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Material Deprivation in Tanure Ojaide's the *Eagles' Vision*

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Abstract

In this collection of poems the poet treats the subject of material deprivation in different ways. Deprivation is captured in the condition of school children, the dilemma faced by unemployed youths, the disasters in third world countries and the sufferings in war torn countries. It is also seen in the conditions of poor homes, refugee camps and street life. The deprived are portrayed as those that either lack good clothing or those that have none at all. The idea of material deprivation, in the third instance, is developed by memorable illustrations of pennilessness, exploitation, insolvency, low income and burdensome responsibility. The paper captures Tanure Ojaide as a poet whose thematic scope covers various conditions of poverty; despite his themes on social activism.

Key words: Tanure Ojaide, material deprivation, pennilessness, exploitation, insolvency, low income

Introduction

Tanure Ojaide's portrayal of material deprivation in *The Eagle's Vision* shows his concern for the poor. For Ojaide, "the poor are those economically disadvantaged and who cannot meet their basic socio-economic needs"(Ojaide,email 1). This serves as a reason why the poet bemoans deprivation among the poor in several Nigerian slums and laments the consequences of war and drought in other parts of Africa. Thus, in some of his selected poems for example, Ojaide presents the poor as those catered for inadequately.

According to Jo Okome(84), "Ojaide's poetry is one of the few among the second generation of Nigerian writers to address the social issues of moral decadence and the inequitable distribution of resources from a thoroughly partisan point of view." This partisan aspect of Ojaide's poetry establishes his reputation as a social reformer; hence, *The Eagle's Vision* has been selected because it contains relevant poems that address material deprivation among the poor.

Several scholars of African Literature have written about this particular collection of poems. Tijan Sallah (10), for example, posits that Ojaide's collection *The Eagle's Vision* treats issues that range from environmental degradation and racial discrimination, through those of neocolonialism and over dependence, to those of the rich and powerful. On this premise, he concludes, "if there is a persistent and unifying theme in most of his (Ojaide's) works, it is a single-minded detestation of tyrants combined with an obsessive commitment to social justice"(10). Tayo Olafioye on his part concludes that in this collection "moral issues continue to occupy the poet's anguish"(55). The critic Ezenwa Ohaeto comments only on one poem in *The Eagle's Vision*. He takes the poem "I Be Somebody" as a reflection of a shift in social roles and status markers. According to him, the poem(which reflects one of the central ideas in Ojaide's poetry) "stresses the importance of even the least member of the society." The persona in the poem is described as the "salt for the soup you de chop"(9). Another critic, Aderemi Bamikunle (64-81), avers that in Ojaide's collection "the exposure of the politician and his political ways continues unabated"(76). He goes further to comment on sixteen poems after which he concludes: "the dominant tone in *The Eagle Vision* is despair, even cynicism" (78). Idris Amali (97-109) argues that *The Eagle* is significant in Ojaide's crusade of national liberation from the forces of evil." The Critic assesses seven poems in the collection. He then posits that in this collection is "the nationalization of the problems which are evident in the Niger Delta" (106). Romanus Egudu opines that in Ojaide's collection the poor are the "living death". In addition, the critic argues that Ojaide treats the "cases of social injustice, of which the poor are the eternal victims" (emphasis added). More so, he sees the Rich's "type of wealth" as that which "presses" the poor "deeper into poverty." Lastly, he concludes with the poet's own

words: “the poor are those who ‘do not bleed when they trip on stones,’ “for no blood is left in their desiccated bodies; and it is the poor who have” “no tears to shed in pain,” “for they had long exhausted those they used to have” (83-88).

From a close look at these criticisms, only Egudu comments on the Poetry of Ojaide from the perspective of the predicaments of the poor. He, however, connects this to the abuse of power in Nigeria as the cause of poverty. His connection of poverty to abuse of power differs from the main thrust of this paper which treats only the different ways the poor live a deprived life. In other words, the concern of this paper is Ojaide's treatment of material deprivation in *The Eagle's Vision*. In several poems in *The Eagle's Vision*, therefore, Ojaide captures material deprivation in the lack of food, clothing and money among the poor.

Food

Ojaide captures material deprivation in the inability of the poor to get enough to eat. This aspect of deprivation is evident in the poems “Nasty Mean,” “The Patriot,” “In Our Time (1),” “Mournful Song,” “In the Fourth World,” “Funeral Drum,” and “In the Sahel.”

The image of hunger pervades the poem “Nasty Mean” (59). In the poem, the street boy is hungry because he lacks food. However, against all expectations, he refuses to “cry going through the day without bread/he won't wail not having ten kobo to buy water/...lest the world congratulate itself on really doing him in”(emphasis added). Two ideas are suggested in these lines; first, a state of physical hunger; second, a situation of social ridicule. It is not only the toil of his physical hunger that he needs to contend with but also the way society treats the likes of the street boy. As implied, the “world” around the street boy is the cause of his poverty. A tinge of pride and a tone of defiance are reflected in the resolve of the street boy, despite the physical strain of hunger he is up against. The poem, thematically, establishes the point that the poor are subject to public ridicule. In addition, the consciousness of the street boy over his impoverished condition represents material deprivation in the poem. The dramatic capture of the street boy's life is significant because it shows the physical and social strains that go with poverty.

To forcefully capture the emotional state of the street boy and the seriousness of his physical condition, the poet makes use of the dramatic “I”. However, the poet deliberately douses this built up emotion by creating a twist that contradicts the expected outcome of the outburst; the street boy repeatedly says, “I won't cry.../I won't wail...” Although the condition is bad, since bread and water are lacking, the supposedly defeated street boy is depicted as triumphant. He refuses to stand down to the ridicule of the “world.” This point stresses the essence of determinism in human life.

Material deprivation in the poem “The Patriot” is portrayed in the lives of schoolchildren who go “to school without breakfast,” yet perform energy demanding tasks like singing the “national anthem” and marching “on Independence Day”(60). The graphic description of their state is apt in mirroring the deprivation they go through. Their hunger is caused by a lack of breakfast and the daunting task of displaying unquestioned patriotism creates the needed tension in the poem. This tension is given credence by the poet’s choice of metaphors like “moving shadows” and breathing sticks” (60). This organic imagery means that hunger and fatigue have turned the school children into lifeless things like shadows and sticks. The ideas suggested here are that of physical weakness and unhealthy thinness which imply a state of malnourishment too. Both metaphors, apart from capturing the physical condition of the children, also tell of the pathetic state of school children from underprivileged backgrounds. Irony is reflected in the “pledge” they recite and the “national anthem” they sing, though hungry, because they “love Nigeria so much. So much!” More ironical is the fact that their parents “feed dogs of masters/with remnants of high tables they are forbidden to eat”(60).Not only are the schoolchildren hungry, but also their parents are deprived of food. Material deprivation becomes something transferable from parents to children. Thematically, these poems of Ojaide treat similar aspects of deprivation like Shelley’s “Songs—To the Men of England”. In Shelley’s poem, the persona questions the deprivation of the poor rhetorically:

Wherefore feed, clothe and save,
From the cradle to the grave
Those ungrateful drones who would
drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood? (1372)

Elsewhere, Shelley establishes the fact that the poor lack “shelter, food” and “love’s gentle balm” (1372). From the illustrations in both poems, it is true that down through the ages poets have concerned themselves with the plight of the poor and deprived. Hunger and malnourishment have consistently remained aspects poets address as themes of deprivation.

Malnourishment and servitude are vividly illustrated as aspects of deprivation in Ojaide’s poem “In Our Time”(1).In the poem, for example, destitute children described as “bastards” are accused of causing misfortunes like the “unending drought”(28).However, the poet-persona makes a case on their behalf by mentioning that the bastards were “raised... on dehydrated breasts,.../weak from birth, they were safe nowhere”(28).The expressions “unending drought” and “dehydrated breasts” betray the idea of malnourishment; because, a prolonged period of drought signifies food scarcity; and a mammary gland that shrinks suggests a problem with feeding. Here, a harsh physical environment can affect human nutritional requirements. It is

also the poet's intention to connect this situation to other negative alternatives. Due to the harsh condition "unknown parents" introduce the children to a world of violence and servitude. The expression "unknown parents" is an example of the poet's use of diction to describe the dubiously obscure identities of those who later pose as guardians to the children. The unidentified parents/guardians are also described as task masters who tie "pebbles as charms round" the children's "necks" (28). Servitude is captured metaphorically to describe the actions of the unknown parents. This vivid image painting is significant because it shows that harsh conditions and servitude lead to the state of malnourishment captured in the poem. It is a connection that Ojaide intends to achieve just as he does in the poem "The Patriots" (60) where hungry parents slave for the rich.

In several poems of Ojaide the idea of hunger is related to deprivation. For example, in stanza 2 of the poem "Mournful Song" (30) hunger is related to the effects of war. Hunger which is an absence of food is captured in the lines, "Division threw us into a deadly war.../Let me half-die from hunger while I raise my own yield" (31). This mood of emotional outburst still runs through the persona's monologue as he laments: "Now...I am occupied by charities, losing myself/ to the same powers that weaned me on subservience". Vividly the ideas of "charities" and "subservience" are related to the overpowering situation that forces one to condescend to accept help. Hunger therefore forces the hungry to accept help from even an oppressor. It also serves as an instance where deprivation depicts a humbling experience. Another example is captured in the poem "Fourth World" where drought and famine highlight the condition of a deprived people. Here, in the poem, the poor "are herded into camps to be fed food by charities/ those agencies of foreign policy and intimidation"(29). The expressions "foreign policy and intimidation" and "camps" show the condition under which the likes of the persona live. It typifies the western type humanitarian agencies that have the ulterior motives of making third world communities always over dependent. Hence, the poem is a statement on how over dependence turns the poor into hungry and homeless people. This condition the persona aptly describes metaphorically as "phantom life" and symbolically as "hell" (29). This view agrees with Uphuophi-Biri who sees it as "some negative roles played by the developed world against developing countries." He argues that Ojaide's poetry is relevant in pointing out this "damaging role" (14).

A similar picture of deprivation that Ojaide relates to hunger is natural disasters. In few of his poems the poor live in areas prone to disasters. Part two of the poem "our History"(The Funeral Drum), for example, conjures up this image: "The crops we plant to feed ourselves taunt with green,/only to dry up before sunrise-/we have forgotten harvest festivals"(14). Visual imagery is used here to recreate a scene of crop failure. Contrast serves the purpose of providing the extremities of the

condition; on one hand is the lush foliage and on the other hand are withered crops. Drought brings hunger. Ojaide's use of diction also suggests this condition. His use of "taunt" personifies the effect of the crops on the planter whose expectations are cut short by the sudden dryness of the lush greenery. Besides, the metaphor of the "forgotten harvest festivals" suggests a period where nothing is harvested from the farms. Undoubtedly, the poet's intention is to picture famine. Here the image of hunger is total, unlike in the other poems where there exist alternatives. The treatment of the subject of hunger in this poem also emphasizes Ojaide's role as a poet who is conscious of the environment and its impact on humans.

Central to some of Ojaide's poems is the subject of hunger which manifests in several forms. "In the Sahel "hunger manifests as starvation, drought and famine. This idea is evident in the complaint of the persona: "These days I make love with scarcities/ to keep bones and flesh from ultimate separation" (19). Depicted in the synecdoche "bone and flesh" is the essence of his complaint; the need to maintain physical well being. His intimacy with the personified "scarcities" shows the extent of his resignation to prevailing conditions in the absence of better alternatives. This excerpt of the poem suggests that one accepts situations that are beyond one. This same idea pervades the poem especially in the persona's lament about his condition: "I am denied sweat in every effort, denied the pride of harvest;/ there is no independence, since I am a colony of charities"(19). Two other aspects of the persona's condition are captured in just two lines: "I am denied sweat in every effort, denied the pride of harvest;/there's no independence, since I am a colony of charities"(19). The first line suggests a condition of dryness that affects the activities of sowing and reaping which is apparent in a period of drought. Famine, which is the result of the drought, shows the new status of the persona: a personality or entity without social and economic independence and a refugee dependant on outside help. The monologue obscures the true identity of the persona; it can be a person or land in peril. What is more important here is the condition of the persona which captures a lack of food.

The subject matter central to most poems discussed till now depict hunger, malnourishment, famine and starvation as aspects of material deprivation. This shows Ojaide's rich poetic perceptions around the broader idea of poverty.

Clothing

In several poems of Ojaide material welfare forms an aspect of material deprivation. This idea is captured in the poems "Nasty Mean," "The Patriot" and "Supplies."

“Nasty Mean,” which is the third part of the poem “Street Boy Blues,” captures an instance of material deprivation as lack of clothing. In line 6, the daily life of a poor youth is described; he resides in a shack where he moves about “without shoes” (59). In what reflects an emotional outburst he declares, “I won’t scream going through broken bottles without shoes” (59). The kinaesthetic imagery “scream” is used in an anticipatory sense. The reaction others expect of him is to go about showing the pains inflicted on him by the conditions of poverty. He does the opposite. “Broken bottle” is a visual image used metaphorically to capture a source of deprivation and pain. What is also interesting here is the simple prosaic language in which Ojaide presents the boy’s lament—it is direct as it betrays the extent of suffering the street boy goes through. The effect of the hyperbolic statement is the show of defiance even under the worst of conditions. His grievance is subdued by a resolve to restore his remaining dignity. Although in the poem deprivation is individualized, it suggests beyond the experience described. Ojaide portrays the poor without the material benefits of life, but makes the poor look triumphant as heroes who can survive without mundane cravings “lest the world congratulate itself on really doing them in” (emphasis added). He makes them, as suggested elsewhere, appear as people who are able to anticipate the condemnation of the world and then disappoint the world by not looking like victims. Significantly, the poem reiterates the idea that poverty does not mean a loss of dignity.

Another instance of deprivation is captured in “The Patriots” (60) where the image of schoolchildren in total want pervades the poem. In the poem, they “give pledge on bare feet/In the WAI brigade as they sing the national anthem,” and “march up and down on Independence Day” (60). The lines are self explanatory. The visual image “bare feet” suggests a lack of protection against wear and tear. More importantly is the patriotic obligations of singing “the national anthem”, reciting the “pledge” and observing the “Independence Day.” Likewise, the acronym “WAI brigade” is a voluntary group which the children join to display their patriotism. These tasks, however, negate the responses of the school authorities and government later. The children are “evicted from school.../because their jobless parents have no tax clearance certificates.” In the poem, the poet’s success is evident in the use of extended irony; because all through the poem are examples of social contradictions. Unlike the street boy who challenges his condition, the schoolchildren and their parents ignorantly accept theirs. The tension in the poem is heightened by contrasting the condition of the children with typical instances of their patriotism. Patriotism, in the poem, reflects the sacrifices by the poor and the unfair treatment of the authorities. Here the schoolchildren, also unlike the street boy, are passive to their condition. The poem is not only a statement on the lack of opportunities common among the poor but also the indifference common in a class conscious society.

In “Supplies” (20) the poor use “old sacks” as materials for making dresses for their newly born babies. In another example, the poor have no jewellery ; as a result they use “ornaments of shrine cowries to look sophisticated”(20).Irony pervades the second instance which revolves around their conscious efforts to live a genteel life despite the glaring deprivation. The poet makes this more dramatic in his report-like depiction not only in the use of the all inclusive pronominal “we” but also in the striking use of simile: “Scavengers, we nose-dive into dirt like the abused pig/ to scratch out our own remnants” (20).Expressions like “scavengers” and “abused pig” show the levels to which they have to condescend in order to survive. Irony underlies the lives of the poor in the poem. Although they are poor their cravings for a materially better life is never subdued. More ironic is the fact that the poor find it difficult to buy clothes and jewellery yet they procreate. Elsewhere, the poet off handedly intones: “we go back to the abandoned place/ which provides more than the national supply company” (20).Paradoxically, poverty induces a will to survive regardless of degrading conditions. Here, deprivation is accepted with resignation.

It is true, from the poems treated so far, that Ojaide exploits different instances of poverty to portray lack of clothing among the poor as material deprivation. His success lies in his ability to capture true life situations where basic needs of material life are absent. Lack of shoes, clothes and jewellery memorably paint a life devoid of needs and luxury.

Money

The imagery of material deprivation in several other poems of Ojaide relate to monetary problems. This idea is clearly illustrated in the poems “Nasty Mean,” “The Patriot,” “People Endure, Unfilled,” “Supplies,” “The Conception of Our Parents,” “They Say We Are a Family of Witches,” “Talking in My Sleep,” “And Again.”

“Nasty Mean” depicts the typical condition of the poor as illustrated in the life of a street boy who aggressively says: “I won’t wail not having ten kobo to buy water” (59). “Kobo”, in the poem, synecdochically represents the lowest Nigerian currency denomination; that, the boy cannot afford. The poem is a statement on life in the streets of poor communities. It captures times the poor go about their daily life without money. Here, pennilessness is portrayed as deprivation. It also captures the daily condition of life in many streets in the world, though the use of “kobo” restricts it to only one geographical location. In the poem, Ojaide’s poetic leaning towards journalistic reportage is evident; in plain language he describes what he sees. His language is direct, since the boy’s condition does not warrant anything loftier. In another poem, “The Patriots,” money becomes a major subject of Ojaide’s treatment of material deprivation. This image is illustrated in the way schoolchildren, under ironical situations, are “evicted from school.../because their jobless parents have no

tax clearance certificates/and “no naira to pay unending school levies” (emphasis added). Lack of money, as these poems portray, continues to be a problem in poor communities of the world.

The picture of deprivation in the poem “People Endure, Unfilled” is scenic. In Stanza 1 the persona aptly describes how “A creditor’s repeated knock at the door/ remains incredibly inaudible/ because of nothing to soothe his own wound” (67). As implied, a creditor seeks to get refund of money loaned out, but stops short of receiving it because of the awareness of the pennilessness of the debtor. The metaphor “wound” stands for the unpleasant condition of deprivation the creditor lives in because none of the debtors has paid back money owed. Stanza 2 captures a market scene where both “buyers” and “sellers” dubiously bargain to outwit one another. The struggle for material gains brings out corrupt tendencies in the individual. Yet again, in stanza 3, the poet- persona describes the impact of a similar situation on a salary earner; the lack of monetary satisfaction is so bad that “the end of the month is a shameful event;/ the shrunk take home packet” becomes “only one plastered hole in a badly perforated home...” (67). The preceding lines metaphorically convey a sense of salaries not being increased but rather pay cuts are implemented; or better still, debts reduce the pay packet before it gets home. Much worse is the fact that the money can only satisfy one need among many; the epithet “perforated home” conveys this idea. This is further given credence in lines 14—16: “You have to be made, shove off your neighbour/ from the porch on which he leans; / pour your blood over his plate.” The metonymy “Porch” represents shelter which is a source of security to the occupant; this is taken away by an opportunistic neighbour. In a similar manner, the metaphorical expression of pouring blood in another’s plate suggests taking over another’s dues. In other words, as captured in the poem, displacing others of their possessions or denying them their rights is part of the craze to avoid material deprivation. Ironically, one desperate move to stave off deprivation causes another. One finds in the poem a demonstration of how desperate struggles for material wealth debase human notions of survival. The ideas presented in the poem are significant because they show how unkind people can be to one another in their desperation to fight poverty.

In “Supplies” (20) the poor are described as people with meagre income. This idea is sustained in the visual image of “coins,” which represents the smallest monetary denomination in the possession of the poor. In the poem, two choices are open to the poor; either they “pick up coins;/ go back to the supermarket to resolve / the arithmetic of price” or they “go back to the refuse dump”(20). These contrasting instances of deprivation are the only options open to the poor. Another instance of deprivation is the kinaesthetic imagery captured in the expression “to resolve the arithmetic of price.” What is conveyed here is the extent of haggling the poor get

involved in while bargaining for items. Less fortunate is the extreme condition of scavenging for items in “the refuse dump.” Another interesting aspect of this poem is the partisan tone of the persona who uses the word “we” to empathize with the deprived; though the persona may not be an active participant in the experience. This tone gives “Supplies” the status of a script on the conditions of the poor in some parts of the world. Various options open to the poor are never the best.

Three stanzas in the poem “The Conception of Our Parents” (102) portray the poor as weighed down with financial responsibilities. As expected in a poem like this one, a tone of complaint pervades the poem. This tone illustrates the frankness of the persona who explains this condition of deprivation in a typically prosaic style:

We bring war upon our children without arming them—
depleted from start, they cannot stand their ground.
The inheritance is a shameful catalogue of leftovers
and impossible demands. Living in huts, we want
to be buried in palaces; riding bicycles
we want bumper-to-bumper motorcades from hospital,
and illiterate, we seek full-page appearances in the dailies (102).

Binary opposition is exemplified in the ironic conditions of deprivation the likes of the persona are born in and the hyperbolic expectations of the funeral arrangements they wish for. Words like “depleted,” “shameful leftovers,” convey a sense of poverty. While the expression “impossible demands” tells of the good treatment the poor envisage at death. Here use of contrast in the poem creates an ironic condition where the dead enjoy the material comfort the living never experience. Implied too, in the same poem, is the toil the funeral arrangements have on the finances of the poor. Apparently one of the themes in this poem is how expensive funeral rites cause monetary deprivation. A second idea is also introduced to develop this idea. The initiation of “Development plan” and announcement of “budget” without the wherewithal conveys the sense of deprivation in the poem. To buttress this point, the persona asks rhetorically, “If it has not been like that, how come/ that we are on the brink of death, choked by debts?” The expressions “brink of death” and “choked by debt” aptly capture this point. One significant point in the poem is the way individuals and groups plan beyond their finances and later face monetary challenges. The poem concludes with these lines: “This is easier done without love, which demands/ sacrifice of bulls from rearers of rams.../Whatever we start will be finished by time.” Multiple use of figures creates a dense meaning in the

way the poet concludes the poem; first, the use of irony captured in “sacrifice of bulls from rearers of rams...” shows the impossible tasks the planners set out to achieve; second, the aposiopesis at the end of the same line suggests other conditions and consequences beyond what the poet has captured in the poem; third, the aphorism in the last line suggests a shift of the financial burden onto future generations who get impoverished by the unwise actions of their forebears.

A tone of lament runs through the poem. Earlier on, the persona reproachfully avers “we bring war upon our children without arming them” (102). The metaphor of “war” captures a condition of poverty and struggles brought down on the inheritors. In stanza 2, at the “Development Plan” organized at a funeral, the persona expresses worries over “the budget announced” knowing that they will “spend more than (they) generate.” A hint of consternation can be noticed in the persona’s rhetorical question: “if it has not been like that, how come/that we are on the brink of death, choked by debt?” However, the lament ends with a note of aphorismic sarcasm; “This is easier done without love, which demands/sacrifice of bulls from rearers of rams.../Whatever we start will be finished by time.” Both imagery and tone in the poem give a vivid instance of the material consciousness of the poor. Here, in the lives of the poor, poverty fails to necessitate any sense of adjustment.

Exploitation in the form of heavy debt burden also reflects material deprivation in one of Ojaide’s poem “Talking in my Sleep (52).” In the poem, the personified country complains endlessly: “Now I have to talk in my sleep, for being on guard/this posture covers me in the neglected watch.” Deep regrets underlie the humorous tone of the poem, which captures the irony of having “to live in death to wipe off the IMF debts of love”(52). In a way, the acronym “IMF” (which stands for International Monetary Fund) is the central image of unfair debts in the poem. The oxymoron “to live in death” depicts the adverse effects of the loans on the poor country. Similarly, the word “love” refers ironically to the exploitative relationship between the beneficiary and the donor of the loan. Thematically, a condition where loans continuously undermine the economy of poor countries and keep them subservient to their donors is deprivation. The poem is a biting comment on the institutionalization of exploitation by wealthier countries. Here lies the global significance of the poem; that in a wider world there exist those who exploit and those exploited.

A similar picture is conjured up in the poem “And Again” (92). Here also, the poet-persona rhetorically presents an exploitative situation: “what use/laboring and borrowing to offer record sacrifices/if we continue to grovel on rubbish and gain nothing?”(92). From the poem, one learns that paying back debts can impoverish the borrower. This is also significant because it depicts the effects of global exploitation on third world countries through economic institutions.

Likewise, in another poem “They Say We Are a Family Of Witches (93),” the condition of deprivation builds up through the personification of debt. The condition is so bad that the worried persona complains: “Debt sucks all we earn and still opens/its mouth wider and hungrier for more to be filled” (93). Captured, in the poem, is the image of debt as a greedy human who eats up every item in sight. The condition gets worse with time. An allusion runs from lines 27 to 29 .It associates the image of the “family” to the rise and fall of a civilization. This shift in emphasis is noticeable at the end of the poem where mention is made of “a queen” that “rose out of a muddled legend, flourished in war/then got riddled against age in the sea depths”(93). This allusion to the prosperity and fall of a land borders on the decline associated with material deprivation. It shows the ephemeral nature of wealth accumulated from war. Significantly, the poem serves as a statement on the toils of war on great civilizations; a kind of gradual recession.

Pennilessness among the poor, less money in circulation, low monthly income among workers, bad debts resulting from too much borrowing, and exploitation by foreign donors are all portrayals of material deprivation. The illustrations agree with the fact that Ojaide depicts varying conditions of deprivation globally.

Conclusion

Ojaide’s illustrations of material deprivation are relevant to his notion about the welfare of the poor. Here, food is central to the image of material deprivation. One finds this portrayal of hunger in the appalling conditions of jobless youths, the poor state of schoolchildren and the neglect of orphans. Furthermore, Ojaide captures material deprivation in the picture of famine and starvation among drought stricken areas and in war torn communities. These portrayals of poverty show Ojaide’s consciousness in addressing deprivation as a problem of the physical environment as well. It gives a universal appeal to his poetry. Yet again, the poet captures instances where the poor have no shoes, no good clothes, and no proper jewellery to satisfy their desires for material comfort. From textual evidences, Ojaide muses upon the substandard alternatives open to the poor. This point also serves as a mark of consciousness about the true condition of the deprived. In the same way, Ojaide’s idea of material deprivation extends to the poor’s lack of financial security. From the poems treated, monetary privation results from unceasing pennilessness, low income, bad debts, foreign exploitation and uneven monetary circulation. As mentioned elsewhere, most of the poems have shown that Ojaide reveals the condition of the deprived in several ways. He does not only capture conditions at home, but also he portrays poverty the world over; a point that emphasizes the universality of his thematic concern.

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