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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BIOGRAPHY AND WORKS OF THE POET

Tanure Ojaide's sixteen poetry collections include *Labyrinths of the Delta* (1986), *The Fate of Vultures* (1990), *The Blood of Peace* (1991), *Daydreams of Ants* (1997), *Invoking the Warrior Spirit: New and Selected Poems* (1999), *In the Kingdom of Songs: A Trilogy* (2002), *I Want to Dance & Other Poems* (2003), *The Tale of the Harmattan* (2007), *Waiting for the Hatching of a Cockerel* (2008), and *The Beauty I Have Seen* (2010). His other writings are: a memoir, *Great Boys: An African Childhood* (1998); two collections of short stories titled *God's Medicine Men & Other Stories* (2004) and *The Debt-Collector and Other Stories* (2009); three novels, *Sovereign Body* (2004), *The Activist* (2006), and *Matters of the Moment* (2009); and six books of literary criticism, including *The Poetry of Wole Soyinka* (1994), *Poetic Imagination in Black Africa* (1996), and *Poetry, Performance, and Art: Udje Dance Songs of the Urhobo People* (2003).

Born in the oil-rich but economically impoverished Niger Delta area of Nigeria, Tanure Ojaide was raised by his grandmother in a riverine rural environment. He attended a Catholic Grammar School and Federal Government College, Warri. Ojaide was educated at the University of Ibadan, where he received a bachelor's degree in English, and Syracuse University, where he received both the M.A. in Creative Writing and Ph.D. in English. A Fellow in Writing of the University of Iowa, his poetry awards include the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Africa Region (1987), the All-Africa Okigbo Prize for Poetry (1988, 1997), the BBC Arts and Africa Poetry Award (1988), and the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Award (1988, 1994, 2003, and 2011). *Sovereign Body* was a runner-up for The Commonwealth Literature Prize for the Africa Region in 2005. His non-fiction manuscript, *Drawing the Map of Heaven: An African Writer's Experience of America*, was a runner-up for the Penguin Prize for African Writing (2010). Ojaide taught for many years at The University of Maiduguri (Nigeria) and is currently the Frank Porter Graham Distinguished Professor of Africana Studies at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he teaches African/Pan-African literatures and arts.

He received a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship for 1999/2000 academic year to collect and study the "Udje Dance Songs of Nigeria's Urhobo People." With a Fulbright

fellowship, he taught at the University of Maiduguri and Delta State University, Abraka, in the 2002/2003 academic year. He has read from his poetry in Britain, Canada, France, Ghana, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Spain, The Netherlands, the United States, and South Africa. In July 2005 an international conference was held at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria with participants from the USA, Canada, South Africa, Botswana, Cameroon, and Nigeria to discuss Ojaide's writings. The Second International Ojaide Conference was held in July 2008 also at Delta State University, Abraka. He represented Nigeria in Poetry Africa 2005 at The University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa (October 10-16, 2005). Tanure Ojaide was the 2005 recipient of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's First Citizens Bank Scholar Award for his creative writing and scholarship. His poetry, a blend of oral traditions and modern techniques, has been translated into Chinese, Dutch, French, and Spanish.

1.2 PURPOSE OF STUDY

The main purpose of this paper is to portray poetry as an expression of anger using Tanure Ojaide's 'the fate of vultures and other poems' as a case study. Specific objectives of the study are to portray the poet's anger as shown in his novel. The poet aimed at showing awareness of his society by exposing and attacking its ills. He achieves these through the use of simple language and proverbs. His simple verses reflect his simple language. The simplicity of language, the literary devices and orality that Ojaide has adopted aid to lay bare the meaning of his poems. Ojaide's use of indigenous language contextualizes his poems and reflects his traditionality and orality.

1.3 THE NATURE OF POETRY

A fellow in writing of the University of Iowa, his poetry awards include the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Africa Region (198), the All African Okigbo Prize for Poetry (1988, 1997), the BBC Arts and Africa Poetry Award (1988) and the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Award (1988, 1994, 2003, and 2011). Ojaide taught for many years at the University of Maiduguri and currently the Frank Porter Graham Distinguished Professor of Africana Studies University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he teaches African/ Pan-African literature and arts.

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1.4 WHAT IS ANGER?

Anger is an emotional response related to one's psychosociological interpretation of having been threatened. Often it indicates when one's basic boundaries are violated. Some have a learned tendency to react to anger through retaliation. Anger may be utilized effectively when utilized to set boundaries or escape from dangerous situations. Sheila Videbeck describes anger as a normal emotion that involves a strong uncomfortable and emotional response to a perceived provocation. Raymond Novaco of UC Irvine, who since 1975 has published a plethora of literature on the subject, stratified anger into three modalities: cognitive (appraisals), somatic-affective (tension and agitations), and behavioral (withdrawal and antagonism). William DeFoore, an anger-management writer, described anger as a pressure cooker: we can only apply pressure against our anger for a certain amount of time until it explodes. Anger may have physical correlates such as increased heart rate, blood pressure, and levels of adrenaline and noradrenaline. Some view anger as an emotion which triggers part of the fight or flight brain response. Anger becomes the predominant feeling behaviorally, cognitively, and physiologically when a person makes the conscious choice to take action to immediately stop the threatening behavior of another outside force. The English term originally comes from the term anger of Old Norse language. Anger can have many physical and mental consequences.

1.5 THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF TANURE OJAIDE

While Marxism stands for the destruction of the capitalist state and has as its aim in the withering away of the state all forms of institutionalized violence, Marxist not only support the right of the working class to exercise a domination over bourgeoisie, they actively fight for that.

The society from which an artist metaphors always in most cases informs the issues He writes about. It is a valid truth that literature is not created in the vacuum as it mediates on social political issues that the artist grapples with in his existence. Charles Bressler gives vents to the above when he says that;

... society shapes our consciousness; that social and economic conditions directly influences how what we believe and values and that Marxism offers us an opportunity and a plan for changing the world from a play of bigotry, hatred and conflict resulting from class struggle to classless society, where wealth, opportunity and education are actually accessible for all people (115).

Tanure Ojaide and Ken Saro-Wiwa find themselves in a society that is characterized by a distinctive social stratification, featuring the oppressed and the oppressor. Both Ken Saro-Wiwa and Tanure Ojaide calls for a non violent revolution that will overthrow the bourgeoisie class that is represented by the Nigerian Government and the multinationals. They therefore adopt the Marxist ideology, Nwahunanya (2011) emits that;

Creative works of literature are product of the society's libido. The psychological approach may illuminate the create process, but the goings-on in the psyche itself are not central as such to literature since they are only preparatory to the act of creation and psychological truths become artistic values only if they enhance coherence and complexity in a work. (36)

The reason for the foregoing is that the writer is an active participant of his society and by extension recreates the collective experience of the people. The African experience thus transcends the concept of "Arts for Arts sake" theory but performs a function in the society in which it thrives and emerging into a moralistic light in questioning of societal practices.

A non-violent revolution is a revolution using mostly campaigns of civil resistance, nonviolent-protest to bring about the departure of government seen as tyrannical. This concept of non-violence is seen in Ken Saro Wiwa's A Month and A Day: A Detention Diary and Tanure

Ojaide's *Great Boys: An African Childhood*, these autobiographies portrays disillusionment and exploitation that constitute the social realities of majority of the Niger Delta region. The authors succinctly display their contempt for the agents of exploitation and degradation of the environment. While Ken Saro-Wiwa's approach was peaceful protest and non violent direct confrontation with the forces of exploitation and a clarion call for resource control by the people. Tanure Ojaide's approach was a subtle presentation of how the comings of multinational have set in doom in the Niger Delta region and to awaken the people to the past "glories" of the region and its environment.

Although the historical canon of the world is replicated with instance of revolution which varied in terms of the method and motivations but the end product in most cases have always being the change in the socio political and economic construct of the society.

1.6 SCOPE OF STUDY

This study shall be limited to Tenure Ojaide's *the fate of the vulture and other poems*. The consideration of these works is because the writers were able to raise significant issues of national importance with the main purpose of calling on the people that are concern about this issue to proffer solutions to the plights of the masses. We have decided to limit this discourse within this scope because; the themes of exploitation and official complicity are the bean of the peoples' plights.

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POETRY AS AN EXPRESSION OF ANGER: A CASE STUDY OF TANURE OJAIDE'S THE FATE OF VULTURES AND OTHER POEMS

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