by this difference is the adult independence versus childlike neediness.

The Leopard (Ida Makokha-Nakhayo)

Your eyes struck me

seeped through me

tore me apart

Rekindled a fire.

Your beautiful fur coat,

black highlighted spots

on a magnificent

mustard richness.

Keen hunter

steady in poise,

A loner—shy yet watchful,

indeed puzzling.

Is it then a wonder

That against my will

You intrigue me

Making me your captive.....

(Nakhayo in Luvai and Makokha, 43)

This is a lyric poem. It expresses strong feelings about a loved one in a personal way. “A lyric poem expresses a poet’s emotions and thoughts in language that is lively and musical. Most lyrics also contain vivid words that communicate the poet’s feelings in a memorable way” (Babusci et

al. 485). The theme of intensity of emotion communicates itself in every line. The speaker is "struck" by the leopard's eyes, and this emotion of attraction seeps thought her so that a fire is rekindled in her. All these are ways of saying she feels passionately towards this Leopard. Towards the end, the speaker declares: "...against my will/ you intrigue me/ making me your captive." She means to say that she is besotted by the subject of the poem, the "leopard." In the opening lines she expresses her intrigue by saying that the leopard's eyes tore her apart. This means that she felt disarmed by the charm radiated by the leopard. The leopard, which could symbolize a person, exudes magnetism which leaves the speaker feeling powerless to resist his charm.

'The Leopard' is the one poem which celebrates a big cat of the wild: the leopard. In this one aspect it is evocative of Jonathan Kariara's poem: 'A Leopard Lives in a Muu Tree' (Cook and Rubadiri, 64-65). However, while Kariara's leopard is sly and self ingratiating, Nakhayo's Leopard is the emanation of masculine suavity. From the outer poise to the inner gallantry, this "leopard" is alluring to the last. "Keen hunter/ steady in poise,/ A loner—shy yet watchful." The graceful elegance and calculated reserve mesmerize the speaker. This poem is one which could be dedicated to the romantic feelings of an awestruck lover. The physical appeal of this leopard has got the speaker feeling attracted to it.

The speaker admires the Leopard's furry skin, calling it a fur coat, as though the leopard were wearing it like an item of clothing. The rich colors of this fur are yellow and black. She describes them as "black highlighted spots on a magnificent mustard richness." Mustard is a rich yellow. It sets off the blackness of the spots. This mottled fur strikes the speaker as stunning. She calls it "beautiful." The concept of beauty, which is essentially value judgment, translates as thus to the speaker. To her the leopard is beautiful. The term denotes an open admiration for the animal, the leopard.

Taken at the literal level, there is no mention that the Leopard is a man. Only the last stanza makes intimation that this might be so when the speaker claims that the leopard has made her captive. Even then, it is humanly possible to get so intrigued by the animal, the leopard's mesmeric qualities as to feel taken captive by it. There is no suggestion as to the gender of the speaker either. One can only guess by contextual interpretation that it is a female. This supposed female praises what are deciphered traditionally masculine qualities of a male, calling him "Keen hunter." In the human world, males traditionally do the hunting. But the animal kingdom does not subscribe to this rule. Both genders hunt. Both genders are keen hunters. Everyone brings in a

kill, more so the nursing females. Interpretation of this poem in figurative senses is therefore subject to value judgment. By so doing, the audience runs the risk of making stereotypical assumptions. The only indisputable interpretation is of the leopard at the literal level. The speaker is mesmerized by the graceful animal.

3.4 Intensity of Feeling

Intensity of Feeling is communicated in this subsection. The feelings most prominent in the section are those of fear and awe and poignancy. Nature is capable of rousing both admiration and fear at the same time. This simultaneous arousal of fear and awe creates a moments of intensity such as those seen in Higiroy, Tejani, Amisi, Barlow, and Datta's poems among others. The idealization of the landscape in 'Leisure in Nature' is due to its ability to provide pleasurable mood. The objective of this section is to bring in nature poems which make an obvious display of emotions; a feature prevalent in Romanticism and which places the selected poems in a similar slot in that one facet.

Fear of snakes is a universal theme. A universal theme "is an idea or situation common to many different groups throughout history" (Babusci et al, 591). The attitude towards the snake is ultimately similar; universally it is one of fear. Snakes are perceived to symbolize evil, among other gruesome qualities. Joy Higiroy's poem 'Along Came a Snake' (Higiroy, 36) is comparable to the English Romantic poet, D.H. Lawrence's 'Snake' (Blaisdell, 44-46) A reading of the two poems reveals a few shared traits. In 'Snake' the initial reaction the creature inspires is awe and honor at the encounter. That creature so grand would choose to come and do an act so trivial as drinking at a simple water trough inspires wonder. In 'Along Came a Snake,' the speaker also wants to admire the sleekness of the snake, the motion of its muscles, but alas, this is overtaken by plain cold fear. These shared attitudes prove to be universal themes, common through time and space.

Even though there are insights given into the myths and schools of thought prompting the reactions, in 'Snake' we see hues of attitude come and fade into each other, such that there is growth in perception of the creature. Reverence in both poems is captured by the images "This sleek deadly creature" in Higiroy, and "majestic and regal" In Lawrence. But fear and self-doubt, are mingled with this sense of awe. In 'Snake' we move on to a compulsive action and subsequent regret; trailed by a longing to recapture lost reverence for the "earth -brown, earth-

golden” being from the bowels of the earth, whose gender is a ‘he.’ A larger backdrop of the scenery is given as “July, with Etna smoking.” In ‘Along Came a Snake,’ however, gives a more shrunken view of a garden. ‘Snake’ is multi-dimensional in its perspective, while ‘Along Came a Snake’ is given a one-dimensional approach. But in both instances the motion, speed and the bearing of the snake are captured.

Along Came a Snake (Joy Higiro)

Out from under the cool stone

It came to light

Crawled on its corroded womb

At the centre of the garden;

I perched at the window,

Looked with terrified eyes,

To the evil that was coming my way

This sleek deadly creature;

The gleasening (sic) skin.

The muscle

The motion

The speed

The poisonous notion,

It is all there

It is painfully true

This creature exists;

Some say it is the hand of the devil

Some say it is the friend of a woman;

Man and Snakes

Are the only deadly creatures on earth

So my love says;

I believe too.

I fear.

(Higiro, 36)

A myth, According to Paul Hunter, is the framework of universally shared symbols, within a defined culture. (Hunter, 542) The speaker in Joy Higiro's poem acknowledges a universally recognized myth, that the snake stands for evil, and she looks on it with dread "... the evil that was coming my way." Most cultures see the snake as standing for a meaning larger than its visual self. "Some say it is the hand of the devil/ Some say it is the friend of a woman." Apparently, in some cultures, the woman presents an esoteric presence just like the snake. These cultures see the woman as able to befriend the snake. Yet other cultures view the snake as diabolical, as "the hand of the devil" this image suggests that the devil directly employs the snake to perform evil acts. The snake is thought one of the most deadly creatures on the planet. It is no wonder it has been branded by many cultural myths.

The myth that a snake is a creature to hold in utter fear is elaborated upon in D.H. Lawrence's 'Snake,' a lot like it is in Joy Higiro's 'Along Came a Snake' in 'Snake' The speaker stands there, transfixed at the sight of the creature. His basic instincts tell him to let it be, he is awed by it. Yet at the same time, he has internalized myths about it, that it is an evil and fearful creature. And so, obeying his stronger convictions, he picks up a stone and throws it at the snake, injuring himself emotionally, more than he harms the snake. This myth is what D.H. Lawrence calls "The voice of my education" (Lawrence in Blaisdell, 44-46). This voice of education is articulated by Higiro's

speaker in the words “So my love says.” Because one whom she trusts calls a snake dangerous, she too believes it.

In Higiro’s ‘Along Came a Snake,’ the speaker begins and ends with an attitude of revulsion for the creature. No modification is made towards this attitude. Higiro’s poem illustrates the wide-eyed motions often undergone by those who encounter snakes. The speaker looks on “with terrified eyes, /To the evil that was coming my way” and yet despite the fear, the feeling of awe is palpable in the words “This sleek deadly creature.” The word “sleek means “lustrous.” The speaker’s fascination with the snake’s glistening colors, and the power of its body is obvious in the repetitive “The muscle/The motion/The speed.” But this fascination is overtaken by her terror of it as a “poisonous notion” since its bite is likely to turn out venomous. The attitude of wonder coupled with horror for snakes is a common one universally, not just on the East African scene. Higiro captures this universal theme when she describes the mixed attitude of intrigue-cum-trepidation of snakes as a product of many different cultures.

Serengeti Night (Bahadur Tejani)

The black earth echoes

a panting sky

shimmering in eerie silence

the tracks feel

desolate

as a hungry widow’s hut

a benefit wind

has stopped breathing

the trees huddle

in fearful pools

the massive heart

is shorn to hum and quiver

only the warm touch

of a hand in hand

recalls

our identity.

(Bahadur Tejani in Luvai and Makokha, 30)

The wild land in the night can be a fearful place to find oneself in. In 'Serengeti Night' the theme of fear is communicated in the pervading mood of the poem. There is a mood of alarm. The very trees are afraid: "The trees huddle/ in fearful pools." Naturally, the fear in the trees is symbolic of the speaker's own fear. Trees are not peripatetic so they cannot huddle up together on impulse. Neither do they have human feelings that they may seek solace in each other's company. The speaker, however, sees it thus. The trees symbolize his own and his partner's trepidation. It is they who huddle up together and is they who need to touch each other's hand for reassurance. Man imparts upon nature meanings of his own, in order to understand his own situation.

The speaker's attitude and interpretation of the environment is indicative of meanings which man might 'read' in the environment from the perspective of where he stands emotionally. "The tracks feel desolate as a hungry widow's hut." This simile is formed from the speaker's value judgment. The speaker perceives a hungry widow's house as the epitome of desolation. The isolation of the pathway along which they are travelling reminds him of this image. This image of a hut is incongruous with the open land they are in.

In such significant moments, such as a moment of intense fear, inanimate objects take on living qualities. Here, "a benefit wind/ has stopped breathing." To begin with, the isolation the speaker feels is such that only he and his partner are breathing, nothing else is. If the wind were blowing then he would feel as if they had company. Since the wind has "stopped breathing" this animistic image suggests that there is no other 'life' around them. It heightens the impression of stillness of the Serengeti landscape. Secondly, the wind which has stopped blowing was "a benefit wind," meaning that the wind was doing the speaker much good. It is solely needed. The lack of it alludes to a stifling atmosphere. Perhaps the night feels hot and airless. The wind symbolizes life

on those two levels. In the need for companionship it takes on living qualities, appearing to offer living company. On the second level the wind infuses the creatures which breathe it with life.

While the middle lines communicate a mood of fear of the night in the deserted Serengeti, it is the opening lines which communicate the speaker's awe of the land on which they are travelling and the sky above. There is an attitude of awe in the words "The black earth echoes a panting sky shimmering in eerie silence." The unnatural silence, "eerie," makes the land feel frightening. The land and the sky both shimmer in this unnatural quietness. To shimmer is to gleam. Both the sky and the earth reverberate with the silence. Everywhere one looks there is a desolate look. The sky pulsates with silence as does the land. The two immensities are a reflection of each other. Tejani manages to communicate in very few lines the sort of fright one might experience, caught in the isolation of a Serengeti night, in the plains of East Africa.

The Sea does not Just Sit Still (Otieno Amisi)

(In memory of victims of the Mtongwe and Bukoba ferry disasters)

The sea does not just sit still

Up with the tides, down with the winds

The breath and the sighs of the vast expanse

Sweating in the heat of the bright sunshine

Trillions of gallons of the wide, deep blue.

The sea does not just sit still

She heaves. She breathes. She leaps

O'er the rocks and the sands and a cloudless noon.

She beckons. She challenges. She soothes.

The silvery fishes in its swimming song.

The sea does not just sit still

She sleeps stealthily on life and seasons

Kissing hard rock to sand by night

Glaring unblinking at the sky by day

A deep blue monster soundly asleep

The sea does not just sit still

She sings deathly songs of forgotten kinsmen

The Rabs and the Japs and the Chinese peers

Of the years and the fears of ferried peers

The sea sleeps still to steal yet again.

(Amisi in Luvai and Makokha, 32)

Nature can also unleash the brunt of its harsh realities on man. In this melancholic poem by Otieno Amisi, the sea, is not that beautiful expanse which is often romanticized for its soothing qualities. It is “a deep blue monster” which lurks in waiting “to steal yet again.” In one image, “monster,” Amisi manages to thwart a peace symbol into a symbol of threat. The rich blue hue of the sea symbolizes peace, but in Amisi’s poem, it has been turned into a nightmarish concept. The sea is a “deep blue monster.” It is paradoxically a horrifying beast, lurking, lying in wait, to “steal yet again.” The theft is the human lives it takes, of unsuspecting victims riding on say, a ferry, a boat, unable to swim, and getting swallowed up into the ocean depths. This way, the sea can be a real threat to human lives. The theme of loss is the ultimate message in this commemorative composition.

The sea takes on the feminine gender “she.” This is quite unlike sunsets which have appeared in previous poems to take on the masculine form “he.” Either way, both can be monsters after their own fashion. Each can appear to lurk, and skulk on its “prey.” “Prey” in this poem means human life. The poem is a dedication to the drowning victims of Mtongwe and Bukoba ferries along the Kenya coast.

The sea uses much trickery to lure in its prey, that is, it entices people into going into it in several ways: "She beckons. She challenges. She soothes." People sail on the sea to explore the wonders which lie beyond what they can see. In this manner, the sea appears to beckon. Some go in for the adventurous feeling. In this way, the sea challenges them to come out and test their bravery. To add on to her wiles, the sea gives a lulling feeling. She soothes those who sail upon it, rocking them on a boat or a ferry, or on its waves, which ebb and flow to produce a rocking motion. Whichever way, "she" the sea, has much guile, very much like an enticing female. The interpretation given the actions of the sea might be perceived as consistent with the gender which the sea has been given by the speaker of the poem.

The timelessness of her actions is captured by the allusion to the numberless centuries in which she has lain in wait. Days, nights, which turn into seasons, and these into a lifetime, are connoted in the lines: "She sleeps stealthily on life and seasons/ Kissing hard rock to sand by night /Glaring unblinking at the sky by day" the image of the sea sleeping stealthily symbolizes waiting out these periods of time, lying in wait, unnoticed. This way, the sea farers do not see her coming to strike again. She waits out a long time and then she strikes again.

Many have sailed in it, and been swallowed up. This fact is alluded to in the metaphor of "deathly songs" in the line: "She sings deathly songs of forgotten kinsmen." This symbolizes the fact that many have died in the sea and the memory of their death lingers on with the sea. She has memories of their deaths stored up in her.

To capture the idea that these long dead have formed part of an ancient history, they have been called the "forgotten kinsmen / The Rabs and the Japs and the Chinese peers." The jargon, "Rabs" and "Japs" are short forms of "Arabs" and "Japanese" who, like the Chinese, have been known to cruise the waters of the Indian ocean for several centuries. "When language, metaphorical or not, becomes... specialized and self-consciously unavailable to an outsider, it is jargon" (Hunter, 541). The reason that the terms, "Rabs" and "Japs" and "Chinese peers," fit into the definition of jargon is that one would have to be familiar with the history of the Indian ocean as a sea route of people of the various nationalities to understand Amisi's meaning.

The theme of tragedy is developed by calling attention to the hidden threat of the sea. Nature, which might appear to lie dormant and inviting, can have another side to it, which is a source of fear. In this case, the sea which lies latent for many years strikes, revealing its nasty side, by claiming human lives. On the surface the sea appears calm and friendly, with a soothing blue coloration, but, underneath, it is potent with hazards.

Pun, repetition and alliteration work together to create the rhythmic flow of the poem. In the last line: "The sea sleeps still to steal yet again." Punning "still" with "steal" calls attention to the contrast between the deceptive calmness and the nefarious act of stealing; taking away what does not belong to it. The same line has the alliterative sibilant sound 's' in the words "sea," "sleeps," "steal." The same sibilant forms alliteration in several lines in the repetition of the expression "sit still." The effect achieved by alliteration is to create a feeling of the clandestine activity of the sea. The hissing sound 's' suggests the words are spoken in a ominous sounding voice, as though it were muttered under the speaker's breath.

The theme of loss also characterizes the next two poems, just as there was in Amisi's 'The Sea does not Just Sit Still.' The fear of a dying eland is transmitted into speaker, who feels almost physically the dying throes of the animal. Loss through death evokes fear in that it awakens a realization of mortality in the living. As the speaker holds the dead bird in Datta's poem, the speaker is awake to the transition of the bird, from life to death.

The Death of an Eland (Henry Barlow)

Those eyes!

Those liquid green eyes

Tearless yet crying

Terrified and silent

Imploring for mercy

Those eyes haunt me

We stood and looked at her

Emaciated with hunger and pain

Lying on her side with the festering leg

Dripping with pus held in the air

Trying in vain to heave itself up with her other legs

Those eyes!

The terrified liquid eyes

Fervently transmitted pleas for mercy

And the body shook with terror and pain

The emaciated legs kicked feebly

Trying to get her up

Where she had tripped and fallen.

There were ticks on her belly

Some were fat and bluish green

And there were numerous small brown ones.

Those eye begged!

Those haunting eyes.

The hunter said in a matter of fact way

It is kinder to shoot her

And raised his gun.

There was a kick and a feeble neigh

The body relaxed; the neck fell back.

The eyes looked at me

Still pleading

.....

(Henry Barlow in Cook and Rubadiri, 16-17)

The theme of fear is strong in this poem. The speaker, through empathy, is able to put himself into the animal's place and not only interpret but also experience the emotions that the animal is experiencing. The liquid eyes with which the speaker walks away echo the liquid green eyes of the eland. The speaker's liquid eyes are shedding tears, mourning the dead animal. The speaker has seen the terror in the liquid green eyes of the dying eland, and he, in turn, is afraid. He is thereafter haunted by the memory of the eyes.

It has been said that "eyes are the windows to the soul" (anonymous). By looking into the eyes of the eland, the speaker is able to interpret the emotions experienced by the eland. The fear of dying is "voiced" by the eland through its eyes. The eland is able to "speak" to the observer, "imploing for mercy." The eland is entreating the observer to save it from a painful death. The poet, Henry Barlow, manages to demonstrate that communication need not be through speech only. Communication can be made even through the language of the eyes, from one soul to another. The expression in the animal's eyes is what symbolizes language. It is as though the animal has spoken to him. Barlow manages to demonstrate that animals have feelings just like humans. They can plead, and they can feel terror. They too are afraid to die.

The Dead Bird (Saroj Datta)

Dead on my palm

A slab of silent meat

Suspended between stiffness and rotting

Bones sitting stolid on my skin

The beak clamped tight

Unsoftened by the feathers

A final refusal

Hanging determined from the weak neck

Eyes bright with liquid

Desperate with concentrated feeling
Smouldering into me
The sun's lens-captured heart finding a point to scorch
The curling feathers, screams,
Imprisoning the whole world's silences
Recoiling from my foreign breath
Pink skin drily accepting feather ends
Rustling cage of feathers
Flapping and raging in my mind
Would never float wind-lightened
Empty itself of song
Because a pump refused to beat
An eternity of grace
Cradled and responsive in my hand.
(Datta in Cook and Rubadiri, 35)

There is a sense of loss connoted in the phrase "...a pump refused to beat." Clearly, the speaker is emotive about the fact that the bird now lies dead because its heart stopped beating. Nature made the first pump; the heart, which is mimicked by man when he makes contraptions with pumping devices. This failure of this pump, the heart, is the reason that this bird lies dead. The speaker is entranced by the reality of death. The emanation of death is in the bird which lies in rigor mortis in the speaker's hands. The speaker is awed by this reality. This bird which was once a "rustling cage of feathers" will never again float lightly in the wind, nor sing and so "empty itself of song." It now lies as "an eternity of grace." This is how the speaker conceives of death. He links it with eternity, suggesting that the spirit has now been immortalized. Yet even as the body of the bird lies cradled in his hands, its solid being is responsive to the speaker's touch. It symbolizes

the schism which lies between the world of the bird and his own. In this manner the speaker introduces the theme of the intrusive hand of man. Man is he, the one holding the dead body of the bird, which, even in death, recoils from him. In life, the bird would conceive of the speaker as a foreign animal. In death, the speaker now reads the little body's repulsion of his human touch, since the body symbolically recoils from his human breath. This apparent response of the bird is a manifestation of the speaker's own awareness that he is an intruder. A bird of the wild belongs with nature, and the speaker is aware he ought to let it be, rather than pry.

Thorns of Sub-Sahara (Gatheru Gathemia)

Everything I touch pricks

I watch where I lay my foot

Small creeping things with thorns

All over my boots they stick

There is no vegetation

Other than thorny wild bushes

Hedges stripped of their leaves.

(Gathemia in Luvai and Makokha, 13)

Intrigue can communicate itself in a lamentation. Gathemia makes the thorny country of the Sub-Sahara sound very fascinating. Noteworthy is that although he is describing thorns, the speaker encapsulates an entire topography. The vegetation typifies the harshness of the climate in the sub-sahara Africa. The very title enunciates this harshness, in the vegetation, of thorns, and in the land, sub-saharan terrain, which is semi-arid to arid land. The speaker has to mind where he steps. He contemplates his every step, saying "I watch where I lay my foot." Walking is not easy. His ease in movement is encumbered by his having to tread gingerly upon the ground, as well as work his way around obstacles in his path. The reason is that "small creeping things with thorns/ All over my boots they stick." He is wary of the brambles, with spikes and such a tenacious grip that they hold on to the leather of his boots. These give him discomfort as he walks around.

An idea raised by Bantu Mwaura in 'Cactus,' is again seen in the theme of a harsh and prickly environment in 'Thorns of Africa.' "There is no vegetation/ other than thorny wild bushes" the desert lacks the lushness associated with wetter land. The barbed vegetation is all that characterizes the desert, giving it a look of desolation. So, in this manner, a mood of desolation is created. While thorn bushes might sometimes have small green leaves, these ones have none. He calls them "Hedges stripped of their leaves." The thorn bushes stand bare. This ironical summation impresses upon the reader that these hedges are anomalous. One might expect a hedge to have leaves on it, but finding none, the forlorn look makes them appear as if they ought to have leaves, a sign of life and abundance, to cover their bareness. The word "stripped" insinuates that there is something missing which should have been there.

Such a poem is left open to interpretation. Thorns and leave-less hedges do not necessarily stand for natural features. They might stand as a commentary on life. As the prick of a thorn produces discomfort, so are life's mishaps seen to be painful. Also, leaflessness of the hedges could represent a shortfall in life. The same sort of imagery of leave-less hedges is as we might see in such a line as Shakespeare's Sonnet 73: "bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang" (Shakespeare, Sonnet 73) to symbolize a waning life. "Everything I touch pricks" might suggest that wherever he goes he is faced with harshness of response. It would not be too far-fetched to interpret such a poem as such. But it could also be a poem about the literal thorn and scrub vegetation.

Despite the promise of pain, walking in this terrain is made to sound fascinating. The artful manner in which Gathemia controls mention of discomfort is hidden in such a subliminal idea as that his feet are well protected despite the creepy things which "All over my boots they stick." Since they do not stick directly onto his body, but onto a removable boot, this tactile image is controlled, and the discomfort muted. The poem ends up more fascinating than it is alarming. Imagery in 'Thorns of Sub-Sahara' is successfully placid where it might have been stark.

Poignancy is often the attendant feeling when man looks on the natural world around him and reflects on events in his own life. In no mood does romanticism find its fullness better than in poignancy. The poems in this section manifest a heartrending cry from deep within the heart of the speakers.

Like the Sea and Its Waters (Waigwa Wachira)

I have see the sun rise and set

with a volcanic passion of flaming orange
and I have thought of the passion of our sweet love
that once rose and set
like the sun in the sky

I have seen trees after sunset
getting ready to sleep
and mountains at dusk with purple blankets
and soft clouds of ink;
and softly I have thought of you

I have stood on the ferry
in the Indian ocean
and have breathed
the sweet scented air
that God gave the sea:
and I have thought of the fragrance
of a love that once shone so brightly
like the stars in the sky.

I have sat barefoot
on the rocks by the lake

wondering what went wrong
wishing that I could hold you;
knowing that I have lost you;
feeling my thoughts fly
like a bird across the sea

.....

If I could touch and hold the sun
I'd give it to you

.....

You are like the sea
And it waters to me
And I have loved you dearly;
More dearly than spoken word can tell.

(Wachira in Amateshe, 75-77)

When literal language is not enough to express an upwelling of emotion, figurative terms becomes an only solution. The speaker communicates the theme of desolation by transference of emotion from himself to nature. The speaker has been deserted by a loved one. The depth of the anguish he feels can only find equivalence in the vastness of the elements such as the sun and the ocean. The speaker's tone is wistful for the old times when the subject was with him and wishes to communicate the intensity of his wistfulness to her. Nostalgically he longs to make amends, saying at one point that "if I could touch the sun, I would give it to you." Such is the gesture he thinks would make up for whatever way in which he failed her. In his imagination, only the sun stands as big enough a symbol to be given as a token of what she means to him.

Using the symbol of the sun once more, he equates the rising and the setting of the sun to the ebb and flow of the passion he and she had. The setting and the rising of the sun is a timeless event, repetitious and unending. The speaker found reassurance in this sense of timelessness while he

and she were together. But now, while the sun still rises and sets, their relationship has ended. The timelessness quality of the sun now reminds him of what is no longer there. It intensifies his mood of desolation.

The sea as a symbol is used repeatedly, just like the image of the sun. Four times, the waters of the sea are mentioned or alluded to. Water is therapeutic when it is in large bodies such as the sea or a lake. It also symbolizes certainty that the heart seeking constancy may find it there. The speaker refers to the Indian Ocean, saying that he has breathed in the scent of the sea and has thought of his lost love. He again says that he has sat by the lake and thought of her. Ultimately he says that she is like the sea and its waters to him. He demonstrates what the sea means to him in earlier lines: its unfathomable mysteries arouse memories of her in him.

Everywhere he looks, in the sky, on the ground, in the sea, something stands as a symbolic reminder of her. The softness of the clouds compares to the “softness” of the thoughts he has for her. “Softness” connotes “fondness.” He has fond memories of her. In the undisturbed company of the natural objects, emotions can come flooding into one who is experiencing poignancy. Nature affords the speaker this sort of catharsis.

The Desert (Amin Kassam)

hear my burning cry o heavens!

hear the lament

of a disillusioned soul

whose footprints weave drunkenly

across the desert floor

you have seen me trudging

across the sands

through whirling storms

staggering over dunes

gasping with thirst

you have seen my steps falter

in oozing sand
you have seen me crawl towards
dry scintillant water
and yet beneath your relentless gaze
i still plead,
plead for bur a drop!

even the cactus raises hinged arms
aloft in supplication
is there no emotion in you o heavens,
no compassion

.....
many have looked to the garden
with hopeful despair
as though at a mirage
and wept
hear my whisper o heavens
before i fall
i have not the strength
to thunder forth my words
in this land ravaged of hope
where bleached bones

seem to say

despair of escape...

perhaps there is no return.

(Kassam in Amateshe, 112-113)

Kassam celebrates the desert by showing its power over the living creatures. The desert is a force to be reckoned with. Kassam is fascinated with the potency of the desert. He sees artistry even in the starkness of aridity. He therefore makes an artistic projection of bleak reality. The desert stands for intensity of human suffering. At a literal and symbolic level, desert has been used to signify scarcity at its most bare.

The tortured cry of an emaciated body in the desert comes loud and clear in the poem. The intensity of emotion is in this cry. The speaker engages in apostrophe, beseeching the desert to lighten his anguish. In actual fact the speaker is wishing for rain in the desert. Since the desert is the source of his torment, he speaks to it as though it could hear him. He merges his own torture with that of the land, personifying the land, making it appear as though it could hear him, and by so doing, bring him the solution he seeks. In an overwhelmed tone, he wonders why the land has no mercy. Often, in the depth of anguish, humans have sought to communicate with inanimate objects, as though directly expecting a response. It is a sign of how deeply poignant the moment is.

The speaker protests the harshness of the desert. All life is in dire straits, and there is no suggestion that relief is coming soon. It is not just the speaker who implores the sky for rain. To symbolize that he is in good company, he says "even the cactus raises hinged arms/ aloft in supplication." This humanizing image of a plant able to raise its hands in prayer for rain is to the speaker an indication of how thirsty, and desperate all living things are in the desert.

The desert is robbed of the sustaining power of water, and yet, according to the speaker, ironically, many have crossed the desert floor and wished for water. The oxymoron "hopeful despair" communicates the intensity with which water has been longed for. The desert, much like real life does sometimes, has raised expectations in them even in their knowledge of how hopeless the situation is. The desert is known to present mirages, just as life is known to present moments of futility. This mirage could be what the speaker is referring to by "many have looked to the garden." "the garden" is the mirage of the sun's reflection on the sand, which tricks an

observer into thinking that there is water ahead. The mirage raises the hope of the traveller in the desert even though the traveller knows that there is nothing there. This explains the oxymoron "hopeful despair."

"Bleached bones" is an image which shows the desert to be a symbol of death. Living creatures have fallen on its surface, died and left an exposed skeleton which is in turn scorched crisp. They signify how unrelenting the sun is in its glaring. It is for this reason that the speaker in a despairing tone calls it the "land of ravaged hope." Hope is symbolized by signs of life. In the desert, the intensity of the sun takes away life, and thus hope. This is a statement as to how man fathoms his world. Where there is life there is hope. Hope is tantamount to continuity of life. The strength of passion displayed in the poem classifies the poem under this section 'Intensity of Feeling'.

3.5 Leisure in Nature

How the human mind fathoms the natural landscape is often symbolic of the attendant emotions. When the mind is calm, the elements are perceived to augment that state of being. Such a moment might present a depth of insight as to the balances or imbalances surrounding one. The greater the balance of the elements, the more the quiet of mind. The more the quiet of mind, the greater the state of leisure. Sometimes leisure is not in its untainted sense, though, but might have an accompanying blend of sensations. Several poems in this section closely communicate these complexities.

'In the Park' is an adroitly crafted composition of a human taking a leisurely walk in the park and taking in the sights. While out for a walk, all of one's senses are tuned to the surroundings. The speaker registers not just the sights, but also the sounds of the park. A sixth sense kicks into place too. This is empathy. Even though emotions have not been named directly by this particular speaker, it is palpable what emotion must have lead to the description of the scenery before him.

In the Park (Khadambi Asalache)

A naked Child.

No blood runs

in its marble veins.
It shows silent acceptance
of its public privacy.

Two birds up a branch
speak in metaphors
to people walking
along commissioned paths.

Even trees
give in to a designer's whim
are kept
in their places; nothing
here has been left to chance.

(Asalache, 27)

Man's sculpting hand has left everything in such perfect order in this park, that there is a cold, detached feeling to it. With everything so clinically in its place, man no longer blends in with nature. "Birds ... speak in metaphors." This double irony suggests a number of things. For one, the 'language' of the birds is now lost on the people. They can no longer interpret the musicality of the birds. In a natural set up, it is easy to tell which bird is singing and what call it is making. Here, though, their 'language' now sounds like some alien noise to the passersby. Secondly, the birds, themselves natural and un-tame, might themselves feel lost in this superficiality. They are as out of synch with the park, being just about the only beings which are in their natural state. They are at variance with the people who themselves walk "along commissioned paths." A made-to-order path symbolizes formality, and the need to be careful about how one walks on it. It is

expensive business, needing maintenance. Naturally, it all exudes the intended feel of domestication of the park.

The speaker is obviously in a poignant mood. A heart-rending scene of a lonely little body of the marble child heightens the mood of forlornness in the poem: "A naked Child. / No blood runs /in its marble veins. /It shows silent acceptance/of its public privacy." This image of a naked child standing in the middle of a park exposed to prying eyes of the passersby is forlorn. It causes the reader to question the empathetic stance taken by the speaker. Why does the speaker notice the specific objects that he does? What state of mind is the person who notices discomfiting objects in a park; a place which ironically is supposed to offer mental therapy, physical comfort and relaxation? Why a child, a symbol of fragility? Why does no blood run in its veins -- an allusion to death where there should be life? Why the 'silent acceptance' connoting a sad submissiveness of the public display of its private parts? Does this paradox "public privacy" allude to humiliation? While the sculpted child is supposed to be a relaxing work of art for park dwellers to admire, the speaker obviously feels differently about it. He sees it as a solemn matter. He seems to question the child as a motif for an isolated park sculpture. He empathizes with the symbolic isolation of a 'child.' This is a poignant moment for him.

Richardson Daily et al make an analysis of Hopkins, a nature poet, who like Asalache describes statue in the park in one of his poems, 'Archaic Torso'. Daily et al say "...the statue is manmade and stands, as all manmade objects do, in opposition to nature. Its order... come from the artifice..." (Daily et al, 273). This means that the statue in the park, in Hopkins' poem is incongruous with the naturalness of the park, because it is artificial. Khadambi Asalache's poem is similar to Hopkins' in this theme. It describes a man-made statue as standing out in the park due to its artificiality. Asalache makes clear the speaker's attitude towards the statue. He feels that it does not belong there. That is why he highlights its non-living qualities. It is made of marble, and it has no blood running in it. Due to these deathly qualities of the little statue, it does not blend in with the living greenery of the park. The tone of voice, then, is resisting the hand of man. The speaker has no doubt induced pathos in the reader, such that an unspoken suggestion is to leave the park in its natural state.

A location touched by the human hand can be a source of much wild finery. The speaker in 'At Farm in July' takes a walk through a farm. What he observes, and what brings him such tranquility has nothing to do with the human hand. Other than the mention of "the blooming

yield” of cowpeas,” a leguminous farm crop, there is little else to suggest that the scenes are taken from a farmland. A farm land would suggest there is interference by human sophistication. But Ndosi does not bring in this intrusion. What he concentrates on is the naturalness of the fields.

At Farm in July (Noah K. Ndosi)

A spider is busy
spinning a play-field
of glassy, fine network;
the wind distills
weaves of rustling,
the bumble bee dances
from tops of blooming
dark-green cowpeas;
in frantic leaps;
a duiker scampers off
near green shrubs;
a twittering bird
singularly applauds
the promising yield:
peace walks into mind
as dew trickles down
with hesitation
to mother earth;
then, cool July

is on the march again.

(Ndosi in Luvai and Makokha, 28-9)

The spider at its web, the rustling wind, the dancing bumble bee, a scampering duiker, a twittering bird, dew trickling down, these are the activities on this deserted farm land. The activities are in keeping with the tranquil mood. The speaker's leisurely walk, the little animals quietly going about their business, are therapeutic to watch. The speaker puts the feeling into pictures, saying: "Peace walks into mind." The feeling of satisfaction is almost physical. No wonder it has been personified as walking into the mind. The speaker needs to make this feeling of peace tangible, so that he may create it more clearly in his mind.

"A twittering bird / singularly applauds / the promising yield" Birds are seen to time again embody the prevailing mood of the poem. Their songs are seen to be interpreted in different ways, by the different poets, always according to the poet's attitude towards events in the poem. The symbolic "applaud" by the twittering bird in Ndosi's 'At Farm in July' is a projection of the speaker's feeling of pleasure. The bird signifies satisfaction at the abundance of crop growing on the farm. The poet's attitude that all is well on the farm is the reason the bird sings in harmony with the surroundings. Its song translates as applause. Applause would a sign of approval for the coming rich harvest.

Different from the song by this bird, is that sung by birds in Khadambi Asalaches 'In the Park.' Asalache's birds, which are at variance with the superficiality of the environment, are said to "speak in metaphors." Their language cannot be understood by the passing humans. Their too primordial musical notes are incongruous with an unnatural environment. They project the mood of discomfort created by the superficiality of the park. Yet again, in Amin Kassam's 'Sunset,' birds twitter with anxiety. They observe a "predator," which is darkness, come to take its place for the night. The birds project the fearful nature of darkness. In Anne Cunningham's "African Night," birds hide up in the trees, and with their songs and trills, sing in thankfulness, glad for a hiding place, up and away from the prowling hunters in bushes. In the trees, they lie in wait for the morning. They project the suspenseful mood. Danger lurks all around, with predators looking for prey.

"July" a term used as a way of marking time by humans is also that time of year when there is no planting going on in most areas of the tropics. Rather, the crop is given time to grow. A harvest

comes in the month of August. The period in between sees the farmland lie quiet. Wild animals, such as the mentioned duiker, may slink in for a nibble. The duiker is startled by sudden movement. Obviously the speaker is walking in the quiet farm, taking it all in. “The bumble bee dances/from tops of blooming/dark-green cowpeas.” The bumble bee is obviously harvesting pollen. The rich colors of a bumble bee, often yellow and black or white and black stripes match well with the dark-green cowpeas. This image enhances the theme of harmony on the farm in this month of July.

Windsurfers Flying (Valerie Cuthbert)

Like multi-coloured butterflies

They dance upon the tops of waves;

Swoop down steep hollows and , wind-blown,

Raise their rainbow wings. A lovely sight.

They race to catch the laughing wind

Which tumbles them through lacey surf

Back from the soaring wings of flight

To land once more upon this solid earth.

Gay earth-bound birds, filled with sea’s delight.

(Cuthbert in Luvai and Makokha, 21)

If the title of the poem did not say “windsurfers,” one would not associate the poem with humans. Even with the title, it is not certain that they are people that the speaker is describing. They could be birds of the air, symbolically referred to as “windsurfers.” The motion at swooping and flying motions at sea, with wings, leave the poem full of varieties of meaning. However, we derive the intended meaning by making deductions about human, versus animal behavior. The power of the wind, and the strength of sea waves is able to make humans feel that they too, can fly like birds. The “sea’s delight” is actually man’s own delight. Man is able to simulate nature. Like birds of the air, man too can be wind borne and sea borne.

How accurately Cuthbert has captured the hilarity of windsurfing at sea. There is mood of joy in the windsurfers. They have been called "Gay earth-bound birds, filled with sea's delight." The repeated notion of "gay," "delight," makes clear the impression of happiness the windsurfing people are filled with. Action is swift. Nature's therapy is in the swooping and tumbling and soaring motion the sea waves and the wind afford them. Further still, "They race to catch the laughing wind." The frivolity of racing to catch the wind depicts their enjoyment all the more carefree. The fact that the very wind is "laughing" is an artful contrivance. People's emotions are often transferred onto the natural feature. It makes the emotion all the more concrete. A laughing wind is a humanizing metaphor. The metaphor creates hyperbole. The laughing human is shrouded with a larger-than-life merriment of the wind.

Since this is a highly visual poem, color is important. The windsurfers are colorful to look at, due to the clothes they wear, and the kites which lift them up, not to mention the azures and emeralds of the ocean waters. They look "Like multi-coloured butterflies." A tactile quality characterizes this butterfly metaphor. Lifted up by the wind, the people look light in weight, as though they are barely touching the water waves. The symbol "birds" to represent people forms as strong an impression as that of the butterflies. The lightheartedness of the activity they are engaged in is alluded to. Birds appear frolicsome when they fly. The subjects, parachuted up by their kites soar above the ocean as though they were birds on wings.

Cuthbert makes use of rhyme. Like her earlier examined poem 'Migration: Zebra and Wildebeest' end rhyme is decipherable. End rhyme, is rhyme appearing at the end of lines. However, in 'Windsurfers Flying' it is half-rhyme rather than exact rhyme. With half rhymes, words have sounds which are similar but are not identical (Babusci et al, 450). For instance: "flies" "sight" and "flight" in the lines 1, 4 and 7 are palpable end half- rhymes, while "earth" forms a half-rhyme with "delight" in the two closing lines. Onomatopoeic sounds are also audible. Some words whose sound imitates the action they describe are such as "swoop" "tumble" "soar" we can visualize the scooping motion suggested by "swoop" as the subject takes a dive into the ocean tide, we can see the falling motion suggested by "tumble," and the sailing up high into the air suggested by "soar." Even "surf" suggests the furl created by waves, so that we visualize the waves curl up. These actions are all the more visible because the words form a visual impression.

The Road to Rumuruti (Anne Cunningham)

So many years since first I took the stony road
That winds down through the forest to the plain,
Then skirts the tumbling stream on rocky slopes
Till the road joins the river meandering
On its long slow journey to the swamp.

On either side thick bush,
Sparse grass on stony ground,
Run beside the road,
Till stunted thorn takes over.

In the distance
Podo and Yellow Thorn tower over the river,
Where the Club stands on its green lawns.
Beyond rises once again
The harsh stony land of Laikipia.

The sky is still blue,
The white clouds mass and sail away,
Throwing shadows
Across the limitless plain.

Where is the change?

There is no change except the fences,

But the people are not the same:

They come and go and life goes on

In different patterns

To those we knew of old.

(Cunningham, 6)

Travelling and sightseeing can be an occasion for much enrichment of the mind. The speaker in 'The Road to Rumuruti' makes a journey through a well liked landscape. She takes in the scenes, noting both the prominent features and those in the background. There is a great variety of features. The speaker manages to paint a resplendent scene. Naturally, nostalgia is an accompanying feeling, as is characteristic of remembrances. She begins by recounting how long it has been since she first travelled on this road.

The road symbolizes a journey into her past. She compares the land as it appears now with the way it used to be. As she moves further and further on, she notes that everything still looks the same. Features from the past she remembers have not changed. Taking delight in the physiographic features on the particular day in the poem, the speaker observes that "The sky is still blue, /The white clouds mass and sail away, / Throwing shadows /Across the limitless plain." The theme of timelessness makes itself manifest. Times may change, as the speaker says, but the scenery remains the same. The sky remains blue, and the white clouds remain white in the sky, and the plains remain as vast as they have always been. Her nostalgia is assuaged by the constancy.

Cunningham's poem evokes the name of a known place on the Kenyan landscape, Rumuruti. The poem describes the road going there in a manner that suggests that she is familiar with this terrain, and used to travel along this road often. Nostalgia is carried in the remembrances of the countryside along which the speaker travelled a long time ago. She remembers "those we knew of old" fusing it with a comparison of the countryside then and now, to see what changes might have occurred. The landscape remains the same, but the people, she observes, have come and gone.

People might migrate from place to place, but prominent features of a natural landscape often remain solidly recognizable.

Although the title is deceptively about a road to a place called Rumuruti, it is the landscape through which this road runs that is the focus of the poem. On either side of the road are vast expanses of natural landscape. They are characterised by rivers and forests, open fields, valleys and gorges. The speaker greatly admires the scenery.

The speaker describes a stony road which makes a winding path down a slope. This road cuts through the forest and joins a plain on the other side of the forest. So far, what has defined the road are the natural features; the rockiness, the slope, the forest, and the plain. Taking this road could actually be seen as one way to see the scenery.

While on a road one is almost sure to cross a bridge or other and this one surely traverses a stream. In the speaker's words, it "skirts the tumbling stream on rocky slopes." This is a gorge. The road crosses a gorge, past a stream which itself takes a dip into the ever plunging valley. The steepness of the valley is thus displayed.

On either side of the road to Rumuruti, there is variety of sightings created by the vegetation. Sometimes there is thick bush, sometimes there is sparse grass on stony ground. This stretches on for a distance, and then "stunted thorn" takes over. "Stunted thorn" must mean the thorny scrubs and short trees, namely the "Podo and Yellow Thorn" trees. These are characteristic of the East African Savannah land. The geographic setting has been given a specific name. It is the "harsh stony land of Laikipia." The Laikipia plains are a real place geographically, lying in the mid-western region of the Kenyan Rift Valley. The serrated landscape is characteristically dry, with occasional breaks of greenery as the poem suggests, as is typical of savannah country. The road in the poem "joins the river meandering/On its long slow journey to the swamp." Even though the river is not named, by looking at the Philips Atlas, the River Ewaso Nyiro, coming from the Nyandarua watershed does empty its waters in the Lorian Swamps of the Duruma Wajir Low Belt (Philip's, 11). Evidently this is the terrain which the speaker in Cunningham's poem takes so much pleasure driving through, and she is glad that things have remained the same. It is symbolic of her love of constancy.

The Thorn Tree (Anne Cunningham)

Meet me at the Thorn Tree.

Which Thorn Tree?

There are over fifty kinds!

There is the Yellow Thorn

That grows along the luggahs and rivers:

The Red Thorn of the mountain side,

The Whistling Thorn on the vast plains.

There is a Yellow Thorn

Amid the concrete towers of the City Centre,

And never in its natural state

Would such a wide variety of life

In all its shapes have passed beneath its boughs.

No lions here, nor leopards in its branches:

No elephants to tear its symmetry apart,

Nor baboons to screech and clamour

At the set of sun.

But birds there are in this bustling place,

With such varied plumage

As dazzles the eye and mind.

A new form of life flits by:
The hippies and their ilk,
With lion-like manes of hair
And strange garments,
A protest against a life not seen in this land
Of far flung sky, plains and mountains.

Protest is the eternal weapon of discontented youth
Throughout the vaunted civilization of the west.

In this land of sky, mountains and plains
Such protest seems an alien and ill-fitting cloak
Where clear eyes and firm muscles
Give the ability to see afar and match
The unrestricted grace of the wild,
Which lies for all to see
Within sight of the Yellow Thorn Tree.

(Cunningham, 8)

The speaker opens with dialogue. A person makes a statement and the other asks a question. Dialogue gives a sense that she is explaining the rest of the poem to an actively listening audience. The listener tells the speaker to meet her at the Thorn Tree. The speaker then asks which Thorn Tree it is, exclaiming that there are over fifty kinds of Thorn Trees. Upon which she goes on to enumerate the thorn tree types found on the land. Dialogue proves an artful style of introducing the theme of variety of this form of fauna. "Thorn Tree" is capitalized. It is used as a

permanent mark by those who meet there. But then, it turns out, that when one thinks of it, there are scores of similar permanent marks on the land. The thorn tree's enduring quality is captured thus, that it lives on for a long time.

The poet, Cunningham, uses the one thorn tree as a symbol of the pleasure she derives from the wide variety of the thorn tree on the land. By repeatedly mentioning what a great variety of the thorn trees there is, she makes obvious her admiration of the fact that there are so many of them. The wide range of species of the thorn tree is also epitomized in the range of colors the trees come in. alongside the range of colors is captured as well the resilience of the thorn tree as a species. The thorn tree can take root and thrive in many types of environment. There are visual images from the color spectrum offered by the tree, even as we get an impression of the tree's sturdiness: "There is the Yellow Thorn /That grows along the luggahs and rivers: /The Red Thorn of the mountain side, /The Whistling Thorn on the vast plains. /There is a Yellow Thorn/Amid the concrete towers of the City Centre," the resilience of the thorn tree is such that it can grow on rivers, mountains, plains, or even in an artificial, man-made environment of the city. It does not wither, whether conditions are harsh or not.

The speaker uses the varieties of thorn tree to expose even more variety of life in the land. There is a tone of wonder at the variety of life forms in the city, and in the jungle. She talks about the birds of varied plumage, even here in the city, which would dazzle the eye. These are the many species of birds hosted by the East African Savannah land, upon which the city is built. "Birds of varied plumage" found in the city could very easily symbolize the variety of people who walk the city streets. There are some whom she says have long manes of hair. The lion-like mane of hair symbolizes Caucasian type of hair. In this image of man's hair looking like a lion's mane there arises a very close merging of man with nature.

The thorn tree also is a symbol of different things to different creatures. The speaker uses the tree to mention the variety of animals: lions, leopards, elephants, baboons. Of leopards she says that they rest on the branches of the thorn tree, of elephants; that they tear up the thorn tree into two. This is because elephants feed on the thorn tree. Variety is not just in the life forms, it is also in the scenery. The speaker calls this the land "of far flung sky, plains and mountains." This is an acknowledgment of the variety of landscapes. The skies look like they are further above than they would appear in a different geographical location. This is true of the East African and Equatorial skies. The firmament appears higher up, probably because the atmosphere is so clear of cloud cover.

Repetition of the phrase “In this land of sky, mountains and plains” is evidence that this quality about the land is outstanding. She displays her attitude of fascination. She highlights this quality about the landscape by mentioning it repeatedly. More repetition is of a notional kind. We decipher it by contextual interpretation of “The unrestricted grace of the wild.” The speaker has already alluded to this wild by mentioning the life forms in it in stanzas one, two and three.

The platform which the speaker uses to contemplate the diversified land is the thorn tree. In her mental exploration, she gives the specific setting by saying that all of this happens “Within sight of the Yellow Thorn Tree.” The Thorn Tree is used as a motif around which other motifs cluster, to bring out the theme of diversity in the land which hosts the thorn tree.

Just Africa (Anne Cunningham)

I love this land of arching skies

Towering mountains and shimmering plains,

Floating clouds, fluttering dust-devils,

The endless road, the valley full of rock,

The sudden vision of water without end.

How can one tell what next will come,

To enthrall vision and ear and heart?

On the map the lines follow this river,

That plateau and the Lake,

But these are flat and bleak

Until you try to follow some dotted line

That takes you to your journey's end.

Vast nyika, arid plain folded mid rolling hills

To upland heights where life begins,
And onward still to more remote ranges
Of valley and gaunt hillside and plain:
Forest, savannah, desert,
End finally in a Lake, a geyser,
And as far as eye can see more tumbled giants.

There is no end
In this land of endless variety .

(Cunningham, 5)

Cunningham comes out and articulates open admiration of the landscapes of Africa. She says that she loves it with its arching skies, towering mountains and shimmering plains. These are symbols of the pleasure she derives from the land. The skies, just like she expresses in ‘End of Drought’ are arching. She finds them distant and far flung. They appear very high up, probably due to the cloudless atmosphere. Visibility stretches higher up. These are enthralling to her. The mountains are also high and towering, also probably because the eye is able to see the top almost all the time, no matter how high a mountain is. The plains, with the sun’s reflection on the grass and sand are “shimmering.” Evaporation of moisture on hot and humid grasslands also often gives the impression that the air is glistening.

The speaker is also enthralled by the variety the terrain has on offer. She asks the rhetorical question displaying her sense of wonder at the array of things there are to see: “How can one tell what next will come, /To enthrall vision and ear and heart?” By this expression of wonder she is celebrating the diversity of the African terrain. Amongst the sites she goes on to mention are plateaus, lakes, rivers, vast nyika, arid plain, rolling hills, uplands, remote ranges of valleys and gaunt hillsides, more plain, Forest, savannah, desert, a Lake, a geyser. Repetition of some features such as lake and plains creates a sense that there are many of them, whichever way one goes. It makes an impression that the land is vast, stretching for far distances, accommodating repeat patterns of the natural sites.

There is a tone of encouragement that one should visit the land, and not just peer at it on a map. On the map, she says, the features appear flat and bleak: “Until you try to follow some dotted line/ That takes you to your journey’s end.” She is encouraging physical travel. The expression “to follow some dotted line” on a map, suggests that one would be following that road which on the map is drawn as some dotted line. It symbolizes the dotted markings in the middle of a tarmac road, which are often represented on a map as one dotted line. This road would lead one until one gets to where one wants to go, which is to those plateaus and rivers and lakes one was fingering on the map.

This is one poem which uniquely celebrates Africa, naming it as a continent, and giving unreserved praise of its natural features. The features named therein are ones which the East African landscape is replete with. The nyika, for instance is a name exclusively used to name plains around East Africa. It is a Kiswahili word. East Africa, and mostly Kenya is also home to geysers, or hot springs of the rift valley, not to mention vast stretches of savannah land. Sharply contrasting features of desert and forest, mountain and plains make East Africa a constant feast for the eyes. Conspicuously, Cunningham’s celebration is chiefly centered on East Africa.

The East African poet has amply demonstrated that humans often think in symbols, and that the natural world is replete with mirror images of what often transpires in man’s life. The land is not just land to the perceiving eye; it is an extension of deeper sensations. Mingling with nature and being a keen observer of it presents one with many occasions to see one’s own life replicated by, or addressed by the animate and inanimate wild world.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHAPES AND SOUNDS OF NATURE: CONTENT DETERMINES FORM

4.1 Introduction

“Content determines form” means that what is being said (content) is the reason that the poem is shaped (form) as it is. This is to say that were it not for the message, that shape would not have been chosen. This argument that “content determines form” is outsourced from a similar statement by Goerg Lukacs, however, the Lukacs’ sense of form is not in the “formalistic” sense (Kennedy and Gioia, 2228). Form is used in this chapter to mean the arrangement of words in a poem. For the purpose of clarity, in this unit ‘form’ is used largely in the sense that J. Paul Hunter has defined it; as the outward appearance of the poem. To quote Hunter’s definition of form:

The form of a poem has to do with its appearance, just as does the form of a building, and one can describe that form in many different ways... the simplest sense of poetic form involves the literal appearance on the page, the poem’s shape seen physically, conceived literally... Occasionally the words are even shaped like a particular object, as in ... concrete poetry (Hunter, 543).

The literal appearance of the poem on the page is made through word arrangement. Arguably, concrete poetry, lineation and prosody make the most patently obvious word arrangement. They therefore make the most visibly demonstrable study of form. This is because they present a distinct outward shape of the poem. What one is saying concurs with the way on is saying it on the page of the book. It means studying concrete poetry, lineation and prosody is an especially convenient way of displaying the manner in which form might be influenced by the thematic concern. This is more so when the theme or content matter of the poem is visual. The natural

world is a visual domain. Describing shapes of natural objects by going beyond semantics to the outward or physical arrangement of the words of a poem is very useful.

A study of prosody comprises of sound schemes within the poem. “Schemes are foregrounded repetitions of expression ... Examples of sound schemes are alliteration, assonance, consonance and onomatopoeia, idiophones and rhyme (Leech, 74). Other sound schemes are pun and repetition and enjambment. In the words of Leech, sound schemes form a phonological echo (Ibid). By so doing they enhance rhythm. They will be highlighted so as to demonstrate that the nature of the sounds within the poem; form, is determined by the overall intended meaning; content.

4.2 Concrete Poetry

As pointed out earlier concrete poetry is that physical idea of form. Gioia and Kennedy have labeled it ‘Visual Poetry.’ The appearance of the lines goes together with their meaning. (Gioia and Kennedy, 947). “Concrete poetry is poetry that is meant to be seen on the page, as well as heard like an ordinary poem. In a concrete poem, the words are arranged into a shape, often one that looks like the subject” (Babusci et al, 474). The reason the poem assumes that particular shape on the page is the message being sent out. The double effect gives the poem two levels of emphasis.

In nature poems, the concrete shape might be a leaf, or a bird, or any shape of a natural object. Earlier poets have experimented with nature’s shapes. An example is E.E. Cummings’ ‘l(a.’

The poem "l(a" is arranged vertically in groups of one to five letters. When the text is laid out horizontally, it reads as *l(a leaf falls)oneliness* —in other words, *a leaf falls* inserted within the first two letters of *loneliness*...the image of a single falling leaf is a common

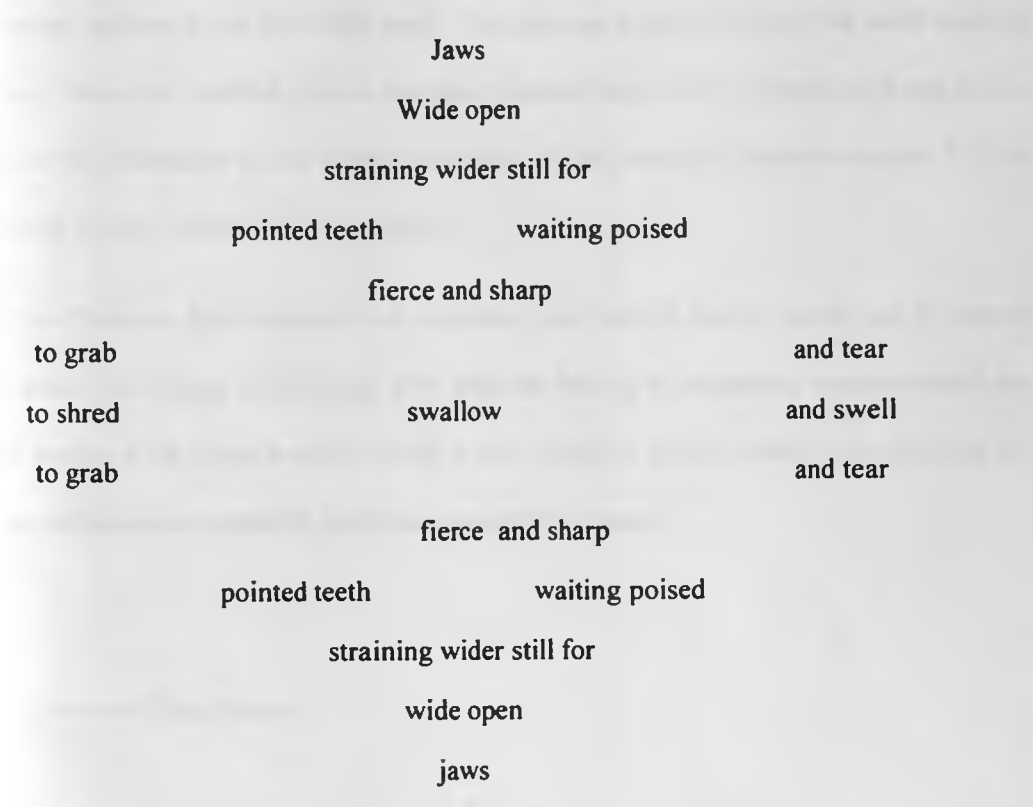
symbol for loneliness, and that this sense of loneliness is enhanced by the structure of the poem. He writes that the fragmentation of the words "illustrates visually the separation that is the primary cause of loneliness" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>).

Cumming's poem illustrates that an abstract concept such as loneliness can be made concrete, by arranging letters on the page of a book, to make them form the concept of an isolated leaf falling, even as the speaker is describing the same. In this manner concrete poetry produces dual meaning: stimulating the mind, even as it stimulates the eye.

Another example is 'Swan and Shadow' by John Hollander (Kennedy and Gioia, 946). It has been called "verbal silhouette" (Ibid) because it forms the perfect shape of a swan as it swims in the water and its shadow in the water, because it is describing a scene on a pond in which the swan swims. These poems and many other of their kind grew important with the written word, when poetry could now be seen visually. As Kennedy and Gioia put it, "ever since George Herbert's day," back in the seventeenth century, "poets have continued to experiment with the looks of printed poetry" (948). In the past decades, as Kennedy and Gioia say, concrete poetry has become increasingly widespread. Its influences are also seen in East African poems.

Amongst the East African nature poems studied so far, experimentation with concrete poetry is not a common feature. But there are a notable number who have, making it an interesting field for study. This form displays a heightened level of sophistication above the ordinary stanza. Mabala's 'Jaws' and Mukuru's 'Teardrop' come across as very clearly outlined concrete poems of nature.

Jaws (Richard S. Mabala)



(Mabala in Luvai and Makokha, 243)

To make the content more meaningful Mabala scatters lines on the page to draw a picture of the open jaws of an animal. This displays clever use of form. The theme of the poem is made deliberately self-evident in the poem. Mabala means to communicate the theme of greed, whether in animals or in humans. This is the content of the poem.

The pictography of concrete poetry is chosen so as to get the poem to speak for itself. Not much explanation of the theme of the poem is needed upon looking at the external structure of the poem. The Jaws described in the poem could be those of an animal. They are ferocious and large-sized, straining wide to take in their kill. Obviously the jaws of an animal have been used

symbolically to lament greed in humans. At the literal level, though, the pictographic quality of Mabala's poem outlines a jaw line, with teeth. The jaws are prised open and the teeth bared in readiness to tear, chew and swallow, just as the poem denotes they will. The theme of greed is thus enunciated in this intimation of the voracious motion of the jaws of a ferocious animal. It is an ample example of how content determines form.

'Teardrop' by Samwiri Kisa Mukuru is a concrete poem which makes ample use of natural images to attain the fullness of meaning. One gets the feeling of poignancy communicated not just by the words of the poem, but also by the visual portrayal of the teardrop. By and large the poem makes references to mournful qualities suggested by nature.

Teardrop (Samwiri Kisa Mukuru)

•
•
•
•
I
feel
like a
teardrop
hanging off
battered cheeks
somehow it was not
supposed to be like this
the dreams are filled with
galloping mares and ambiguous

faces giving murky stares, and I am
ready to roll off and become a thousand
particles of salt, I *feel* so much like a
drop of rain hanging from a thorn on a
rose's stem just magnifying all behind
with a light that will soon become un-
kind for clarity will be the last thing
on my mind when I evaporate
and I *feel* like a dewdrop
clinging to sweet green
grass just waiting for
the sun to come
up.

(Mukuru in Luvai and Makokha, 3)

Concrete poetry is visual and Mukuru's teardrop is self evidently one. On a graphical level, the poem forms a teardrop suspended mid air on its way to fall on the ground. It captures an action in its process. It not only creates suspense of a teardrop suspended mid-air, but it also has kinetic energy in that it communicates a feeling of physical motion. Internally, the poem goes on to develop the theme of a teardrop falling off a cheek. The speaker links his lugubrious feelings to the tear which would come from his crying. Mood and structure are thus interwoven.

Significant to this study is the symbolic comparison of this teardrop, and the source of his lachrymose mood to the natural world. Mukuru uses a series of similes to achieve this purpose. Similes conjure up the visual image of a suspended drop of water, ready to fall. The speaker

himself feels like a teardrop hanging off a cheek. The idea that a person feels like one big tear drop, is symbolic of how weepy he feels. His entire body feels teary; like his very essence is immersed in tears. In a second simile, he says he feels like a drop of rain hanging from a thorn. Once again this creates the mental picture of a drop of water about to fall. Its crystalline qualities are even further seen in the reflection caught in the drop, of the rest of the scene, as it is "magnifying all behind with a light." This reflective quality of the drop makes it appear translucent, in the mind's eye. Lastly, he feels like a dewdrop clinging to green grass. This is similarly a crystalline image of a drop. The similes make the scenes very vivid.

Metaphorically, the speaker's dreams are filled with "galloping mares." Hurling horses suggest terror because they promise to crush one underfoot. Alternatively, they are a symbol of lack of fulfillment because they detachedly ride away, signifying that one is unable to get a hold of something one desires. In another metaphor, he is ready to roll off and become a thousand particles of salt. This is the salt found in teardrops. When the teardrop falls onto a hard surface, it splashes and gets scattered around, upon evaporation, there remain minute salt particles, just as are seen on a dried up cheek after weeping.

The meanings created by the metaphors merge with those by the similes to communicate the speaker's state of mind. Ironically, the speaker does not even see himself remaining in a wholesome state of a drop, he sees himself as ready to fall, to break into a thousand particles of salt; the dewdrop is waiting for the sun to come up, which in the unspoken meaning, will cause it to evaporate in the sun and cease to be. This is a self-effacing quality, capturing how insignificant he feels in his present state.

Sometimes, nature poem could be composed to point out one specific human action, rather than man in his entirety. Asalache writes a poem about a poet, to describe the creative impulse of a poet. It is a poem which attains subtlety of form without undercutting the sophistication of its content. The external appearance is deliberately chosen because the content is supposed to sound light hearted. More to that, the poem does form the shape of the object alluded to in the poem:

A Poet (Khadambi Asalache)

A

fresh

breeze

from

a

distant

land

blew

through

his

pen

(Asaleche, 11)

Asalache makes an exceptional visual interpretation of what a poet's inspiration is like. Visual images enable the reader to envisage an abstract concept; a poet's creative impulse. The refreshing visual and tactile image of "A fresh breeze" connotes the novelty of a poet's ideas. They are ideas which are original and not yet used by anyone else, just as that air would not have been breathed by anyone else. One can decipher the feeling of admiration for the freshness of the poet's ideas. Using this natural element as a symbol, the poem celebrates the creative instinct of a poet.

The softness suggested by the image of a breeze symbolizes suppleness of mind. It is a soft wind, alluding to flexible yet swift moving ideas. This is as opposed to a forceful hurricane which would be unbendable in its will, therefore un-innovative. The fact that the ideas are "From a distant land" endows them with an exotic quality. They are not localized and therefore commonplace, every day humdrum, but far-flung and therefore are pioneering and extraordinary. These refreshing ideas "blow through the pen of the poet." The pen is therefore synecdoche for the mind of the poet. It is the poet's imagination rather than his pen which brings into fruition the poems. The silent last part is the insinuation that they blow onto the page, rather than the prosaic terms "get written" on the page. It is a striking technique of presenting an artiste's adroitness.

In terms of form, visually, the one-word lines form a column; the shape of a gust of a wind blowing through the pen; or even better, the pen, through which the breeze is blowing ideas onto the page. According to Babusci et al, "the term *concrete* refers to the shape's being specific," (Babusci et al, 475). This one-sentence poem is brilliantly arranged, with the lines calling to mind the pen, or a cylindrical object, such as a flute, through which ideas, symbolized as the "breeze" could "blow," meaning "be written" onto the book. Mentally, one visualizes exactly what the poem is saying.

The poem itself is a spurt, in its tininess. It suggests the very idea of spray or a gust. It is as though it has been sprayed onto the page. "Concrete poems are often lighthearted. When the words of a poem are arranged in a shape that imitates the subject or suggests something about it, the effect is usually playful" (Ibid). The playfulness of this very lighthearted, yet highly imaginative piece is not lost on the reader. It takes away the heaviness of a poet's task; taking time to fashion out something imaginative, such as a poem. Rather, it makes creativity look very easy and relaxed.

Asalache's poem makes an outstanding epigram for the rest of the anthology; coming as it does first in the text. As an epigram it illustrates the magical way by which the rest of the poetry appears on the anthology. It appears simple, yet it leaves a strong lasting impression. In his anthology, Sunset in Naivasha, Asalache has composed many similarly inclined poems relying on Nature for a fullness of meaning as is evident from this exposition.

A Wren (Khadambi Asalache)

its eager voice
coaxes sunrise
the melody
like some mad torrent raging
strikes at nature's
secret hideouts
beyond the rosebush
an exalted rapture
runs
past the leafy branches
up and about to dart
its solicitous authority
like a newly born

This poem has been analyzed in Chapter two due to its structural strength. It is once again used in this chapter to make a brief illustration of its visual quality. There is a distinct concrete poesy value about this verse. The line arrangements are not far from forming an image of a wren. There is a visible suggestion of the bird's head, wings and body and tail in the line arrangement. The wings are suggested by the one long line, while the demarcation between body and tail is made by the one-word line "runs." Of course, it is arguable, whether or not the shape is intended to manifest as concrete poetry, but lineation is very striking, considering how reminiscent it is of the subject it is describing.

4.3 Lineation

A simple definition of lineation is "the way in which line breaks are inserted in a poem" (Wolosky, 26). The lines of a poem are often not random. Most poets use line arrangement within the stanza to attain the intended meaning. In regular cases, a stanza will be a block of several regular lines, or uneven lines. But some poets use the lines in a more sophisticated way to create a visual effect on a page much as a concrete poet does. This is what Anne Cunningham has done in 'Forest Fire'

Robert Morgan, in 'On the Shape of a Poem,' puts it in highly figurative terms that "in the body of the poem, lineation is part flesh and part skeleton, as form is the towpath along which the burden of content, floating on the formless is pulled" (Mayer, 911). In Morgan's words, lineation embodies in it the contextual meaning and the form around which this meaning is molded. Content, he goes on to say, finds shape in form. Therefore content determines the form along

which it will be “pulled” so to speak. The meaning in the poem influences the shape the lines will take because the lines are required to help the meaning come across to the reader.

Forest Fire (Anne Cunningham)

The flames filter from the rubbish pile,

And flicker through the tinder-dry grass,

Catch the weeds and bushes

And flare in an excitement of flame.

And then

The flames leap high,

The wind rises

And the trees alight like torches.

The roar of air and flame

Amid the age-old trees

Is like the roar of a crowd in a street—

No knowing where it will end.

The excitement mounts —

A hollow tree falls

And scatters sparks

Which float and start anew

The flutter, the flicker and the flare of the flames

(Cunningham, 12)

The poem describes a big forest fire breaking out from a small accidental flame. To give a visual rendering of the flames suddenly leaping up high in the wind, Cunningham employs Lineation. Lineation is an example of using lines and stanzas in a special way to enhance the meaning of the poem. The middle stanza which describes this happening is indented. Detached thus from the margin, the stanza, like the flames of fire seems to leap out of place on the page.

The artistry of this poem is in the forcefulness with which the inferno builds up to a crescendo. The inferno building up to an uproar, the furor in the forest captured by images from the first “flicker” to an “excitement of a flame” and ultimately, to the raging inferno. Cunningham tries to use the lines of the middle stanza in a manner that makes the reader see the fire ablaze. It is for this reason that I see lineation as a modest form of concrete poetry.

The rampant spread of this conflagration determines the variety of imaging. Imaging is in the simile, ‘trees alight like torches,’ we visualize the fire make quick work of a tree, as though it were a small flame to fit into a hand. This way, without many words, Cunningham is able to put the point across that the blaze has built up to heights beyond the trees. It is this need to capture the immensity of this fire that causes the poet to use that manner of simile. Yet another simile “The roar of air and flame...Is like the roar of a crowd in a street” gives us an aural image of just what the noise of the inferno sounds like. It is like an uproarious multitude, everyone shouting at the same time, and everyone’s voice lost in the tumult. This is a very clear image. To make us hear the sound of the forest ablaze, Cunningham makes an adept use of simile. Thus established, content determines form.

The Spring that Flows (Noah K. Ndosì)

A spring flows
from the foot
of our hill;
when rains fall,
canals, rivers
redden with
brown earth, but
our spring
is ever clear
.....

Noah K. Ndosì describes a river which flows from the foot of the hill. Because he would want the reader to imagine the fluid motion of flowing water, he uses the lineation in a manner to mimic the long narrow path of the river. Since the river flows in continuous motion, Ndosì does not use a full stop between lines. The theme of an uninterrupted flow of water causes the poet to employ one lengthy, uninterrupted line to form a mental picture of the physical feature he is describing.

Older than the village,

the ancestors drank

from its eyes;

tales of its past

emerge linking the present

with the past

The spring that flows

from the foot of our hill

will ever flow on

while competing with time,

our children

will drink from it,

.....

(Ndosi, in Luvai and Makokha, 24).

Time past, present and future is symbolically linked by a stream. The spring is linking time, while itself is linked by its flowing waters, and line arrangement suggests this never-ending motion. The tone of pleasure at the ageless crystal clarity of the stream links with a spiritual nourishment that the village derives from the river. The need to capture the cathartic effect of its flowing waters is the reason the lines are short and easy on the mind.

The message of a time continuum necessitates that the lines suggest the same thing. The nurturing qualities of the river never stop, just like the river's flowing waters never stop. The river is a symbol of steadiness and stability in the lives of the villagers. What the river meant for the ancestors is what it will mean for posterity. There is a sense of certainty as the speaker says that his ancestors drank from it and "our children will drink from it." It is thus a symbol of unrelenting hope. It has been and is and will be a source of existence for generation to come. What it meant for those gone is what it will mean for those to come. In a similar manner, the lines of the poem must flow without a break.

Similar to Ndosi's poem in terms of lineation is Amin Kassam's 'Sunset' (Cook and Rubadiri, 75). The lineation of 'Sunset' stands out. The lines are short, ranging between one to three words. This quickens the movement, so that we visualize the fluid movement of a stealthy animal, which wants to skulk in unnoticed:

warm scent

lingers

.....

through

.....

breathing

perfume

as under

.....

furtive eyes

he

buries

his mane

of fire

.....

Noticeably, the first words of the lines are written in lower case, and there is no pause in the lines. The fluidity with which the poem must be read is because of the theme of the stealthy movement of the sun across the sky, and its rays on the ground. The sun is like an animal slowly on the move. To capture the suspense in the slow movement, the words on the page must also suggest the calculated motion of the sun. The poem sound suspenseful as the lines create an enigmatic feel. This mood of suspense is carried onto the wording, so that as the poem is read at a stealthy pace, one also visualizes the anxiety in the furtive eyes, and the twittering birds which watch this “predator” as though it might harm them.

Lineation in the coming poem is does not have a concrete effect. The message, however, does necessitate that Ingonga call attention to certain features of the morning being described. She thus resorts to two-line chants:

The Dawn (Lillian Ingonga)

In the twilight (sic)

The first bird sings a melody

To break the darkness silence

.....
The morn is here again

Herald the new day born

In the twilight (sic)

The first sun's-rays

Light the still dark grey sky

.....
The rays in stray

The night shadows behind cast

.....
(Ingonga in Amateshe, 80-81)

This poem is unique in its composition because it has two-line chants between stanzas. The reason for the labels 'chant' rather than 'refrain' is that the words in each are not a repeat of the previous one, but are a completion of the thought raised in the main stanzas. A chant is "a repeated rhythmic phrase" or "the rhythmic speaking or singing of words or sounds, often primarily on one or two pitches called reciting tones"(<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chant>>). The chants in Ingonga's poem are short and they form a repeat pattern through the poem. They give

the impression that they ought to be recited in a more thoughtful tone and at a slower pace than the longer stanzas. The chants, for instance, “the morn is here again/ Herald the new day born” call to attention the most important event happening as the day is breaking.

The two-line stanzas enhance rhythm in several ways. Their formation is repetitious-sounding, even though the words do not match. The reason that these chants sound repetitious is due to alternating breaks from the regular tone of voice to the two line chant and back to the regular tone again. Each chant is catchy, causing reflection of the words previously read in the main stanza. For instance after stanza one, the chant develops the idea just raised in stanza about the breaking morning, adding the insight that the coming of the morning is a cyclic action and that it is the harbinger of a new day. Also each chant forms an emphatic conclusion of the thought just raised. For instance in stanza three, the last line of stanza three which is “the sun peeps” is completed in the first of the chant “from behind the clouds.” This in itself is enjambment. Enjambment is “grammatical overflow from one line to the next” (Leech, 123). In ‘The Dawn’ Enjambment from stanza three to the chant creates a completion of thought, giving details as to where it is the sun peeps from. It has a bearing on spatial setting, since the sun is seen to be peeping from behind the clouds.

Bantu Mwaura’s ‘Cactus’ celebrates the sturdy qualities of the Cactus plant in the harsh desert climate, where seasons bring little or no relief to growing plants. The speaker is awed by the endurance of the cactus. To the poet, the sense of awe calls for a deliberate crafting of the lines. His feelings are strong and must be expressed in the strong appeal of the lines. Repetition of words and phrases is also a part of form. Words which express how astounded the speaker is have to be repeated. As a plant of the desert, the cactus appears to defy the laws of life. It does not seem to live by nature’s principle that water sustains life. This is what astounds the speaker.

Cactus (Bantu Mwaura)

Sand

Water-less, and

Dry, drrry

Dust

That's the environ

But even then, green

Albeit the sandy dirty green,

Thorny and brutal

Because of the brutal surround

Yet

Fleshy and juicy

Amidst the brutal dry dust

What will!

What power!

What strength!

The will to be

Against non-existence

The power to live

Amidst death

The strength to grow

Against all odds

The strength

Amidst all weakness

The Cactus

Defies

The Social Laws.

(Mwaura, in Luvai and Makokha, 4)

The theme of enduring qualities of nature finds emanation in a cactus. Lines and words stand out to strengthen this message. The severity of a desert climate is the direct cause of sturdiness of vegetation. The cactus plant is representative of persistent life forms on earth. Life tenaciously holds on even in ruthless conditions. Repetition is a strong device of style in the poem. In order to articulate the austerity, “Dry, Drrry” in stanza one is repeated, and “dry dust” in stanza two is to emphasize just how moistureless the land is. Ironically, the cactus, even though the land around is

harsh, is itself even more brutal in its appearance, its determination to endure harsh conditions.

“Drry” is idiophonic, it makes the use of the trilling sound ‘rrr’ which suggests just how brittle the soils are. The trill in the ‘rrr’ is what creates that idea of emphasized dryness. The speaker means to draw attention to the extremity of the drought. In adaptation, the cactus appears as an equal match for the land.

Conversion of the word “dry” into the idiophone “drry” is not the only occasion in which Mwaura uses Diction to exercise his poetic license. The phrases “the dust the environ” and “brutal surround” break the rules of grammar to attain compactness of expression where needed “environ” has been used in place of “environment” and “surround” has been used in place of “surroundings.” . Mwaura uses the adverbial form of the words, rather than the nouns which would be longer. The Collins English Dictionary defines “environ” as “to surround,” while outside of poetic license one might not talk of “a surround.” Diction in ‘Cactus’ becomes atypical in the qualities seen.

Back to the physical appearance of the cactus, the plant’s attributes attest to its stamina: “Thorny and brutal/ because of the brutal surround/brutal dry dust.” Repetition of “brutal” with the meaning of “vicious” as a quality of the land and therefore of the cactus, demonstrates that the cactus’ has been shaped by the natural forces around it. Repetition attains an emphatic quality, asserting that the cactus must of necessity maintain a gaudy exterior, giving the impression that it is toughened up.

Ironically, the interior does not appear the same as the exterior. The interior is “Fleshy and juicy.” This contrast of the exterior with the interior is evidence of incongruity of a plant having so much water inside it when the land has no visible water to offer; itself being “dry dust,” is what astounds the speaker.

The incongruity of greenness in aridity causes the speaker to utter the interjection “What will/ What power! / What strength!” Being repetitive in his use of interjections articulates the depth of his amazement. His admiration and wonder is self evident in the observation that this plant has got so much “will,” which means “determination” and does not dry out even though the land is unable to support life, since it has got no water to offer. He is awed by its “Power” which denotes its supremacy over the land, and over other plants which would not survive the severity. He is also astounded by its “strength,” that is, its potency. It is a sign of valor that the cactus has grown to be fleshy and juicy in an environment which dictates otherwise. An ordinary plant would be withered and without much moisture to offer, and yet, the cactus defies waterlessness to create its own inner watery environment. This irony is what makes an impression on the speaker.

In stanza four, to show just how awestruck the speaker is by the fortitude of the cactus, he goes on to articulate the qualities which have impressed themselves upon him: “The will to be/ against non-existence/ The power to live/ amidst death/ the strength to grow/against all odds.” Repetition of “will” “power” and “strength” delineate stanza five as a development of the same ideas in stanza four. If the two were fused together, the lines would read: what will-- the will to be, what power—the power to live, what strength—the strength to grow. These repetitive lines and ideas capture the vivacity of the cactus. The plant is endowed with so much living energy that it will endure “amidst death.” It alone stands alive, when all else, even the land speaks of cessation of life.

In conclusion, the speaker points out that the cactus is a defiant plant on all the levels exhibited by the speaker. It is green, and juicy and flesh in a dry land, and it is alive when all else is dead. “The Cactus /Defies /The Social Laws.” The cactus stands in utter defiance of the existing laws of nature, which say that where there is no water there should be no life. The lexical oddity created by capitalization of each word in the last three lines could play the role of emphasis. The line is meant to be read strongly. It is a culmination of the astounded tone of voice with which the

speaker has been regarding the cactus. The reading of the last three lines is meant to be impactful, hence the capitalization of each word.

At a symbolic level, one word ultimately misspeaks (Bressler, 139) to give an entirely different picture of what the cactus might be. This is the word 'social' in the phrase that the Cactus defies "Social Laws" rather than "natural laws" or "laws of nature." One wonders why "social" which is ordinarily applied on human activities. It must be summative of the fact that the poem is left open to be read at two levels, literal and symbolic. At the symbolic level, it would be representative of a person of great valor and stoicism, even, socially succeeding in say, a repressive community, for instance, under an oppressive rule of law. However, this is value judgment. The poem is complete when read at the literal level. The literal level is that of the cactus plant enduring harsh climatic conditions of the desert.

4.4 Prosody

"Prosody literally means the science of versification" (Mweseli, 162). To paraphrase Mweseli, where musicality is needed, rhythm is important. Oludhe Macgoye calls it "a study of tune" (28). The operative terms are tune, rhythm and musicality. Many devices create rhythm. Repetition and rhyme are among these devices. The ultimate message of a poem may dictate which device the poet will employ.

To Pius Oleghe, a brewing storm is a source of joy. Wanting to capture the mood of joy of the children and the excitement of the adults, Oleghe reaches out for prosody. A harmonious mood in a poem is created by regular rhythm. In turn, the regular rhythm is attained by a rhyme scheme. This is evidence that content; the theme of joy, determines form, rhyming sounds.

A Sudden Storm (Pius Oleghe)

The wind howls; the trees sway,

The loose housetop sheets clatter and clang;

The open window shuts with a bang,

And the sky makes night of day.

Helter skelter, the parent run,

Pressed with a thousand minor cares,

Hey, you there! Pack up the house wares,

And where on earth is my son?

Home skip the little children;

Where have you been you naughty boy?

But the child feels nothing but joy,

For he loves the approach of rain.

The streets clear; the houses fill,

The noise gathers as the children shout

To rival the raging wind without,

And naught that can move is still.

A bright flash, a lighted plane,

Then from the once blue heavens,

Accompanied by noise that deafens,

Steadily pours the rain.

(Pius Oleghe in Robins and Hargreaves, 20)

Because Oleghe wants to recreate a joyous occasion, he give his poem has a sustained rhyme scheme, a-b-b-a. To make sure that the musicality is sustained through the poem, all the five stanzas have an exact rhyme. In Stanza one for instance, the words at the end of the lines one to four follow this pattern in Sway- clang- bang- day (a-b-b-a) in this manner, lines one and four form the exact rhyme with the sounds “sway/day” and the middle lines 2 and 3 rhyme have an exact rhyme with the sounds “clang/bang” A similar pattern is sustained through the subsequent four stanzas.

An internal rhyme is also formed, with audibly similar sounding words in pairs of lines. In the middle of each line, a word rhymes with the word in the middle of the subsequent line. From stanza two, for instance are the middle words “skelter-thousand-there-earth” (a-b-a-b) “skelter” and “there” form a vowel rhyme, with the /e/ sound, while vowel sounds /ou/ in “thousand” and /a:/ on “earth” form a near rhyme.

This rhymed verse by Pius Oleghe makes it stand out from all the other poems in this collection. He alone has maintained a faithful observance of prosody, such that there is a discernible metrical pattern. It makes the verse very memorable, and, due to the musicality, the word order is remembered years after first reading it. The metrical pattern is Dimeter. "Dimeter is verse written in two-foot lines" (Babusci et al, 839). Dimeter is decipherable by breaking each line of each stanza into two:

The wind howls/ the trees sway

The loose housetop sheets/ clatter and clang

The open window /shuts with a bang

And the sky makes/ night of day

There are also distinct spondees." A spondee is a foot with two strong stresses" (Ibid). A good example is "The wind"/ "the trees" / "the loose" /"the sky." These stressed syllables in every line enhance swift movement of every line. There is swift shifting of attention from one thing to another without stopping. "The number and length of pauses in a line affect the speed with which the line is read, and indirectly, the tone in any meter." Oleghe's poem is fast paced, because there are few pauses, and there are stresses in each metrical foot. The fast paced reading enhances the happy tone of voice, which complements the theme of excitement at the coming of the storm. In this manner, Oleghe manages to show a happy response to a storm on the East African front.

Because the message is pleasant, even the visual effect of the stanzas has to be pleasant. "A poem in stanzas can please us by its visual symmetry" (Kennedy and Gioia, 947) as the exactness of this one does. Oleghe makes the events in the poem come in scenes by episodic arrangement of stanzas. Each scene is independent from the other from stanza to stanza. "Stanzas often function just like paragraphs in prose. Each stanza states and develops a single main idea" (Babusci et al,

846). Each scene is differently affected by the storm. The reader takes a pause reflecting on the independent action of each stanza.

For the episodic effect, Oleghe uses a distinct outward form. Each stanza is a quatrain. Each stanza has four lines of equal length. "Division into stanzas is common in traditional poetry and is often accompanied by rhyme" (Ibid). This is true of Oleghe's 'A Sudden Storm.' Oleghe follows the traditional method of writing poetry, observing uniformity of lines to give his poem the rhyme scheme desired. But the rhyme scheme is not the only intended effect, it is equal attention paid to each episode. Each episode is just as important as the other and to impress this on the reader, Oleghe gives each episode equal number of lines. In one scene, the atmosphere darkens. In the next two scenes people react to the changes in the atmosphere, by the fourth stanza the hilarity builds up with expectation, and in the fifth the rain finally falls. One scene leads to the next, and yet the reader takes time to enjoy a cinematic view of each scene equally.

Since Oleghe requires that the readers hear the sounds of a raging storm, he makes onomatopoeia forms an important part of the sound scheme. Onomatopoeia "in its narrowest and most literal sense, it refers to the purely mimetic power of language—its ability to imitate other (mostly non-linguistic) sounds...there is consequently a resemblance on a fundamental physical level." (Leech, 97). For instance, at the literal level, the non-linguistic sound is the noise of the wind "h-h-o-o-o-w-w-w-l-l-l." It is captured in linguistic terms and called a "howl." The term "howl," imitative of the noise made by the wind is thought to resembles the noise thus on a physical level.

The howling of the wind can be heard across the land. This wind howls, meaning it wails or yowls, rather than blow, because it is a ferocious wind. Clattering and clanging of the loose house top sheets also contributes to the loudness in the air. They add to the effect of the power of the wind. There is yet more noise in this commotion as windows bang, the wind rages on, and thunder deafens.

The storm is a highly visual occurrence. This visual rendering of the storm is an additional reason to use onomatopoeia. The poet wants to make the reader see the trees “sway”, and see the “flash” of lightning, and see the rain “pour”. “sway,” “flash” and “pour” are all onomatopoeic. “On a wider and rather more abstract interpretation, the phonological patterns ... can represent not just the ‘sound’ of what they describe, but the activity as a whole. The connotation is made, not via the ear alone, but through ... pathways of empathy and synaesthesia” (Leech 97). For instance, the sibilant sound /s/ in “sway” depicts the physical swishing movement of the trees as they bend gently in the wind. The fricative /f/ in “flash” mimics the swift movement of lightning, while the plosive sound /p/ in “pour” is mimetic of the impact of the falling rain.

Excitement is accompanied not just by hilarity, but also by anxiety. The mood of anticipation necessitates that all sound schemes are used in a manner to complement these tensions. Alliteration in its own small way contributes to this balance. In line two of stanza one, “clatter” alliterates with “clang” in line three of stanza four: “rival” with “raging” and “wind” with “without” the consonance of the choice of word: “helter skelter” is also visible. Consonance creates a feeling of clamor. There is lack of ease in mood, because actions do not sound coordinated. Rather there is jostling and unrest. It is this commotion in the atmosphere and on the ground that Oleghe means to capture in his poem.

Right from the time the raging tempest is announced by the wind, events build up, from one stanza to another, systematically, until the rain finally falls. Yet all the stanzas are unified in the sustained lighthearted mood. Content necessitates deliberate use of form. This deliberate use of form, as demonstrated is where the success of the poem lies. The lighthearted quality of the poem is a feature which makes the verse memorable. How welcome the rainfall is is expressed by the joy of the humans. The cheerful mood lasts through the poem. The storm does not appear destructive, but rather is a happy event, because those it rains on are happy. In the bushes it would show animals frolicking around with delight. But in the human habitation, it is the children who

appear frolicsome. The clanging of rooftops, the banging of the windows, the trees bending to let it pass, all show how forceful a storm is, such that it subdues other elements around it.

The excitement in the atmosphere is transferred to the humans. They become a part of the brewing events. Commotion seems therapeutic as people respond to the sudden turn of events. As the storm gathers force, there is need to seek refuge from it. Consequently, there are more visual images of streets clearing and houses filling up. One can visualize a land vacated by the moving creatures. Olfactory images of children's screams rending the air, in competition with the howling wind outside depict how elated they are. This enhances the impression of the storm's fury. The more noisome the atmosphere is the stronger the storm appears to beat.

Migration: Zebra and Wildebeest (Valerie Cuthbert)

Cams with foals, startled, running

Fear is the spur-off they go thundering
terror behind, setting ground trembling.
see the vast herds, roistering, flowing
pass out of sight, dusty grass flattening.

.....

(Cuthbert in Luvai and Makokha, 34)

To show life on the move, Cuthbert concentrates together Kinesthetic images since she wants to portray movement of the journeying animals. Their motion has to appear fluid. In a poem, to show fluidity of Movement calls for rhyming words.

Cuthbert uses eye rhyme. "In eye rhyme, the spellings are similar, but the pronunciations are not, as with "bough" and "cough"" (Mayer, 839). Cuthbert's eye rhyme is sustained from start to finish. What is even more remarkable is twelve out of the fourteen lines end in an exact rhyme /ŋ/ sound created by "-ing" letter combination at the end of each word. There is a break in rhyme twice with lines two and seven, which have a vowel rhyme of the sound /o/ in "toss" and "off". Perhaps we are meant to take a pause before we move on to all the motion suggested in the immediacy of the present perfect tense: "flying," "surging," "baring" "running" "meeting" "shoving" "thundering" "trembling" flowing." These rhyming words are what infuse the poem with vivid motion and sound. They appeal to the reader's sense of hearing, sight and touch. We can "see" the animals "flying" meaning the move in great propulsion, we can "hear" them "thundering" and we can "feel" the touch as they are "shoving" against each other.

To say in as few words as possible that the animals are mingled beyond recognition of a single one, even the words are mingled in non-grammatical structures to capture the muddle created by the animals: "Pounding hooves, dust flying; /...manes toss/ Stripes blending as bodies surging." To make a recap of words used in chapter one of this work, the enormous herds appear as one big mass of hooves, manes and stripes. One can barely make out individual zebra and wildebeest as they pound their way along a dusty trail. The sheer force of these herds on the move can be heard in the auditory image of pounding hooves. We also see the dust flying, and get a feeling of motion. The animals are on the move, and there is speed to their movement, along a well beaten path, that is why they are raising dust and Cuthbert knows just which images to hire as a vehicle for these messages.

In the poem, 'Evening,' Stephen Lubega presents a remarkable play of phonic devices which become graphically decipherable. Noticeable is the striking use of cacophony in stanza two, culminating in the conclusion that "The night voice is a harsh guitar." This is apt choice of words after the discordant notes created by "retch" "sick dogs" "scold" "file." Cacophony is immediately soothed by the subsequent alliteration of the sibilant sound 's' and the vowel 'i' in "Sweet nuns sing litanies," because we are now on somber grounds on the hill on which stands a convent and a monastery there is harmony. The chaos in the secular world is captured in consonance while harmony on the holy grounds is brought out in assonance.

Less obvious is the rhyme scheme and yet, it contributes so much towards a regular rhythm. Rhyme scheme is in several versions; the different stanzas have their own unique scheme to go with the theme there in. In stanzas one and two there is audible vowel rhyme: Poet-world-though-west-soul// trumpeted- fiery way; falling,-Trailing; aridity- ray; thicket- note; tolled- note; last-file-child; homewards- guitar. But stanza three gets slant rhyme (approximate rhyme/near rhyme): *musizi* trees-- sing litanies; graveyard - breviary. In all three stanzas there is decipherable internal rhyme: tolled –world/ work-though / universal-west/ grave-soul// retch - harsh. And at the end of the poem comes the end rhyme, audible in the last two lines: "All sing the ancient *elegy*/For the sun that has died in the *West*" [my italics] "elegy" and "west" form end-rhyme. They give a sense of finality, of closure, because the day has ended. Strong onomatopoeic impressions are part of this Euphony. The "piping" and "bellowing" perceived as the "singing" of an "ancient elegy" means that the crickets and the frogs' sounds all mesh together to make up a funeral song in tribute to the sun. These little nocturnal animals have been "singing" the same dirge since the beginning of time, to bemoan the "passing" of the sun every evening, which incessantly terminates to the West of the land. There is so much jarring sound all around that the night acquires a voice peculiar to it, symbolically described as "the night voice is a harsh guitar."

The night has a voice, because the ear picks many noises. These discordant noises are evocative of an ill-tuned musical instrument.

Pun, is also a phonic device employed in a noticeable manner. "A pun is a foregrounded lexical ambiguity" (Leech, 2009). Pun is made of the words "son" and "sun" in two subsequent lines. The nuns sing hymns about that "virgin whose son we know," this phrase naturally refers to the Virgin Mary, whose son, Jesus, the world knows. His death is paralleled with the world's marking the demise of "the sun that has died in the west." The word play of the pun lies in its homonymic ambiguity. The pronunciation is the same, but above all, the ambiguity brought out in the contextual meaning of the lines renders even greater significance to the two words. Punning of "son" and "sun" acts as a reminder that both referred to have a universal impact. Allusion to the most greatly marked death of the Son of God paralleled with the apparent demise of "the sun that has died in the West" pulls at chords in the memory of the reader, magnifying the descent of the night. This is transference of meaning by association. Therefore Eulogies being sung for the "Son" might as well be the same sung for the "sun."

By the use of rhyme, consonance and assonance, pun, onomatopoeia, Lubega's poem comes alive with sound. These words are not only audible; they are visual being strikingly distinct on the page. They are words which mean as closely as possible as they sound. Clearly, concrete poetry, lineation and prosody make the most clearly decipherable visual appearance of the poem on the page. They all make use of word arrangement in written poems. Arguably, they make the most visibly demonstrable study of form in poetry, since they form the outward shape of the poem. Others such as rhyme, alliteration, consonance and assonance, pun, onomatopoeia, idiophone and enjambment depend on their repeated use to form visible patterns. When this happens, what one is saying concurs with the way one is saying it on the page of the book. Content determines form when the theme of the poem influences the graphical representation of the poem.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has lengthily made a demonstration of the face of East African poetry with regard to nature poetry. Certain deductions have been made in the course of this inquiry.

Celebration of nature is the focus of this study. The celebratory essence takes many shades in the selected poems. Majority of the poems paint an idyllic situation, and this is Romantic. But, **not all** poems present nature in an idealized manner, and are therefore not Romantic. One such is Kassam's 'Desert' whose tone is a strong protest against the harshness nature can visit upon living creatures. Also, a dire situation is seen in the harshness of the Savannah scrub and bush terrain perceived in: 'Thorns of Sub-Sahara' by Gatheru Gathemia, 'Fire on Marmenet' and 'Drought' by Anne Cunningham, and Jotham Tusingiirwe's 'July.' The reality of suffering in these pieces is too stark to be categorized as Romantic, since it lacks that idealist quality which is characteristic of Romanticism. Yet the poets are celebrating nature, by the very composition made in tribute to nature, and the triumph of the mentioned poems lies in the vividness of description of the scene. Even though they are scenes of despair, the manner in which the poet has put the scene together is testament to the poet's regard for the natural world, and this is a celebratory quality.

There is a defined reserved attitude in the idealization of nature by the various poets. The majority are quite reticent in their handling of Nature themes. For instance, apprehensiveness becomes a marked quality in the night-poems of Kassam, Lubega, Cunningham, Mukuru and Asalache. The display of powerful emotions associated with Romanticism is limited to a few pieces. Waigwa Wachira's 'Like the Sea and Its Waters' and Ida Makokha-Nakhayo's 'Leopard' display strong sentiments about the subjects of the poems. Higiro's 'Nature at Play,' Wangusa's

'Death,' Asalache's 'A Wren,' Mpaka's 'Wind in the Leaves,' Cunningham's 'The Forest' these are all palpably fantasizing their subject.

Setting refers to space and time. Setting in the poems sees evening as the most greatly celebrated time of day. Ironically, dawn is not as greatly marked as is evening. While evenings are portrayed as quite spectacular, this grandness is tempered by a palpable protest against the coming of night. Time and again, darkness is seen to symbolically 'defeat daylight' to usher in an uncertain time that is nighttime. This is as proven by 'Sunset' Amin Kassam, 'Evening' Stephen Lubega, 'African Night' Anne Cunningham, 'An African Sunset' and 'Sunset in Naivasha' Khadambi Asalache, and 'Night' by Samwiri Kisa Mukuru.

The next most greatly marked phenomenon after sunset is water, in one form or another, and mostly rainfall. Five out of seven poems in the collection have been dedicated to the falling of rain. The poets' enchantment with the build-up of a storm is self-evident. The various poets go into great detail when describing this process, and its effect upon the land. Large water bodies such as rivers, pools and lakes are mentioned in a few instances too. It is evidence of how greatly enthralled the various poets are with inundation, in still form or in motion.

Markedly, and without fail, birds are seen to time and again embody the prevailing mood of the poem. Their songs are conspicuously interpreted in different ways, by the different poets, always according to the poet's attitude towards events in the poem. Among such poems: 'At the Park' Khadambi Asalache, 'At Farm in July' Noah K. Ndosu, 'Sunset' Amin Kassam, 'African Night,' Anne Cunningham, 'A Sudden Storm,' Michael Vincent Mugabi, 'Drought' Anne Cunningham, and 'July' Jotham Tusingiirwe. One might rightly conclude that birds are given the greatest attention in animals of the animal kingdom.

Structure-wise, the extended metaphor is largely exploited. Remarkably, sometimes poems which appear to describe humans are actually describing nature and vice versa. For instance, 'Seasons'

by Innocent Karamagi uses the voice 'we,' the voice continues on in the first person pronoun as though it were people describing themselves, only for it to turn out that it is plants talking about themselves. Humans see patterns of their lives projected in the pattern of living organisms, be they animals or trees. It is aptly demonstrated in these extended metaphors: 'A Young Tree' Stella Ngatho, 'The Tall Tree' Khadambi Asalache, 'The Last Leaf' Joy Higirot, 'On the Death of a Friend' Anne Cunningham, and 'The Tortoise Song' (A. D. Amateshe). The most popular feature for the extended metaphor is the tree, and leaves of a tree. Khadambi Asalache, Stella Ngatho, and Anne Cunningham, and Joy Higirot compose odes to certain human beings as though they were trees, or in the case of Cunningham and Higirot; the leaf of a tree.

Personification is a greatly preferred aspect of style. Inanimate objects have been personified in majority of the poems. It is an idealistic, and therefore Romantic portrayal of the natural world in relation to man. The sun, mountains, trees, especially, are endowed with one human quality or other. Sometimes this happens in apostrophic poems such as Ann Wangusa's 'Death' in Echoes across the Valley, and Amin Kassam's 'The Desert' found in An Anthology of East African Poetry. Notably, the two poets who write tributes to mountains, Higirot, and Asalache address the mountains directly as though the mountains could hear them. Asalache's mountain is unnamed, but Higirot's is the Kilimanjaro. Mountains being of towering heights dominate the land on which they stand. They have often been seen by humans as forces to reckon with, and this could be the reason for the direct address.

The poems, by equating man to a tree or to a leaf, demonstrate a truth that man and other living organisms pattern themselves after the same rules. That is why one life form is able to symbolize the other. They are governed by, and obey the same rules of nature. For instance, the tough endurance of one last leaf clinging on to a tree is acceptable the symbolic representation of the tenacity of a person clinging on to life, when all other people in his circumstances have

succumbed under the pressure, and perhaps died or failed in an endeavor. Man imparts upon nature meanings of his own, in order to understand his own situation.

Further characteristics of Romanticism manifest themselves in the obvious display of emotions in poems which involve human concerns. This simultaneous arousal of fear and awe creates a moments of intensity such as those seen in Higiroy, Tejani, Amisi, Barlow, and Datta's poems among others. The idealization of the landscape in 'Leisure in Nature' is due to its ability to provide pleasurable mood. The objective of the section 'Poignancy' is to bring in nature poems which make an observable display of emotions.

Use of the New Critical model for analysis has helped to demonstrate that content is enhanced by style, while content also influences style. These are "two opposites that interpenetrate" referred to by Henry Indangasi, quoted at the justification of this study. It is the reason unity of style and content observed during the analysis. Analyzing poetry at a purely thematic level is tantamount to retelling of the content in the poem, it is only upon applying the tools of style that the true workmanship which went into the making of the poem is revealed. Deeper thematic concerns unfold as one analyzes the tricks which went into the telling of the tale. In reverse motion, the workmanship itself, that is, form, is directly determined by the message in the poem. These facts are demonstrated in chapters two and four.

Further still, on the topic of form, free verse is the prosodic pattern of preference in nearly all the poems reviewed. Only Pius Oleghe's 'A Sudden Storm' is fully versified, with noticeable metrical feet and a sustained rhyme scheme from stanza to stanza. Valerie Cuthbert's 'Migration of the Wildebeest' has a visually discernible rhyme scheme as well. All of the other poems examined show a preference for free verse. "Free verse has no regular rhythmic pattern and no regular rhyme scheme. Usually, free verse uses the sounds and rhythms of natural speech to create its

own unique musical quality” (Babusci et al, 533). The musicality in these poems is therefore attained in the line breaks, word arrangement, and pauses, termed rhythms of natural speech.

Still on form, a few poets are seen to experiment with concrete poetry. Concrete poetry is poetry that is meant to be seen on the page, as well as heard like an ordinary poem. In a concrete poem, the words are arranged into a shape, often one that looks like the subject” (Babusci et al, 474). Richard Mabala and Samwiri Kisa Mukuru make the most striking imitations of the subject of their poems. Mabala draws the shape of the open jaws of an animal, while Mukuru draws the shape of a teardrop. The poems are classified as nature poems because even the thematic content draws from nature.

Levels of meaning often come out upon deconstruction: Higiro’s ‘The Moon in flight’ uncovers unfulfilled longings, and at an even deeper level, death, from what is a deceptively tranquil scene. The motion of her thoughts and the flight of the moon unite to symbolize the ebbing away of an unfulfilled life. In Cunningham’s ‘African Night,’ birds appear to be safely up a tree, the speaker says they are safe for the night, but examining the opposition of binaries, in a deconstructive fashion, a meaning surfaces that they are really not. There are alarming sounds of marauding creatures; therefore, the cooing of a dove is not reassuring but haunting. In this instance, deconstruction brings these facts to the fore. Likewise, in Mwaura’s ‘Cactus’ one word misspeaks. By saying ‘social’ laws rather than ‘natural laws’, the reader realizes that all along that it is likely that the speaker has been symbolically speaking about a die-hard person rather than a hardy plant. But that meaning is hinged on one word, which could have been intentional or not. Deconstruction therefore reveals such as a binary opposition in Mwaura’s poem. But, ‘The Leopard’ by Ida Makokha-Nakhayo dictates that it be read at a literal level. We begin to give it a symbolic interpretation but realize this would only reduce it to stereotyped assumptions about gender laws. The only way to read it is at the literal level. Such is the role played by

deconstruction, alongside the unspoken backdrop flexibility it affords, which relieves the study of the severity posed by applying New Criticism in an unmitigated manner.

Across the Anthologies, certain poets begin to emerge as nature poets. A collection of their work is found from one Anthology to another, sometimes addressing the same subject but from a different perspective. Bahadur Tejani's work, for instance, is found in Cook's In Black and White, Cook and Rubadiri's Poems from East Africa, A.D. Amateshe's An Anthology of East African Poetry. And Luvai and Makokha's Echoes across the Valley. A favorite topic by this poet is scenes from the Serengeti, where in one instance he celebrates the Serengeti night, and in another, a wild horse in Serengeti. More poets who make regular appearance across the Anthologies, with nature poems, are Noah K. Ndosu and Amin Kassam, and Valerie Cuthbert, all who severally appear in Echoes across the Valley, and An Anthology of East African Poetry, and Poems from East Africa. They come across as prolific with regard to composing nature poems.

This study has tried as much as possible to present a faithful picture of the face of nature poems on the East African Landscape. Out of forty Anthologies of East African poems, the nine which have nature poems in them are selected. Picking out as many nature poems as are found in the relevant Anthologies ensures that not much is left unexamined. However, there are many up and coming poets who are dwelling on the topic of nature, whose works might just be making a debut in the literary world. The study therefore does not presume to say that it is exhaustive in unearthing East African oriented nature poetry. There is more awaiting the researcher's attention.

Yet another recommendation is that more detailed study of concrete poetry could be undertaken, and not necessarily in the realm of nature poems. Several poets are seen to experiment with form.

This would be an interesting field to focus on on the East African front.

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