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Aesthetic and Social Vision in Tanure Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures* and Other Poems

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Abstract

Significant occurrences have caused the quagmire of Nigeria since October 1, 1960 when the British lowered the Union Jack sixty three years ago. The country has not only had a long history of military dictatorship but irresponsible politicians that obstruct the wheel of its socio-economic as well as political progress. More disturbing is the class-divide between the exploited masses and the ruling class. Recent Nigerian poetry, therefore, has been attempting to provide an alternative to the prevailing horrid and overwhelming social relations. This paper explores Tanure Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures and Other poems* and his social vision in voicing the appalling demeanor of the country's rulers, as a way of driving mass awakening. The poet uses animal metaphors especially the "vultures" motif to describe the degree of leaders' oppressive recklessness in the affairs of the country. The paper, therefore, examines Ojaide's collection using the Marxist ideology. The ultimate aim of the Marxist socialist school is to reorder society. This reordering involves establishing a classless society where the means of production are collectively owned and controlled by workers and it leads to the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism. The end anticipation is the distribution of resources according to the people's need. Marxism encourages the idea of freedom that embraces both labourers and economic powers and that for an egalitarian society to emerge and fight in order to liberate them from the dominating class or bourgeoisie. Tanure Ojaide does not only function as a chronicler in this collection but as a poet who spearheads liberation movement in his country. This is a content based analysis; hence for a more comprehensive

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analysis, five poems from the collection have been selected. The paper concludes that Ojaide uses poetic devices like imagery, alliteration and mainly metaphors as effective tools for mass awareness which is channeled towards effecting the desired change for a country that has endured a long history of socio-economic oppression from the ruling class.

Keywords: Engels, despot, vultures, fate, Marxism, socialist vision

Introduction

In his book *Contemporary African Literature*, Tanure Ojaide argues that modern African literature is a literature that responds to the people's plight, feelings, and aspirations (9). Ojaide explains that this purpose is reflected in African poetry which is critical of political corruption as in Niyi Osundare's *Songs of the Marketplace*, Frank Chipasula's *Whispers in the Wings,* and Tanure Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems*, among many others, (*Contemporary African Literature* 8). In his article, "Poetry, Historicity and Nationhood: Recent Nigerian Poetry in English", Sule Egya explains how recent Nigerian poetry in English concerns itself with the most pressing socio-political condition in Nigeria, especially prolonged military despotism in the past decades (128). In his analysis, poets who address these issues use the dialogic approach to dramatize and historicize the situation. This style involves a dialogue between the poet and the people, and between the poet and the despot. Egya also identifies the role of poetry in military tyranny when he says:

> It will seem that in time of crisis, such as military tyranny, poetry, or any genre of art, in Nigeria becomes intensely political, instituting itself as a kind of dialogic context in which the poet or the writer does not only address the tyrant and the tyrannized, but also deploys his artistic prowess, as it were, to fight for social justice, and possibly offer an alternative vision (129).

As a result of the socio-economic condition in Nigeria, poets of the military era emerged as radical ones. In the early 1980s Ofeimun's volume *The Poet Lied*, announced this wave of change. Niyi Okunoye, quoting Sule Egya, argues that Ofeimun's volume marks a strong social responsibility of art as well as inaugurates a generational shift in Nigerian poetry (130). This shift was necessary to perform a function in Nigerian society. Similarly, in his article, "African Literature in the 21st Century: Challenges for Writers and Critics", Nnolim posits that "literature is judged always in relation to its social function; the better the function it fulfills, the better the literature" (2). Nnolim is of the opinion that the challenges of African countries, in

the south of the Sahara, have taken their toll in literary production so that art has become a veritable tool that should not be ignored (2). That tendency explains why the poet and literary scholar, Funso Aiyejina, in his quite influential essay "Recent Nigerian Poetry in English: An Alter-Native Tradition", announces the emergence of Odia Ofeimun, Niyi Osundare, Femi Osofisan, and Tanure Ojaide as the voices of a new generation of poets, and applauding their poetry for its concern with the condition of the masses. These were a generation of voices in Nigerian poetry in English who saw the euphoria of independence and experienced the disillusionment of leadership failure. As a result of the turmoil in the country, they became angry and their combatant tone earned them the name 'angry poets'. They had read works of Karl Marx, Lenin, Fidel Castro and Franz Fanon and therefore had no time for poems about beautiful flowers and lovely pets. This generation was also characterized by the recourse to oral traditions; they turned to their African roots in matters of style and language.

The corpora of poems in Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems* is not ordinary "philosophical musings" as some critics opine; the poems reflect ideological commitment of a poet that cares about the plight of the masses. Critics such as Sule Egya and Tijjan Salla believe that the collection earns the nomenclature "market place poetry" and its ideological bent is identified as Marxist. This paper examines the Marxist concerns in Ojaide's collection *The Fate of Vultures and Other poems*. The ultimate of the Marxist /Socialist school, as pointed out by Nnolim, is utopian, and it is to reorder society so that the dictatorship of the ruling class will be overthrown on African soil (6). The poems in the collection highlight the skirmishes of the downtrodden against the powers; the powers that befit the description of indigenous predators who have hijacked the country's resources and subjected them to colossal mismanagement. Niyi Akingbe argues that sometimes, contemporary Nigerian poets such as Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Femi Fatoba, Odia Ofeimun, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Obiora Udechukwu, and Ogaga Ifowodu use satire as a weapon of criticism against certain aspects of contemporary Nigerian society as well as the country's socio-political problems (183). Satiric or otherwise description of these leaders reflects the engagement many contemporary African poets reveal as the characteristic of an age that is being swept in leadership failures.

The era of military despotism in Nigeria, for instance, produced a "bird nest" of poets who defied the dictators by publishing poems decrying military despotism (Egya 8). The spirit of struggle and hope for a regenerated land is equally echoed in

Ojaide's other collections such as *Labyrinths of the Delta*, *The Endless Songs*, and *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems*. Ojaide and poets like Niyi Osundare, Funsho Aiyejina and Femi Osofisan (whose pen name is Okinba Launko) attempt to provide "an alternative" to the existing gruesome and crushing social relations. In their works, they have the shared visions of supplanting terror and exploitation, thereby creating a society with love and equity.

Theoretical Framework

Marxist criticism is derived from the political theory of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels who are better known for their political and economic writings. In Marxist criticism, Hungarian Gyorgy Lukacs, his British counterparts Terry Eagleton and Raymond Williams are often quoted. African critics who are highly fascinated with this theory are: Oyin Ogunba, Abiola Irele, Theo Vincent, Ernest Emenyonu, Emmanuel Obiachina, Omafume Onoge, Biodun Jeyifo, Chidi Amuta and Olu Obafemi. Other African writers who are fascinated with the theory are Sembene Ousmane of Senegal, Ngugi wa Thiong'o of Kenya, Nurudeen Farah of Somalia, and Festus Iyayi of Nigeria.

Marxism criticism delves into the story of the struggles of people to free themselves from socio-economic exploitation and oppression. In Terry Eagleton's words "Marxism is a scientific theory of human societies and the practice of transferring them (xii). Marxist critics examine literature for its reflection on how dominant elites, who owe the material means of production, exploit subordinate groups. They also examine how people become alienated from each other, and how upper-class/bourgeois values lead to the control and suppression of the working class. In the words of Wumi Raji, "the two principal classes identified by the theory are projected as being frontally opposed to each other" (226). This tense relationship explains the unending struggles going on between them. According to Olu Obafemi and Charles Bodunde, these opposing groups result in a struggle of opposites (dialectics) to which attention must be paid as "the examination of social contradictions in the society" (41). As a basically economic theory, Marxism centralizes the concept of socio-economic structure which it holds as the base material foundation of any society. It believes that historical development is determined by the ever changing mode of socio-economic production, and that changes in the mode of material production themselves influence the relations between the two principal social classes. Marxist criticism holds that society is divided along clear cut

antagonistic lines which are economically conditioned. In other words, those who have the economic power control the masses and use it against labour.

One unavoidable factor that affects social relations between men is their material life. The system of feudalism which existed in the Middle Ages involved "villein lords" who were lords over working class men and women. In our contemporary time, there are capitalists who owe the means of production and the proletarians whose labour the capitalists buy for profit. From this system emerges the superstructure that legitimizes the power of the lords in various forms by creating social consciousness via religion, politics, ethical values, aesthetic, and so on. Literature is ideologically conditioned to address this antagonistic pull between the two classes in the society. Marxist theorists view the value of literature in promoting social and economic revolution with works that espouse Marxist ideologies, prompting the kinds of economic and political changes that conform to Marxist principles. Such changes would include the overthrow of the dominant capitalist ideology and the loss of power by those with money and privileges. Fundamentally, Marxist ideology looks toward a vision in which classes have disappeared altogether.

Marxism, therefore, examines literary texts for their sociological relevance; how literary works such as novels, plays and poems are published in connection to the working class is important to them. Marxist critics therefore pay close attention to forms, styles and meanings of literary works as products of a particular history; as products of their era, especially as they are influenced and, even, determined by the economic and political ideologies that prevailed at the time of their composition. While expounding the theory of Marxism, Robert Di Yanni, argues that the literary work is considered a "product" in relation to the actual economic and social conditions that exist at either the time of the work's composition or the time and place it describes (2089). There is an emphasis on class propaganda and revolutionary didacticism as well as the ideological specifications of the total state. There is also emphasis on the deterministic origin of art, the economic and social status (proletarian, pseudo-bourgeois or aristocracy) of artists and artisans in the various past eras. In accordance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his article, "Towards a Marxist Sociology of African Literature", posits that "Marxist critics have always insisted that in class societies, this contingent relationship of intellectual production and consciousness on material economic relationships is mediated by the class structure, by way of class interests and class psychology" (472).

In other words, culture and art are fully implicated in the class struggles in literature. It can either demonstrate a consciousness that seem to conserve the

society on behalf of privileged interests or exude a revolutionary consciousness compatible with the objective interests of the oppressed class which is engaged in the struggle to change the social status quo.

Ideological preoccupation in Ojaide's *The Fate of the Vultures and Other Poems*

Men are constrained into social relations that invariably inform their ideology. Eagleton argues that ideology or social mentality is the product of the concrete social relations into which men enter at a particular time and place. In his book, *Ideology and Form in African Poetry,* Emmanuel Ngara (1990) posits that authorial ideology is not only "the stance the writer takes but what determines the poet's perception of reality" (11). Ngara buttresses his point by citing Chinweizu Ibekwe, Jemie Onwuchekwa, and Madubuike Ihechukwu thus:

> For a work has to be evaluated not on issues of "pure-craft" but also on the values it urges upon its readers, implicitly as well as explicitly, moreover even issues of "pure-craft" embody social values. This proper and inevitable question therefore ought to, be which ideology-European, Africans Christian, Islam, Buddhist, Capitalist, socialist, communist, Communalist individualist and what have you (33).

Categorically, literary critics such as Ngara, Chinweizu, Onwuchukwu and Madubuike prescribe that it will not do to judge a work by the quality of its craftsmanship (aesthetics alone) and not by its moral and ideological commitments alone, both are required. The combination of both the qualities is apparent in the poetry of Tanure Ojaide, who is not only ideologically driven but aesthetically conditioned. Bate Besong elucidates by saying that "the perspective from which he (the poet) creates is determined by his vision of the world, since works of modern African literature are often living testimonies of their period" (4). In Salla's view, Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems* covers a wide variety of subjects about which his overall artistry which can be summarized as pivoting around the themes of protestation against political and economic tyranny. This inclination tends toward outright condemnation of capitalism; an economic situation where a few people circulate the country's wealth within their caucus. Ojaide captures it in the poem "The fate of vultures" with the alliterating lines "the chief and his council, a flock of flukes /gamboling in the veins of fortune", (lines 18-19). The imagery here illustrates what is obtainable in a socialist economy. Ojaide professes a Marxist

vision for Nigerian future when in the poem "The fate of vultures" he writes: "they had all their free days, / let today be mine" (34-35).

In the poem "The arrow-flight", there is an indication that the aristocrats will indeed be overthrown as Ojaide further declares that "And no Ogiso, a plagued dynasty of beasts should / be allowed to live a full life" (27- 28).

Tanure Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems* (1990) consists of fifty one poems in four sections. The first section opens with a two line 'prologue' pronouncing that "I'm not the first to fight; and not the last / The country will be troubled for a long time," (x). These preliminary lines signify a clarion call to combat the oppressor as other oppressed people have done, and will continue to do so. Hence, *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems* is a bold attempt to contend with the oppressor in which the poet invokes the memory god in the opening poem - "The music of pain" thus:

> I invoke Aridon for trails
> of victories against overlords
> who clamped reins upon the jaw bones
> of upright words.
> I dressed my words with steel shafts
> for a long hunting season (6-11).

The "steel shafts" imply hidden metaphors, traditional imageries and depth of meaning which hunt irresponsible rulers. Being "the music of the communal pain," Ojaide's poetry is the poetry of ethnic voice whose songs "have the bite of desperate ones," and "they are fine-filled machetes" in readiness for war ("The music of pain", 24-25). In addition, Ojaide captures the hypocrisy of diplomatic soldering in the poem, with the image of the gun and the propaganda.

The poet suggests that military dictators in his land are sly and deadly so that one can hardly catch them in their crimes. Further in the poem the poet follows up with repetitive listing of facts about the soldier diplomats thus:

> Rhetoric outshoots cracking guns
> detours lead to no fields of defeat
> there's great skill in the craft!
> the bedbug doesn't care for the test of your blood
> ("When Soldier are Diplomats" 9-12).

The politician suggested by the poet here is a kind of politician who is democratically selected, and whose activities are similar to those who blindfold journalists, patronize marabouts (witchdoctors) and indulge in the crime of ritual murders as they wield their double barrel power. Further in the poem, the poet describes how desperate and fetish politicians seeking power can be. The poet also comments about such fetish tendencies of the politicians in the poem "Compatriots" (pp. 13-14). In order to extend their stay in office and embezzle more public funds, the Nigerian politician is a custodian of charms.

The star poem in the collection *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems* is written in lower case, which is a stylistic way of showing the poet's disregard for the upper class. Many other poems in this collection appear in lower case. The poet opens the collection with the poem "The fate of vultures", which is also an invocation of the memory and vengeance god, asking him to recover the people's stolen wealth thus:

> O Aridon, bring back my wealth
> from rogue – vaults;
> legendary witness to comings and goings,
> memory god, my mentor,
> blaze an ash-trial to the hands
> that buried mountains in their bowels
> lifted crates of cash into their closets (1-7).

"Crates of cash" suggests how politicians steal public funds in billions of naira. The poet expatiates on how they live a life of arrogant flamboyance, enriching themselves as if it was their birthright while they leave misery in their sweep. Further in the poem, the poet describes the greed of these rulers in the following alliterative lines:

> When one believes freedom is a windfall
> And fans himself with flamboyance
> The chief and his council, a flock of flukes
> gambolling in the veins for fortune,
> Range chickens, they consume and scatter (16-20).

Ojaide also uses sinister animal names such as "vultures", "range-chickens" and "flock of flukes" to create the imagery of scavengers, destroyers and blood suckers as metaphoric references for the rulers of the people. Furthermore, in the poem, the poet re-invokes *Aridon* to return his wealth which these rulers have been looting

over the years. As an ending, the poet declares the fate of these vultures as jail terms in prison houses and death as well as rejection. Ojaide continues to hamper on the crime of the ruling class in the poem "The arrow-flight". He explains the way they take advantage of the people and how it can be compared to "the hare's over the crest fallen cock, / the lion's over the goat / and they exact it to the last breath of their victims", ("The arrow-flight", 2-4). In order to describe their meanness and trickery, Ojaide employs metaphoric references such as the tortoise and the hyena. The tortoise is known as a trickster character in African folk tales while the hyena is known as a predator. He also refers to them as *Ogiso*, "a plagued dynasty of beasts" because of their tyranny and associated bestial activities. The metaphoric reference, "Ogiso", also suggests the overthrow of the aristocrats. The lavish use of negative metaphors of evil spinners and master tricksters aptly describes the unpopular leaders.

The tribute poem , "My next step" (for Jack Mapanje) , represents a call to battle in which the poet uses the personality of committed Malawian poet, Jack Mapanje, who was imprisoned after the publication of his first collection – *Of Chameleon and Gods* to buttress the idea. The mention of other patriots of sacrifice like Mapanje, Gandhi of India, General Murtala of Nigeria and Sankara (former revolutionist leader of Burkina Faso) serves as energizer to the fearful citizen who has been mute in the face of oppression. It is in stanza four of "My next step" that Ojaide highlights his Marxist tendencies thus:

> My blood is no longer mine, it is boiling
> with the anger and hunger of the land.
> I am no longer just a man, I am human;
> I am a devotee of the faith of justice,
> I wave the borderless flag of unity,
> I enlist in the army of instant recovery (15-20).

The poet asks two rhetorical questions – "whom do we wait for from the chorus of today's patients? / whom do we wait for from the void of tomorrow?" ("My next step", lines 27-28). The poet believes that if the masses waited longer, there will be no warriors for the future's fight. Ojaide uses several metaphors such as hyena, tortoise, masqueraders, players, falcon and mean witch, to represent Nigeria's rapacious leaders because he believes they are fearsome. That is why he says "I hate the faces of masquerades milling about the cabinet" ("My next step", line 37). Then, he suggests to the masses in a generic call which is implied in the pronoun "me" thus:

Let me fire at those free to blind the world
and pillage pockets in the name of power
I can no longer wait for the sharp tongues in the tower
Let me start to dig the pit
That will swallow the tortoise chieftain and his bundle of tricks
Let angry hands fashion the metal
to rid the land of the hyena and his vicious greed (29-35).

He is ready to pay such supreme prices as Mapanje or Thomas Sankara for the sake of sanity and freedom. The poet here suggests that he and his comrades are ready to die in war for the course, if necessary.

In another poem titled "No", Ojaide underscores the urgency of a resistance when he cries "Stop them / lest your enemies think you are week", (1-2). In the last stanza of the poem, he urges the people by saying "Before they devour you / for their own reasons your own fears / stop them with an instant "No", (18-20). On that note, the poet suggests that attack is the best defense against one's enemies. That is why the people should resist their suppressors and oppressors before they devour them.

The poem "The banner of the future" recreates the country's history of lost hopes and shattered dreams from independence to present day in the following lines:

When we wrote our adopted name
in one flag
We least expected a charger
To grow into a monster
with voracious years
And occupy the landmass
There's hardly space
to breathe (10-17).

Although Nigeria is not mentioned here, there is metonymic representation in "a flag and an eagle". The Eagle, as we know, is a symbol of strength found in the country's Coat of Arms. Again the expression "adopted name in one flag" suggests the name given to the country by Flora Shaw (following the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914). Therefore, it is a colonizer's christening. Through the above lines in the poem, the poet recreates a land suffocated with unimaginable deprivation and stench of corruption, so serious that writers and

activists who wished to live flew "farther/ than the fatherland" ("The banner of the future" 20-21). Many writers left the country for fear of their lives especially during the regime of military dictators. Those who dared to remain like Dele Giwa and Ken Saro Wiwa lost their lives in the hands of military dictators. The poet metaphorically refers to these activists as "the Irokos" who could not "sprout in the ravished soil", ("The banner of the future" 35). As a consequence, the poet challenges the masses to combat the beast rather than dodge it by saying:

> For how long will one survive
> Ducking monstrous feet,
> Sneezing from allergic inhalation;
> For how long
> Will the blood-sniffing beast
> Be free to tear apart the land
> The wreck of a father? ("The banner of the future" 51-57).

"The funeral of the hyena" is another poem in the collection with a sarcastic but combatant tone. In this poem, the poet further deploys animal images as metaphors that focus on the ugly, destructive and carnivorous nature of animals in order to vividly create images of oppressor-figures. The poet also uses the metaphors to create imageries of Nigeria's ruling class. Ojaide calls the oppressors dangerous insects and animals like scorpions, hyenas, vultures and the tyrant Ogiso. With a tone of urgency, the poet, in this poem, encourages the masses to brace up for a fight in the following lines:

> But brace yourself for a blind leap
> You can hit a rack
> When the hyena's after you
> With a mouth saddled with steel…
> No other door out of hell
> Than through fire ("Funeral of the hyena" 8-13).

Further in the poem, the poet gives these leaders sinister names such as:

> scorpions
> hyenas
> vultures
> they aren't the salt
> nor their rule a refuge ("The funeral of the hyena" 24-28).

He says these leaders are a total contradiction of the biblical symbolism "salt of the earth". The poet creates this imagery to emphasize that those leaders who rule the country cannot offer any better life to the people. Hence, in lines 32 and 33 of "The funeral of the hyena" he says, "the beaten monkey haunts and / mauls the baboon with blows". While the beaten monkey represents the masses, the baboon represents the oppressors. By echoing this Nigerian proverb, the poet implies that it is time to end oppressors' molestation. Hence, Ojaide can be understood as a social crusader who desires an egalitarian society for his country.

In yet another poem "Questions of tate", the poet asks the masses the simple question - "prey to the trickster-lord / profiteering on tears and howls, / who will relieve the land / of this rage, this thirst?" (21-24). "The trickster lord" is a recurring problem in the collection and it alludes to a one time military dictator in Nigeria. He was also known as Maradona – a popular Argentine master dribbler in soccer.

Ojaide writes in English but the images, references and allusions are Nigerian and African. This is why Salla says, there are several indigenous images which represent the poet's powerful plea for accountability for public funds from politicians who have gone out of control. Salla's observation is obvious in "The fate of vultures", the star poem of the collection. Salla earlier likened Ojaide's poems to what Soyinka calls "Shot-gun" poems. The urgency of the situation resurfaces in the poet's direct address to *Aridon*, who the poet believes is potent enough to punish and retrieve stolen public wealth from corrupt and greedy rulers of his land. In the poem, "The fate of vultures", Ojaide cries,

> O Aridon, bring back my wealth
> from rogue vaults;
> memory god my mentor
> blaze an ash - trial to the hands
> that buried mountains in their bowels (1-5).

The poet's cry to Aridon, the memory god, further expresses his utmost dismay with the politicians in his country. In order to describe African politicians, the poet further creates the imagery of two natural disasters we dread; the African whirlwind and the hurricane which are feared for their destructive aftermaths. What irks the poet still is the way they sweep away his country's wealth as the whirlwind without shame. These crop of politicians steal a lot of cash without hiding it. They "lift crates of cash" in their brazen sweep- away or "spread their ward's wealth" in the open. The pillages of these politicians leave the country in socio-economic misery.

Employing alliterations, Ojaide recreates the notorious activities of this deleterious politicians who like to fan flamboyance when he says "The chief and his council, a flock of flukes / gamboling in the veins of fortune" ("The fate of vultures" 18-19). The effect of such alliterative representation leaves the reader astonished. Furthermore, Ojaide does a clever play of poetic pun when he contrasts the deprivation of working class Nigerians with essential things like Gari (cassava flakes). In "The fate of vultures", he marries this pun with the billions of Naira sunk with the building of Abuja and the associated corruption thus:

> Shamgari, Shankari, Shun gari
> Stapled food of the people
> And toast champagne
> Alexius, architect of wind razed mansions
> a mountain of capital
> Abuja has had its dreams ("The fate of vultures" 26-31).

In addition, the poet does not forget to stress the fact that these politicians can be punished, hence, in a blunt manner, he spells the doom of the flash millionaires when he says "and when they die, they are dead for only vultures alike will mourn their kind" ("The fate of vultures" 45). By implication, corrupt politicians will not die as heroes and will not be immortalized in the hearts of their victims. Ojaide chose several sinister biological symbols which are contextually relevant to name Nigeria's military dictators and politicians. Ojaide deployed quite a number of Nigerian symbolism, metaphors and allusions to reach the masses. Ojaide's deployment of indigenous metaphors, alliteration, rhetorical question, pun, satire and irony equally accentuate the height of leadership irresponsibility and the attendant economic disparities in Nigerian society.

To further communicate his mission in this collection, the poet contrasts ordinary Nigerians' deprivation of essential things with the corruption of the billions that were spent to build the federal capital - Abuja at the expense of the hapless masses. Furthermore, the poet expresses his disappointment in military dictators in satiric poems such as "When soldiers are diplomats", where he asks the question "Can soldiers be diplomats?" One wonders what the people can do if solders play the harlot, lavish and exploit every opportunity for further enrichment. By recreating images of hardship caused by soldiers and politicians in the land, the poet has illustrated the socio-economic conditions of the hapless masses and further suggested how they can resist them. To confront the questions and problems directly, Ojaide makes

war cries to the masses to resist the despotic leaders. In the poem "Questions of state", the poet asks the masses if they will fight the trickster lord and revive the land of his rage (p. 94).

Conclusion

Through the analysis of the selected poems from *The Fate of Vultures and Other Poems*, this paper has described the socio-economic and political crisis of a country instituted by a class of feudal lords. There remains no option for the masses but to confront the upper class who steal and control the wealth that belongs to millions of Nigerians. The poems analyzed in this paper have illustrated how these politicians and military leaders carry out their socio-economic and political oppression in different guises. As an instance of social injustice, Nigerian leaders have legitimized the supremacy of the ruling class by creating socio-economic disparities in the society, even from the grassroots. No doubt, these feudal lords have accentuated their irresponsibility by causing a wide class divide.

The poet who advocates an egalitarian society has to use his voice to intervene in the socio-economic matters of his country. The poetry of Tanure Ojaide cannot be dissociated from the socio-economic realities around him. Ojaide has also used suitable aesthetics in his poems so that the common people he represents will understand the messages in his poems appropriately. The essence of these kinds of aesthetics is to reach as many people as possible. Ojaide has proved that his poetry needs to reach the masses. He has also shown that if poetry be the tool for social awakening, it must be available to the common man that it is all about in the first place. Critics like Salla argue that Ojaide's poetry is not only political, but consistently rich and deeply rooted in the Delta region of Nigeria where Ojaide comes from. This is a valuation that could be found in other collections by Ojaide, namely *Children of the Iroko and Other Poems*, *Labyrinth of the Delta,* and *Endless Song*, because of their central themes of single minded detestation of tyrants combined with an obsessive commitment to social justice. This preoccupation forms the social concern of the poet which condenses as social vision that Ojaide deems achievable unlike the apparent lack of social vision of oppressive leaders. Moreover, solutions to such tensions of class divide must be solved in order to re-order the society. Hence, the poet who desires such a change suggests that the masses resist the socio-economic structure created by these leaders with decisive actions that will produce socio-economic and political liberation for the masses as well as the country.

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