

Influence of Yoruba Concepts and Worldview on Niyi Osundare's *The Eye of the Earth*

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of Yoruba concepts and worldview on Niyi Osundare's The Eye of the Earth. The poems in the collection, The Eye of the Earth are investigated in order to find out if Osundare's poetry is dependent on oral composition or merely employed the register of oral composition for stylistic reasons. This work analyzes some concepts and elements from the poet's cultural background found in the texts. The selected text is discussed under Performance and Orality. Some cultural features and oral literary devices such as repetition, rhetoric, songs, chants, parallelism, proverbs, idioms, incantation, invocation or praise epithet are also used in analyzing the poems. It is observed that one element may be prominent in one poem but less prominent in another. Ultimately, the study reveals that the poet's selected poems exhibit different characteristics of oral poetry extensively borrowed from his traditional oral background. It is also discovered that Osundare employed the traditional patterns of Yoruba poetic composition in writing which has influenced his style of poetry.

Introduction

This study surveys the influence of Yoruba concepts and worldview on Niyi Osundare's selected poems. The term, 'Concept' according to *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* "is an idea or principle that is connected with something" (299). The word, 'Worldview' is also defined by the above mentioned dictionary "as a person's way of thinking about and understanding life which depends on their beliefs and attitude" (1700). However, the term concepts and worldview are essentially used in this research to represent those ideas, principles, attitudes, beliefs, oral forms or philosophical views that are connected to the Yoruba people which influenced the poet's style. Niyi Osundare is a prolific poet, dramatist, essayist, and literary critic. He was born in 1947 in Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State; Nigeria. Osundare has written volumes of poetry, books of selected poems, plays, essays, and numerous articles on literature, language, culture, and society. However, his Yoruba cultural background and beliefs have influenced his works and are thus very visible. However, Osundare in some of his texts acknowledges to having been brought up in the traditional Yoruba oral culture. According to him,

My poetry is strongly influenced by Yoruba poetics. Mine is a figured fancy. Metaphor, simile, hyperbole, metonymy and other figures of speech populate the lines as fishes do a fertile river. The concretizing power of these figures aids the transformation of airy nothings of the imagination into sensuous, rememberable entity. ("My Poetry ..."55)

Yoruba people have different metaphysical concepts and worldview that are religious and philosophical in nature. Their culture consists of folk or cultural philosophy, religion and folktales that are embodied in ifa-ife divination, known as the tripartite book of enlightenment. Yoruba spiritual systems and philosophy are deeply rooted in the ancient tradition and their system of divination is based on some natural forces that work together to improve people's lives. Worship in Yoruba religion is based upon the belief in a Supreme Being called Olodumare, the creator of heaven (orun) and earth (aye). There are also the belief in other spiritual deities like the Orisha, Yemoja, goddess of the river and Egungun, the ancestral spirits. These deities have shrines where offerings and prayers are offered. Yoruba history is moreover rooted in mythology and cosmology. According to Kola Abimbola, "the Yorùbá have evolved a robust cosmology. In brief, it holds that all human beings possess what is known as "Àyànmô" (destiny, fate) and are expected to eventually become one in spirit with Olódùmarè (Olòrún, the divine creator and source of all energy). Furthermore, the thoughts and actions of each person in Ayé (the physical realm) interact with all other living things, including the Earth itself" (2). Metaphysical discourse is an important epoch in Yoruba culture. Yoruba thoughts are narrative in form, pointing to the knowledge of things and affecting spiritual elements of the universe. Thus different natural objects like the rivers, caves, rocks, earth, mountains, and trees are venerated and intoned with praises. These natural objects have become sources of spiritual inspiration and nourishments for them.

This study deals with the influence of Yoruba beliefs, attitudes, oral culture and music on Niyi Osundare's style of poetry. These concepts have deeply influenced the poet's form of writing to the extent that his poetry reflects the Yoruba oral tradition. Yoruba concepts and worldview are built around Yoruba beliefs which mark the tribe as very philosophical. Ezenwa-Ohaeto notes that "the poetry of Niyi Osundare illustrates interesting patterns of orality. The poet consciously fashions his poems to reflect those patterns of orality that are functional and give immediacy to the

themes” (151). He further states that “Osundare demonstrates significant patterns of orality. This technique enables the poet adopt abundant materials such as witty aphorisms and phrases from Yoruba oral traditions to create highly political and social poetry” (161). This observation is also echoed by Stephen Arnold who states “that Osundare’s use of Yoruba words and mythical allusions suggest that many of his words have close ties to oral poetry” (3). Thus, the deliberate deployment of elements and devices from the poet’s African cultural milieu becomes the defining characteristic style of Osundare’s generation. These features are clearly manifest in the works of Odia Ofeimun, Tanure Ojaide, Onuora Ossie Enekwe, Femi Oyebode, Harry Garuba, Catherine Acholonu, Femi Fatoba and Femi Osofisan. Niyi Osundare is one of the prominent political and social Nigerian poets that emerged after Clark, Okara and Soyinka. He draws massively from the Yoruba oral tradition in order to create a unique poetic voice different from the first generation of Nigerian poets as mentioned above. His poems explore the use of indigenous Yoruba oral poetics as a means of commenting on the society. The poet is brought up in the traditional Yoruba oral culture and this has strongly influenced his poetry.

To some extent Osundare’s poetry is close to oral traditional poetry that it can be considered almost identical to it. His poems are based on the Yoruba oral poetry recited by elders, farmers, and traditional oral poets; different forms of Yoruba oral poetic sub-genres form the poet’s sources because he has borrowed extensively from them. Examples of these sub-genres are ‘Oriki’ (Eulogy), ‘Ijala Hunters chants’, ‘Ekun Iyawo’ (bride’s chant) and ‘Iwu Egugun’ (Ancestral chants). The poet also explores proverbs and idioms as forms of oral poetry; these oral forms are laced with witty speeches and strong rhetoric that are very persuasive. Yoruba society uses oral poetry to preserve their culture and tradition. According to Oloriya Aina Olomo, “Yoruba culture uses the human voice to document history and comment on social realities” (1). These oral forms are poetic and usually chanted to preserve the Yoruba oral culture. Chants are arts of composition and recitation formed or developed to promote discourses, entertain and render praises. They are crucial in reconstructing historical and literary aspects of Yoruba culture. People, ancestors, gods, community and objects primarily occupy the subject position in these chants; hence, people use them to praise or teach communal history.

Yoruba poetic sub-genres include: oriki (eulogy) chants, ijala hunter’s chants, ekun iyawo (bride’s chant), iwu egugun chants (masquerade chants), proverbs. Oriki (Oral praise) is part of Yoruba traditional performance and daily life. It is a praise or vocative statement for a person, family, group or an entire community. It is an organized poetic verse which is employed to expound individual or family attributes, qualities, successes and accomplishments. It is usually in the form of poetry, consisting of songs of praise. According to Oloriya Aina Olomo, “Oriki and itan are forms of Yoruba oral poetry and narratives that have been used to acknowledge the character traits that serve and detract from the advancement of the people. The performance of words and the poignant use of language to develop and announce the collective intention to carry out social action and change” (1). *Oriki* is rendered in praise of individuals, sacred objects, vegetation, environment, gods or ancestors of a particular lineage in the community, extolling their attributes and achievements. This is usually in the form of prayers or worship. In support of this view, Thomas London states that “Yoruba praise-prayer is found at its most elaborate in the communal worship of the ‘orisa’ .The orisa are defied remote ancestors or natural forces. These divinities have inspired lengthy hymns of praise which are among the finest religious and literary products of Yoruba culture” (xx). Thus, it is a form of oral poetry which can be used for entertainment. It is a way of preserving history and understanding people’s ancestry, weaknesses, strength family traits or behaviour. According to Ayinde Abimbola “oriki goes beyond mere praises and is a good source of history” (89). This form of oral poetry is extensively employed by Osundare in order to create a sense of flow in his poetry. In an interview with Ogoanah, Osundare affirms that

Two Yoruba poetic sub-genres are responsible for these parallel structures: (i) the Oriki (‘praise poetry’) and (ii) Incantatory poetry. These two derive their power from uttering and chanting. (Ogoanah: 2003)

Chant is also a form of oral poetry which is recited in praise of persons, animals, places, ancestors, or gods by people. It is only rendered by experienced people who focus on the attributes of the subject to praise, express happiness or disappointment during their chanting exercise. In Yoruba culture chants like Ijala Hunter’s Chant, Ekun Iyawo (Brides’ Chants), and Iwu Egugun (Masquerade Chants) are explored and performed as part of the people experiences. It is very important to note that oriki and chants as forms of Yoruba oral poetry are explored through the rich resources of language such as proverbs, idioms, witty statements etc. These poetic language forms are thus employed to enhance the meaning and artistic value of the poet’s poems. The study investigates the poet’s style and also seeks to find out how the Niyi Osundare has employed the elements of indigenous Yoruba oral culture in exploring his themes. Written literature can show oral-like features which are also obtainable in oral cultures since such purely

oral culture is unlikely to be found. This explains why Osundare employs the register of oral tradition for stylistic reasons. It is therefore possible to apply the oral-formulaic model on written composed texts which employ ‘oral-like’ poetic language, typical themes identical to the ones which can be hypothesized for oral poetry.

The Eye of the Earth is fashioned on Osundare’s perception of man in nature. The poet assumes the image of an interpreter of the rich culture of his Yoruba people and also lays emphasis on the love and reverence for nature. He defends the cultural and traditional myths of the Yoruba people and at the same time projects them in this volume. This collection has a ‘Preface’ which aids the reader in understanding the muse behind the poems. According to Osundare, “the poems in this collection are a journey into these times and beyond when the earth’s head stood on its neck and a hand sprouted but five fingers” (*The Eye of the Earth*, x). Elgezeery also views “*The Eye of the Earth* (1986) as a homecoming journey that reveals the traveller’s complex relationship with time and place. In this journey, the poet revisits distinguished symbolic places that stand for significantly nourishing and spiritual values for his people, and establishes a dialogue between the past and present of these places in order to question the recent economic and political changes that have led to the deterioration and degradation of the journey’s destinations” (62).

In this volume, the act of recollection is used as a means of presenting a vision that derives inspiration from a past; this past is used to remind people of what has been inflicted upon earth so that they can regenerate their land. Osundare also explains in his preface to this collection that , “looking back is looking forward; the visionary artist is not only a rememberer, he is also a reminder” (1986, xii). *The Eye of the Earth* is divided into five (5) movements: *The Preface, back to earth, rain songs, and home call and eyeful glances* functioning as their episodic diaphragm. The past that the poet revisits relates to the landscape of Nigeria (Yoruba land), especially that of Ikere, the poet’s hometown, which the poet enlivens through memory and comparison.

The Concept of Orality in the Eye of the Earth

The term ‘orality’, refers to thought and verbal expressions within different cultures. It is a technique which employs new and dynamic forms of expressiveness in poetry. According to Ezenwa-Ohaeto, “the concept of orality is not static, but dynamic. It implies that orality is flexible and adaptable to change; that the oral mode can accommodate modernism through specific indigenous perspectives” (18). Ezenwa-Ohaeto however, employed the term ‘poetics of orality’ to define the literary tradition of Nigerian oral poetry. He further states that “the new forms and techniques decipherable in contemporary Nigerian poetry are part of the poetics of orality which is hinged on the acceptance of the view that there is the employment of the poetics of orality , the principles of traditional aesthetic and rhetorical devices of the oral mode in written poetry”(18).

Orality is based on the creative principles that govern the form of contemporary Nigerian poetry. In view of the above, Chinweizu et al state that “there is evidence in the oral traditions of effective uses of narrative poetry, parables, paradoxes, myths , legends, proverbs, poetry of tenderness, chants, songs of praise, songs that celebrate absences and other varied aspects of life” (259-261). However, these traditional techniques of orature are deployed as features that would help explore relevant issues and subject matter of contemporary Nigerian poetry. The nature of oral literature has generated a lot of views in the contemporary Nigerian poetry. Some scholars have defined the oral literary tradition to mean ‘oral/spoken literature aesthetically written as a form of art. It has also been proved that both the oral and the written forms can exist together in literature as a way of preserving the oral tradition of an existing culture. This is true of the contemporary Nigerian poetry. Hence, Osundare aesthetically imbues his poetry with the features of these oral forms; therefore, his poetry is perceived to be oral literary in nature. The presence of orality in Osundare’s texts is synthesized based on his unique poetic composition which is sensitive to the Yoruba oral tradition. One unique attribute of his poetry is the exploration of oral verse forms and a sense of realism which helped him to present the daily experiences of people in Nigeria.

The features of orality in Osundare’s poems are: proverbs, idiomatic expressions, rhetoric, praise names, invocation, songs and chants. Also, evident in the poems are some literary devices like refrain, repetitions, metaphors and parallel syntactic structures used for the main purpose of emphasis. The first poem in “back to earth,” entitled “Forest Echoes,” establishes the mood of *The Eye of the Earth* as a collection that reverberates with the echoes of the forest that has been and no longer exists in its full bloom:

A green desire, perfumed memories,
a leafy longing lure my wanderer feet
to this forest of a thousand wonders.
A green desire for this petalled umbrella

of simple stars and compound suns.
Suddenly, so soberly suddenly,
the sky is tree-high
and the horizon dips into an inky grove
like a masquerade scribbling loric fear
in the lines of festival streets.(3)

This return is symbolic and can be interpreted as a need for creating a rich and diverse way of life in the present. The first poem after the preface is entitled the “Earth”. This title is the first poetic movement which conveys a creative, regenerative, productive, sustaining and personified power. Hence, the poet revisits his childhood and remembers the beauty of the forests and the earth. In this poem, Osundare draws vivid metaphors using the Yoruba Oriki and Ijala praise chants. Praise names are employed to extol or eulogize the features and fruitfulness of the earth. Osundare deploys elements of praise to reinforce the fact that praise names are relevant features of Yoruba oral poetics: Earth

Temporary basement
And lasting roof
First clayey coyness
And last alluvial joy
Breakfast
And compost bed
Rocks and rivers
Muds and mountains
Silence of the twilight sea
Virgin of a thousand offspring...
Oge ere amokoyeri (1)

The above Yoruba expression is translated in the text as “The one that shaves his head with the hoe. This expression makes reference to the earth which is the poet’s subject of discussion.

In “Forest Echoes”, Osundare uses the Oriki praise chants to give tribute to the earth; these praise forms portray the usefulness and characteristic nature of the earth. The forest trees like the tough Iroko (ogonwa) and Ayunre (feather weight) are also eulogized or extolled according to their strength and fruitfulness. Eulogy is specifically rendered to the earth and trees for their richness and usefulness to all.

This is Oke Ubo Abusoro
The distant forest which shames the lazy leg
Where the oro tree hawks lofty fruits
This is Ubo Abusoro
Where my first faltering steps
Broke the earthworm on the path of dawn (5)

This celebration is corroborated by the poet’s intentional use of the Yoruba names for these trees, iroko, ogonwo and ayunre, leading the reader/audience to identify with the Yoruba popular culture. These forest trees are given their praises according to their strength and roles in society:

Iroko wears the crown of the forest
Town’s rafter, roof of the forest
Ironwood against the termites of time...
Incapable of the hardy majesty of iroko
Ogonwa wears the surrogate crown
Of heights and depths;
Wounded by wanton machets
Bled by the curing cutlass of babalawo
They take solace in ayunre’s laughing stem
Machetes sent sheathwards
By iroko’s haughty hardness
Oh ayunre!
Feather tree of the forest. (6)

The poet uses these praise epithets in his poems to appeal to the emotions of his Yoruba African audience or readers. He makes allusions to the earth, trees, gods, persons and places in his poetry in order to show his creative ability. The last part of “Forest Echoes” is replete with echoes of parting and farewell. The poet repeats the phrase “my parting

eyes” (10-11) which represents the subject of some structural parallelisms. This parallelism is one “of the rhetorical strategies of Yoruba oral poetry which explores the thematic effects of the past and the poet’s ideas:

My parting eyes arrest the anthill,
pyramid of the forest,
My parting eyes sing silent requiems
to the vertebra of expired snakes (10-11)

In the poem, “The Rocks Rose to Meet Me”, there are allusions to the rock “Olosunta” which is worshipped by the Ikere people during the Olosunta festivals. He alludes to the rock Olosunta in the quotation below.

The rocks rose to meet me
Like passionate lovers on a long-awaited tryst
The rocks rose to meet me
Their peaks cradled in ageless mists
Olosunta spoke first... (13)
Oroole came next
His ancient voice tremulous
In the morning air
Pyramid of the brood
Whose unclosing eyes witness
Every stroke and every dot at Amoye (15-17)

The Yoruba word ‘Amoye’ is the name of a Grammar School which is situated under the shadow of Oroole rock. Here, the poet praises the ageless nature of the rock. Oroole is described in the text as a huge, imposing rock in Ikere, which is worshipped yearly during the popular Olosunta festival. As translated in the text, this rock is also reputed to be a repository for gold.

In “Harvest call”, Osundare celebrates the fertility of Iyanfoworogi, Oke-Eniju and Ogbese-Ode describing their physical features. Most of the poems in this collection are also celebratory in form because the poet makes references to different objects of worship in the Yoruba pantheon:

This is Oke Ubo Abusoro
The distant forest which shames the lazy leg
Where the oro tree hawks lofty fruits
This is Ubo Abusoro
Where my first faltering steps
Broke the earthworm on the path of dawn (5)

In the last poem of this collection entitled, “Our Earth Will Not Die”, the poet reinforces the hope that the earth will continue to survive any form of physical destruction done to it by human and natural factors. Therefore, the refrain “our earth will not die”, shows the poet’s positive attitude towards the survival of the earth which enables him to sensitize people on the human abuse of the earth. Osundare, in an attempt to explore the features of the Yoruba orality comments on the contemporary reality of the Nigerian society.

The Eye of the Earth incorporates many instances of language experimentation which illustrates the Yoruba poetics of orality. In the first poem entitled “Earth”, the poet deploys parallel verbal structures. Some of these parallel structures are contrastive in nature while some are not. Here, the earth assumes and performs different functions at different times. The earth serves as a ‘temporary basement’ for men, because they build the foundation of their houses on it and at different times, it serves as ‘lasting roof’ when they are buried in it:

Earth
Temporary basement
And lasting roof
First clayey coyness
And last alluvial joy
Breakfast
And compost bed
Rocks and rivers
Muds and mountains
Silence of the twilight sea
Virgin of a thousand offspring...

Oge ere amokoyeri (1)

Thus, the parallel structures and images portrayed about the earth may be contradictory but they still make sense since the earth's role is rotational in nature. The refrain as an oral literary device is explored in this text. In "Let Earth's Pain be Soothed", refrains are employed which add to the musicality of the poems:

Let it rain today
That parched throats may sing
Let it rain
That earth may heal her silence
Let it rain today
That corn leaves may clothe the hills (28)

The refrain written in Yoruba language, "Araba ponmbe ponmbe ponmbe/ Araba ponmbe ponmbe ponmbe" (10) is employed for its sound and musical effects to enhance the musicality of the poem.

In *The Eye of the Earth*, Osundare concentrates on the landscape, forest, animals, earth. His use of Yoruba names and Oriki poetry for his subjects of discussion shows that he is rooted in his tradition. In the poem "Harestcall", Osundare employs some Yoruba words and names such as Iyanfoworogi, Oke Eniju, Efuru, Ogbese Odo, aroso, geregede, otili and pakala. The poet uses these names to extol the richness of the Yoruba soil, vegetation and regions; he lays emphasis on food produced by the soil which now becomes a source of pride to the people. These are all nostalgic feelings of the poet about this fertile region.

This is Iyanfoworogi
Where garnished in green
Pounded yam rested its feted arms
On the back of stooping stakes.
And this Oke Eniju
Where coy cobs rocked lustily
In the loins of swaying stalks...
(Finally) Ogbese Odo
Where cotton pods, lips duly parted
By December's sun,
Draped busy farmsteads
In a harvest of smiles. (18-20)

The Concept of Performance in *The Eye of the Earth*

The term, "performance" is referred to as 'the orality of performance'. In performance, poetic experience and imagination reflect a poet's creative ability borrowed from a poet's oral tradition. According to Ezenwa-Ohaeto:

African poetry performance portrays some aspects of these vibrant elements and configurations because it is sustained by a tradition that absorbs, synthesizes and refines the poetic strategies generated by oral traditions. This performance element is perhaps why many poets from Africa are invited for performances as part of the literary activities in both African and European countries.(41)

Isidore Okpewho further explains that "in the traditional African society, for instance, it has been established that performances differ one from the other, depending on such factors as the age and energy of the performer, the nature of the occasion (death or merriment), the type of setting (cult enclave or square), whether or not any musical accompaniments are used especially by the performer and whether it is a solo or group" (42). Ezenwa-Ohaeto suggests that "the interplay of ideas and literary experience as well as the narrative density, rich proverbs, metaphors and memorable songs bear affinities with performance poetry" (42).

In performance, Osundare's poetic experience and imaginations are explored. According to Carolyn, "not only are the words in motion, unbroken by the beat, but the poet performer, uncontained by the boundaries of the book (text), speaks face to face with an immediate audience. In an act of performative transference, the speaker gets across the closure of printed page" (2). In essence, the performance which crosses the closure of the printed pages becomes a way of presenting the poet's ideas and thoughts to the audience.

In the volume, *The Eye of the Earth*, Osundare employs the following oral literary devices such as invocation, praise epithet, repetition, imagery, chants and songs. These oral devices are accompanied by musical instruments during a performance section to enhance the musicality of the poems. The poet includes some musical directions for the rendition of his poems.

In *The Eye of the Earth*, musicality and rhythm are prominent features which are aided by structural repetition, parallelism, metaphors, rhetoric and similes. Niyi Osundare deploys the stylistic and unique features of sounds, drums, dancing feet and melody of tunes in order to fully explore his poems; this makes his poems more accessible to the audience, listeners and readers. The poem, "Forest Echoes", in the first movement of this collection entitled "Back to Earth", Osundare shows great interest in oral performance which is emphasized in the recitation of his poems as well as instruments for its orchestration. In the above mentioned poem, the poet requests for the poem to be recited with flute and heavy drums. In the second poem of the first movement entitled "The Rocks Rose to Meet Me", the poet directs for the poems to be chanted with 'agba drum' throbbing in the background. In the preface, Osundare states as follows:

"The Rocks Rose to Meet Me" is a home coming kind of journey back and forth into a receding past which still has a right to live. The rocks celebrated in this section "Olosunta", "Oroole" (both wonder siblings of Esidale), occupy a central place in the cosmic consciousness of Ikere people; they are worshipped and frequently appeased with rare gifts, thunderous drumming and dancing. But it must be stressed that these rocks are dramatized in this volume as creative, material essence, as lasting monuments of time and place.... Indeed in addition to the mystic dimension, Ikere people also perceive the rocks as guardians of the harvest spirits, a feeling which informs the stem and stalk of "Harvest Call", the final beat of the first movement. (*The Eye of the Earth*, xi)

The "Rain Song", which is the second movement, is a logical continuation of "forest echoes". The poems in this movement are highly lyrical in nature and rendered in the accompaniment of flute and rain drum. In the poem, "Let Earth's Pain be Soothed", the poet dedicates the poem to the *one who brought rainy news from under the rocks* and he also requests for the poems to be rendered with a flute and the rain drum.

Let it rain today
That parched throats may sing
Let it rain
That earth may heal her silence
Let it rain today
That corn leaves may clothe the hills
Let it rain
That roots may swell the womb of lying plains... (28)

The above refrains, "let it rain" are used to reinforce the lyrical tone of the songs employed in the poem. Niyi Osundare effectively employs different aspects of oral poetry in such a way that they provoke people to reflect on his social themes.

Conclusion

This study has explored the major influences of Yoruba concepts and worldview on Niyi Osundare's selected poems. It has established that traditional Yoruba oral poetics has a strong influence on the form, structure and style of the poet's poetry. This study also, provides a clearer vision of the poet's reasons for the deployment of these traditional oral elements in his texts. However, this research has discovered that the poet employs Yoruba oral traditions to widen the scope of the Nigerian readership. Thus, the deliberate deployment of elements and oral literary devices from the poet's cultural society becomes the defining characteristic style of the poet. Some oral traditional forms employed in the texts are composed in a more or less fixed form. This suggests that Osundare is not just a representative of his tradition, but of his poetry because; he has been decisive in the process of fixing the text.

Nigerian literature is rooted in its culture, tradition and languages. This literature also shows oral-like features which are obtainable in different cultures; the features are manifest in short fixed or memorized forms as seen in Osundare's texts. These texts however employ oral-like poetic language and typical themes identical to the ones in an oral culture. Osundare adopts the oral poetic technique and sub-types in writing his poems; such sub-types are: praise poetry, chants, songs, vocational songs, lyrics, idioms, proverbs etc. Hence, it is proved that traces of some original orality can also be found in Osundare's texts. The poet employs the Yoruba language and oral poetics as his tools of

experimentation to develop his unique style. This is conveyed in his use of Yoruba oral tradition, the oriki (praise poetry), Ijala chants and the Incantation which are the poetic sub-genres responsible for the parallel sentences or structures in his poetry.

This research has discovered that Osundare's poetry is dependent on an oral composition for stylistic purposes. It has also ascertained that the poet's selected poems exhibit different characteristics of oral poetry extensively borrowed from his traditional oral background. Therefore, some modes of expression such as proverbs, riddles, rhetoric, songs and chants are explored in his poems. These verbal modes are aided by different literary devices such as repetition, refrain, parallelism, metaphor, personification and other figures of speech to enhance the musicality of his poems. Furthermore, Osundare employs the oral forms to correct, admonish, instruct, render praises and address some sensitive issues in the Nigerian society. *The Eye of the Earth* explores the elements of orality and performance in order to present the poet's journey into his homeland, landscape and memory. However, the analyses of the poems in the collection, *The Eye of the Earth* proves that one element may be prominent in one text but less prominent in another since the poet concentrated on different thematic issues in his poems. This research concludes with the view that Niyi Osundare has contributed to the growth of Nigerian literature through his use of the rhetorical strategies of Yoruba oral poetry.

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