

**SOCIO-POLITICAL COMMITMENT IN TANURE OJAIDE'S *THE BEAUTY I*
HAVE
*SEEN: A TRILOGY AND DELTA BLUES & HOME SONGS***

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ABSTRACT

This research identified Ojaide's representation of oil politics in the selected works. It examined Ojaide's poetry in relation to political issues in the Niger Delta, and also discussed the relationship between socio-cultural and political commitment in the selected works. All these were done with the aim of examining the aesthetics of political poetry.

The study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source recognized *The Beauty I Have Seen: A Trilogy* and *Delta Blues & Home Songs*. These poetic works represented to a large extent the Poet's Socio-Cultural and Political engagement with then question of environmental and social injustice in the Niger-Delta. A close reading of the texts was done to elicit data for the research. The secondary source of data included books, articles and the Internet. Marx and Engels Marxist theory were employed in analyzing the data.

The study showed that Ojaide's poetry has provided advanced knowledge in the study of oil politics in the Niger-Delta. It also showed that Ojaide's poetry has improved in relation to political issues in the Niger-Delta. It, as well, showed further insight in the relationship between socio-cultural and political commitment in the selected works. Also *The Beauty I Have Seen* Beckons on the deity of the Niger-Delta land – Ardon, the River-god and the Udje traditional chant to intervene on the oil crises informed by internal contradictions borne out of marginalization and segregation which culminated into oppressions. Thus, *Delta Blues & Home Songs*, talks the insensitive socio-political intrigues within the region which chronicles in retrospect the abandonment and neglect of the Niger Delta region by the government, and the retrospect the abandonment and neglect of the Niger Delta region by the government, and the devastating effects of environmental degradations of his homeland.

The study concluded that socio-political commitment and poetic aesthetic show recurrent lines in the study as it provided a new insight for a better understanding of the Niger Delta oil crises. Again, the socio-cultural contents of the selected works show the poet's artistic credo beyond arts for arts sake to art as capable of fostering a social change.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Art occupies a special place in human society and it deals with diverse issues. Art can function as a tool for political mediation and social control. In the contemporary society, ideologies guide many artistes and they use their art as a means of projecting their ideologies and belief systems. Also, human identity is interwoven with other sundry activities and almost every action can be read as a way of projecting the self. In literature, both creative writers and literary critics have leanings that guide their ideas. Over the years, many ideas have been formed and they have influenced thoughts and opinions. These ideas often depend on culture, experiences and association. There are literary critics and creative authors who embrace the Marxist persuasion, and there are those whose ideology relies on formalism. Also, literary theories like African American criticism, postcolonial theory, New Historicism and others have adherents who subscribe to them because of certain experiences.

Writers who explore the human society have continued to come up with diverse views on the socio-political disintegration evident in the society. In Nigeria, unpleasant political events like colonialism, neocolonialism, military dictatorship and corruption have provided material for literary works and several Nigerian authors have written on the issues. Also, present-day Nigerian poets have used their poems as tools for engaging the oppressive system and the drivers of the system. Within the multiethnic Nigerian nation, several specific ethnic challenges have also provoked literary responses. One of such response is the literature of the Niger Delta region. Joseph Ushie explains that the “Niger Delta region refers to the area covered by the six states of