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Inscribing dispersal: the politics of exile in African poetry

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INTRODUCTION: AFRICAN POETRY AND THE POLITICS OF EXILE: A CRITICAL SURVEY

Even at the most propitious of times, when a convergence of historical events and creative ferment of the imagination appear to announce their evidence, literary periodization remains a messy business— Harry Garuba, “The Unbearable Lightness of Being”

Coping with Periodization in Modern African Poetry

This thesis is essentially focused on the politics of exile in Anglophone African poetry, but on account of the generation of poets that is selected, this introduction begins by making some clarifications on the next few pages on the question of periodization and the specific category of generation into which the poets are placed. This is both in relation to the generation that preceded them and the ones by which they are succeeded. Thereafter, the chapter proceeds directly to engage the concept of exile with relation to African poetry.

Although relatively recent in its evolution, modern African poetry has undergone a series of transformations, blossoming as it does by appropriating names across time and generations. This in turn has also developed a paradigm which incarnates with it all the possibility and pragmatism of periodization. Concentration on poets of the second generation presupposes a preceding first generation.¹ This position, taken further, implies the identification of a certain distinctiveness that marks the previous generation from the second and vice versa. This kind of clarification which is at both levels of thematic concern and formal innovation cannot be divested from the socio-political space inhabited by the world of the poets.

In the first generation of modern African poetry, there was an incarnation of a dominant tendency of reaction against colonialism. Therefore, the thematic concern in the main was

¹ It has to be admitted, however, that there is no cut and dried approach to the delineation of these literary generations in African literature. Basically, the manner of study and approach often determine how these categorizations are configured. This is because of the overlapping nature of the defining paradigm in the literature. For instance, those writers of the first generation are still very much active and productive in the contemporary sense even now that there is already an incipient fourth generation.

to refute in a postcolonial fashion all forms of colonial insinuations which had hitherto placed Africa in poor relation to the West. It was indeed an attempt to “write back” in the same manner of textual articulation with which the West had depicted Africa; after all, colonialism was executed, employing all forms of textual strategies (Elleke Boehmer 1995:13-15).

An understanding of the extent of colonial impact on Africa and the forms of imperialism that had gone with it, engaged the art of these poets of the first generation in a sense that reveals their aversion to the propagation of the Judaeo-Christian civilization. It was a civilization which, having made a success of its proselytizing in Europe, had become the basis for encroaching upon Africa with an impassioned rationale that was carried out to the extent of displacing the gentile, communal societies, as was the case wherever this form of colonialism had occurred (Fredrick Engels in Stuart Ferguson 2005: 462). It thus becomes understandable why most of these early writers from Sedar Senghor to Christopher Okigbo to Agostinho Neto, to mention an arbitrarily representative few, joined in the nationalist awareness which had commenced much earlier with African independence struggles to highlight the impact of this colonial incursion and the need to revive the African heritage hitherto condemned to oblivion by the colonial dispensation. This essentially was a preoccupation of poets of the first generation in the period shortly before and after the wave of independence in most African countries in the 1960s (Tanure Ojaide 1996: 75-76).

One poem which typifies this tendency is Kofi Awoonor’s “The Cathedral”. It is a lamentation of the desecration and destruction of an otherwise authentic African milieu as represented by a tree whose “boughs stretched, across a heaven/ [and] brightened by the last fires of a tribe”. However, with the advent of colonialism, “surveyors and builders” are sent to cut it down and in its place “A huge senseless cathedral of doom is built” (Kojo Senanu and Theo Vincent 2003:209). Other poets take other various approaches in the exercise of asserting and affirming the African personality in their reaction to colonial views, while at the same time pointing out ways to cultural reclamation. For instance, Okigbo’s “Heavensgate”, Okot p’Bitek’s *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol*, Senghor’s

negritude poetry, Neto's poetry, among others, are works of this generation projected in this direction.

Perhaps one other tendency of this generation was the privileging of private or personal thoughts in their works. Soyinka's "To my First White Hairs" falls into this category. It is a creative devotion to the surprise and excitement that accompany the sudden realization of the passage of time as often signalled by the transformation of dark hair to grey. It also calls to mind Dennis Brutus' "The Sibyl" in which one encounters the externalization of some amatory infatuation with a young lady.² The attitude of these poets, it has to be explained, was actuated mainly by the prevailing socio-political ambience of the time. Things were still relatively in order and all that was needed was to celebrate Africanity and indulge in other forms of gratification.

The socio-political climate of their time was also to inflect the kind of training they had had in the art of poetic composition and literature generally. Whether trained in the newly established colonial universities on the continent, or the far more established ones in Europe, Anglophone African poets of this generation had western modernist poets to emulate as they launched their creativity in a foreign language. Of significant mention is the influence of modernist poets like Gerald Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot and others whose creative temperament was characterized by metrical finicality, obscurantism and fragmentation, features that often stand in the way of poetic apprehension and only serve to build a cult image around poetry (Timothy Materer 1995:1). Besides, it was a period during which these poets consciously or otherwise were concerned with the self-imposed responsibility of proving that the Black in Africa could also use English for poetic creativity as well as any other best known European poet. Indeed, it was a tendency which had earlier manifested itself in the attitude of African Americans and most illustrative in the snide and condescending attitude of Alexandra Crummell in his perception of English as a superior language to African languages (Henry Louis Gates, Jr. 1994: 248). This propagation of modernist universalism had its purchase on these African

² This analysis should not be taken as absolute, as it does not fail to take cognizance of the fact that for Brutus, romance is another way of articulating his love for his country, a view that is better borne out in "A Troubadour, I Traverse All my Land".

poets — whether Dennis Brutus in South Africa, or Christopher Okigbo in Nigeria, Kofi Awoonor in Ghana and others in their category (Ken Goodwin 1982).

Even when it comes to mythological allusions, most of these poets found themselves looking up to Greco-Roman mythologies and symbolisms. Much of this abounds in the early poetry of Okigbo and Brutus, especially “A Troubadour, I Traverse all my Land” (1963:2-3). In the summation of Chinweizu and others (1980: 209), all this constitutes the poets’ vulnerability to “Hopkins Disease”. On a last note, it goes without saying that poetry to these poets was more of an elitist privilege than any other thing.³

Yet as Harry Garuba reminds us, literary periodization, like canon formation, hardly goes down as a decent enterprise; not least because of the continually slippery nature of the literary landscape itself which makes categorization a particularly vexed and challenging issue for the literary historian. This is why:

Even at the most propitious of times, when a convergence of historical events and creative ferment of the imagination appear to announce their evidence, literary periodization remains a messy business. The happy coincidence of history and the foregrounding of particular thematic and formal preoccupation in literature are often one such moment when a period or school seems inevitably to come into being. But the inevitability is deceptive, masking the constructedness of the category we devise for framing our understanding of it and the time-lines we draw to mark it. For, once time-lines are drawn and writers and writing are placed within them, the intuitive clarity of the lines blur, as writers who should be within the period by the nature of their preoccupations and styles fall outside and others within very clearly pronounce their unbelonging in their work. The struggle to both maintain and reconstruct the boundaries then begins as critics scramble to recuperate the distinctiveness of the classification—often with qualifiers such as ‘early’ or ‘late’—while the unrecuperable writing continues to mock their best efforts. As boundaries demarcating neat categorizations, therefore, literary periods and schools are porous as they come. As markers of general trends, however, they retain some usefulness, more like provisional maps, open-ended rather than closed, always inviting revision; their reversibility inscribed, as it were, at the heart of their making (2005:51).

³ Certainly, the most chronically vulnerable of these poets was Okigbo who once stunned fellow writers at a conference in Makerere, in the early 1960s when he said that he did not as a matter of fact write his poetry for ordinary people- his poetry therefore was written for poets only, which makes him poets’ poet. See Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments* (Ibadan, Heinemann, 1988: 79). Yet one must acknowledge the fact that in spite of this prevailing circumstance, there were some other poets in this generation whose creative oeuvre was defined by clarity and simplicity; JP Clark-Bekederemo and Okot p’Bitek come to mind.

What is more, by attempting a categorization of African poets into generations, there is a simultaneous acknowledgement of distinct literary traditions. Nevertheless, the formulation of such categorization becomes problematic when it is imperative to admit that no tradition or generation stands as an island without drawing inspiration from an earlier tradition, no matter the magnitude of contrast a juxtaposition of two separate traditions pretends to show. That is, even when written African poetry pretends to contrast sharply with oral poetry, the rootedness of African poetry of scribal tradition in the predominantly oral tradition cannot be denied. Similarly, much as it is possible to argue about the existence of different poetic schools, traditions and periods in modern African poetry, the task admittedly remains “messy” as one struggles with the intersections and overlapping tendencies by which the first generation is, for instance, at poles apart from the second, and so forth. The observation is all the more true since in whichever historical context, “so it is that the individual text [and by implication every individual poet] carries with it a whole tradition, reconstructed and modified with each new addition” (Fredric Jameson 2005:2). To cite one specific instance of Okigbo’s influence on poets of the second generation, even the most vociferous of his critics, Chinweizu, has been confirmed to have consciously or unconsciously internalized some stylistic and structural inflections that are typical of Okigbo’s creativity (Wale Ajayi 2005:98). Not surprisingly, then, Afam Akeh (2007:3) reels out a long and diverse list of younger African poets, who in spite of their engagement with issues not exactly in consonance with the realities that informed Okigbo’s poetic intervention, let alone the complexity of his art, continue to betray their indebtedness to this poet of the first generation. In spite of the foregoing, part of the mandate of this introductory chapter is to come to terms with and acknowledge a second generation that can be said to have evolved in the wake of what has been termed “the post-Soyinka’s generation” (Femi Abodunrin et al 2006:1022).

Identifying a Second Generation, Anyway

The background to the emergence of the second generation of African poets transcends the simplistic banality of age difference as more fundamental issues can be adduced for

the evolution of these poets. If anti-colonial, nationalist zest and passion could be attributed for the making of the first generation poets during what Robert Wren (1990) has christened “those magical years”, the second generation poets inhabit another worldview and space created mainly by the pulse of post-independence socio-political circumstances. It was these that conversely induced another tune of poetic and literary creativity generally. More and more, it was beginning to register that while the colonial legacy aided the foundation for a drift in socio-political values, the reality on the ground was that power had since been handed over to the otherwise nationalists-turned politicians and administrators. The generally failed state of things could therefore be blamed less on colonialism— except only in the diachronic sense— than on the immediate African successors of colonialism who had begun to exceed colonial bungling and corruption in their dealings. In the West African sub-region, for instance, things had become so bad as to engender the interruption of civil administration by military coups and adventurism. This was the case especially in Nigeria, Ghana, Togo and the Republic of Benin.

Once the socio-political malady was identified, it appeared the stage was set for ushering in a new voice of African poets. This was not only in the West African sub-region, but in every other part of sub-Saharan Africa where the first wave of political mobilization and revival of traditional values, and in some cases, the propagation of socialist ideology, had taken root. However, there was a fundamental neglect, and that was the need to eliminate corruption (Henry Bienen 1987:48). It was this loophole that was capitalized upon by the military in the West African sub-region, especially as they intervened and disrupted civil governance for decades. In each case, they couched their take-over speeches in accurately ostensive terms for which the citizenry responded with vulnerable enthusiasm and credulity. As a region thoroughly buffeted by military coups and counter coups, it became evident, in the words of John Harbeson (1987:13), that while the first wave of politicians who took over from colonial masters belonged in their own right to the first generation of African rulers, the ostensibly intervening phase of the military could be said to betray “a second generation phenomenon.” Usually, their intervention was populist in approach and appeared to provide a source of optimism both locally and internationally;

yet they often ended up “in economic crisis, political repression or social failure” (John Foran 2005:1). Whether as a coincidence or not, it becomes understandable why among African poets there should also be a deserving tradition of a second generation.

In West Africa, for instance, the poets’ concern was an impassioned commentary on the situation in the sub-region in a sense that reflected the pulse of the oppressed people. In this region, the production of this generation of poets was numerically formidable, especially in Nigeria. Some notable names are Odia Ofeimun, Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Harry Garuba, Femi Fatoba, Mamam Vatsa, Okinba Launko (Femi Osofisan 2001) Funso Aiyejina, to mention but a few. Kofi Anyidoho, Atukwei Okai and Kobena Acquah make the frontline in Ghana. According to Niyi Osundare (1996:27):

Theirs...is the literature of social command, extremely sensitive to the social realities around them, but without losing sight of the aesthetic imperative of their works. This generation shocked African literature with a combativeness and radicalism never experienced before. The thematic preoccupation remains the desperate situation of Africa.

Most of these poets who began to write and publish in various magazines and journals from the late 60s of the 20th century began to express their radicalism, extending it ultimately to the point of individual publication of collections in the 70s and beyond. The disappointment of the military political class which exceeded that of the civilian government in praetorianism and privative tendencies becomes the preoccupation of Anyidoho in *Elegy for the Revolution* (1984). The subtext of this is that the people have lost confidence in both forms of leadership. In Odia Ofeimun’s debut, *The Poet Lied* (1980), there is a “directness” that shows the indictment of the leadership in the various crises into which the Nigerian nation had been plunged, especially the three-year long internecine civil war between 1967 and 1970.

This radicalism was also to be seen in the bias of most of these poets for socialist ideology, a consciousness which defined the problem in the region as primarily class-based. This view was to be further promoted by the Ibadan-Ife School through various fora and conferences (Georg Gubelberger 1998: 52; Femi Osofisan 2001: 172; Titi Adepitan 2002:66). Niyi Osundare’s collections, *Songs of the Marketplace* (1983), *The*

Eye of the Earth (1986), and *Village Voices* (1984) especially, are significant in this direction. He, like others in this generation, clearly highlights the dissection between the ambitions of the rich and the ruling class and the dispossession of the poor masses in society. This is done by asserting that the lot of the poor is a direct consequence of the ambitions and comfort of the rich and the ruling class.

It is in relation to the above that one must mention at this juncture the tendency on the part of these poets to demystify the esoteric aura created around the art of poetry. Again, Osundare's "Poetry is" (1983:3-4) is germane here. As a representative poetic manifesto, poetry must bear its meaning to all in society; hence, "poetry is/ man/ meaning/ to/ man" Harry Garuba (2003:5). This populist tendency is perhaps best illustrated with Ofeimun's "Prologue". Unlike his precursor of the first generation who sat on an alpine altitude from which he textualized with grandiloquent mysticism, Ofeimun illustrates the need to make the utility of his art common knowledge among his people. This he does by descending from his esoteric height and sitting right in their midst:

I have come down
to tell my story by the fireside
around which
my people are gathered. (*The Poet Lied*, 1)

In the East and Central African sub-regions, military dictatorships were relatively less, yet the regions experienced a consolidated tradition of civilian tyranny. The continual drift in commitment on the part of the leadership was to expectedly produce a new poetic tradition far from the narrative and expository rhetoric of David Rubadiri's "Stanley Meets Mutesa", or the succeeding post-colonial socio-cultural conflict that p'Bitek's *Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol* dwelt upon. The selfish hedonistic tendencies of this ruling class were to become the focus of Kenya's Jared Angira "whose talent for apt and felicitous phrasing combine with a sense of humour" (Senanu and Vincent 2003: 300), and which found complement in his scathing sarcasm as shown in his collections: *Juices* (1970), *Soft Corals* (1974), and *The Year Goes By* (1980). This view is best illustrated perhaps with "No Coffin, no Grave", a poem which combines the properties of dramatic satire to show the folly of the esurient flair of the ruling class for material acquisition.

The Malawian production of this generation is unique in the sense that those who populate its space also double as members of her first generation in the true sense of the word.⁴ The reason for this delay in the development and production of writers in this part of the region has been less due to the dearth of creative endowment than to the institution of draconian laws which manifested in the form of extreme censorship especially during the dictatorship of President Hastings Kamuzu Banda (Douglas Killam 2004:99). It is this that also explains why major Malawian writers that fall into the category of second generation in the broader African context have all adopted cryptic idioms and metaphors for their poetic practice. For instance, while Jack Mapanje and Steve Chimombo often sustain the metaphor of the chameleon in referring to the oppressive attitude of the state, Frank Chipasula especially in *Nightwatcher, Nightsong* (1986) prefers the metaphor of the “nightwatcher” as his own way of apprehending tyranny and interrogating its perpetrators (Mpalive-Haugson Msiska 1995). The sit-tight attitude of President Hastings Banda and the terror it unleashed on the dissenting voices to his administration became the major sources of inspiration for the poets in this country. From *Visions and Reflections* (1973) to *O Earth, Wait for Me* (1984) to *Nightwatcher, Nightsong* (1986) and to *Whispers in the Wings* (1991), one cannot but see the consistent critical stance of Chipasula who for the most part has remained in exile owing to the high-handedness of the establishment. In “*Nightwatcher, Nightsong*”, for instance, the confrontation with the leadership as the symbol of oppression that must be crushed is clearly articulated in the title poem.

The daring tone of the above poem is similar to what one finds in Chimombo’s *Napolo Poems* (1987). But perhaps it is with Jack Mapanje that one comes to terms with the Malawian reality in the way he engages themes of socio-political corruption and tyranny. Right from the first collection, *Of Chameleon and Gods* to *The Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* (1993) and *Skippping without Ropes* (1998), two collections that form an account

⁴ It must be admitted that David Rubadiri, whom literary history has often placed within East African literary tradition, is actually a Malawian and for that reason should be regarded as belonging to the first generation of Malawian writers. But perhaps for the notorious intolerance of the civilian government, his identification with the country’s literature has remained ambivalent. G.D. Killam, *Literature of Africa*, (London and Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 2004), 100.

of his bitter experience in prison during the rulership of Banda, one finds the same spirit of “combativeness.”

Concerning South Africa, Lewis Nkosi (1988:50) argues against the possibility of periodization in her literature of the 50s to the 70s. This is because of what he describes as “our single epic theme (which then was) still apartheid”. Michael Chapman (2002: 498), however, is quick to contest this by pointing to the period of the interregnum and in fact “poets of the interregnum”; that is, poets who had to take the initiative of filling the space left behind by poets of the first generation such as the Brutus and Kunene. For by the mid 1960s, apartheid had succeeded in banning all publications by black writers that reflected on the injustice of the system. The situation was worsened by the fact that most of these writers had been forced into exile or committed to prison. As a result, between this time and the early 70s there was a serious dearth of any form of literary creativity by black writers. It was this yearning against a creative vacuum that produced a second generation of black poets sometimes referred to as poets of Black Consciousness,⁵ or Soweto poets in South Africa. That their poetry was employed at this point in time as a medium of liberation struggle can hardly be denied, since the kind of poetry produced at this period was framed essentially by the need to actualize the Steve Biko mandate of pumping “black life into the empty shell” of the black man (Ritske Zuidema 2002: 12). What is more, “poems could be performed orally in front of large audiences, and because of their brevity, and density, they could be turned into effective carriers of urgent political

⁵With respect to South Africa, it needs to be further clarified that that the question of periodization is particularly problematic. To deny this fact is to be vulnerable to what Harry Garuba (2003:4) calls “the naïve homogenizing” which arises from attempts at theorizing in African scholarship. On account of this, “poets of the interregnum” are only appropriately so if we deploy Ken Goodwin’s (1982) model which places Brutus and Kunene in what can be broadly designated as the first generation of modern African poets in English. Otherwise, it has become necessary to acknowledge the long history of black poetic tradition in South Africa. While it is possible to trace this back to the late 19th century, we may however consign ourselves to the generation beginning with the “New Africans” to which the likes of R. Dhlomo, and A.C. Jordan in particular belonged. They wrote mainly between the 1930s and 40s. It is thus only after this generation can we be discussing the generation of Brutus and Kunene, which may within this paradigm of convenience place the Black Consciousness poets in the third generation (See Michael Chapman 1996:452-3). But as indicated earlier, for the purpose of convenience in this thesis, it will suffice to place the “poets of the interregnum” in the third generation. This younger generation, in the words of Serote, “had to search very, very desperately indeed for who we were, where we were going, and where we came from... which explains what came to be called the ‘Black Consciousness era.’ ” See Jane Wilkinson, *Talking with African Writers*, (London, James Currey, 1992), 177.

messages” (ibid.: 12). This development was again unique in the sense that the re-emergence of poetry was almost to the exclusion of other forms of literature. In an exposition by Nadine Gordimer (1976:132-133), this was because other forms, especially fiction, were considered by the apartheid government as particularly explicit in treating matters which were at the core of black agitation and opposition. It was this situation that inspired young black writers to seek “a less vulnerable” mode of literature with which “to give expression to an ever greater pressure of grim experience.” From printing in the little magazines and journals like *The Classic* (Michael Chapman 2007:11), the second generation of South African poets emerged with their individual publications. Prominent among these are Mongane Wally Serote, Njabulo Ndebele, Oswald Mtshali, and Casey Motsis.

Despite the censorial and inhibiting space they inhabited, they found a propitious medium in poetry and,

their poetry states, in varying degrees of subtlety and explicitness, that they will remain human, alive and free in the face of whatever destructive forces outside reality might be aiming at them. This is a form of psychological self preservation and the most effective vehicle for it is poetry. (Robert Royston 1973:7)

The result of this resolution was the production of a vibrant tradition of poetry which held sway and held the fort for other literary forms while the evil days of apartheid lasted.

Apart from the defining oeuvre of simplicity that one identifies with this generation of poets on the continent, the predisposition to orality is another index of the generation’s articulation. Related to the above, by way of summation, is the way this generation has radicalized African poetry through the incorporation of dramatic elements and performance, a trope upon which the third generation of African poets like Remi Raji (Nigeria), Kgafela oa Magogodi (South Africa), among others, have built.

Justification of Study

The overall justification of this study is underpinned by the need to examine the poetic representation of Africa’s post-colonial susceptibility to exile in about the last thirty

years. More specifically, however, the undertaking of the study is informed by a further need to explore the various factors that are considered by the selected writers in their representation and apprehension of exile. Viewing the collections singly and together, therefore, bears the prospect of demonstrating how they constitute veritable readings suitable for the critical challenge “of opening...spaces for new narratives of becoming and emancipation” (Couze Venn 2006:1). This is why the study is interested in how the writers have individually taken up the challenge of the discourse of exile against the backdrop of the socio-political climate of their regions and countries as a way of registering their alertness to the trend. Again, the decision to study the second generation of African poets only, is actuated by their unique sense of creative reaction to the social phenomenon of African dislocation. The writers of the selected collections are also united by their focus on the West as the main destination of most Africans confronted with the option of migration for better lives. Furthermore, the study is fascinated by the prospect of re-reading some of the texts, especially Anyidoho’s *EarthChild* and Mapanje’s *Of Chameleons and Gods* as texts which, contrary to the popular critical reception they have had so far, are valuable in the discourse of African exile. Besides, not a few of the texts, particularly those published on the threshold of the twentieth century and shortly thereafter are interested in the complexity the discourse of exile assumes as a result of a new world order overwhelmed by the invention of a planetary system in which the frequency of the negotiation of space and movement across national boundaries, especially from South to North, has become an orthodoxy.

The poets’ response to this global development in relation to Africa and African exile is remarkable because they are also able to express the fear about the problem of historical polarization between North and South, while at the same time making statements concerning alternative views on the new world order. This in some cases is done by staging strategies of ultimate return from the accelerated susceptibility to drift. The study is further considered worthwhile because, while much attention is currently being given to the other two sister-genres of postcolonial literature, that is, prose and drama, poetry has suffered much critical neglect (Elleke Boehmer 2007:np). Yet it is inevitable to remark that poetry, in spite of its typical denseness and economy of diction, has been no

less articulate in engaging with the question of exile. As a global phenomenon, the critical neglect to which poetry is subjected in recent times finds expression in Bruce Murphy's essay "The Exile of Literature: Poetry and the Politics of Other(s)". Although essentially a critique of the exclusion of American poetry from critical attention and patronage compared to the other genres of literature, and although presumably for a different reason,⁶ it nonetheless serves further as a basis for the need to rise to the occasion of restoring the critical attention that the study of poetry lacks at the moment. This accounts for why it is possible to argue in this research that the aim of this study is two-pronged: to explore the concept of contemporary exile in African poetry because it is hardly given attention compared to the other two sister-genres; and to also attempt a rescue of poetry from the general neglect and "exile" to which it has been committed in recent times.

Scope and Limitations of Study

The proposed study, because of its consciousness of the existing tradition of exile in African poetic discourse, will focus first on certain earlier works of exile as found in the poetry of older poets like Sedar Senghor, Dennis Brutus, Wole Soyinka, Kofi Awoonor, Christopher Okigbo, Lenrie Peters, David Diop, and Okot p'Bitek. This is essentially for the purpose of setting a background for the discussion of the poetry of the selected younger poets in this study.

The assemblage of the cast of six poets of the second generation is for the purpose of highlighting the various ways in which they have responded to the question of exile in the past two decades or so. Certainly their responses have not all been the same because their task of creating generalized personas in their reflection on the issue are not bound to any totalizing paradigm. This is also where the prospect of this study as an interesting one lies; for, even in the diversity of approaches of these poets the unity of their purpose cannot be denied.

⁶ Bruce Murphy cites the genesis of the "marginality" of poetry in America as dating to the "dawn of modernist period, when Walt Whitman printed his first volume of poetry at his own expense." (1990:162). Contemporary marginality of this genre of literature is made poignant, according to Murphy, by the inability of American poets to reflect with compelling infection on the contemporary suffering of American communities.

Specifically, my analysis of these texts will focus on the construction and location of home; the mode of apprehension and the acknowledgement of exile; the battle for survival in a condition of dislocation; the strategies of reaction and return; and the techniques for location and dislocation. These aspects are so considered because they are veritable areas of concern and critical strategies in the study of exile. The study does not, however, include African female poets. Nevertheless, this is not to deny that female poets have been outstanding in the area of reflection on exile. Again, the study does not include works from the north of the Sahara due to the difficulty in accessing materials from this part of the continent as a result of language barriers. Similarly, other works of French and Portuguese-speaking African poets will not be considered owing to the unavailability of recently translated collections on the theme of exile.

The Authors

The authors whose works constitute the primary texts of this study have one thing in common: they belong to the second generation of modern African poets. This generational patrimony has equally placed on them the responsibility of considering the issues that typify their age in their poetry. Interestingly, exile and the general question of migrancy have also engaged their creative attention. They have all, however, adopted different approaches both thematically and structurally in their response to this social phenomenon.

Odia Ofeimun is easily tipped, especially in the West African sub-region as the voice that blazed the trail for his generation with his first collection *The Poet Lied* (1980). The debates generated by this singular collection in the West African sub-region have significantly contributed to the shaping of the literary tradition that evolved with the publication. The other works of this Nigerian literary journalist and scholar are *A Handle for the Flutist* (1986), *Dreams at Work* (2000), *A Feast of Return under African Skies* (2000), and *London Letter and Other Poems* (2000), which is the collection for study in this research.

Tanure Ojaide is most acclaimed for his award-winning *The Fate of Vultures* (1990). This Nigerian professor of Humanities is credited with numerous titles including *Eagle's Vision* (1987) and *Labyrinths of the Delta* (1986). But this study focuses on *When it no Longer Matters where you Live* (1998). He has also made remarkable contributions to African critical scholarship especially with his books, *The Poetry of Wole Soyinka* (1994) and *Poetic Imagination of Africa* (1990). His poetry is defined by an unambiguous concern for the neglect of his Niger-Delta people in Nigeria. But this is not to the exclusion of other issues affecting Africa and the world in general.

Olu Oguibe is a professor of Visual Art and a rising voice in postcolonial theorizing. He has to date a lone collection, *A Gathering Fear* (1988) which nevertheless has been acclaimed a remarkable contribution in the generation, a fact attested to by the series of both national and international awards he has received on account of the publication. Besides, the frequency of its mention in critical circles is a testimony to this comment. It is a work in which the pains of exile are unequivocally expressed while drawing attention to the equally frightening realities at home. The distantiated condition notwithstanding, the love for home also defines this work. It is interesting to remark further that his artistic concern for the condition of space and crossing with respect to Africa is expressed in his edited theoretical and critical text, *Crossing: Time, Space, Movement* (1997).

Kofi Anyidoho is easily Ghana's most acclaimed poet besides the older Kofi Awoonor. His collections include *Elegy for the Revolution* (1978), *A Harvest of our Dreams* (1984), *EarthChild* (1985) and more recently *Praise Song for the Land* (2002). Like Olu Oguibe, he has also edited a book on exile: *The Word behind Bars and the Paradox of Exile* (1997). This professor of literature also has several other seminal critical texts to his credit, besides edited works. Among these are *Interdisciplinary Dimensions of African Literature* (1982), *The African Ideal in Literatures of the Black World*, (1989) and *Oral Poetics and Traditions of Verbal Art in Africa* (1990).

Jack Mapanje is a professor of Linguistics. He remains arguably Malawi's finest and most renowned poet whose debut, *Of Chameleons and Gods* (1981), as well as the controversy in which it was caught was partly responsible for his imprisonment by the regime of the then president of

the country, Kamuzu Banda. Other collections of his are *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* (1993), *Skipping without Ropes* (1998) and *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* (2005). This study will focus on the first and the latest, namely *Of Chameleons and Gods* and *The last of the Sweet Bananas*. His prison experience also inspired his editorship of an anthology of African prison writing titled *Gathering Seaweed* (2002).

Mongane Wally Serote. This fine artist who is bound to the South African and indeed African cause in his writing is certainly the most prolific in his generation, especially in Southern Africa. He was a notable voice in the Black Consciousness movement in the days of impassioned protest against apartheid. Some of his collections are *Behold, Mama Flowers* (1978), *No Baby Must Weep* (1975), and *Scatter the Ashes and Go* (2002), among others. He is by no means a stranger to exile and this is evident in most of his collections. As a novelist he has also published *To Every Birth its Blood* (1981). However, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on *Freedom Lament and Song* (1997) and *History is the Home Address* (2004). His poetry, as discussed, often assumes a narrative approach to get across to his readers, and challenges Africans to the necessity of holding memory in high esteem in order to take on the accessible present as well as the unpredictable yet inevitable future.

Exile and African Experience

Considered in the orthodox sense for the purpose of convenient discursive departure, exile, that result of dislocation from one's native land, occupies a conspicuous place in poetic exploration in particular and literary conception in general. This is perhaps so because human history all the world over is characterized by elements and moments of dislocation at one point or the other. The veracity of this remark is underscored by an assertion as George Lamming's (1960: 24) that "The exile is... a universal figure... and to be in exile is to be alive". But perhaps there must be an admission of an extremely allegorical twist to this notion of Lamming's apprehension of the concept. This is in view of the fact that the context from which the assertion extracts articulation revolves around the capacity of the political to engender estrangement. More literally, therefore, exile

must be viewed as a human condition which is defined by dispersal or drift usually against the wish of an individual or community.

The fact of humanity's vulnerability to exile is evident in the various circumstances and incidents by which it is necessitated. These circumstances and incidents range from war to famine to political crisis and in some cases, a dissident stance. It thus becomes understandable why the literary contents of peoples' cultural traditions, whether oral or written, are replete with engagements of dislocation.⁷ But it is to Jewish mythology and literature, both in the distant and contemporary context, one may turn for the assessment of the panoptic drift of exile which usually verges on the problematized experience of diaspora. Being closely related to and often designated as a logical consequence of exile, it is not surprising that the etymological denotation of "dispersal" that diaspora carries from its Jewish antecedent (Isidore Okpewho 1999: xii) remains valid in contemporary times in matters of uprooting and re-rooting from an original homeland. Usually the paradigm of dispersal is two-pronged in the sense that the tendency is spatio-temporal; that is, where there is diaspora the time of dispersal and the space of arrival and settlement are crucial in the definition of a diasporic identity and configuration.

To return to the exposition on exile, the triumphs and tribulations of it are indeed expressed and evident in the representation of the Jewish race in biblical times as nomadic. The simplicity of this view is however blurred in the Pauline hermeneutics which inverts the literal understanding of the Jewish race by introducing an allegorical twist by which as many as are converted to the Christian faith—a theology that is complicitous with the civilizing alibi of western colonialism—is to be Jewish (Daniel

⁷ In his essay, "Uganda: The Resilience of Tradition. Displaced Acholi in Kitgum", Ambrose Olaa reviews the exilic history of the Acholi people of Uganda and argues that dislocation has come to be accepted by this ethnic unit as a unique culture which typifies its identity; this fact is underscored by its inclusion in the thematic preoccupation of the people's folk songs. See Marc Vincent and Birgitte Refslund Sorensen (Eds.), *Caught Between Borders*. (London, Sterling and Virginia: Pluto Press, 2001), 99-113. Similarly, Chris Cusano in "Burma: Displaced Karens Like Water on the Khu Leaf", cites the instance of the Burmese tribe, Karen, as one which considers exile a permanent way of life. Even when a movement like Karen National Union (K.N.U.) mobilises the tribe martially to the end of achieving restoration, the theme of exile cannot be wished away, and this is evident in the various versions of their folk tales of origin. See also Marc Vincent and Birgitte Refslund Sorensen (Eds.), *Caught Between Borders*. (London, Sterling and Virginia: Pluto Press, 2001), 138-171.

Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin 1995: 332). Nevertheless, the all-embracing, spiritualizing liberalism of this philosophy is thoroughly compromised by the historical persecutions to which genealogical Jews have often been subjected especially in the western world, so much so that, the word Jew is a metaphor for the dreaded, rootless and rejected “Other” against whom all measures of exclusion must be executed (Gorge Mosse 1995: 196). Not surprisingly, therefore, exile, as soberly reviewed by Edward Said (2001:173) with insightful acuity, invariably becomes that strangely compelling condition whose “achievements... are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind”.

In terms of Black Africa’s first major dispersal of diasporic magnitude to the West, the period is generally, but not exclusively, agreed to date back to the 16th century. Nevertheless, scholarly evidence abounds to the effect that it is not in all cases that the “pre-Columbian scheme” (Okpewho 1999: xii) can be wished away. The circumstances of this dispersal were as epochal as they were evolutionary. Again, I have chosen to invoke Okpewho’s paradigm which identifies three imperatives in the said dispersal and making of Black diaspora in the West. The first of the imperatives is the “*labor imperative*” which stresses the era of the West’s unbridled quest for the slave labour of Africa’s “sons and daughters” via the agency of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Logically following on the trail of the first is the “*territorial imperative*” which, in response to America’s monopoly and foreclosure of any further European colonization of Latin America, pushed European imperial powers to convergently scramble and partition Africa. The third imperative is the “*extractive imperative*”, an era “when Africa’s mineral wealth had become the main focus of western interest in the continent”.⁸ In their cumulative significance, the imperatives have built a major Black presence in the West. Indeed, the historical circumstances under which the unenviable condition of exile translated into diaspora have resulted in a dispersal experience. However, this experience for the most part continues to point to how the posterity of the uprooted Black race lives through a world with evidence to the fact of “the loss of something left behind” on the

⁸ Although in expounding these imperatives Okpewho limits his focus to America, it is nevertheless important to state that given that American imperialism did not and still does not operate in isolation from European imperialism, whatever effect it has had on Africa cannot be said to be exclusive as it is in league with European imperialism. This is why the paradigm, though restrictive in Okpewho’s explication, is however considered vicarious in this context.

African continent. This is essentially because of the tribulations that have dogged the lives of the African diaspora in the West. Of course, while this view is a basis for why Africa remains crucial in the discussion of Black diaspora, it does not fail to inspire counter-critical perspectives which interrogate this view as one may find in articulations of the sentiments of the Black Atlantism as advocated by Paul Gilroy and others in this school of thought. In this case, Black Atlantism, among other things, seeks to transcend the question of race or soul in the contemplation of Africa and its diaspora (Michael Echeruo 1999:3). How this precursory experience of the Black diaspora is expressed in its literature will be explored later in this section; suffice it to say the discussion will return to exile experience in the continental Africa of modern times.

However, to say that persecution is all there is to the configuration of African diaspora in the West is to miss the mark. The point returns the discussion to the “Black presence” phenomenon especially in America, which Okpewho (1999: xiii-xiv) contends is manifest in every area of the American configuration: from culture to literature to the making and consolidation of the American capitalist economy. To the extent that there is a measure of logic in the foregoing argument, exile with respect to the conditions of African diaspora originally formulated through the historical antecedent of slavery must as well be considered from an angle that transcends the calamity that defines the initial expulsion of people from their homeland. To echo Nikos Papastergiadis (1993: 1), the apprehension of exile must transcend inflections of political banishment and incorporate, among other things, “the dislocation of peoples by economic pressures and [more substantially as in the case of the bulk of Black diaspora] the redefinition of values and norms through cultural transformation. In this sense exile embraces the totality of ruptures that pervade the mechanisms and constitute the dynamism of social change.”

Exile and Modern African Poetry

If so far the attempt in this introduction has been to establish the genesis of African large scale migration/ exile to the West, it is also important to incorporate the memory of the trade and its aftermath for African exile. This is in order to show what subsequently

followed on the continent, especially as colonialism was a follow-up to the antecedent of the trade. Once this historical liberty is granted, the discourse of exile in African literature begins to have its appeal of logic as it presents a holistic approach since the place of the continent as a primordial homeland for its diasporas in the West cannot be obscured. Moreover, it also provides the groundwork for the possibility of presenting an argument about the continuum of African exile in the West, and showing how the dimensions have changed over the centuries owing to the ever-changing historical epochs the continent has witnessed.

Considered nonetheless with the trappings of its nuances, the engagement of poets of the first generation with exile was basically cultural, giving a strong validity to the “importance of the language-place disjunction” (Bill Ashcroft, et al 1989:28) in the construction of the post-colonial realities. Beginning with the poetics of Negritude as most exemplified by Sedar Senghor, one encounters a reaction to colonialism and its consequences of disjunction which is that of a double alienation from African heritage and that of the West. The attempt at reclaiming the lost African ontological space and its endowments becomes the focal point of Senghor and other negritude artists. Among other things, the imposition of the paradigm of western modernity on Africans and the ambiguity of identity it created in them due to the fact that the conflation of indigenous and western epistemological practices was indeed a crisis in itself. One way of resolving the conflict as exemplified by Senghor was to pursue a quest for synthesis both in “life and poetry” (Mildred Mortimer 2002:38). This brings into perspective the cultural exile that resulted from the contact with western culture and its impact on Africa. Such synthesis through which Senghor finds some kind of parallel between, say, “Sine and Seine”, goes to show the dilemma of cultural exile. Senghor “combined Sine with Siene, the rivers of Africa and Europe, knowledge of the culture and traditions of his native Senegal with that of his adopted French heritage” (ibid.:38). This is because caught between both ends of conflicting epistemologies, an attempt to internalize and become an embodiment of both can be regarded as some kind of metaphorical return. This way the cultural exile is able to utilize the knowledge of both worlds to redefine his identity.

Christopher Okigbo dwells on the same theme in *Heavensgate* where his atonement becomes vicarious as there is a sense in which it speaks for the pains of the severance of the modern African from the otherwise authentic African culture as a result of the purchase of colonialism on him in all its ramifications.⁹ For Okigbo therefore, exile is painfully spiritual as it is physical. The cultural implications of his inability to take up the path charted for him by the dictates of tradition are not only regretted, they also go to validate the Spanish etymological underpinning of exile as “*los despistados*”, that is, the disoriented (Dolora Wojciehowski 1992: 1). Also from West Africa, Soyinka’s “The Telephone Conversation” touches on the theme of exile, this time in the physical sense. Similarly, in the poetry of Portuguese-speaking writers, the preoccupation with the condition of the exilic among writers of this generation is remarkable; Antonio Jacinto’s “Poem of Alienation” comes to mind here. With Okot p’Bitek, the issue assumes a grand dimension of extended metaphors as one finds in *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*. In both, there is a contextualization of the socio-cultural tensions of exile. There is however a parallel twist to the notion of exile among poets of the first generation in South Africa, as it is in the main an experience engendered by the aberrations of the politics of apartheid. It is in fact for this reason that Udentia Udentia (1996: 123) asserts that during this period, it was impossible to talk about South African poetry without discussing exile. This trope is most represented by the poetry of Brutus.

In a similar vein, various critical works have been done on African poetry in general and the concept of exile in particular. In the context of the first generation prominent among such was Ken Goodwin’s *Understanding African Poetry*. The work consciously selects poets of English expression in a manner that places it, even two decades after, as a critical intervention not only intent on recognizing the accomplishment of the poets, but making statements of canon formation at the same time. In understudying the impact of western tradition on these poets the journey motif associated with modernity is also manifest. This

⁹ The personal experience of Okigbo in this case is instructive. Robert Fraser recounts it this way: “We know from Anozie’s account that Okigbo wrote *Heavensgate* shortly after a brief return visit to his home village of Ojoto, where he re-encountered the traditional mysteries and in particular the cult associated with the riverine goddess Idoto. We learn further from Okigbo’s own testimony that as a young boy he was expected to shoulder the burden of the priesthood of this cult when he grew up, but later found it impossible to reconcile this with his professional career as librarian and publisher”— *West African Poetry* (Great Britain, Cambridge University Press, 1986), 106-107.

is because either in the literal or metaphoric sense, the internalization of western poetic traditions and the influence on the works of the African poets speak to the question of exile which, as has been seen, is crucial in one way or the other to the understanding of poets in this generation. The list runs from West to Southern Africa: Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, Lenrie Peters, John Pepper Clark, Kofi Awoonor, Taban lo Liyong, Okot p'Bitek, Mazisi Kunene and Dennis Brutus. Earlier Romanus Egudu had published *Modern African Poetry and the African Predicament* which was linguistically all encompassing by looking at the commitment of African poetry to the socio-political realities of sub-Saharan Africa.

Besides, other critical works have engaged with regional poetic traditions with focus on individual poets in each of these regions— from Michael Chapman's *A Century of South African Poetry*, to Robert Fraser's *West African Poetry: A Critical History*, to Landeg White's *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices In History*, among others. While some of these critical works have included poets of the second generation, others have concentrated on members of this generation in the main in order to explore the defining tropes of their creative oeuvre. Among such are Adrian Roscoe and Mpalive-Hangson Msiska's *The Quiet Chameleon: Modern African Poetry from Central Africa*, Tanure Ojaide's *Poetic Imagination in Black Africa: Essays on African Poetry and Michael Chapman's Soweto Poetry* and David Attwell's *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History*. However, much as these works have explored works by poets in this generation, there has been no decisive effort to reflect on the poetry in this generation with respect to the writers' responses to the phenomenon of exile that has become too overwhelming in contemporary times to be ignored. Where such attempts have been made at all, the critical reflections have been anecdotal and, at best conflated with other themes. This then explains why this research has chosen to engage with the concept of exile as directly responded to by the selected authors in some of their collections.

Bound by the paradigm of periodization, one is constrained to assess the works of poets of the second generation against the backdrop of the influence of their emergence. Their

preoccupation with exile becomes more literal than allegorical; that is, while it is possible to locate part of their thrust within the project of cultural reclamation, their poetry within the context of exile bears more “of the material forces of politics [and] economics”. This is achieved as they confront in the immediate sense, mementos of the dead end of post-independence euphoria, an attitude informed by the alienation agenda constituted in the manner of the ruling class which leaves most of the countries in an array of crisis. Invariably, the recognition of their poetry as postcolonial in relation to exile becomes the more challenging as it necessarily takes into account the trend of human migration from the latter part of the 20th century especially as a global phenomenon. As May Joseph (1999:154) succinctly puts it:

Migration has become a way of life in the latter part of the twentieth century. The large scale displacement of people from the rural to the urban or across nations has heightened the precariousness of arbitrary boundaries while fuelling contemporary identifications with ossified national identities. The 1970s in particular witnessed a global reconfiguration of national citizenship. As new nations contended with older ones, new geopolitical arrangements— neocolonialism, globalization, structural adjustment— shifted relations of power in less unilateral directions, creating multiple nodes of transnational interrelatedness. In the process, peoples around the world have aspired to conception of world citizenship while also asserting their particular social identities.

Locating the thrust of the second generation of African poets within this trajectory is apposite, as a combination of factors has resulted in the articulation of their African stint to what has come to be identified as the continual “restless movement of peoples and cultures” (Couze Venn 2006: 18). Yet it is also for this reason that Venn, like many theorists of postcolonialism, insists that the contemporary disposition of the world order demands a development of “a [new] critical postcolonial standpoint that extends the focus and terrain of postcolonial theory (p.1). By so doing, an understanding of the works of these poets will primarily stem from the contemporary workings of the representation of space and movement across spaces, a tendency within postcolonial discourse which is otherwise construed as “nomadism” (Lisa Lowe 1993). However, before yielding to the ideal of the global expressed in the contention that “the spatial framing of historical arguments and the ‘visualization’ of events is not simply a neutral process independent of the events... ‘out there’” (Angus Cameron and Ronen Palan 2004:59), one must first and foremost rivet on these “historical arguments” in their African neutrality before

considering what possible configuration they extract from the “event out there”. Just as the nations and regions on the continent are different, so too are there different and various challenges which have in the past two or three decades induced exile. This is so especially in the Africans’ search for better fortunes thought as attainable in the First World, and identified as a tendency on the part of the “formerly colonized people to turn to migration as an option to living difficult lives” (Martha Dorkor 2005: 27).

To start with, what then are the circumstances that produce in these countries of destination the psyche of hostility? Secondly, what in particular are the realities of exile as an intimate experience of Africans? It is for this reason, whatever one encounters in the works of these writers should not be seen as emanating exclusively from the authors’ experiences, but rather should appropriately be gleaned as representative of the much larger community of African exiles for whom they have become advocates, as “representations of colonialism, nationhood, postcoloniality, the typology of rulers, their powers, [and] corruptions” (Aijaz Ahmad 1992:124) on the one hand; and on the other, the purchase of western neo-liberalism as well as structures of exclusion against immigrants along race, class, and gender lines in the First World. Therefore, even when the experience being related can in some cases be interpreted to be personal as in the case of the Malawian poet Jack Mapanje, it has to be gleaned more substantially as speaking for many other fellow Africans who have fallen victim to exile. The obligation of speaking on behalf of others by writers should not come as a surprise once we bracket them in the category of intellectuals. For the intellectual, according to Said:

is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public. [He is also] someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d’etre* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. (Said 1996: 11)

What is more, writing with specific response to the conditions of exile and the response of writers to it, Jane Guyer (1997: ix) avers that “writers’ fates provide direct testimony to those conditions, and their capacity to write makes accessible an experience that they share with many others who are less artistically endowed.” Thus by virtue of their artistic

endowment, these writers are obligated to articulate the burdens of their contemporary psycho-social circumstances among which is exile. They all have not however experienced exile the same way; neither have they all responded to it in the same way. This in itself makes the study all the more exciting and intriguing at the same time. Nevertheless, the works are united by how across different regions the writers have been able to explore those factors and conditions, both internal and external, which have induced the experience of exile in Africans especially in the past two to three decades.

As well as the above, the analysis of the texts will be illuminated by the application of postcolonial theory with specific reference to exile. In order to adequately account for this, Chapter One engages with questions that pertain to theory and the relevance of postcolonial theory to the concept of exile as a central idea in this research. In view of the mobility of the concept and its constant transmutation into other related concepts, the chapter explores the extent to which these other related concepts such as diaspora, nomadism, transnationalism, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, globalization, etc. are relevant in the discussion of the texts under study. It thus implies that the application of the concepts to the texts must be read in qualified terms; not least because in spite of the highpoints of these concepts and the ideals they espouse, so much more is needed at the level of practice to live up to their projections. That much is detracted from their practice as demonstrated in the lived experiences of exiles and migrants warrants the kind of careful application that has been adopted in this research. Overall, therefore, their values and limitations are explored and illustrated against the backdrop of the texts under study.

Chapter Two, by concentrating on Anyidoho's *EarthChild* and Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear*, explores the roles of various military interventions in the shaping of the post-colonial West African polity and social evolution. It thus establishes military adventurism as a veritable social imaginary against which the reality of exile can be read in the two collections. The historical epoch constituted by military rule in the sub-region looks back specifically to 1970s and 80s. The chapter explores the representation of home under military leadership together with its trappings of neocolonialism and how the aggregation

of misrule and bungling on the part of the military forced the fate of exile upon citizens either directly or indirectly. In addition, the chapter examines the irony and the paradox that exist between the thought of escaping hardship by the exiles as they move to the West and the realities that await them in their countries of destination. In this analysis of the representation of exile as the logical consequence of political misrule, the chapter will also comment on the poets' artistic virtuosity in the articulation of their thrust.

Focusing on Mapanje's "Sketches from London" in *Of Chameleons and the Gods* and against the background of oppressive civilian rule in Malawi, Chapter Three demonstrates among other things, the initial exilic consciousness of Mapanje. It will further show how the first period of exile set the antecedent for the present sense of exile that one encounters in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*. On the other hand, this chapter will explore the consistency of the poet's opinion of the myth of social and infrastructural sophistication of the western world herein appropriately represented by Britain in a time interval of about twenty-five years. It will examine the sarcastic tone of his poetry on this issue with a view to pointing out the vulnerability of British socio-structural flanks to the same vagaries found in any other part of the Third World. In the final analysis, the chapter will locate the exilic condition within the context of struggle for survival against the native forces of exclusion. Crucial to the intended explication in this chapter is the need to frame it by a critical response to the claims of western modernity with respect to journey in particular, and the resultant transnationalism that one encounters in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*.

Chapter Four is preoccupied with Odia Ofeimun's *London Letter and Other Poems* and Ojaide's *When it no Longer Matters Where you Live* as direct responses to the concept of globalization. More specifically, the chapter is illuminated by the understanding that the politics of space in general and the cityscape in particular is central to the practice of globalization. Therefore, the chapter engages with the dynamics of city politics between the North and the South and how these dynamics have ingested migration and exile of people from African post-colonies in the era of globalization to the North, especially Europe and America. Reckoning that the dystopian conditions of postcolonial nation-

states are no exclusive design of western imperialism, the chapter also conducts forays into the internal socio-political dynamics of the Nigerian nation state of the late 1980 and 90s as contributory to the exacerbation of the migration from Lagos and Niger Delta cities to the West. The above providing the basis for migration, the chapter further engages with how the machinery of western transnational capitalism accelerates the migration of Africans to the West as a response to capital flight as well as the deceptive effects of media hype about the attractions that the West holds for prospective exiles from the South. The chapter therefore comments on the demystification of the global cities of London and America in the collections through their exposure of the shocking realities behind the smokescreen of tantalizing attractions associated with Euro-American cities. For this reason, the chapter explores the extent to which postcolonial nomadism, migrancy and cosmopolitan articulations can be taken seriously in view of the constraints that are evident in their practices. It also examines the limits of nationalism and the justification for the rise of sub-nationalism as in the case of the Niger Delta where a multi-layered conspiracy of the ruling class, local elite and western transnational corporations has turned the cityscapes of a resource-rich region into a nightmare.

Chapter Five seeks to undertake a study of the South African dispersal odyssey peculiar to her history of liberation struggle against apartheid. This will be done using Serote's *Freedom Lament and Song* as textual memorabilia of the struggle that terminated with the institution of democracy in 1994. It will further explore in *History is the Home Address* the poet's alertness to the nation's continual susceptibility to dispersal in the post-apartheid era. For this, it will comment on his poetic subscription to the condition of exile in the post-apartheid era. In addition, the chapter will comment on Serote's clear instruction to Africans involved in such to see how the necessity of taking their individual and collective narrative and memory seriously as a cultural and political weapon needed in their relation with the outside world especially the West. This is more so in view of the broad spectrum of identity negotiation in a world that is increasingly vulnerable to migrancy. It is also on account of this that the chapter deploys the concept of "trans-nation" as popularized by Bill Ashcroft in the explication of the issues *History is the Home Address* engages with both in terms of homeland and the prospective post-

apartheid South African diaspora which the imperative of globalization has necessarily induced. For this reason, memory becomes an extended metaphor of reclamation from dispossession, not just for South Africa, but also for the entire African continent. It provides a desirable balance to the drift of exile authorized by globalization, as the primacy of home and return, both literal and metaphoric. Moreover, it assumes an imperative dimension necessary for the achievement of global equity, if globalization must be truly beneficial to global humanity.

By way of conclusion, Chapter Six reflects on the overbearing impact of cosmopolitan culture as an imperative whose morality deserves reformulation. This is not least of all because exile as a phenomenon is gaining unprecedented ascendancy in the present age of globalization through its capability to transform into other apparently attractive terms. It also holds the scary prospects of undermining the place of the African post-colonies as homelands to the long train of African exiles to the West. The extractive implications for the continent are evident in the magnitude of labour which is willingly or unwillingly exiled to the West in the wake of capital and resource flight to the West. The morality of exile, viewed against this backdrop, explains the basis for this reformulation. Ultimately, the chapter weighs this form of migration, pointing to its desirability on the one hand and the complex question of return on the other. Nevertheless, diaspora in whatever form must be balanced with a considerable measure of return in order to retain and sustain the integrity and viability of African post-colonies. This is especially so in an age in which the imperative of productive development in the comity of nations can only be achieved through the ability of each nation state to retain the best of its resources, packaged with added values in order to command respect. Thereafter, the chapter does a summation of the preceding chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

POSTCOLONIALITY, EXILE AND THE MUTATION OF CONCEPTS

The concept of exile, like the exilic subjects themselves, is a living dynamic organism that lurks and thrives in the interstices of social and political formations. — Hamid Naficy, “Introduction: Framing Exile: From Homeland to Homepage,”

Newness here is the irruption of the possible, the movement beyond the boundaries of the known. But unfortunately, a different kind of newness— an invading newness— can be *forced* into the world by imperial power. This is sameness masquerading as newness, an erection of boundaries where none may have been. When this occurs, colonial space is the first thing that must be made ‘new’. — Bill Ashcroft, “Forcing Newness into the World: Language, Place and Nature”

Setting off against the background of Bill Ashcroft’s critique of the notion of “newness”, this chapter intends to demonstrate how the time-honoured concept of exile can also be said to have mutated, gaining amplification in other “new” concepts such as cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, migrancy, globalization, nomadism, etc. It also engages the relevance of postcolonial theory to the concept of exile and the various ways in which the theory provides an appropriate template for the exploration of exilic issues in the works under study. Specifically, I engage these concepts with a view to illustrating how they overlap and facilitate the understanding of exile with respect to the selected works in this study. By so doing, I also attempt to demonstrate how these concepts are as well implicated in the concept of home. While highlighting their values, I also point out their limitations, suggesting a middle ground for coping with their practice in view of some realities in the age globalization.

In his remark during a keynote address at the Rerouting the Postcolonial Conference in July 2007, Simon Gikandi reviewed the major concerns of postcolonial theory and concluded that to date the theory had ramified issues such as nationalism, decolonization, exile, multiculturalism, globalization, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. The interesting thing, however, is the possibility of arguing that all these concerns are

implicated in the initial dislocation which the imposition of colonial rule engendered in the colonies created through western imperialism. Therefore, whether in the colonial era when various forms of resistance to colonialism were employed by the colonized, or during the era of a predisposition towards conscious decolonization in the wake of the Second World War, resistance to colonial experience can as well be summed as a response to dislocation. For Africa, in fact, the antecedent of such resistance must be recognized as dating back to the horrendous practices of chattel slavery which the West in connivance with a few African collaborators inflicted on the continent from the 15th century.

However, owing to the subtlety with which the practice of colonization was prosecuted, the tendency, unfortunately, is to view dislocation and the exile that it exhibits as mainly physical. This explains why Homi Bhabha is quick to draw attention to the necessity of recognizing “those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences”, noting further that the idea of a “postcolonial perspective” also presupposes “a recognition of the more complex and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of [the] often opposed political spheres” of the formerly colonized people (cited in Kathleen Flanagan 1998: 89). But as Flanagan contends, the “meeting of nations/cultures in colonial and postcolonial moments affects social discourse” (89). The complexity that arises from the location of colonial and postcolonial cultures speaks essentially to the asymmetry that inheres today in the articulation of self identity. The crisis of self identity was made poignant by the subtlety of the highly systematized colonial order of cultural imperialism (Satish Aikant 2000: 338). Little wonder then that the realization of the extent of the crisis and the need to reverse the damage done to the colonized, or the formerly colonized, has often produced an articulation of recuperation which former colonial powers oppose, claiming and arguing that in such antipodal responses of the formerly colonized lies a suspicious mandate that goes against the grain of progress.

The mention of progress then leads to the “*refraction*”—to borrow a word from Flanagan (1998:89)—which the imposition of colonialism has produced in the Third World. For on the one hand, while the teleology of progress foisted upon the colonial world changed

the dynamics of internal progress, forcing a rift and deracination between a people and their history of progress, it subsequently imposed a new order of progress, which has done more to objectify a form of inscription on the palimpsestic space of the colonized episteme. The overwhelming feeling of exile that results between colonized people and their originary world order must therefore be seen as the first instance of dislocation that characterizes and also frames all other forms of crisis which the colonial and postcolonial world has faced over the centuries.

The foregoing thus gives cogency to the remark that the condition of postcoloniality can as well be limned as a product of “a dark vision of dislocation” (James Smithies 2004:99) which was initiated in the questionable logic of modernism and modernization. If the response to this dystopian vision of dislocation catalyzed the production of the triage of literary movements which in the West did everything to engage with the reality of dislocation and its implication through an exploration that was at once technological, aesthetic and surrealist (Smithies 99), the response it produced in the colonies, especially the African colonies, transcended the triune categorization just mentioned. Needless to say, the complexity of the dislocation in the formerly colonized world defies simple categorization. It appropriately explains why in individual post-colonies today, it is not uncommon to make claims about the uniqueness of dislocation as exile, as in the case of, say, Latin America (Fatima Mujcinovic 2003:169). But one must differ with Mujcinovic on the ground that the annunciation of “US Latina literature” as an investigation into “a complicated and complex condition that evades generalization and consistency” (169) cannot be qualified as an exclusive preserve of this postcolonial literature, but must instead be seen, ironically, as a commonality by which the entire postcolonial worlds are conjoined.

This is why the choice of postcolonial theory offers congenial vistas into the investigation of the various possibilities which come with the discourse of exile. With specific reference to the subject, a multiplicity of approaches thus becomes one way by which this can be done. Once this fact is established, it also becomes clear why the suggestion of multiplicity provides the scaffold and liberty for exploring exile as an ever-changing

concept which must be understood as reinforcing the dynamism with which it has come to be identified. But as well as this, and perhaps more importantly, the dynamism speaks to the complexity and complication in which the discourse is enmeshed, both historically and contemporaneously. The flexibility that comes into play when the discourse of exile is addressed in postcolonial theory is another reason. In respect of this, the study as an exploration of the politics of exile in African poetry has taken the liberty of the flexibility to engage with other issues and concepts, which, though often conceived as related but different from exile, are in actuality mere transmutations of exile as: migrancy, diaspora, nomadism, transnationalism, globalization, transnation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, among others. Not least because these concepts and other similarly invoked terms are nothing but a connotation of some kind of deracination which forces an estrangement, usually in that physical sense, from home. Where the estrangement or cutting off is better considered in the psychological sense, the rift and cleavage it produces between the mind and the body still reinforces a way of not being at home. Therefore, one may do well to concur with Susan Suleiman (1998:1) that “over and above their fine distinctions, however, these words designate a state of being ‘not home’ (or of being ‘everywhere at home’, the flip side of the same coin)”.

On this score, while it becomes apt to explore further each of these terms, especially the ones that accrue to frame dominant arguments in the chapters of this thesis, a great deal of attention will be paid first to the blanket relevance of exile and how it sets the pace for the discussion of the other terms, which have all found sustained engagement in postcolonial theorizing. For that matter, exile must be situated first within the broad spectrum of migration, which is today considered to be one singular phenomenon by which the contemporary world condition is defined.

As a concept that is as old as any known human institution, exile is characterized by a long history that does not, however, cease to engage with the present. Owing to its enduring duality as both historical and contemporary, the term still catalyzes literary and critical preoccupation at present just as it is known to have done in the past. Not being

selective in the way it claims its victims and patrons,¹⁰ it is clear why it is not uncommon to find writers whose condition of dislocation finds articulation in and reflection upon this phenomenon. This explains why “whether their exile was voluntary or not, writers have often found their voices most meaningful in a foreign land, and the literary world benefits from these voices” (James Whitlark and Wendell Aycock 1992: iii). On this score, John Peters, for instance, reflects on the “Western canon” and concludes that exile constitutes “*the* central story in European civilization” (1999: 17).

If Peters’ review revolves around Western civilization which is locatable within the framework of the evolution of Christianity, the recency of that trails behind the Egyptian account of Sinuhe over 4000 years ago: “to go into exile was written neither in my mind nor in my heart. I tore myself by force from the soil upon which I stood” (cited in James Whitlark 1992: 1). With Sinuhe’s account we are brought face to face with the reality of exile as a phenomenon through which an individual’s claims to primordial identities in form of geography and time are disrupted and ruptured precisely because of exile’s simultaneity with dislocation. Such disruptions and ruptures engendered by exile within African context, as is the case elsewhere, have been both internal and external. And when considered from the period of chattel slavery, modern African exile experience is not only replete with various accounts of the disruptions and ruptures by which exile is known, it is also characterized by dislocation beyond African borders. Yet, it must be admitted that such external displacement, especially as a coercive categorization, should be appropriately read as beginning from the epoch of Trans-Saharan Slave Trade which preceded chattel slavery. The traumas and the tribulations of African exile from this angle are so enormous that they continue to draw intellectual responses from all fields of enquiry.

Once linked to the succession of colonialism and the postcolonial dispensation that was bred in the wake of the former, the fact of the external exile of Africans to the rest of the

¹⁰ In my view, exiles like the modernists who were taken by the “liberty” exile provided can be distinguished from others by referring to them as “patrons” of exile as against those who have exile forced upon them by various experiences of violence and exclusion in their homeland: these could pass for “victims” in this context. But I also reckon that this simple dialectic is not absolute as the complexities of exile demand further engagement.

world becomes all the more compelling. In choosing to operate within this timeline, the import of Isidore Okpewho's (1999: xiv) observation about the dispersion of Africans gains strong cogency; for indeed, it is the African human dispersion and sedimentation into "a global space, a worldwide web, that accounts as much for the mother continent as for wherever in the world her offspring may have been driven by the unkind forces of history". In view of the "unkind forces of history" in the remote as well as recent past and with respect to the African reality, the situation is one that is best limned as requiring shared blame precisely because the reluctant and coercive dislocation of Africans beyond its borders was and still is a possibility because external forces have always been found to be in league with internal forces.

On this plane, it will be apt to allude to what Edward Said (1994:16) refers to as the overwhelming presence of politics everywhere, to the extent that not even art can escape it; and if so, we can infer that the engagement with exile in art cannot be without this politicization. Always evolving within the context of human institutions which are themselves no less politicized, the cruelty of history may then be appropriately blamed on forces of capital and imperialism which have found a way of defining the dimension of exile over the past four to five centuries. By focusing specifically on certain poetic works in the second generation of modern African literary tradition, the phenomenon of exile comes alive as a discourse which must be engaged against the socio-political and economic sensibilities that define each of the post-colonies that produced the writers under study. Indeed, it is a combination of these sensibilities and those of global capitalism that has accounted for the forms of deracination that are evident in these texts. Interestingly too, the texts are united by the fact that they can be categorized as illustrative of some kind of "new internationalism" in which there is an accelerated delinking from the naturalist and national topoi of nativity to be part of some kind of rootedness in the West (Homi Bhabha 1999: x). This is essentially because the texts are concerned, for the most part, with the dispersion of Africans to the West especially Western Europe and America in the post-colonial era from the 1980s.

Most of the experiences represented in the works constitute another way of capturing the ordeals of people who, one way or the other, have become victims of state violence, and economic oppression; their exile is therefore an attempt to escape the hostile conditions of home in order to be part of a perceived better life elsewhere in the West. But just as the “discourse of exile thrives on detail, specificity, and locality (Naficy 4), the same way it is possible to talk about the specificity of the conditions of home which induce exile. The conditions of home in Ghana against which Kofi Anyidoho writes in *EarthChild*, for instance, is that of a nation hemmed in by dictatorial tendencies with a crushing effect on the economy, and ultimately forcing many to abandon home and their loved ones together with the responsibilities of engaging in the “fertility game” (1), a metaphoric articulation of the negation of economic productivity on the spaces of homeland. Poets like Oguibe, Ofeimun and Ojaide have written against a similar background of military repression in Nigeria and the deracination effect that it bred. However, with Jack Mapanje, the condition, though still that of state repression, was not exactly the same as that of Ghana and Nigeria in the sense that the perpetration of state repression is carried out by a civilian despotism which has secured for itself some kind of life rulership. The South African experience in the chosen texts by Serote rise in memory to invoke the horrors of state repression in the era of apartheid and contemplate the implications of a new democratic dispensation in the wake of the collapse of apartheid where the coincidence of political liberation and economic liberalization (Jean Comaroff 2005:128) has a potential of still engendering dispersion.

This is why “all displaced people do not experience exile equally or uniformly” (Naficy 4). In spite of this, the thought and experience of exile are concomitant with the abstraction and practice of diaspora. For, while the thought of home remains for the most part on the minds of exiles, there is nevertheless the challenge of living through the present moment of displacement. The challenge applies to exiles in the countries of arrival where certain understanding of adjustment to new life and survival is basic; but challenge does not exclude the possibility of attaining certain forms of fulfilment. Against the backdrop of the circumstances, both internal and external, that predicate the migration of Africans, like their counterparts in Asia, it thus becomes understandable

why Gayatri Spivak (2002: 48) observes that the phenomenon of “large-scale movements of people” from these parts of the world have been renamed diaspora. Moreover, because the pattern of movements Spivak tries to capture connects to the colonial history of the nations involved, it is understandable when she remarks further that there is a resultant effect which makes “the premodern principle of demographic frontiers... encroach upon imperial territorial frontiers ” (ibid). With respect to the texts under study nothing could be more factual as they concentrate largely on the movement of Africans to countries of the West which one way or the other have had some kind of colonial influence on their countries in the past.

Yet the tendency to link or substitute diaspora for exile is no new phenomenon. Scholars and theorists alike have always dealt with the question of the interrelatedness if not interchangeability of both terms, as the discussion of one invokes thoughts of the other.¹¹ In her introduction to *At Home in Diaspora* Wendy Walters (2005: x), for instance, uses both concepts interchangeably in order to make a statement on their interwoven relationship particularly when it has to do with their reputation as catalysts for literary production: “One way to approach the concept of diaspora and literature is to state that the condition of exile/diaspora is the material condition that produces particular... literary responses”. However, the challenge of living and survival in countries of arrival presupposes an effort to take a more critical look at the concept of diaspora.

It is on account of this that Walters extends her reflection on diaspora beyond the commonplace as she sheds light on the complexity of its dynamics as arising precisely from the impossibility of exclusivity of the lives exiles live. It is at this point that we must take into account that diasporas do not live in isolation from the natives or indigenes/ citizens in their countries of arrival. In fact, it is through the analysis of the commonality of the space they share that we can truly assess the impact of the experience of their

¹¹ On account of their close relatedness Nico Israel (2000: ix-x) combines exile and diaspora, pointing to those salient aspects of the concepts that can be read together precisely because of “their relation to nationalism and colonialism, to authority and institutionality, and above all, to broader questions of subjectivity, race, location, and language, as these concepts themselves change during the course of the century” One must also add that whatever changes exile and diaspora assumed in the 20th century did not mark the end of their dynamism; which is why the 21st century must be anticipated as capable of advancing such changes so long as our disposition to inventing new terminologies persists.

dislocation. Speaking specifically about what he terms “diaspora space” Avtar Brah contends that it is “‘inhabited’ not only by diasporic subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as ‘indigenous.’ As such the concept of diaspora space foregrounds the entanglements of genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put’” (cited in Walters 2005: ix). Therefore, the tensions and harmonies that arise from the commonality of the space of diasporas and indigenous subjectivities underline and justify why the idea of exile or diaspora does not cease to ramify the question of otherness, which once pursued to its logical conclusion, reveals a number of other forms of binarism, and which point to the impossibility of blurring beacons of difference, even where the most benevolent ethics of hospitality are applicable.

Nevertheless, because of the dialectic of home and exile in a discussion of this nature, coupled with the fact that both the liberatory respite to flourish outside homeland and the possible simultaneous tribulations associated with the experience of exile, home hardly goes out of perspective when exile is brought into focus. Home thus remains recurrent in the discussion of exile because, there is exile, first and foremost, because there has been a home or homeland. This explains why Hamid Naficy (1999:3) argues that “exile is inexorably tied to homeland and to the possibility of return”. Yet we must be cautious in accepting this order of the ubiquity of homeland in the discourse of exile as it is not in all cases that the exile is read and apprehended as holding the prospects of return. This is true, for instance, of most African Americans and African Caribbeans who acknowledge Africa as home but hardly think of a possible physical return; though, with this category of African exiles, metaphoric return as a kind of mental journey cannot be ruled out.

The remark above compels us further to reckon that the apprehension of homeland in the discussion of exile is not uniformly configured. While for instance home may be “where the heart lies” (Kenneth Parker 1993:65), pointing to a conditioning of the mind and the primacy of individual attitude to the understanding of home— homeland or abroad— such subjective generalization contrasts sharply with an assertion like the construct of home as a perennially tantalizing space that has never been visited: “you can go home again, so long as you understand that home is a place where you have never been” (Le Guin in

Frank Dietz 1992: 107). Yet at other times, as in the line of thought pursued in this research, the idea of home is synonymous with the nation state and for that matter generates discussions around issues of nationalism.

The impossibility of experiencing exile the same way, just as a unipolar construct of home is unacceptable, then compels us to examine further other possible ways in which exile can be configured. Therefore, beyond the recognition of the predominance of the understanding of exile as physical separation from home, exile can among other things be read as constitutive of a wide range of other conditions of living both literal and metaphorical. For a number of people, physical exile is the externalization of a much more profound separation of an individual from homeland at the psychological level. In this case, the mind has first been many thousand miles exiled from home long before the physical body ultimately follows suit. Exile can also be read as the consequence of cultural dislocation (Jefferson Faye 1992: 115), an experience with which many formerly colonized nations still battle today. In addition, the assumption that colonialism itself was driven by the ideology of modernity also explains why exile has also come to be synonymous with modernity in view of the holistic dislocation that the experience of modernity still engenders (Dan Ojwang 2004:53). Furthermore, exile in some other circumstances can be synonymous with prison; that is, the punitive measure the state takes against transgressors of the law. But when subjected to further critical focus, exile in this instance, especially as experienced by dissents for challenging an undesirable status quo, becomes a political exclusionary measure the state adopts against alternative views. One of the most recent accounts of this experience is captured in Kofi Anyidoho's edited work *The Word behind Bars and the Paradox of Exile*, a book that intimates on individuals African writers' experience of incarceration and imprisonment on account of their opposition to the establishment of their various countries. As well as that, there is an assumption that exile is a reminder and metaphor for the spiritual condition of mankind (Dietz 107). The idea of creativity is also often connected with exile whereby an envisioned alternative possibility is expressed by writers (Dietz 107). Closely related to this is the association of intellection and intellectual practice with the readiness to assume

a kind of metaphoric exile in order to be at one with the processes and intricacies by which intellectual articulations are made manifest. Thus:

For the intellectual an exilic displacement means being liberated from the usual career, in which 'doing well' and following in time-honored footsteps are the main milestones. Exile means that you are always going to be marginal, and that what you do as an intellectual has to be made up because you cannot follow a prescribed path. If you can experience that fate not as a deprivation and something to be bewailed, but as a sort of freedom, a process of discovery in which you do things according to your own pattern, as various interests seize your attention, and as the particular goal you set dictates: that is a unique pleasure. (Edward Said 1994:46)

In other words, exile within the intellectual realm becomes the freedom to live in a hermetic/exclusive world other than the generally accessible. In this case, in following their own hearts, intellectuals are seen as operating within the realm of the patently anti-social and constituting at the same time the marginal other. Yet the inspiration for intellection ironically produces modes of expression which ultimately confront the existing social order on matters of the culturally popular; they must however be projected and packaged to be consistent with the present age. The radicalism that inheres in the vocation of the intellectual also touches on the other spheres of the social order: the political, economic, etc.

The attempt at categorization, however, flies in the face of Breytenbach's view of exile which presents the antinomy of home and exile as illusory. Put another way, humanity has always exclusively been a product of exile and never that of home, which is why "through expansion, skirmishing, coupling, mixing, separation, regrouping of peoples and cultures... everywhere is [now] exile" (Leon de Kock 2004:1). If everywhere is exile then there has never been home, there may never be home. While we may be fascinated by the exceptionality of Breytenbach's argument, it is important perhaps to observe that the value of such contention lies in the manner in which it problematizes and explodes the popularly held opinion about the antinomy, and in some cases the complementarity of home and exile. Do we then say that exile, especially physical exile, with which this study is generally, but not exclusively concerned, be subsequently read without any reference to the idea of home?

Breytenbach's one-sided paradigm for all its breathtaking import, requires nevertheless that we examine the experience of exile and how it is intruded upon by the space of home. For whether as a form of political banishment or the logical consequence of economic crunches, Olu Oguibe (2004:22) reminds us that:

What gives exile its peculiar poignancy ... is not so much the essential act of departure, as the nature and condition of that departure. The sojourn of exile is particularly tragic because it is inevitably, inescapably bracketed by the fact of loss, not of things willingly forsaken but of things forcibly left behind, things from which there is no healing even to the grave. Even in the bravest and most optimistic of circumstances, exile is also marked from the beginning by the fact that the exile leaves or flees certain only that they may never return.

Even the very knowledge of the uncertainty of return keeps the thought of home in mind and accounts for the impossibility of escaping the implication of nostalgia in the discussion of exile. Or if exile is expressed to be some kind of independence from home, an externalization of freedom which is construed to mean a condition that is an end in itself because the thought of home is a foregone issue, the fugacious duration of such mindset emerges when physical separation from home turns out not to mean exactly the same thing as psychological independence of the mind from the thoughts of home (Janet Perez 1992:34). As a foregone conclusion in some circumstances from generation to generation, the depression that the thought of home engenders is illustrated in Suleiman's (1996:5) reflections:

Those who leave home with no thought of return and succeed, well or badly, in settling elsewhere, occasionally cast backward glances at what they left behind. Interestingly, so do their children, who may never have seen the left-behind place at all, except through the words—or the silences—of their parents.

To put the discussion on the relationship between exile and home at rest in the meantime, Said (1994:44) deserves a last say: "Because the exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actual here and now, there is a double perspective that never sees things in isolation. Every scene or situation in the new country necessarily draws on its counterpart in the old country."

As said earlier, exile is intricately linked to other terms. I shall, therefore, explore these other related terms beginning with migration. According to Shailja Sharma (2001:596), “*migration* refers not only to the displacements of people in history but to a state of displacement that befalls humankind in general.” In the same vein, King et al shed more light on the dynamics of migration in contemporary times when they explore its complexities, contradictions and propensity towards defying any straight jacket, over-determined apprehension especially of the binarism of home and exile, or here and there. Therefore, migration is

Not a mere interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but a mode of being in the world– “migrancy”...The migrant voice tells us what it is like to feel a stranger and yet at home, to live simultaneously inside and outside one’s immediate situation, to be permanently on the run, to think of returning but to realize at the same time the impossibility of doing so, since the past is not only another country but also another time, out of the present. It tells us what it is like to traverse borders like the Rio Grande, or “Fortress Europe,” and by doing so suddenly become an illegal person, an “other.” (cited in Carine Mardorossian 2002:16)

Yet the tendency to subsume migration under a planetary categorization smacks of an absolutism which cannot go unchallenged. First, it must be conceded that migrancy, an increasingly favoured term, has become an index by which humanity is levelled. Nevertheless, as Sharma (2001:597) contends in response to Rushdie’s assertion that “we all cross frontiers; and in that sense, we are all migrant people”, it is still very crucial especially within the postcolonial context to recognize the verity of the understanding that “while that may be true on some abstract level, still we all cross them differently, and thus we are not all migrants in the same way. That the experiences of migration differ... is one of the crucial distinctions to be made in any discussion of the subject.” Drawing such distinctions is, moreover, necessary because the status of the postcolonial world as an unwilling participant in the Western project of migrancy which was prosecuted through the idea of modernity and the subsequent crisis that it bred, already demands that the postcolonial migrant is not a migrant the same way a migrant from the West is.

Therefore, migrancy for all its seeming attraction and liberatory values requires critical scrutiny in order for us to assess the extent to which it departs from exile and to at the same time gauge the extent to which its filiations to exile construct it as another mutation of the subject. To engage with this challenge, perhaps the first thing that deserves attention is the remark that the fascination with migrancy as opposed to exile may have come to us as fundamentally flawed in the sense that, like many other abstractions through which western imperial practices seek endorsement and sustenance from the postcolonial world, migrancy is not unconnected with modes of hegemonic discourses. Gayatri Spivak bears this observation out when she reveals that “the whole *notion* of authenticity, of the authentic migrant experience, is one that comes to us constructed by hegemonic voices; and so, what one has to tease out is what is *not* there.” (Carine Mardorossian 2002:15). This is why the fascination with the concept of migrancy that makes it more acceptable than the erstwhile notion of exile must be limned as palliations of Western imperialism through which the enormity of postcolonial deracination is extenuated.

To return to the often cited crisis of modernity which catalyzed certain Western modernists to endorse migrant existence— from Joyce to Adorno— the privileges that came with such migrant style of living are today not available to the postcolonial writers and indeed postcolonial subjects who have chosen this path especially in the West. What is more, once we go beyond the time-line of modernist memory it becomes clear that the privileges that accrued to Western migrants generally found enablement in the preceding imperialist activities of the West which in varying degrees resulted in the subjugation of the colonial world. The subjugation was totalist in approach, ramifying all spheres of the colonial world— religion, education, culture, technology race, etc. It must also be admitted that the process of navigation from the West to the different parts of the world for the often hyped civilizing mission was nothing but the precursory step in western migrancy of domination. At this juncture, we need to cite but one instance of the privileges that attended Western imperialism in the colonies: the occupation strategy and the reversal and indeed displacement of spatial ownership that came with the obsession with colonial naming. Achebe’s essay, “Named for Victoria, Queen of England” in

Morning yet on Creation Day, insightfully captures the political economy of naming which colonialism brought to bear on the African continent, when significant geographical sites got named after monarchs and aristocrats of Britain. Ngugi recently advances the analysis of this dispossession that came with the arrogance of naming African spaces by colonists. The colonists and other western self-serving adventure seekers and explorers simply forgot, or rather discounted the fact that indigenous people had already named these places long before the so-called feats of exploration and discovery of these sites by the West. Analyzing the malaise of colonial naming from a linguistic point, Ngugi says, “Somewhere in the process, the original text and memory of place is lost or becomes forever buried under that of Europe, for at the end of the process a European language becomes the only store of knowledge about the place.” Instances of the relics of colonial naming as painful reminders of the overbearing tendencies of western migrancy still abound today everywhere the colonial havoc was wrecked— from River Niger to Lake Victoria to Rhodesia.

Again, in some instances where race is not a factor, migrancy becomes beautiful altogether. For once the ideological undercutting of migrancy is scrutinized, epiphanies other than the obvious begin to emerge. For certain, it begins to dawn on us that the frantic efforts to package the abstraction in a way that appears to reprieve exiles from the tribulations of dislocation to the West is an attempt for the migrant subjects from the subordinated parts of the world to seek integration into the mainstream of their countries of destination. At the same time, the condition induces migrants to maintain a certain predominant measure of ambiguous or adaptable identity which prospectively purports to offer some hope of acceptance and identity assertion. Their rootlessness thus signals an assurance of compliance and conformity to host nations of the West and at the same time provides evidence of absence of threat to these host nations. Whereas the affirmation of identity was one way by which colonialism thrived in the colonies, the migrancy of formerly colonized people in the Western metropolitan countries requires a shedding of such affirmation of identity, ostensibly as a way of getting around the invocation of the binary of the “self” and “other” in order to live as comfortably as the hosts do.

Yet, the desire for migrant privileges in the West, especially by the formerly colonized people, remains as elusive in spite of the readiness to compromise the dignity of identity affirmation. This is where the question of race and racism takes centre stage. For instance, the diction of “migrant”, or “migrant bird” is a recurrent metaphor and reference point in Ojaide’s *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*. Not only is the frequency of the invocation of this metaphor a way of speaking to the migrant experience in the autobiographical kitty of the author, it also serves from an apparent angle to reinforce the currency of the fascination with the experience of migrancy among not only African postcolonial writers, but a sizable number of Africans who remain taken by the benefits the abstraction and practice of migrancy appears to offer. But if this is the impression one gets in Ojaide at the beginning of the collection, it does not take long to realize in the unfolding of the sustained argument in the text that migrancy may not after all possess the magic wand the African postcolonial subject needs to be really at home in his enhanced life of exile in the West. The epiphany of the unfulfilled life of migrancy comes to full glare in the title poem when the persona reveals rather painfully that:

For all its refuge, the foreign home
remains a night whose dawn
I wish arrives before its time (77)

It thus explains why in one of the concluding poems when he declares the agency of “migrant birds” in bringing him words from home. Needless to say, there may not yet have been found an alternative to home no matter what the privileges of migrancy objectify.

A similar illustration of the limits of migrancy can be drawn from the response to the closely related term of nomadism and the reality that stares us in the face in Odi Ofeimun’s *London Letter and Other Poems*. It remains, for instance, a serious matter of contradiction which for the most part stays unresolved in the collection: the fact that where there is a declaration of an intention to continually pursue a rootless and foot-loose existence in the Western metropolis— possibly because there is in this specific case a sudden realization of the liberty which the colonial history that binds Lagos and London claims to offer— there is a hostile threat which dogs the path of the nomad. Therefore, the

resolve to stay glued to the imperial country through an annunciation such as “a nomad unready for home” (54), as a way of exploring all that the city of London parades—as a world centre— suffers a serious setback. The said setback stems, among other things, from the articulation of the racially inflected expletive, ‘*Nigger go home/ there is no black in the Union Jack,*’ (17), and which constitutes an essentialist aspect of the imperial world. Such articulation reveals, rather disappointingly, the painful but hidden reality that frustrates and undermines any agenda of fulfilled postcolonial migrancy in the West. Nevertheless, the nomads or migrants, as illustrated in the collection, have their moments of pleasure and satisfaction which are best captured in the pidgin refrain in the title poem: “*Na London we dey... na so so enjoyment* (We are in London...it is so much of enjoyment 14). However, the fleeting span of such moments of pleasure put lie to whatever liberatory credentials postcolonial migrancy may claim; not least because the “so so enjoyment”, we are told in the end, does not obscure the fact that the integration or hospitality that the migrant seeks even in the age that emphasizes and celebrates nomadism, cannot offer the meaningful *presence* that migrants seek. Absence from home in this case is no guarantee for presence in the western country of destination. This then explains why in the end the refrain changes from being “*Na London we dey... na so so enjoyment*” to “*We dey for London like we no dey at all* (we are in London as though we were not at all 20).

The contradictions through which we come to terms with the cleavage lying between the ideals of nomadism and the practice accounts for why the postcolonial subjectivities may not attain the envisaged fulfilment of either migrancy or nomadism. The case is more so when nomadism is placed in greater conceptual perspective; that is, the fact that those who advocate and identify with the ideals do so in the persuasion that “nomadism is interiorized to interweave a multiple subjectivity, which is displaced across various paradoxical axes of difference” (Jamil Khader 1997:84). It goes without saying that the practice hardly takes off before it is eviscerated. To put in another way, of what use is the dissipation of efforts to ensure an interweaving of multiple subjectivities which gives way at the instance of “axes of difference”? The question is the more pertinent in view of the fact that the conception of such multiple subjectivities was enabled in the first place

because there was a felt need to blur difference across various axes. This is usually done to institute a morality that would be sympathetic to and sustain some measure of universal levelling of conflicting identities. Yet the discourse of nomadism returns us reflectively to the antecedent of colonialism which thrived via the ordering of difference (Linda Anderson 2005: 114). At the core of such a dialectic was the racial imperative which drove the operation of the imperial agenda as a commonality throughout spaces of subjugation— whether in the colonies of occupation, as was the case in many parts of Africa and Asia, or colonies of settlement as in the case of Southern Africa, the Americas and Oceania.

The blurring the differences with which migrancy is concerned, becomes a Herculean task in view of the inveterate binary. Khader's model does more to speak to the intersection between postcolonial nativeness and nomadism, and the literal consequence of mixed blood and identity as in the case of discussions of nativism in America. All the same, we must recognize the general postcolonial efforts within the "aesthetics of dislocation" that highlights "postcolonial imperative ... [and] celebrates an inclusive, affirmative, and accumulative identity" (Khader 85) as something that, at least in the metaphorical sense, speaks to the condition of postcolonial nomadism beyond the space of American nativism. To face the race question and how it stands in the way of postcolonial migrancy, Patricia Collins (2006:205) observes about the British society for instance that it remains challenged by the disruption which its "seemingly homogenous national identity" has suffered through "post-colonial migrations." This may explain more pragmatically the frontline role of race, besides other recently invented strategies of imperialism, in undermining the ideals of migrancy.

But it is with the American society that she paints so convincingly both the historical and contemporaneous dynamics of race and racism that have always been put in place to negate any such practice of fulfilled multiple subjectivities. Usually the basis for racial essentialism is couched in the shorthand of threat-wariness:

the notion of threats to so-called American security is far from a novel idea within domestic American politics. In particular, the concept of the racial threat, namely,

ensuring security for white American citizens from racialized others, remains deeply rooted within American national identity. The USA has long grappled with how to manage its black, native, Asian and Latino immigrant populations. In essence, powerful groups in the USA have often constructed groups who differ by race, ethnicity and religion as potential threats to American security...Unassimilable groups within the borders of the American nation-state pose certain risks— the indigenous folk who refuse to give up their land and their traditional ways, the black people whose ghetto art catalyzed hip hop, Latino immigrant populations who insist on speaking Spanish and sending money home to their relatives, all constitute potential threats to the American way of life...Thus every concept of threat remains racialized. (Collins 2006)

The paradox of the privilege both migrancy and nomadism claim to offer is exhibited in the above as the racialization of the western social order into a water-tight spectacle will continue to stand in the way of the integration quest that drives these abstractions of mobility which have done a lot to draw many from the postcolonial world into a disposition towards exilic dislocation in other names.

Closely related to migrancy and nomadism in the discourse of exile is multiculturalism. Like the other two concepts, multiculturalism assays to bring into focus the dialectic of home and exile, on the one hand and the nation state and diaspora on the other, setting home and the nation state in a battle for not only survival, but also that of integrity (David Bennett 1998:44). Yet since “its coinage by a Canadian Royal Commission in 1965” (Bennett 2), the term has meant different things to different people. To the postcolonial world particularly, the perception of it has been essentially along the axes of increased border crossing. Again, the impression of it is that of the provision of respite to predominantly postcolonial minority groups whose movement, usually to the metropolitan countries of the North, seeks in a way to endorse the pluralism of identities and tolerance which the space of the host countries provides. If in a way this appears to be a measure of the willingness of the host nations to open up and extend hands of accommodation to the perceived postcolonial beneficiaries, the desired expectation has, for the most part, remained elusive.

Yet, multiculturalism which is conceptually plagued by conflicting framings, thrives, among other things, on the fetishization of community (Joseph in Donna Strickland 2004:182). Put differently, the practice is sustained by the suspension of recognition of difference to legitimize the abstraction of a melting pot of culture in a fashion that

apparently makes the hassles of the nation state undesirable, as a community of exiles enjoys an enhancement in their status far away from their postcolonial countries of origin. However, as Tariq Modood (2007:6) explains, this is not to say there is a complete obliteration of difference within the context of multiculturalism, as issues of racism and ideologies are implicated in the designation of migrants as inferior in the societies into which they have chosen to settle. Yet while the suspension of difference lasts, part of the substance of the benefit that comes with such a status is articulated, for instance, in Anyidoho's *EarthChild* where in Bloomington (37) Yaa and Owusu Brempong are commended for "bring[ing] Ghana home in a feast of highlife cultural things" in far away US. Besides, other characters are able to forge an alliance between African cosmopolitans and their diasporan African-Americans, among them a diva, who, we are told, "walk[s] away with all our history braided on your head" (41). However, there is a limit to which this kind of ecstatic moment can sustain the exilic condition of the African cosmopolitan. Needless to say, it explains why the imperative of return in the work cannot be obscured. One indication of the limits of multiculturalism in this particular instance, as I have argued in the conclusion to the analysis of the text, is the dialectic existing between the condition of the African-Americans and that of the postcolonial African exiles.

To expatiate on the identity of the African-American in the multicultural society of America, there is already a marginalized image that the identity cuts because of the existence of an institutionalized marginalization of this identity. Perhaps one telling validation of this assertion is to be found in Andrew Hoberek's (2004:278-9) allusion to the accrual of "urban triage and literary multiculturalism" in the American society to justify the continual "ghettoization and displacement" of the black American population through an overall alibi of black criminality. Using James Lee's thrust in the fiction *The Wire* as background to his analogy, the tripartite condition of wounded soldiers becomes an apt illustration of the American social condition and the basis on which policy formulation and implementation are based: "those who need urgent attention, those who require medical care but can wait, and those whose injuries are so extreme that they are beyond help" (Lee in *ibid* 378). Moving on thereafter to interpret the application of this to the African-American condition, Hoberek explains that the social equation of the

American establishment has designated certain African-American neighborhoods and indeed identity “as inherently pathological, and likewise beyond help” (379) in order to justify whatever social displacement and ghettoization that befall them. He therefore concludes in a manner that speaks unambiguously to the naked truth: “one explanation for the congruence of urban triage and literary multiculturalism is that the latter was a feint, a bone tossed to a few elite cultural workers and their multiracial middle-class constituencies in order to affirm liberal faith in individual upward mobility while leaving systemic racism largely undisturbed” (379).

So while an average African-American community struggles against the hypocrisy of the establishment and testifies against the awry morality of multiculturalism because of its legitimization of double-standards, the promise that the banding together of the postcolonial African exile and the African-American cannot but be cosmetic where survival is tricky, if not treacherous. In other words, apart from the fleeting moments of conviviality that do more to serve as an opium from a traumatic reality of survival in a diaspora that, for the African-American, has become home, owing to long centuries of severance from Africa, there may not really be much for the African exile to gain from such alliance.

On the other hand, for the postcolonial African exile whose solace lies in the magnanimity of multiculturalism, the perceived escape from the dystopian condition of home may require a critical look. On this score Bhabha (1998:44) contends that for the postcolonial figures that remain taken by the ideals of multiculturalism, the attraction stems from the smokescreen of a hegemonic hue: “we shouldn’t forget the *hegemonic* potential of the minority as an economic elite, or versions of diaspora which dramatise border-crossing and ‘hybridity’ as privilege rather than deprivation, the privilege of mobility associated with economic and cultural capital.” It then follows that those that are united by the sense of minoritarian community that is built on the basis of the multicultural persuasion, have, wittingly or unwittingly, allowed themselves to be employed in the mission of preventing critical social evaluation, which is grand altogether and morally inflected on a global scale, if granted space.

To what stake then is the tenacity inherent in such sense of community tied; and to what extent can the preservation of privileges for a negligible part of a subordinated group be used as a measure for living up to the ethos of tolerance? Perhaps the first challenge posed in this case is the need to unmask the implications of the elite ideology that downplays the more credible pulse of the larger community of the border-crossing phenomenon. More substantially, the question raised above returns us to the fetishization that dogs the sense of community that multiculturalism practised with an affected slant creates. As Miranda Joseph reckons:

Fetishizing community only makes us blind to the ways we might intervene in the enactment of domination and exploitation. I see the practice of critique, and in particular a critical relationship to community, as an ethical practice of community, as an important mode of participation. (Donna Strickland 2004:182)

Thus the refusal to admit the faultlines of multiculturalism practised in this mode that underwrites imperialism and betrays a collusion with the imperial order to affirm the disingenuity of the capitalist order may have, after all, drawn back the march towards global equity more than it appears to have advanced it. Among other things, consumerism and the deception of purchasing power that it confers on buyers, especially of the privileged few that make up this hue of postcolonial subjectivities may have blinded them to the enormity of the betrayal that their attitude embodies. Whatever purchasing power they boast about, only goes to serve the capitalist interest of the host nations. Although speaking essentially to the treachery of capital mobility and the intractable elusiveness that globalization engenders as a fulcrum for contemporary capitalism, the painful lugubrious lamentation that one finds in “Immigrant Voice” in *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*, over the slippage of cash from migrants in the USA, demonstrates the unpalatable dynamics of “domination and exploitation” that multiculturalism endorses. Thus, for a future that will be worth dissipating multicultural energy upon by Africans who must find themselves in the diaspora of the West, Serote affirms the primacy of return as an antidote to drowning in the pull of multicultural proselytizing. Read in this thesis against the frame of “transnation”, the idea of “history is the home address” in Serote also responds to the double standards of the concept.

In the end, the impression that we come away with is that multiculturalism attempts to celebrate and accommodate diversity; but at the same time, it does everything to shield the limitations of imperial and racial history from the criticism they deserve. This is perhaps done in order to give a sense of belonging to all for the actualization of equality. The suggestion of the reversal of the order to truly accommodate the formerly excluded in the economic and imperial scheme of things, which was made horrible through colonialism and slavery, remains unacceptable even to the most liberal of the liberals. Again, Bennett and Bhabha bear this view out:

But the unsettling thing about current 'minority' claims to historical being is that history is underwritten by the need to come to terms with memory and trauma: there can be no mirage about a 'level playing-field' until the soil is dug up and the whole terrain re-built. This notion of freedom as looking to the past while 'working through' the present is deeply disturbing to consensual 'centrists', however liberal, because it makes the historical present 'strange' to itself, estranged from the sources of its authority, harrowed in its very presence-ing. (1998:45)

The sheer superficiality of the claims of multiculturalism as a reparative concept through which the formerly marginalized in the imperial scheme of colonialism of all kinds can be brought into the commonwealth of the present disturbs and refracts from any gains it offers. The unpreparedness to face up to the horrors of the past and the tackling of the fundamental questions which seek answers as to why the current dislocation of the formerly colonized peoples goes, to demonstrate the hidden price tag of the gratifications of multiculturalism. Not least because, the subtlety with which it operates is an indication that there is hardly any break from the long history of colonialism. But if there has been a change at all, it has been only in the area of strategies. In this case, dislocation, to a number of the formerly colonized subjectivities, gets across as an innocuous enterprise. In actuality, however, the imperial undercutting has become more sophisticated and the deficits of such willing dislocation is no less troubling than those of exile, even if victims vociferously deny categorization in the amphitheatre of exile.

Therefore, it will be disingenuous to pass a clean bill of health on multiculturalism as it is being mostly practised in the West by some few privileged members from the formerly colonized spaces of the Third World especially. A verdict of this nature may sound

unpalatable especially in an age that is witness to an unprecedented acceleration of dynamics of globalization. But so must it be upheld because such instance of multiculturalism undermines the place-based ethos of nationalism, especially of formerly colonized people, owing to the imperialist exploitations that lurk in the prospects of the concept. This assertion is further borne out by the imperative of globalization which demands, at least in principle, that a certain measure of convergence should be demonstrated on the other concepts and abstractions through which the pragmatism of compression of time and space can be sustained. And once this culture is entrenched, it may “no longer matter where” one lives. The celebration of such spatial promiscuity into which notable modernist writers and artists tapped in the 20th century is still on the ascendancy today. Yet we must not lose sight of the fact that the primacy of original location and race especially, still plays a crucial role in the success or otherwise that is made of any chosen multicultural life and career. Put differently, to what extent can the testimonial articulation of, say, Paul Nizon (1995) be taken to be representative when it comes to testimonies on the intimate encounters with multiculturalism in the process of accounting for a life of exile? The Swiss author is definitely behind himself when he reflects on multiculturalism and his life as an exile:

For a writer who chose exile, multiculturalism is manifest not only in his desires but also in his everyday life. For almost twenty years I have lived in Paris, another sphere of language and culture. My everyday language is French. My newspaper is French. For that matter, a large part of my reading is French. Even my marriage is French. French translations of my books circulate, such that I receive letters from my French readers, and French authors, some of whom are young and unknown, send me their books. French students write about me. The desk clerk at the police station recognizes me as a well-known Parisian writer simply from my name. Nevertheless, I remain a German-language author. I could characterize myself as a Parisian writer of Swiss descent who writes in German... accordingly, my two-to threefold literary affiliation could certainly be called multicultural. I suppose that multiculturalism has surreptitiously found its way into my language, as a stylistic agent. (474)

Obviously, the level of reception in which Nizon regales cannot be divorced from his skin pigmentation as Caucasian. What is more, exile for him is a matter of choice and for that matter, he may not bear about a psyche that is burdened by the trauma of a forced separation from a homeland one loves so much as is the case of many postcolonial writers and indeed many others from postcolonial spaces of African and Asia who have been goaded into existential rifts between their countries of origin and those of

destination. Such articulation of trauma is best exhibited in Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear* where the dilemmatic condition of exile is so glaring as to stare one in the face. Disgorged from home, yet unaccepted in exile, multiculturalism for the African postcolonial subjectivity is better designated as a mirage.

The dilemma can be explored further when we turn to Isidore Okpewho (2006:69) whose testimony suggests that even when one succeeds in escaping the difficult conditions of Africa and joins the class of the privileged in the West, the "tales of horror that continue to come out of Africa" requires that a greater sense of intellectual concern should be invested in engaging with the situation at home, rather than shunning out all manner of intellectual jargon and theories that redound little to the urgent need of a continent: "what I am calling for is nothing short of an ethical agenda in our investigative labors. For those of us in literary study, this will mean that we retreat a little from our pet propensities toward theories and modes of discourse that may have advanced the horizons of humanistic study but that have proved woefully incapable of creating the climate for humane conduct of affairs in the world we live." (69)

To cite one more instance this time from the African diaspora, in Carine Mardorossian's essay, "From Literature of Exile to Migrant Literature", the author gives a long list of writers from South Asia and the Caribbean who have rejected the designation of exile and have taken up that of migrant of course as a way of indicating a departure in their way of living from that of their precursors who also migrated from these places to the West. As discussed earlier, this exhibition of preference in nomenclature constitutes part of the strategies exiles in contemporary times seek to employ for both survival and integration. In this case, no strategy promises to be more propitious than the resolve to patronize multiculturalism. After all, like Paul Gilroy has reported, the centuries-long cultural domination of empire may have begun to suffer some setback now that birthday celebrations in Windsor Castle include, among other things, the privileging of an "out of Africa" dimension (Paul Gilroy 2004:116). We may even add the recent birthday anniversary of Prince Charles that was conducted in the Nigerian-founded the Redeemed

Christian Church of God.¹² The truth of the matter, however, is that such moments of multicultural triumphalism pale behind the overwhelming exclusion that still typifies the lives of postcolonial exiles or migrants, as some prefer to call them. What is more, measured against the political, economic and technological backwater that Africa as home has become and the many ways in which the dystopian condition instigates border-crossing to the West, one begins to wonder if the battle stops only at the cultural level. Put another way, multicultural triumphalism that balks in the face of other social constituents apart from fugacious moments of cultural ceremony fails to provide answers to the exclusionary challenge that Africa and the Third World face both at home and in exile.

Caryl Phillips' (2006:5) predicament in the UK will serve this analysis further. He had chosen to be part of the campaign team of the Labour Party in 1983. Moving from one apartment to another in canvassing for votes should be natural; after all, he is no longer an exile but a multicultural migrant whose integration into the British society qualified him to be part of such campaign train, which should affirm the exercise of his civic rights in his country of destination. To his shock, not only did he realize the level of rejection that lurks in the status quo as he led a campaign team from house to house, he also discovered that his colour could as well work against his white candidate at the polls if he did not withdraw from the campaign team. Similarly, an African in person of Mathew Ashimolowo, may now run the largest single congregation of Christian believers in Britain, but the status does not insulate him from British police brutality to which black folks are routinely subjected in the UK.¹³ Yet, ordinarily his achievement in propagating a colonial and western religion to a level of distinction should have prevented any such brutality and humiliation. Therefore, for all its attraction, the multicultural slant to the abstraction and practice of exile may be on the face value exciting and innocuous altogether for postcolonial subjectivities, it is however in reality a far cry from the ideal.

¹² This was on the 14th of November, 2007.

¹³ See *The (Nigerian) Punch* of Sunday December 9 2007.

Another concept that is in line with the discussion of exile especially at the moment is transnationalism. Although another fiercely contested concept, one thing that is above contention among theorists, however, is the simultaneity of attachment to two or more nationalities, whereby apart from the original country of origin, an individual's allegiances to other countries are obvious essentially because there is a continual coming and going among these countries and a telling border-crossing propensity which justifies his multiple allegiances. But beyond the multiple allegiances of individuals which are reinforced by their many crossings, transnationalism is also imbricated in a more elaborate, if not totalist form. This is when we talk about the simultaneity of congruent flows of people and other resources like goods, capital, and ideas across borders. If however, the flow cannot be said to be new as we can argue for its antecedents in history, the unprecedented stage it has attained today has been catalyzed essentially by technology and capitalist imperialism (Valentina Mazzucato 2004: 132).

The flexibility of flow has impacted on the flexibility of identity formation and renegotiation, in which case, "in the borderlands, a liberating confusion of identities challenges the superimposed boundaries of culture, class and region, as well as gender and nation" (Ron Robin 2002:372). Focussing specifically on the transnationalism of individuals from the postcolonial world, border-crossing within transnational culture can be gratifying at a point altogether. Not least because, where repressive regimes have reigned supreme, the relief that transnationalism offers provides an opportunity to escape death or detention especially where certain groups or individuals are perceived to be enemies of the state as in the case of Jack Mapanje. Therefore, whether for ill or good, the role of the nation in engendering border-crossing of the transnational mode, cannot be ignored. This explains why once the Malawian history of repression is put in context, we begin to see how the Banda years of imprisonment without trial, detention, torture and state murder forced many, including Mapanje, to adopt a transnational existence even when this is another way of opting for exile. No doubt, much relief came his way after the years of imprisonment were brought to an end and he was able to relocate to the UK. As shown in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*, and the preceding collections, *The Chattering Wagtails of Mukuyu Prison* and *Skipping without Ropes*, it was a way of

escaping the debilitating atmosphere of home as he prepares for a new way of life in which his allegiance will be divided simultaneously between Britain and Malawi. It also explains why the specificity of the place of countries of destination in determining transnational practice as put forward by Muzzucato (133), must be challenged. This is because the initial motivation begins from the countries of origin whose government attitude either encourages or discourages transnational cultures particularly those meant to liberalize a permanent human flow across borders of other nations.

Nevertheless, the repressive regime of the Malawian nation which eventually forced a transnational identity upon Mapanje is not without an exhibition of affinity with the colonial history of Malawi and the imperial Britain. For a writer whose advanced study had taken him to Britain in his younger days, the specificity of the colonial link had already been established since the study then had been sponsored by the Malawian state in a bid to make the young poet “drink from the source” of modernity, as we find in *Of Chameleons and Gods* (33). Such affinity which eventually charts the course of transnational human flow in the postcolonial world finds parallel in the way Paris remains “a narrative construct in the minds of its former colonial subjects” (Dominic Thomas 2007:156). A similar transnational flow is found in the movement from Lagos to London in Ofeimun’s *London Letter and Other Poems*. As will be argued in the discussion of the collection, this is not unconnected with the colonial history that binds both cities.

Concerning the solidarity which the formation of transnational identities allows, it is not uncommon to find a banding together of people for the agitation for more rights in their countries of destinations much as they also remain committed to the unfolding of events in their countries of origin. Again, Mapanje’s *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* illustrates this so enthrallingly given the way his reflections in the collection speak both to situations in Malawi and London where he can no longer be considered a bird of passage or outsider as in the days of his study when his impression of London was articulated in *Of Chameleons and Gods*. An instance of the affirmation of rights along the lines of solidarity of people of similar status in Britain is evident in *The Last of the Sweet*

Bananas when he cautions and protest againsts shabby treatment to a fellow immigrant for whatever drives her from home to Britain is not unconnected with the “nameless wars” from Britain cannot be exonerated. He therefore cautions:

So, define her separately,
She's not just another
Castaway washed up your
Rough seas like driftwood (203)

If transnationalism espouses a form of simultaneity of multiple nationalities by demonstrating allegiance to two or more national spaces including the home country of origin, cosmopolitanism on its part, departs from transnationalism in the way it advocates discontinuity of thoughts and ties to the nation-state. Put another way, for the often touted cosmopolitan aesthetic, the allegiance to home is replaced with allegiance to the world. It, therefore, drives a wedge between what is called “the home” and “the world”. When conceptual thoughts are further volunteered on cosmopolitanism, the normative impression is that, of all forms of border-crossing-inflected ways of living in contemporary times, cosmopolitanism remains the most voluntary. Cosmopolitans are therefore different from, say, refugees and other similarly identified subjectivities in the sense that it is a way of life that is adopted out of choice and should not feature in the context of the coercive forms of migrancy with which the world is typified today. Nevertheless, we need to interrogate the assumptions of cosmopolitanism as perhaps the most complex form of migrancy in order to come to terms with the reality it holds especially for the postcolonial world.

Just as its claims are contentious (Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider 2006:2), the history of cosmopolitanism remains as contested, which is why each theorist chooses what he considers a suitable periodization model for the take-off of discussion on the concept. As I argue in Chapter Three, cosmopolitanism is as old as the history of world civilization which of course is why we must acknowledge that it must have definitely begun with Egyptian civilization. Not least because some of the earliest theories and figures of classical thought originated from Egypt by the virtue of the training of the highly rated thinkers, professionals and theorists from Egyptian universities (Mathew Ashimolowo

2007:3). More recently, however, cosmopolitanism is conveniently linked with the evolution of the Western Enlightenment and often associated with the theoretical suppositions of Immanuel Kant. On this score, Gerard Delanty's (2006: 26) account of the history and the informing ideology of the concept will be useful:

Although the origins of cosmopolitanism lie in an essentially moral view of the individual as having allegiances to the wider world, it was to acquire a political significance once it was linked to peoplehood. The main tradition in modern cosmopolitan thought, which derives from Immanuel Kant, sought to extend republican political philosophy into a wider and essentially legal framework beyond political community extending beyond the community into which one is born or lives. Cosmopolitanism thus became linked with the universalism of modern western thought and with political designs aimed at world governance.

Cosmopolitanism, viewed from this angle, cannot be separated from the imperialist agenda that the Enlightenment produced both in terms of slavery and colonialism. The desire to expand the horizon of allegiance beyond national boundaries definitely was of great mercantile benefit to the West in the centuries-long expeditions into Africa and the rest of the world. The returns have since consolidated the economies of the countries that were actively involved in the cosmopolitan mission which did not only spread the often hyped desirability of Western forms of democracy, but has also forced a reconfiguration of spatial nationalism, pointing ultimately to the dimensions of imperialism as transmutation of border-crossing into relocation for the domination of aborigines living in other parts of the world in their distinctly racial and cultural contexts— from Africa to Asia, Canada to Australia.

Therefore, the disaffection with the nation state that cosmopolitanism puts forward in order to celebrate some kind of homeliness in the world deserves careful scrutiny, just like the other similarly configured abstractions. This is more so in view of the fact that for the postcolonial world, the morality and teleology of western abstractions and other forms of conceptual invention hardly redound to its development. The situation is patently so because the history of western imperialism since the Enlightenment has more often than not shown that every step of progress the West takes has always impacted negatively on the rest of the world, especially Africa. On the strength of this observation,

cosmopolitanism must thus be received with utmost caution, if not suspicion. Its claims, for that matter deserve further exploration.

To return to the assumption that cosmopolitanism is embarked upon by individuals out of their own volition, the smug complacency with which this notion spreads was captured in the Gikandi's keynote lecture on "Rerouting the Postcolonial". According to him, professed African cosmopolitans are categorized as highly skilled professionals and intellectuals who cross the borders of their countries as many times as they want and traverse many parts of the globe at will, choosing in the process to determine which place suits them best to live at any given time. But if there may be no contest about this perception of African cosmopolitans, there is something particularly disturbing when reflections on the practice of the concept aspires towards a comparative propensity as a way of justifying the choice to be *at home in the world*. The proclivity toward comparison, according to Gikandi, is evident in the embarrassment the sight of African refugees, for instance, causes their cosmopolitan counterparts whose ego of international travel is bruised when refugees show up at international airports with their goats, tethers and all, in hope to be air-borne to a far away land somewhere in the West.

Such condescending reaction on the part of African cosmopolitans cannot but provoke critical thoughts on the true intention of cosmopolitan assumptions. Once this is done, it begins to dawn on us that the disposition of African professionals and intellectuals towards an uncritical avowal of cosmopolitanism spells greater danger for the continent than the benefits that it may offer. Not least because if to be at home in the world is to relocate from Africa to the West, then to what degree can the sincerity of such wilful cosmopolitans be taken seriously in view of the understanding that they constitute a veritable source of Africa's human capital base? One likely counter-response to this poser is that here is an attempt to undermine the ideals of world citizenship in the age of globalization. But again such counter-responses deserve to be engaged on the ground of the disequilibrium in the pattern of world citizenship of Africans in the mould of cosmopolitanism and that of the West, whose disposition towards being *at home in the world* discriminates against choosing Africa in the wake of colonialism, except where

there are abundant resources for extraction for transfer to the West. Upon refinement, there is a backward cosmopolitan journey of finished products which Africa buys at prices several times as high as the original cost of extraction.

It then stands to reason that Shameen Black (2006:45) is right to deplore modes of writing from the Third World which celebrate “imperialist visions of world citizenship”. The uncomfortable antithesis existing between the theory and praxis of cosmopolitanism of this hue is best illustrated in the Ojaide’s *When it no Longer Matters Where you Live*, when he engages in the opening part of the collection with the history of ships and the meanings they generate for historically subjugated people like Africans. As he argues in the poem “Ships”, and as I hope to have illustrated, the sight of ships only brings back memories of the carting away of both human and material resources from Africa and other places that have come under the colonial subjugation of the West. On the contrary, ships will in the interpretation of the West be harbingers of civilization to Africa and the rest of the formerly colonized world. Today, however, the exploitation of African human resources has assumed more subtle and sophisticated dimensions since the facilitatory role of the Chinese-invented compass which guided the various western voyages (Chinweizu 1975: 3.) has been boosted by the convenience of aircraft, and information technology. Blinded perhaps by the seeming comfort of the attraction, the tendency to gloss over the coercion that lies behind the cosmopolitanism of Africans in the West should not come as a surprise. It explains partly why cosmopolitanism is affected towards valorizing the world in opposition to the home (Black 2006:46); not least because while exilic victims of refugee status necessarily carry with them insignia memories of home beyond physical reminders like their goats, the memory of home is expected to count little to cosmopolitans.

Yet by further probing cosmopolitan claims especially with respect to its beneficiaries (or victims), we realize how the informing catalyst for border-crossing has its foundation in the down-turn of conditions at home. This view is reinforced by the antithesis existing between the abstraction and its actual practice; that is, the paradox that the juxtaposition

of cosmopolitanism and *cosmopolitanization* illustrate. At this juncture, it will serve us better to take into account an often unacknowledged predicament of cosmopolitans:

Like the distinction between ‘modernity and ‘modernization’, we have to distinguish between *cosmopolitanism* as a set of normative principles and (really existing) *cosmopolitanization*. The distinction turns on the rejection of the claim that cosmopolitanism is a conscious and voluntary choice, and all too often the choice of an elite. The notion ‘cosmopolitanization’ is designed to draw attention to the fact that the emerging cosmopolitan of reality is also, and even primarily, a function of coerced choices or a side-effect of unconscious decisions. The choice to become or remain an ‘alien’ or a ‘non-national’ is not as a general rule a voluntary one but a response to acute need, political repression or a threat to starvation. (Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider 2006:7-8)

Once the above delineation is put in context against the specific backdrop of postcolonial Africa, it becomes evident that the choice of cosmopolitanism in recent times, especially from the late 1980s has not been voluntary, after all. The recrudescence of military rule that plagued Africa in the 1960s and 70s and which continued unabated up to the early part of the 90s for instance served as an unfortunate impetus for the “voluntary” exit of many African intellectuals. But such exit, it must be remarked, was not exclusive to the elite class as many others that fell below the skilled labour categorization also joined the train of migration to the West in search of greener pastures. As observed earlier in the introductory chapter, where military dictatorship was not a factor, other forms of leadership excesses engendered the dispersal of a significant number of African human capital the West. The deplorable conditions have spread to all spheres and have significantly affected artists, writers and scholars many of whom have since relocated to the West and in the process internalized the informing impetus of their relocation. Having settled into Western system of knowledge production and career practice, the tendency among this category of intellectuals is to look back on the moments of exit, especially where they were not linked to direct confrontation with authorities, and conclude that they are better categorized as cosmopolitans than as exiles. But the reality on the ground often puts the lie to their claims as has been illustrated in *When it no Longer Matters Where you Live* for instance. The title poem gives cogency to the observation as the “the Iroko”, despite the confessed security of his status in the several seasons of uprooting and “transplanting” it has witnessed, eventually testifies to the desirability of home no matter the benefits that accrue from being at home in the world:

There's none so hurt at home
who forgets the pain outside—
that's the persistent ache one carries
until home's safe to return to,
when it no longer matters where you live! (77)

With globalization, the task of demonstrating its relationship to exile is perhaps most challenging; not least because as a concept its reach is far flung and imbricates almost all other conceptual elements by which various fields of enquiry have attempted to engage with social epistemes and how we ought to live in the present age. While on the one hand for instance some scholars trace its origin to the 16th century European exploratory and subsequently imperial travels around the rest of the world (Stan Smith 2006:2), others see its evolution as concomitant with modernity. As well as the aforesaid, there are others who prefer to connect its evolution to the rise of English as a universal language (ibid. 2), a phenomenon that can hardly be denied in view of the historical modes by which the language was elevated to a global status. Other schools of thought do not hesitate to single out the phenomenon of globalization for the justification of eschatological persuasions in terms of the way it hastens Armageddon, and accelerates the admission of the faithful to paradise in the context of the increasing spate of terrorism in contemporary times and overtly and covertly underwrites the heating up of the apocalyptic rivalry between Islam and Christianity (1). Yet, a number of other scholars prefer to bring the narrative of its origin closer to the present by limiting it to the 20th century and the advancement of information science and technology whereby, to allude to the popular coinage by Marshall McLuhan in his 1964 work *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, the world has been turned into a “global village”. David Harvey has since then come to be identified as the theorist whose attempt at painting the scenario of globalization infects most; this is precisely for the aptness of expression: “time/space compression” and the accelerated progression in human capacity to demystify space through the reduction of the needed time to cross it (cited in Don Kalb et al 2004:1)

Anthony Giddens (1990) in a similar vein advances this popular perception of the dynamics of globalization by stressing the consequence of “time/space” compression. On this score, globalization is read as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which

link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away” (cited in Michael Murphy 2006:140). The logic that emerges from the foregoing is that which compels us to accept the fact of the dismantling of all boundaries, both virtual and territorial, as we witness the ascension of a planetary order in which there is a levelling of all spaces. Such levelling, in principle, provides the groundwork for the realization of a global equilibrium. In this case, the previously invoked yardsticks of differentiation between races and nations are pronounced obsolete as the world appears to be framed by the similar happenings and concerns which call for responses that will ultimately leave no one in doubt as to the possibility of being governed by certain irresistible developments and conditions of living. Once this line of thought is pursued further, it is not difficult to accept the simultaneous philosophical espousal for the invention of universal patterns of morality by which all, irrespective of where they live, can have a sense of connectivity and belonging in the global village.

The absence of consensus as to what constitutes globalization may then account for why Stan Smith (2006:1) concurs with Holdersness and Loughrey in suggesting that “it might be more accurate to speak of overlapping, interacting and conflicting *globalizations*, each with its own teleology of origins and ends, its visions of apocalypse, continuity and renewal.” Another way of simplifying the notion of globalization is to see it as a concept that has united and divided scholars and nations into camps such as the globalist and the anti-globalist (Peter Dicken 2004: 9). While the globalists tend to defend and celebrate the virtues and benefits, real and potential, the anti-globalists tend to approach the concept from the angle of the contradictions it inheres and which undermine its objectives. The fact of the contradictions and the failure to as much hold together all peoples and nations as envisaged, whereby the mandate of blurring differences becomes difficult to accomplish, explains why it is no longer uncommon to talk about “globalisation and its discontents” (Stan Smith 2006: iii). Thus the stretch and imbrications of globalization which are as convergent as they are conflicting require that each writer at every point in time identifies a working definition through which he contributes to the discourse while staying alive to other possible approaches, which hold useful values of reinforcement and contrast for his argument.

On the above score, globalization in the context of this research subscribes to the postcolonial view of C.A. Bayly, as captured by Murphy that it must be read “as a process that may be traced to certain developments in trade, colonialism and the nation state.” (2006:139). Following this line of thought, the relationship of the postcolonial world to globalization becomes easy to grasp. What is more, it becomes easy to illustrate how and why within the discourse of postcolonial theory globalization has come to be identified as one of its major concerns (Simon Gikandi 2007: np). It is on account of this position that I have tried to show especially in Chapters Four and Five how the link between globalization and exile can be limned via the historical triage of “trade, colonialism and the nation state”. In other words, the idea that within the context of globalization, there is a commodification of all things in as much as they circulate (Alphonso Lingis 2005:140), crystallizes when the process of commodification and circulation is subjected to thorough engagement through the centralization of the framework of the elements of the triage. Needless to say, by engaging with the three elements, it begins to make sense how oppression, despite the promise to the contrary, has come to punctuate, more often than not, the narrative of human migration, a phenomenon that today is synonymous in most cases with globalization.

Another way of looking at the question of oppression in this case is to consider it from the angle of the discontents that come up against globalization. The commodification of resources and their simultaneous circulation as experienced in the postcolonial world has also catalysed the migration of peoples. The condition is a materialist challenge which, when given a closer look, makes evident the contradictions of globalization. For, there is an implication of a collapse of boundaries; this, as hinted earlier, is to allow for a free flow of ideas and commodities across different borders of the world. Usually linked in recent times to the fall of the Berlin Wall (Naomi Klein 2005:196), it is however sad that there are all manner of restrictions to the flow of certain resources. Curiously, the free movement of people is itself another issue that has become particularly problematic. Problematic because the accelerated movement of people that comes with globalization is being, however, realized without the envisaged index of equilibrium. The situation is

especially so with respect to the disproportionate movement of people from the Global South to the Global North.

One dominant explanation among others being given is the systematic and conscious ploy on the part of the West to consign the postcolonial world especially Africa to the centuries-long responsibility of providing cheap raw materials for Western technological and industrial use (Samir Amin 2006:94). Thereafter, these raw materials are transformed into finished goods which Africa is made to buy at a highly prohibitive cost, thereby serving to advance the wealth of the West and other similarly allied international blocs to the impoverishment of Africa. The social-economic and infrastructural disorientation that the continent experienced in the 1970s and 80s has also been put forward as another major issue in what accounts for the undermining of the realization of the aspiration towards global equilibrium. Knowing that the deterioration in social infrastructure and standard of living was also connected then with the implantation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and World Bank and International Monetary Funds (IMF) conditions for obtaining loans, the terms of such conditions of borrowing from these world financial institutions were very clear. The instruction to cut down on public expenditure (Peter Abrahams 2000:229) was crucial to the giving of the loans; its implications touched negatively on peoples' conditions of living, making education, for instance, unaffordable in many countries while public infrastructure suffered neglect.

As the recommended austerity measures began to take toll on the people the option of migration became attractive more and more. Since the promise of economic liberalization and freedom turned out to look more like a fencing out of the people against better standards of living, they soon realized how they had come face to face with the violence of poverty among others. The option of migration appeared and still appears today as reasonable in view of the contradictory violence that the promise of better living handed the masses from postcolonial nations in Africa and other parts of Asia. Yet the migration option is no guarantee for reprieve from being fenced from the much sought after better conditions of living. The violence of exclusion from better living conditions can be

exacerbated by other forms of exclusion depending on the country of arrival. It may be helpful to ponder Klein's sense of this situation:

In fact, remarkably few of globalization's fenced-out people turn to violence. Most simply move: from countryside to city, from country to country. And that's when they come face to face with distinctly unvirtual fences, the ones made of chain link and razor wire, reinforced with concrete and guarded with machine. (197)

But such perspective of victimhood, that is, the representation of the postcolonial world as a victim of the global North, deserves further critical exploration. Once we apply our minds to this, it begins to dawn on us that what is considered to be the supranational conspiracy of globalization and as championed by the West and its allies through trade and the vestiges of colonialism, has been going on for this long because there is a complicity charge of which the postcolonial nation states are guilty. This is why in the texts that engage with globalization and exile in this study, I have sought to show how the coercive movement of Africans to the West cannot be entirely blamed on the imperialist agenda of globalization. Indeed, the extent to which the African postcolonial nation state is rendered powerless and obsolescent in the face of globalization must also be seen as a result of the wilful collaboration of the elite, especially the political elite to betray the primacy of the economic well-being of their states in order to share in the booties of imperialism. For instance, in Ofeimun's *London Letter and Other Poems*, the movement of people from the city of Lagos to London is induced not only by the external forces of globalization, but also, and significantly so, by the neglect of the political elite which was mainly drawn at this historical time from the military class. The import of this neglect is vividly captured in "Lagoon" where the persona "let the lagoon speak for my memory/ though offended by water hyacinth/ waste and nightsoil..." (3).

The violence of poverty carried out against the masses during the era of military rule especially in the 1980s and 90s emanated from the military's insatiable desire for embezzlement of public funds. It then explains why the funds from the world financial bodies, much as their terms were unsympathetic to true development in the postcolonial nation state, could have ultimately made some difference in the people's standard of living. So while the austerity measures resulted in the growth of unemployment as local

industries could no longer cope with production, the deterioration of public facilities, a charge of the government, brought about the contemplation of exile. Needless to say, the failure of local industries provided the increased opportunity for finished commodities from the West to make inroads into Nigerian markets in the name of liberalization of the economy. The fences that Klein talks about are to come into full manifestation when the migrants find themselves in the city of London where, for all its animation of the spirit of exiles, the exclusionary reality on the ground stares them in the face. The response to the situation is best captured in the refrain, “*we dey for London like we no dey at all*”.

A similar situation is at play in Ojaide’s *When it no Longer Matters Where you Live*. Concentrating on the Niger Delta plight as it plays out in the collection, the dystopian condition of city life in this region, which runs contrary to the expectations of the people as they move from their various villages to be part of the perceived prosperity of the oil cities, ultimately induces movement not only from city to city but from the country to the West, specifically America. As Ojaide (1999: 244) himself puts it, the condition of neglect of the region can as well be read as illustrative of the “paradox of sitting on oil and yet remaining impoverished”. And as seen in the collection, the buck stops at the desk of the transnational oil corporations whose exploratory activities do not only deplete the environment but also leave the region with little or nothing to show for its resources. But more critically, whatever misdemeanour, capitalist and otherwise, that the transnational firms run away with is made possible through the betrayal of the Nigerian state. The notoriety of the military in particular for disregarding principles of fairness in terms of commitment to the development and maintenance of the Niger Delta remains a contributory factor. This condition is made poignant by the readiness of the region’s elite class to compromise in matters bordering on the welfare of the region and its peoples, so long as the selfish interest of this negligible class is satisfied. In a more explicit language, this is what Biodun Jeyifo (1998: xxxii) refers to as the unfortunate dynamics of the “spoils of office” and the “spoils of power”.

Not being sympathetic to the interest of the populace, the parties, both internal and external, are in league to deny the people basic conditions of living. It is this tripartite

league of the state machinery, civilian and military, the Niger Delta elites and the transnational oil corporations that, has contributed to the retardation of the region. If the effects of the neglect are found everywhere in the region, they are more glaring in the cities. A progressive response to this situation is to expose the conspiracy and speak out against the exclusion of the majority of this region from the rights to good living. This then explains why the subnational consciousness of the region has been on the rise in recent times. While subnationalism can be pursued from both collective and individual angles, Ojaide's intervention in *When it no Longer Matters Where you Live* as in other works of his, illustrates the externalization of a subnational consciousness, even if there are other concerns in the work which are patently national in orientation. Perhaps the articulation of exile as a logical consequence of overwhelming deprivation is captured in "Home Song":

The eyes blurred from exhaustion
see no farther than the next half-meal
& next week fresh exiles will take to flight
to distances without roots. (51)

The South African situation in the post-liberation era must be considered from a similar angle particularly with respect to Jean Comaroff's remark about the "coincidence of liberation and liberalization" (2005:128). If one can take the liberty of interpreting the coincidence as meaning the liberalization of the South African economy and the endorsement by the state of the free flow and accelerated border crossing of commodities from the North to the South and vice versa in the wake of the collapse of apartheid, the context in which Comaroff speaks of this coincidence can then be said to be replete with the anxiety about the consequences of this coincidence. One of such consequences, as the gains of liberation are no longer to come to the ordinary people with the initially construed immediacy, but instead through the long term "trickle-down-effect", is the likelihood of human dispersal which is prospectively going to be more attractive in view of the understanding that such movement or migration is to occur within the framework of globalization. Thus, as Mongane Serote engages with this likely consequence in *History is the Home Address* in form of migration, globalization takes on a bright look as the productivity and authenticity of the African diaspora are invoked as a way of ensuring

that the concept makes sense. Such productivity cannot however be credible without rendering paramount the memory and affirmation of the African identity. This kind of proposition is best captured in the recurrent refrain, 'history is the home address'. Nevertheless, it is not likely that this bright side will completely obscure the migration of some South Africans in the post-liberation era. Not least because the persistence of marginalization of the South African populace and social and economic exclusion in terms of the delays in the accrual of the gains of liberation will also induce further drift of citizens across borders of the nation. These conditions of exclusion range from poverty to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and the overall elusiveness of the dividends of liberation.

The situation as examined under globalization then speaks vicariously to the ultimate understanding that emerges from the discussion of exile in this research. In other words, much as the reluctant migration of Africans to the West especially as from the 1980s can be blamed on the flip sides of migration on the continent particularly with respect to the negative impact of western transnational corporations, on the one hand, and that of global financial institutions whose sympathies lie more with the West than with the rest of the postcolonial nations of the South, the complicity of African nation states in accelerating if not aggravating the labour and general human flight cannot be ignored. The corrosive effect of this on African nation states makes glaring the obsolescence and inadequacy charge that is today being brought against nation states especially of the postcolonial world.

It thus stands to reason that in a bid to restore the integrity of the postcolonial African nation states, the task at hand is that of aspiring towards a transformation of orientation first of the political elite in order to win the confidence of those Africans who have been unnecessarily dispersed into a new circle of diaspora in the West. At the same time, the survival of the nation states which must be precipitated on an assurance of national integrity must be productively and economically fortified, conscientizing the citizens to be alive to the challenge of standing up to those exceptionable elements and practices of globalization that may compromise the survival of nation states. As I hope to argue in the succeeding chapters and the conclusion in particular, this is one way by which the

negative tide of unproductive migration of Africans can be stemmed. On account of this, then, the subsequent task becomes that of striving towards how to stand tall in the comity of continents in the global village, where a credible groundwork for the negotiation of equitable morality of migration both of materials and humans would have been laid. On this note, the yearning for home which is a recurrent issue in the collections under study would have been met.

CHAPTER TWO

PATH OF RESCUE AS *PATH OF THUNDER*: MILITARY INTERVENTIONS AND THE DESCENT INTO NATIONAL TRAUMA IN OLU OGUIBE'S *A GATHERING FEAR* AND KOFI ANYIDOHU'S *EARTHCHILD*

Military intervention or praetorianism, i.e., 'a situation in which military officers are major or predominant actors by virtue of their actual or threatened use of force', has preoccupied the attention of those interested in the politics of changing or developing societies of the Third World—Constantine P. Danopoulos, "Intervention and Withdrawals: Notes and Perspectives"

Dad was redreaming the world as he slept...He saw the economic boom in advance, saw its orgiastic squander, the suffering to follow, the exile to strange lands, the depleting of the people's will for transformation— Ben Okri, *The Famished Road*

This chapter is concerned with Olu Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear* and Kofi Anyidoho's *EarthChild*. Basically it intends to examine dimensions of exile in the texts as framed by the specific historical circumstance of military dictatorship in both Nigeria and Ghana. I argue that the incursion of the military into politics first in the 1960s in West Africa was opportunistic as they capitalized on the derailment of the nationalists who took over the reins of administration from the colonialists. For that reason, it was no surprise that they could not rise to the occasion of doing better than their civilian counterparts. Therefore, the following questions are crucial in the unfolding of the chapter: In the specific historical context of the 1980s against which both texts are set, what specific images are there to illustrate the directness of the writers' response to the historical epoch? More specifically, how does this response play out in Oguibe's poetry, first, in the depiction of conditions of home; and how do these conditions ultimately induce exile? How, therefore, does he, like many others he is presumed to represent, respond to the condition of exile. What are the limitations of the assumption that he as an artist cum intellectual can be seen as a voice to the suffering others? To what extent can the tropes of commitment and nationalism be taken seriously; and how do Oguibe's sentiments of return play out in text? With reference to Anyidoho, how does military dictatorship inspire his poetry about home and exile? What are the multiple layers of exile that one

can identify in the collection? What is the significance of the multiple approaches which reconcile the past with the present? By engaging with issues bordering on diaspora, how does he link them with exile as well as other similarly configured concepts like cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and nationalism; and how does he regard the question of return within the discourse of exile?

The abundant evidence on the failure of the civilian political elite who were in the forefront of anti-colonial struggle created a deep sense of disillusionment in the citizenry both in Ghana and Nigeria. The situation became so critical that it rendered the citizenry vulnerable in a desperate way for change in the status quo. However, the price to be paid for the longing for change would become regrettably incommensurate to its gains in the decades to follow. The military, understanding the psychology of each of the nations, sought an opportune time and ousted the civilian elite. So when the soldiers took power in Nigeria and Ghana respectively in 1966, the jubilation appeared to indicate the fulfilment of a collective dream. It was just in character with the earlier prediction of Achebe in *A Man of the People*.¹⁴

The excitement of the people remains for me pathetically flawed. This is because the take-over speeches of the military were carefully constructed in verbiage that once again aroused the shattered spirit of oneness in the people.¹⁵ It was for them a dawn of healing

¹⁴ Achebe in *A Man of the People* had predicted a coup at the end of the novel. Curiously, because of the precision with which his narrative made the prediction, he was arrested on the allegation that he was part of the plot, although he was later released, having not been found guilty.

¹⁵ The military junta that executed the first 1966 coup in Nigeria put forward the divisionism in the various regions of the country to take over power. Again, in the 1983 coup, to cite one other example from the country, it was so easy for the junta to capitalize on the un-popularity of the Shagari administration to present a speech that struck the right cord in the people and united them in support of their intervention. The speech read by the then Brigadier Sanni Abacha partly read: “you are living witnesses to the grave economic predicament and uncertainty which an inept and corrupt leadership has imposed on our beloved nation for the past four years... After due consultation over these deplorable conditions I and my colleagues in the Armed Forces have, in the discharge of our national role as the promoters and protectors of our national interest, decided to effect a change of leadership” (Patrick Utomi 1985:40). In Ghana the situation was not different. The 1966 coup led by Col. E. K. Kotoka and Lt. General A.A. Afrifa did everything to discredit the Nkrumah administration. For instance, in his speech to the nation, Lt. General Ankra explained that in taking over power the military formation and the police force “acted in accord with the *oldest and most treasured tradition* of the people of Ghana, the tradition that a leader who loses the confidence and support of his people and resorts to the arbitrary use of power *should* be deposed. No one

and revival of the myth of the nation. There was indeed an optimism of great expectations from the new regimes. The people thought that the promised gains of independence that were constantly elusive in the first republic could be made accessible by the military, after all. But before going any further, it will be necessary to consider the background against which the military class emerged in the colonial days. Like their civilian counterparts, Sivanandan (57) reminds one that they “received their education under colonialism” and completed their studies in elite institutions like Sandhurst. Although the experience at such institutions greatly contributed to their hatred for colonialism, and they must have had a great deal of relief at independence, “their culture and mentality”, Sivanandan argues further, “remained deeply dependent and derivative” (57). The implication of this is that far from creating an opportunity for redeeming the nations from the stakes of socio-political and economic failure, it was unlikely that the military would save the nation as envisaged by the people. This view can be further stressed when one searches back to consider the use into which the military formations were put in the colonial days. There was a common history defining the formation of the military class not only in Ghana and Nigeria, but in the whole of Anglophone West Africa. According to Baynham (1988: 20):

The military establishments of former British West Africa trace their origins to the constabularies commissioned by trading companies and colonial administrators for internal security duties in the latter part of the nineteenth century. With the advent of the Ashanti Wars and fears of French colonial expansion in West Africa, the forces from Gold Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia were amalgamated under Lugard in 1897 on the orders of Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies to form the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) and were given legal recognition in 1901... In the first years of its history, RWAFF (sic) was used as the constabularies had largely been employed before, for expeditions to establish and secure British rule on the frontiers of empire. After the Ashanti War of 1900, the force served mainly in northern Nigeria and inevitably left behind memories of punitive activities...

Viewed against this backdrop, the flaw in the enthusiasm and excitement of the people becomes clearer. The complicity of the military as a colonial formation and the use into which it was put at the time had created in its members an identity that appeared to be insulated from being made accountable to the rest of their society. Besides, the privilege of serving in the colonial institutions as agents of suppression to all forms of opposition

can doubt that Kwame Nkrumah has completely lost the trust and confidence of the people of this country...” (Maxwell Owusu 1989:378; author’s emphasis).

to colonial imperialism had already exposed this professional class to the application of force for the benefit of a negligible section of the society. Taken further, the aura of intimidation within which they operated in those days had taught them to perpetuate it whenever the opportunity offered itself in the newly independent countries. And as Ruth First argues: “More than anything else, colonial administrations resembled armies. The chain of authority from the top downwards was untouched by any principle of representation or consultation. For long periods in some territories, indeed, the colonial administration not only resembled armies, in their paramilitary formation and ethos; they were... the instruments of military men (cited in Arnold 2005: 114). The foregoing becomes yet another evidence that points to the unlikelihood of leadership performance on the part of the military. The tutelage acquired in the colonial days was to strongly influence the manner in which they perceived themselves as against the rest of the nation. As an institutional product of colonialism, the tendency of *ordering difference* in the post-independence era was a natural thing to do, as by the virtue of their position they saw how it worked to the exclusive advantage of the colonial system. Besides, there was also post-independence external motivation for both the Ghanaian and Nigerian military to take over power for the purpose of class privilege:

Nigerian and Ghanaian army officers who served in the Congo under UN auspices saw at first hand the power of the soldiers to arbitrate or coerce politicians and took such lessons home with them. African armies soon learnt that their interventions could be decisive. (Arnold 15)

A combination of all these various orientations had resulted in the creation of a distinctly separate identity and psychology. What is more, although this class affirmed its membership of each of the nations and put forward a strong reason that verged on patriotism and nationalism for taking over power, reeling off all the atrocities of the civilian politicians, the memory it bore of its past orientation was poles apart from what others had in mind. Maurice Halbwachs’ (1950: 48) view on collective memory will serve to illustrate this better: “While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember”. Remembrance in this case becomes group-bound. What a group therefore chooses to remember is contingent upon the prospect to enhance the status and gains of

such a group. In validation of this Lewis Coser in his introduction to Halbwachs' *On the Collective Memory* explains further that "social classes, families, associations, corporations, armies, and trade unions all have distinctive memories that their members have constructed, often over long periods of time. It is of course individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being locatable within specific group contexts, draw on those contexts to remember or recreate the past". Moreover, if as Richard Terdiman (1993: 8) argues that because of the overwhelming interaction of the past with the present memory can as well be designated the "present past", the kind of governance the soldiers were to exercise upon taking over power was not likely to be progressive. It is the more so since for them, "drawing on memory to recreate the past" meant creating and reinventing the sordid experiences of imperialism, which would please no one among the majority of the people who would be at the receiving end. This is not however to say that the military could not have chosen to invoke the memory of selfless service and sympathy with the masses as embodied in the ideals of nationalist struggle. Thus much as the people constituting other social groups would try to reinvent memories of the promises that nationalist struggle held in those days of colonialism, such lacked the wherewithal for actualization. This is because of the position the rest of the citizenry occupied in the structure of power. The situation is thus illustrative of what Richard Werbner (1998:2) calls "the diversity of postcolonial memory practice". Put another way, because the situation in question involved power relations, the position of the governed became that of handicap. At their best, they would be at the mercy of the new military rulers for whom power meant more of advantage over the people than demonstration of responsibility towards them. Michael Foucault (1994: 343) argues in line with this position when he reveals that the whole idea of taking power or subjecting a people to state control is usually for preservation of privilege of the group in control. Where, however, the people choose to adopt confrontation in their relations to power, there is the possibility of the adoption of "a winning strategy" to the advantage of the state. The reason for this is traceable to the "ruthlessness" identified with the powerful. But this is in fact the more so in the case of the military owing to their exclusive access to arms and ammunition.

Beyond the above summation of military pedigree, a clear understanding of military knowledge of power will serve to clarify issues further. At this point it will be necessary to state that the finicality of drawing a line between coups and revolutions will be superfluous. This is because, using Gordon Tullock's (2005: 78) paradigm, all the coups that have occurred in Africa right from the sixties set out in the fashion of revolutions. Whether they succeeded in bringing about the "rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change" (Huntington in John Foran 2005:6) is a different kettle of fish. And if "historically, the common form of revolution has been a not-too-efficient despotism which is overthrown by another not-too-efficient despotism with little or no effect on the public good" (Tullock 180), then this categorization perfectly limns what Nigeria and Ghana witnessed during the decades of successive military rules.

In Tullock's theory which radicalizes the popular notion of the masses with respect to the necessary primacy of public good, Tullock contends that by the very act of coup planning itself, the planners have already constructed for themselves an identity which, should the coup succeed, is expected to benefit the planners to the detriment of the identity of the people. This is the case whether in the commonplace view in which military dictators are overthrown by other dictators who head the army, or through the other forms— of junior officers, or uncommissioned men. What is paramount is what they intend to gain ultimately. The argument is to the extent that the commitment they demonstrate towards the people is less out of the recognition of an obligation than from a sense of charity (Tullock 182). However, the strategy is to invoke patriotism which they only verbally affirm. They can even purport that such patriotism which is germane to their intervention is greater than that of any other class in the nation. This could be illustrated with those moving take-over speeches which summon in the populace an outburst of emotions and support for such coups. Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* provides one of such instances of the people's response:

The unionist turned round and went down to join his crowd. Through the windows their sounds came: old songs with the words changed from the old praise for Nkrumah to insults for him. So like the noises of the Party when all the first promise had been eaten up and it had become a place where fat men found things to swell themselves up some more. (158)

However, the excitement of the people remained pitiable as they soon found out that the change perceivable was only in terms of who were at the helm of affairs. What started in Nigeria in January 15, 1966 as a coup— the drowning vortex of which Okigbo had presciently designated “as path of thunder”— did not only culminate in a civil war, it produced for so many years afterwards a militarized culture by which state power was defined. In 1979, a lull came after the various coups and counter coups when the second republic was inaugurated. But hope dimmed again for the nation when another coup toppled the Shehu Shagari-led regime in 1983. Between that year and 1999 a series of other coups— successful and aborted— took place. But perhaps the peak of military aberration was the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. This was done in order to perpetuate military rule. The crisis in which the nation was engulfed would later claim the life of the acclaimed winner, Moshood Abiola. This was shortly after the death of the dictator, General Sani Abacha in 1998. In retrospect, the moment is variously described as the saddest and most horrible era in the existence and history of the nation. In the words of Daniel Bach (2006: 63), at that time, contemplating Nigeria was like “inching towards a country without a state”. This was owing to the staging of an absurdity defined by praetorianism, violence and state betrayal. Ever since the return to a democratic dispensation in 1999, retired military officers have had better placements at various levels of government. What is worse, there still remains the preservation of the “cult” of Generals by which it is difficult to make them account for how the country was run in the past.¹⁶ Yet from all indications, for many years to come, the military may still dominate the Nigerian democratic scene with unapologetic ruthlessness and class aggrandizement.

¹⁶ In a recent interview, General Ibrahim Babangida, a former Nigerian head of state openly admitted that the military class is run as a “cult”; it is especially so within the rank of Generals, which was why he demanded some measure of solidarity from Obasanjo, himself a former General. The end point of this solidarity is that when it comes to probing the past of the nation’s Heads of State, especially by a former military General, other Generals should be insulated from being brought to book. See “Ibb to obj: You can’t provoke me”. Source: <http://odili.net/news/source/2006/sep/30/814.html>

The situation in Ghana is not too different from what has just been recounted about Nigeria. Right from the period of the toppling of Nkrumah's regime, in February 24, 1966, about a month after the Nigerian coup, what followed was a succession of military regimes with occasional lulls of civilian democratic rule. From this time on, what began as an aberration would become the order of the day. The military from 1966 made continual incursions into politics. The tendency to distinguish military identity from the rest of the nation left the nation in disarray. Writing on the situation at the time Baynham (9) says: "the rhetoric of altruism and patriotism is a screen to hide the soldiers' sectional interests, and the maintenance of public order carries with it the maintenance of the domination of those who control that order".

In assessing the performance of the soldiers in the countries, together or differently, what comes up ultimately is an antinomy of expectation on the part of the citizenry, and non-performance on the part of the military. It has to be said further that the military were no less vulnerable to the tactics of neo-colonialism which especially in the 1980s saw most of the Third World nations into deep debt traps. These were ideas sold by the capitalist West ostensibly to free the mostly developing countries from the shackles of poverty (Peter Abrahams 2000:229). The irony however was that both countries, like others, became overwhelmed by indebtedness through institutions like IMF, the World Bank and the Structural Adjustment Programmes. The economic crunch in which the nations were caught therefore was a result of the collaboration of the military rulers with the West. To worsen issues, there was also a disturbingly pervading aura of suppression and peremptory commands which left the citizenry helpless. Opposition became risky on the part of dissidents of all categories. For a long time, standing up to change the military status quo was hardly effective, because of the relic of colonial memory which produced a myth sponsored by the West to endorse military dictatorship. This was the case, so long as the various strategies redounded to the wealth of the West. That is, just as anthropology created the myth of the wild negro with all negatives (St Clair Drake 1990: 270), and would therefore need to be tamed from outside through colonial violence, the military also saw itself as distinct from the people and qualified, for that reason, to handle the situation and crisis in the countries. On this Arnold again says: "It was a Western

myth, largely fostered by the departing colonial powers, that Africans preferred strong authoritarian rule to democracy. This was never the case but the myth suited the interests of Europeans, who needed to justify providing support for autocratic regimes that would safeguard their strategic and financial investments on the continent” (665). So was the experience of “arrested decolonization” (Biodun Jeyifo 2006: 3).

Yet by the time one regime is overthrown by another, people, to their disappointment, discover how little things have changed and how worse situations have become. This has been the case from Greece to Chile. The falsity of the patriotism mantra is perhaps best illustrated with the Spanish experience between 1814 and 1881 when more than fifty *pronunciamentos* occurred. The recurrence of military intervention would eventually consolidate the audacity of the class when it did not only enforce mistrust between it and the civilian population, but also popularized the idea that it was far more patriotic and owed the nation a duty to intervene in the politics. But it was no doubt an attempt to defend the interest of the military class only in the society (Paul Preston 1990: 131). All the same, it is instructive to note that the exclusive claim to the love for the nation is reminiscent of the various colonial strategies through which the system perpetuated itself in control for scores of years. Or to go farther than that, knowing that compartmentalization of African history is an intentional imperialist strategy to play down the enormity of the deficits resulting from African relation with the West (Jacques Depelchin 2005: 15), the military strategy by which Nigeria and Ghana were held in thrall for decades owed so much to the alibi of the civilization of the coercive movement of Africans across the Atlantic.

No matter the paradigm of performance used, the military interventions in these countries and the revolutions they purported failed to deliver. Thus if it was their argument that the politicians were leading the nations on the path of indignity, there was actually a sense in which their intervention expedited the arrival of both nations at the portal of such indignity. The various regimes perpetrated all manner of atrocities against the nations so much so that the myth of the nation as a collective entity was quaked. It offered, instead, for the people other drifts of the semantics as they began to consider possibilities of

uprooting and rerooting in other lands, especially in the West. This is what Christine Brooke-Rose (1989:9) refers to as the possibility of “springing forth into a new life, beyond the boundaries of the familiar”. Put another way, the tribulations of home which attended the various military regimes in both countries created a thoroughly vertiginous and treacherous social imaginary and forced many— some of the most patriotic— to seek home elsewhere far beyond the boundaries of their lands.

In essence, if as pointed out earlier, an “invention” breeds reaction, then the military dictatorship that was invented produced reactions of various kinds from the people. For those that contemplated the option of exile and yielded subsequently, either because of their anti-establishment stance as activists or dissidents, or as seekers of socio-economic fulfillment in other lands, it was a confirmation of the veracity of the Foucauldian postulation of the “winning strategy” of the state. Such monopoly resulted in the squandering of a lot of resources and opportunities which left the people in poverty and despair that nudged and encouraged an exit out of the failed space of the state. Ben Okri, reflecting on the corruption and abuse of power by the military in a spiral of coups and counter-coups, describes the condition that results as that of an “abiku” child.¹⁷ The effect of the despair created is further described thus: “Dad was redreaming the world as he slept...He saw the economic boom in advance, saw its orgiastic squander, the suffering to follow, the exile to strange land, the depleting of the people’s will for transformation.” (492)

Measured against Huntington’s paradigm of a revolution, on the one hand, and on the other, Tullock’s theory of coups, the soldiers failed to meet with the expectations of the people. The 1980s were particularly significant with respect to this failure. The decade bore the cumulative failures of the decades preceding it; it was at the same time an adumbration of the subsequent decade of struggle. This fact makes the study all the more interesting as both collections are set against the backdrop of the 80s. The effect of exile it created on the people’s psyche and corporeality will therefore be worth considering.

¹⁷ “Abiku”, a mischievous spirit-child who traverses both the land of the living and the spirits through the transitory agency of death, is a metaphor for political instability in some African writings. The most celebrated of these works is Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road*.

It is against this backdrop of the overwhelming socio-political situation of military repression that Olu Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear* and Kofi Anyidoho's *Earthchild* will be considered. The choice of poetry in this analysis is especially appropriate if one takes as instructive the view that even up to this moment the holdovers of colonialism as the genealogy of postcolonial disarray and trauma could find peculiar expression in poetry. The works will therefore serve well to undertake a "worlding" of an "earthed" or repressed postcolonial condition which attests to the effects of a collective unconscious acquired in the process of the making of their repressed past. But more importantly, the reputation of literature in giving "us insight into physical affect" (Khanna 158) remains valid as these texts constitute a reinvention of postcolonial world whose vulnerability to dislocation is best understood in terms of such "physical affect".

Uneasy Double Attachment: The Agony of Home and Exile in Olu Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear*

Olu Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear* is set against the backdrop of General Ibrahim Babangida's dictatorship. He had taken over power in August 1985 after staging a palace coup against the regime of Major Generals Mohammed Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon, of which he was Chief of Army Staff. The duo had dominated the nation's political scene after their overthrow of the democratic government headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari in 1983. They did so, on the pretext that the corruption level of the politicians and their dereliction of duties to the people had become unbearable. The achievement of what was later to be labelled a two-man regime— Buhari and Idiagbon— was the level of discipline and environmental sanitation the country witnessed. This was especially so in the then capital Lagos and other cities. Theirs was an uncompromising stance on discipline. But then whatever they achieved within the space of less than two years in terms of discipline and sanitation was eclipsed by the level of their extremism and harshness in the execution

and handling of certain sensitive issues. To put it straight, the regime's human rights records was alarmingly poor. What is more, the economic recovery plan, which apparently meant well for the nation, was being pursued with an alacrity that discountenanced the bourgeoisie; this included those in the military. Knowing how well this class had been empowered in the past by the status quo, it was not difficult for it to bring down the regime. So by capitalizing upon the duo's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1985, a bloodless palace coup took place and produced a thoroughly bourgeois and dictatorial military head of government in the person of Babangida.¹⁸

His regime would also be remembered as the one during which there was so much windfall from the sale of crude oil. But the said windfall was not to benefit the nation as this would not be accounted for. Babangida's reign was also reputed to have witnessed perhaps the greatest level of bloodshed both within the military ranks and the civilian population. The siege mentality created by his regime and the level of corruption it indulged in led to a series of coup attempts in the military. The most controversial of this however was the Mamman Vatsa's alleged coup plan. The controversy which trailed the execution of this poet-General as well as others alleged to have plotted the coup is still very much a matter of national opinion to date. It was therefore not possible for literary creativity, especially poetry at that time to ignore the despicable phenomenon into which military dictatorship, personified by Babangida, had constituted itself. Poetry at this point became a potent counter-weapon with which Nigerian writers engaged the regime. For all other forms of resistance appeared to have come under arrest by the dictatorship. It was because of this intractable success of literature in "speaking truth to power" that Ojaide, in *The Blood of Peace*, for instance, says:

Neither bullets nor other savages can arrest words
that have already been aired—

¹⁸ Even at that, Wole Soyinka, reputable for always providing alternative critical history of Nigeria in his own rights, argues against the corrupt-free credentials of General Buhari. The reason for such stance had to do with his previous office in the 70s as minister of Petroleum Resources. In fact, he contends that the corruption scam which the then UPN-led opposition inaugurated had all the potentials of catching up with Buhari: this was why he staged a coup in the first place to squash not so much the obviously corrupt NPN-led government, as the Awolowo-led opposition which had demanded a comprehensive probe of the scam. See, *The Open Sore of a Continent* (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996: 91-92).

paper is witness to the lone-mind

These words file out on the dirt of road
to stop nerve-wreaking waves of despots;
they are the charms worn before battle. ("Before our God", 28)

A Gathering Fear specifically gets across as a work whose emergence is in the spirit of "daring the beast" (Stewart Brown 1995: 58). It was indeed a moment of the articulation of a desire to thrive against the military dictatorship of Babangida whose pattern of rule, going by the typology of Laura Chrisman (2004: 188), falls into the category of "dominatory formation". That is, the regime threatened the sense of belonging of the people, as the professed spirit of nationalism and patriotism which the military claimed informed its intervention in power was only to the extent of protecting the "interests of the bourgeoisie", [and] necessarily sacrificing or 'ignoring' the interests of the 'subaltern' groups" (188). Naturally this situation does one thing to the nation: it threatens its collectivism and the myth that sustains such collectivism. Nonetheless, the poet begins with an affirmation of confidence in the idea of the nation despite all odds. Therefore, the poet declaims:

I am bound to this land by blood
That's why my vision is blurred
I am rooted in its soil
And its streams flood my veins ("I am Bound to this Land by Blood", 11)

Here is an unequivocal declaration of a commitment to the space of the Nigerian nation, not least because in this collection both land and nation are used interchangeably. It is an expression of a strong belief in its existence despite the ugly experience of its recent history; an experience which then had threatened the nation with total disintegration. The Nigerian Civil War was the said experience. Although his ethnic group Igbo suffered most during this war as it was branded the secessionist group, the trauma and the humiliation of defeat did not preclude identification with the subsequent integration process and aspiration of a united nation. Besides, his poetry resonates within the context of that generation of Nigerian writers whose milieu of birth and growth witnessed, one way or another, the devastation of the war and the subsequent determination to prevent a repetition of such apocalypse, having witnessed both "the horror and the passion" of it.

(Brown: 2003: 101). The fervour of expressing confidence in the idea of the nation thus became for the poets an attempt to denounce the brinkmanship and suspect patriotism of the political elite, as well as nationalism of the past which resulted in the war. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the expression of faith in the idea of the nation attests to the reflection on the understanding of the nation as an entity that informs the collectivism of a people. For this reason, there is usually an articulation of a resolve at the collective level to endure difficulties and challenges, no matter how grievous the trauma of history, in order for a nation to survive, although it must added that this is for as long as each nation lasts. Regarding this Ernest Renan (1991: 19) says:

A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past. It is summarized however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life.

Beyond the above, the opening lines of the poem bring up the metaphor of the nation as a land, a territorialized entity, and one that presupposes a rootedness. In other words, although the mapping that resulted in nations were informed by capitalist tendencies and especially in Africa where they were done without the consent of the people themselves for whom indigenous collectivism would become history,¹⁹ people who find themselves in this whimsical situation have often taken it upon themselves to respect and recognize “the spatial partitioning of territory” that follows (Malkki 55). They do this in a bid to adjust to the challenges that the formation of a new sense of identity demands of them, just as it requires the reinvention of a new sense of memory as memory itself is known to be amenable to constant revision (Pierre Nora 1998: 635). Yet it is necessary to note that this knowledge of the conception of the nation can only be understood and regarded in a qualified, rather than absolute sense. The need for this clarification stems from the understanding that the collective invention and reinvention of myths of nationalism and

¹⁹ Liisa Malkki attempts to explain away this condescending act of mapping on the part of the imperial powers when he says: “That the world should be composed of sovereign, spatial discontinuous units is a sometimes implicit, sometimes stated premise in much of the literature of nations and nationalism” — “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees” in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Eds) Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson. USA: Duke Univeristy Press, 1999, p. 54.

collectivism with respect to the nation holds water only as long as there is a consensus—no matter how uneasy that may be — despite the people’s disparate cultures and histories. Such consensus is to respect the spatiality forced upon them by the designs of capitalist modernity.

Therefore, Oguibe affirms the link that he has with the nation by virtue of his birth in the land whose main insignia, “blood”, strengthens his sense of nationalism and the awareness of his rootedness in the soil. This also strengthens the metaphor of the nation as an arborescent essence. Because of the rootedness precipitated on birth “blood” or the blood shed in the Civil War for the nation to remain one—for “blood” in this context assumes an indissoluble ambiguity—a vision is reaffirmed which is essentially territorial. It explains why “my vision is blurred”. Put another way, the sense of belonging rules out the suggestion of transcending its frontiers for the purpose of coping with the pressing existential problems with which he is faced. Such avowal calls to mind the epic illustration of the attachment to the land even in the face of state adversity in Osundare’s *Waiting Laughters* where what is demanded is the uncommon strategy of patience: “oh teach us the patience of the Rain/ which eats the rock in toothless silence...” (25) For as long as the knowledge of patience remains, the suggestion of deterritorialization or uprooting is disingenuous.

Yet as a poet, a sense of alienation pervades Oguibe’s consciousness in the metaphoric sense. But his sense of alienation is set off by the passion to simultaneously identify with the “sweat ...of the men”, fellow men whose “million feet...plod/ The dust of streets” that make up this land with which he identifies (16). The manner of identification with the rest of the people is reminiscent of what Walter Benjamin (2004: 22) regards as the metaphor of the lone rag picker on the street and whose vocation and condition find comparison in the solitude of the vocation of a poet. Although Benjamin’s analysis is immediately in reference to the peculiar art of Baudelaire, there is a sense in which this finds semblance in Oguibe’s poetry. The difference however is that his identification is not with only one rag picker, but with the “million feet”, the state under the headship of a military tyranny has trampled upon so much so that they form part of the “refuse” on the

streets. The people have all been subjected to the same kind of dehumanization; their sorrow therefore becomes the poet's. It is a society in which the majority is deprived of mirthful smiles as the "toil" in which they engage fetches them little or nothing. One can guess, and rightly too at this point, that the same sense of nationalism which defines the vision of the poet, is very much in force in the attitude of these million faces for whom living is nothing but existence in "pain" and "agony". The poet's expression of solidarity with the multitude is in such a manner that makes him "bear the mark of the masses on my brow" (11). This is a depiction of the consolidation of the capitalist legacy of the colonial days and on which the political nationalists had built earlier. For here is a situation whereby the personalities engaged in labour have no cause for joy or excitement because the proceeds of what they do, do not accrue to them. They have become "owners who are owned" by the state. What follows is an outburst of hysteria that testifies to the desperate condition of the land and the prospect of bloodshed: "I see rivers of blood... And I see nothing but blood", I see blood on the statue/ Of the Immaculate Mother... I see puddles of blood... the grasses wither in this deluge of blood" (12). The pervasiveness of this macabre scenario is justified by the fact that not even the statue "of the Immaculate Mother" is spared: it is as blood-stained as any other thing mentioned. This is nothing but an indication of the overwhelming injustice in which everyone is implicated. It is a system that upholds the oppression of the powerless of all categories. Nonetheless, the poet expresses at the end of it all his unwavering resolve to sing about everything there is to the land and remains bound to it:

My pictures are the colour of dust
And I sing only of rust
I have swum in the flood
And I know better
For I am bound to this land
By blood. (13)

In spite of the articulation of patriotism, his attachment to the land remains at best pitiable. The above remark is on account of the imagery of decay which defines the aura of the land, that is, the imagery of 'dust' and 'rust'. But the imagery also helps to achieve a unique rhyme pattern which makes for the feeling of pity as one goes over this part of the poem again for the fact of its beauty.

Having succeeded in painting the general picture of a land in turmoil, Oguike goes ahead

in the subsequent poem “The Triumphal Entry” to locate and identify the author of the sordid theatre created in the land. It is, however, important to comment on the significance of the title both in terms of the corresponding and contradictory congeries of images that follow. It is indeed an effort in tracing the genealogy of “postcolonial melancholia” (Paul Gilroy 2004). Colonialism was to be surely and effectively prosecuted through the cultural animation of Christianity. In its wake was the sidelining of indigenous collectivism and spirituality, and a magnification of an exotic religion whose triumphs through its many myths attest to the triumph of colonialism itself.²⁰ It would be recalled that the curious logic of colonialism was explained away then in terms of the benefits of the civilization that it was ready to offer the colonized. The civilization was, to be sure, consummated with sentiments of the light and salvation inherent in the altruistic and vicarious life that Jesus led. It was this that informed his acceptance to die for the whole world. One quality which Jesus as king possessed was a form of humility that enabled him to bear the sin of the whole world on the cross. It was a burden of morality and obligation to which he was committed so much so that even when he made the “triumphal entry” to Jerusalem on donkey back— as scholars and Bible believers put it— he remained no less humble. “The Triumphal Entry” therefore reminds one of the avowed sense of humility and responsibility evident in the sentiment of “the white man’s burden” for which Europe claimed to have sent the best of her own to enlighten and civilize the dark continents of the non-white humanity in the name of colonialism. It was through this avowed but discredited means that the West made a “triumphal entry” into Africa shielding away in its narratives the haughty and predatory angle to the mission. At this juncture it is necessary to subscribe to Okpewho’s (1988: 203) bill of revisionism to which mythology is amenable. So if as Bronislaw Malinowski explains, “myth acts as a character for the present-day social order... and supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values” (cited in Timothy Brennan 1990: 45), it is also for this same reason that one must take a critically ‘retrospective’ look at the myth of the “triumphal entry”.

First, the myth acknowledges that there is an aura of humility which pervades the

²⁰ Nonetheless, African cultural practices have survived in many forms, not least because of the adoption of what Bruce Berman calls “conservative modernization”, a concept this study pursues further in the next chapter.

narrative of the birth and life of Jesus. T.S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" attests to the situation of his birth as being that of "a temperate valley/ wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation" (1983:109). But this same incarnation of the king through his birth would adumbrate a feeling of apocalypse where "these kingdoms/ [are] no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation" (110). The destruction that accompanies this birth and adumbrates the subsequent consequences are found in W.B. Yeats' "The Second Coming" in which the understanding of the coming attempts to place the world within a planetary frame, subjecting it, as it were, to the forecast of a macabre dance by which "Things fall apart" as "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (cited in Daniel Albright 1990: 235). The particular extent of the impact of this "anarchy" is what Achebe captures so inimitably in *Things Fall Apart*. But of all, William Blake, though once designated by Eliot as "mad" (T.R. Barnes 1967:165) for his critical and unpopular comments on the shielded side that completes the duality of Jesus' identity, was the most explicit in achieving the needed balance in the depiction of the Christ figure. In his uncompleted poem titled "The Everlasting Gospel", Blake interrogates popular assumptions about Christ's humility, pointing in the end to certain traits in the attitude of Christ that could also make him pass for the opposite of the lamb or a combination of both humility and pride.²¹ This in a sense interrogates the missionary humility narrative that may have attended the prosecution of colonialism.

Invariably, there is anxiety over what emerges where there is a focalization of the multiplier effects of the review of the interaction between two different worlds, or when such worlds are in confrontation, "or when boundaries between worlds are violated" (McHale in Ato Quayson 2004: 830). These are part of the questions central to the concept of postmodernism. It is these questions that serve to identify the various instances of change that are precipitated on the intrigues which characterize such contact and conflicts of different worlds. Related to this is the attempt by one world to impose on others a purportedly superior ontological perspective intended to serve its own purpose. Such was colonialism's sentiment of the Enlightenment as mediated through modernization; however, as Quayson (ibid.: 828) reveals, the value of postmodernism lies

²¹ See T.R. Barnes, 1967:163-5.

in its devotion to the “exposing of modernism’s constructedness of knowledge as given”. Also because what is central to this argument is the dynamics of power relations, the recognition of Christ as the humble king, especially as found in his own personal expression, requires validation from the perception the subjects have of him and the interpretation of his exercise of power. As has been seen in Eliot’s “Journey...” and Blake’s *The Everlasting Gospel*”, the perception of his essence as re-enacted in these poems may have presented after all a dimension which is in sync with Foucault’s (1994: 341) reflection on power relation as something requiring and capable of having effects on others and thereby eliciting their reaction. In the end, their view (the subjects’) may be just the opposite of the view of the figure of power.

Taking one back to colonialism, the true assessment of the effects of this project on the colonies was the main reason for the eruption, almost cataclysmically, of anti-colonial nationalism immediately after the Second World War. The “humility and civility” of “the white man’s burden” came under serious scrutiny and criticism because while it might have been perceived in the western home countries as the actualization of an altruistic impulse of civilizing the primitive colonies, the assessment of the colonies that actually bore the brunt of the action was radically contrary. The memory of the violence and the depredation of colonialism remain an abiding element in the psyche of the colonies. The haughty exercise of power which underwrote the dehumanization of the colonies became inherited by the bourgeois class to which power was relinquished. Since the military elite also formed part of this elite, it should be understandable why Oguibe’s reflections are such that they navigate the power relations of the colonial past to show how it informs the pattern of power relations in the postcolonial context. This is why the present texture of power relations in the postcolonial encounter can be said, for that matter, to be coextensive with the traumatic days of colonialism. This also explains why the picture of the king painted in “The Triumphal Entry” is wide apart from what one finds in the Synoptic Gospels. But rather, it is more attuned to what one finds in “The Everlasting Gospel” and in the Millennial Reign as evinced in the Book of Revelations. For this was what colonialism made of Africa and what it made of the postcolonial leadership, especially the military:

I see your majesty resplendent
Upon the throne of God
The beast at your feet

I see your gold-sandalled feet
On the spines of men
I hear the creak of ribs

And the radiance of your laughter
Lights the recesses of heaven
With the blaze of ten suns

I see the hands of men
Whose sweat has robed your feet
In garments of gold

And in the shrivelled distance
I hear the howls of dogs
The bay of a mule driven to heat

I hear the sound of the bayonet
Through the marrow of the womb

*The king has not come on the back of a mule
His path paved with branches and leaves
The king has come in the dazzle of butts
Garlands of toilet paper bedeck his neck
The King has come with a split-toothgrin
The King comes riding on the bones of men (14)*

With the metaphor of the king “with a split-toothgrin”, there is no doubt that here is a direct and undisguised accusation of the many atrocities wrought by Babangida’ high-handedness and autocracy. During the reign of Babangida, the gap-toothed General’s image was common in poetic and literary composition, as a way of linking his image to the despotism of his regime.²² On account of this it also becomes clear that the collective sorrow and passion of the people which the poet-persona shares in “I am Bound...” is a handiwork of military dictatorship personified by the General. This explains why we may refer to the repetition of ‘I see...’ at the beginning of almost every stanza as emphasizing the lucidness of the poet about his remarks on the (tyrannical) king because of whom the

²² Many Nigerian poets were inspired by the many grins of Babangida, a gap-toothed General, particularly because underneath those grins was a merciless and ruthless character, which ironically did more to intimidate and frighten the people than assure them.

land reeks of despair.

From this stage on, the remaining parts of the poem lay out as product of a traditional African poet whose verbal weapon of sarcasm and ridicule is intent on exposing the folly and betrayal of a collective trust on the part of the autocracy. “Triumphal Entry II”, for instance, is an eloquent interrogation of both the present and the past with respect to the questions of history. Again, the memory of the Civil War comes to mind in the list of random mention of burning issues affecting the country. So: “Blessed is the mortal/ And the councils of war”. Not only does this call to mind Okigbo’s prophecy about the war in “Path of Thunder”, it also affirms the notion that such harrowing memory hardly goes into oblivion. But beyond memory, Oguibe’s criticism of state visits and the vanities of such a culture also indicts the complicity of the West especially Britain as a colonial power. The fact that the series of “blessings” also extend to the “Queen of England” goes to justify this assertion. Ordinarily for a “majesty resplendent/ upon/ the throne of God”, one would expect that a similar, if not the same radiance would be ascribed to his subjects; but here they are: “The poor, the hungry”. Yet “Blessed are the travellers/ Without travelling shoes” (15). The same imagery of paradox runs through the parody of Christian mass in the last two segments of the poem. The evidence of this paradox resides in the understanding that the same king who “comes riding on the bones of men” is the same that is being implored to bless all, including “the poet and his gun” (16). But at the end of the poem nobody is at a loss concerning the non-performance of the regime. The ultimate revelation is nothing but promises that are never fulfilled:

And blessed are we that prostrate at his feet
Blessed are we who are blessed to see
The stream of sirens and the gleam of his grin
Blessed is the cloud of dust he leaves in his wake
Blessed are the shards of his million promises

Blessed is he that cometh in green

Blessed
Is his name (17)

Nonetheless, the above only plays a prefatory role as seen in “Who would Listen to the Poet?” another piece in five segments. The poet in the first part takes a bow before older

poets and declares his desire: “I want to speak to the leaden crown” (20). With the licence obtained, the second part of this poem becomes the exposition of the cesspit of a military regime and the overwhelming purchase it has on the citizenry. Appropriating the rhetorical formula of an oral poetic chant, the piece in the continued tempo of sarcasm reels off the praise names of the military leader and succeeds in demonstrating the terror his image conjures up in the mind of the citizens. The only explanation for leading the life of “The jackal that laughed his way into flock” (21) is that: “A people’s leader must be tough as a cord/ His heart must be hard as a block of iron” (21). Also he is expected to be the “Stout one who rocks the foundation of the earth/ Stocky one who defies the cry of all [and] Warlord in the time of peace” (21). The foregoing no doubt confirms Oguibe’s grasp of the values of African praise poem traditions. Especially associated with institutions of monarchy and other forms of power-related institutions, the praise poem tradition is nevertheless an artistic medium for articulating the grey areas of an institution of power as well. To be more explicit, even when a court poet is essentially taken in to sing the praises of the king, the room his vocation allows for ambiguities, ensures that he can also project simultaneously the resistant voices of the defeated and the naked flagellation of critics (Duncan Brown 1998: 94-96). But Oguibe is better situated in this collection as belonging to the categorization of “those well outside the domains of public power” but who, nonetheless, exploit the artistic riches of African expressive forms for the exertion of possible transformation on “social conditions and power relations” (Liz Gunner 2004: 6).

The General’s activities call for further exploration in this sequence. The praise singer describes him as the General about whom “We hear word of quick sentence/ And swift executions/ In moments of idleness” (22).²³ The stanza ends with “Even Ogun slaughter his own”. Certainly there is a sense in which the stanza is indebted to Soyinka’s “Idanre”.

²³ The most shocking of the myriad executions during the regime of Babangida was that of Major General Mamman Vatsa, who was also a poet of note in the second generation. To date, the execution remains the most controversial for lack of evidence to justify such killing. The peak of the efforts to prevent his execution as well as that of other alleged plotters was evinced by the intervention of three of Nigeria’s foremost writers, Chinua Achebe, JP Clark-Bekederemo and Wole Soyinka. Although they got an assurance from Babangida that the plotters would be spared, they were eventually executed. (See Wole Soyinka’s *You must Set Forth at Dawn*).

As an epic poem that celebrates the Yoruba god of iron with respect to the duality of his personality as an incarnation of both creativity and destruction, the sarcasm in Oguibe's verse becomes more incontrovertible. Truly, "Ogun slaughters his own" in "Idanre", but the destruction transcends the mean banality of state terrorism as in the case of the General's command. This is because Ogun's excited destruction of his own subjects eventually results in a creativity which ensures continuity. It is indeed an instance in the bounteous regeneration of a land cleansed from the desecration of previous seasons. Therefore, "Containment and communion, seed-time and harvest, palm/ and pylon, Ogun's road a 'Mobius' orbit, kernel/ And electrons, wine to alchemy (Soyinka 1981: 85). There is however an absence of this delicate balance between necessary destruction and creativity in the personality of the General. Put another way, the one-sided demonstration of destructive qualities of Ogun on the part of the General cannot lead to any social progress. It will only encourage him to engage in greater acts of oppression. Any wonder then that his thirst is quenched by "tears of broken men" and his pride fed with the "sight of famished children". His autocracy is defined by how "He sets up councils and muffles them". What is worse, he has also appropriated those sly qualities of the chameleon who in the mythical age lost his credibility with humanity.²⁴ Consequent upon this fact, the poet's engagement of the General in praise performance is one that can best be described as intent on speaking sense to power and removing whatever masks of charisma with which he holds the nation in thrall. The picture painted so far of power and its exercise through an autocratic headship can be said to conform to what Zaltzman regards as the crippling of the psyche and the enforcement of a collectively submissive psychology of a people held spell-bound to the erotic allure of a charismatic power (cited in Dominique Scarfone 2006: 815). But where such "binding" exists, Scarfone explains, "unbinding" becomes the "real winner", and if so, this is what Oguibe has set to achieve concerning the reality of a power relation in which the "grins" of a "gap-toothed" General tend to blind the people.

The insanity and the vapid atmosphere already created and which maintains an alterity between the General and the masses is further consolidated and defined by a delegation

²⁴ See Stephen Belcher, *African Myths of Origin* (London, Penguin, 2005), p.245.

of part of his oppressive essence to his wife called “First Lady”. This is the preoccupation of the third segment of the poem.²⁵ Still adopting the structural formula of Yoruba praise poetry, the poem opens with an insight into the psychology of the First Lady which is comparable to the powers of *Iyalode* in traditional society:²⁶

We hail you, Iyalode
Aya roro joko lo [the fierce lady of the home]
 Mound of earth that props the house
 Yet speaks louder than the owner of the house... (23).

Again, the allusion to the powers and values of the *Iyalode* within the Yoruba power structure cannot be said to conform to the original essence. For the *Iyalode* is expected as the first of women’s leaders to liaise with the monarchy to ensure that power and authority is dispatched and tempered with some measure of tenderness in order that a balance— which would ensure sustainability and credibility of the state— is achieved. The contrary is the case in the instance of the General’s self-appointed *Iyalode* whose presence on the power pitch only goes to swell the ranks of oppression already made formidable by the General. Measured on the template of common good, the General’s *Iyalode* is obviously deficient. It therefore explains why the injustice which defines her personality cannot help but bring back memories of the Civil War in which the evils perpetrated against one region by the rest can hardly be forgotten in a hurry. One of such was the Asaba Massacre which the poet remembers thus:

I remember that day how
 In a village by the River
 Men were rounded up and like roosters
 And slaughtered in the square

 Her own father was among them (23)

²⁵ Such was the power of Mariam Babangida as First Lady, and she did not pretend to be circumspect with drawing attention to herself.

²⁶ The “*Iyalode*” in Yoruba monarchy is the most powerful of female leaders. Her presence is for the purpose of checks and balances along gender lines. This way, she protects the interest of women and the oppressed generally by the infusion of feminine tenderness to the dispensation of power and authority of the monarchy. However, Mariam Babangida’s mien contrasts with this office of the *Iyalode* as her office only does more to swell the ranks of oppression already made formidable by her husband. For further exposition on the role of the *Iyalode* among the Yoruba, see Bolanle Awe, “The *Iyalode* in the Traditional Yoruba Political System,” ed. Andrea Cornwall, *Readings in Gender in Africa*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press; Oxford: James Currey, 2005.

The horror, injustice and extremism of a war crime of this nature perpetrated against a civilian folk remain condemnable. The values of such repressed memory for artistic invention and preoccupation with the present cannot be disputed. This is why concerning the repressed, Dominique Scarfone (2006) says:

The repressed *does* carry a form of temporality, but that it evades *chronological* time. In other words, the repressed is what lies outside the past-present-future-categories in which thoughts and feelings wear away by combining with others of their kind and being worked through into newer thinking and affect. (832)

It is interesting how the “thoughts” of the injustice of the Civil War of which the *Iyalode*’s father was a fatal victim have worked “through into newer thinking and affect” of the oppression and injustice of the *Iyalode*. The extremism of her flamboyance which is an extension of military praetorian living is evident in her sense of dress. She does not only adorn herself with the most expensive attires of various kinds— from “smooth silk” to “adire”, “sanyan”— but also steps out in “Fifty lengths of akwete/ [which] sweep the path behind ...” Beholding her therefore is beholding the “The true wealth of our land” (24). The evidence of injustice subsequently lies in depriving others of good living. The bourgeois proclivity of *Iyalode* saps the land entirely dry and forbids even the labourer to enjoy the wealth of his sweat. The poet’s sympathy therefore lies with the masses. His intervention is evident in his demands on behalf of the oppressed millions; that is, the agitation for the people’s right to some measure of dignity which would not in any way counteract the First Lady’s pleasures:

We do not need your charity
Benevolent one
We only ask that who works harder
She also eats better
We say that the boat that took your children away
Should also have a place for our own
That the eagle may perch
That the kite may also perch (25)

This kind of vicarious supplication, rich in proverbial innuendoes and bardic wisdom of the oral poet, is an attempt to engage with power and redress an autocratic injustice made worse by the complicity of the General’s wife’s insensitivity to the pains of an entire

land. But how can all this be addressed when both are intoxicated with power? Unlike in the mythical moment of Ogun's folly during which the goddess Oya warned of the danger inherent in such folly (26), the General's wife has refused to warn her husband on his insensitivity to the travails of the nation. Or how can the hunger in the land be alleviated when the intoxication of the General is also comparable to the Igbo deity Anukili who once upon a time became notorious for depredation? "Anukili harvested where / He had not sowed / He ravished farmlands / And stripped yam barns". From this point on, in the fourth sequence of the poem, hope for the land has already begun to dim. In the fifth and last movement of the poem, the autocratic essence has assumed an overwhelming proportion, for Anukili has transformed into "Kabiyesi". Within this context, the import of the word "kabiyesi", a Yoruba honorific for addressing the Excellency of a king, becomes that of "the king or queen whose action nobody can question". It is significant to note that by alluding to various mythical figures of power in describing the actions of the General and the First Lady, Oguike shows how power corrupts and extends the frontiers of such corruption. It is against this increasing gale of oppressive "binding" of the land in despair and hopelessness that the title poem, "A Gathering Fear" opens. What follows is an adumbration of exile.

What is encountered in the title poem can rightly be described as the climax of state activities and exercises that run counter to the sustenance of the nation. So when the eight-part poem opens, it is clear that the nation has begun to tilt towards the precipice. If at inception, Babangida's coup back in 1985 had any rays of hope in the minds of the people, such had been totally obliterated few years into his rulership. The fear of disintegration and the crisis that would precede such preoccupy this poem. Taking cognizance of history, exile well becomes one of the fall-outs of the crisis. The fervour with which the poet declaims his attachment to the land has decreased because those telling tropes of what makes a nation are disappearing fast. What is written across the land is the exaltation of a ruler's personal ambition over the will of the rest of the people. In such a situation it is doubtful whether the idea of a nation as a collectively recognized cartographic space can still hold much water. Indeed, the people are known, like Rena would put it "to have done great things together" (Nora 634), but as things stand

currently, it is not certain whether they are prepared “to want to do more”.

The worrisome signals are evident in the first part of the poem, showing what happens when leadership is driven less by the ethos of responsibility than by personal ambition:

The demented set his hut on fire
And stood aside to watch the ashes of his life
The child is set again on a path of death
And my fear returns to me (31)

The reign has become that of an apocalypse, the annihilation it is likely to breed is enormous in the estimation of the people. This is why it is comparable to the memory of the Civil War. The implication of this is that the same brinkmanship of the civilian and military class that devolved into the war is at play again under the despotism of Babangida. The long standing battle that has always existed between the artist and the state here appears to be awarding victory to the state because the wish of the state appears to be on the ascendance. When this happens especially in the form it takes in the socio-political background to this work, Oguike himself says: “we (artists) have even greater reason to be doubtful... we are simply saying what we see, for it is seeing and not saying, our people say, that kills the elder. It is hearing and not heeding that will kill the child” (Stewart Brown 1995: 59-60). Saying therefore becomes a burden of responsibility in “A Gathering Fear”. It is an attempt to expose all there is to the machination of the state against the people on the one hand, and on the other, an attempt to interpret the implications. So by proverbially telling on “the child [that] is set again on the path of death”, the generally pervasive metaphor of the “abiku” child— which many Nigerian writers, the most famous among whom is Ben Okri have explored — comes into the picture again. For the mischievous spirit-child who is destined to be born as severally as it is prepared to die before attaining consciousness, the trauma and instability it brings on its parents can be rightly linked to a dangerously treacherous and vertiginous point to which Nigeria is pushed in the march once again towards the carnage of the Civil War. This is what the poet means when he says “These clouds now hurrying back/ Heralding the clap of thunder / We’ve walked this path before / Memory lies ahead wriggling in her pain” (31). The “path of thunder” has also come to appropriate every other form of crisis

in the nation's history. Unfortunately, when memory "wiggles" in pain, this is of no concern to the autocratic regime. But the sanity of the poet while the nation is under the headship of "the demented" is not in doubt. This is because he is able to live up to Nietzsche's model by which he is able to "burn" the past into himself and make it available to all as a warning (Nikolas Rose 1998: 179). In this case, the conscious embeddedness/internalization of the past becomes one way by which one is able to take on the challenges of the future, knowing that it is natural for the past to repeat itself, even if not in absolute variables of sameness. For thoughts of exile, bloodshed and destruction that the memory of the war provokes, the poet warns the autocratic figure in power and all others that might want to be involved in prosecuting another macabre dance akin to the Civil War:

Whoever recalls the rampaging bull
Rumbling talks crunching bone in dust...

Let him watch these seasons
Let him tread softly
Into this dance
Of masquerades (31-3)

At another level, it is important to remark that Oguibe's poetry is significant in the way it resolves the question of the possible exile that may result from an African writer's use of English. The observation stems from the poet's conscious attempt to reconcile the apparent linguistic drift through the privileging of African mythological resources as well as other African verbal art forms which all come together to give his poetry a unique flavour and texture. Thus, while he may have alluded to the Christian mythology of the Triumphal Entry, he has however domesticated it in a way that speaks to the immediate reality on the ground. Moreover, by invoking African myths like those of Anukili, Iyalode, among others, Oguibe demonstrates how a metaphoric liberation and return from cultural exile can be garnered, even where the medium of expression is patently foreign.

In the third part of the title poem hope dims more and more as "In a land of mad men / There's only anguish and pain/ While silence paves the road/ To the commoner's grave" (35). The subsequent segment sings of nothing but the broadcasting of "seeds of terror";

nevertheless, “the Horsemen gallop at breakneck”. The fifth part indicates the drastic decrease in the chances of redemption from the treacherous situation: “Generals/ Sergeants/ Warlords/ feed on blood”. Having held up the nation to their whims and caprices, the nation has obviously become helpless. Perhaps the only redemptive path yet to be trodden would be the way backward. This is the argument in the sixth part:

The only way forward
From here is backward...

Ah!
Death knocks at the door of this nation...
Death has seized this nation in his grip
And there is no way forward...

I see the ashes of a great city
I see the ruins of a great lie...

Ah!
There is no way forward
But through the Bloodriver. (39)

The above is a sad commentary on what relations of power can produce in the postcolony. It is no longer refutable at this juncture that the poet and the people he speaks for have become disillusioned with the governing system and concept of the nation. And with the metaphor of “horsemen” and their “glinting swords” in the last part of the poem, going by the structural arrangement of the collection, it is already clear that the way backward, which signifies loss of faith in the nation, would induce all manner of escape strategies. One of these strategies of escape is exile, which one finds in “A Song from Exile”.²⁷

Basically, “A Song from Exile” illustrates what Timothy Brennan (1990: 63) calls “the contradictory topoi of exile and nation” in the writing of the Third World. Explaining this further, he contends that the situation is pathologized as emanating from a fusion “in a lament for the necessary and regrettable insistence of nation-forming, in which the writer proclaims his identity with a country whose artificiality and exclusiveness have driven

²⁷ Although Oguibe had initially published “A Song from Exile” as a separate volume, its inclusion and arrangement in *A Gathering Fear* shows how it bolsters the argument that exile is a direct consequence of the hostility of home.

him into a kind of exile". The stark reality that results from this condition is "a simultaneous recognition of nationhood and an alienation from it". In other words, there is a necessary break, on the part of the poet, from the physical fixity of the nation's spatial order that limits him to the nation as homeland. The spatial tenacity nationalism has imposed on him all along has suddenly come under critical scrutiny. Certainly, the grounds on which he keeps faith with such fixity are no longer as profound and compelling. There is now a realization of some kind of incongruence between the avowed commitment to homeland and the benefits which such avowal offers. Therefore, extending his "vision" beyond the "blurred" horizon of homeland becomes necessary. For him, like any other modern African artist, such decision calls to mind the precedent set by African oral artists of mythical ages. To shed more light on this Andrew Smith (2004:247) illustrates the precedent with Okri's recollection in *The Famished Road* that "the old storytellers were the first real explorers and frontiers people of the abyss". However, it is needful to go further than this in order to identify the limits to which such semblance can be drawn upon. For Okri goes beyond the precedent set in antiquity to identify the "first universal golden age" to which contemporary times hark back. Nevertheless, Smith is quick to add quite perceptively that, the absolutism of such observation on the part of Okri "would not always have been plausible; the idea of migrancy as a name for human being is sustainable only because of specific historical or ideological shifts which we need to understand" (247).

Needless to say, it is already evident from the foregoing that exile is no longer a reserved privilege of the artist. Rather than this, it defines the entirety of contemporary humanity. The way each region responds to this challenge is however determined by its peculiarity, how it is objectified by those "specific historical and ideological shifts". But first the pervasive nature of the phenomenon of exile raises the question of how this has come to be a defining feature of our time. Again, Smith's response answers to why this is so: "A first key alteration is a growing uncertainty over nationalism" (24). Specifically, much as this is so on a global scale, the postcolonial world's vulnerability stems primarily from "the tenacious hold on power of parasitic local elites", and in fusing with "Euro-American hegemony", which illustrates the "link between the loss of hope in anti-

colonial nationalism and migration” (247). It is perhaps for this that Brennan sees exile as the antithesis of nationalism (Timothy Brennan 1990:60), although one must quickly add that exile can also foster a desire for restoration of a national homeland. The crisis of leadership especially which devolved into military intervention in the wake of nationalist governance at independence has particularly done much in contributing to the loss of confidence in the idea of the nation. It is truly regrettable that the confidence reposed in anti-colonial nationalism, which produced independent governance, could give way so soon. What this creates in the artist as well as the people for whom he assumes the role of a mouthpiece is nothing but a feeling of “melancholia”. In this context melancholia assumes a cumulative dimension in the sense that the postcolonial victim of exile does not only mourn over the nation fabricated for an imperialist end by the West, and which has suddenly lost its attraction and confidence, he also mourns over that preceding, old, mythical order that was decimated by colonialism. The mourning must be considered as diachronically extending this far even if it has to be conceded that the epistemological and ontological order in pre-colonial Africa was never an absolutely closed up essentialism (Dan Izevbaye 2004: 472). Therefore, in yielding to exile, there is an illustration of the pragmatism of the mourning and melancholia that follows. Conceptually Khanna (22) reveals further that “given that the concepts of mourning and melancholia concern loss and the manner in which loss manifests itself, they are also bound to the notion of temporality— the loss of something in time and how one is affected by that in the present and for the future”. As explicated in the foregoing, the specificity of temporality in the analysis of mourning and melancholia in this section of Oguibe’s collection is crucial in that it serves to highlight the hostility generated in the homeland in the era of absolute dictatorship and the implication it has for the victims of such dictatorial rule. The situation as seen in the previous sections of the collection justifies the assertion that, in contemporary times especially:

Exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produced by human beings for other human beings; and that like death but without death’s ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography. (Said 2001:174)

This tearing away from homeland and its realities constitute a preoccupation of “A Song

from Exile”. The first painful impression registered on the mind of the exile is nothing but that of an outsider:

I stand at the gates
Stranger and outsider
I have journeyed away
From the sea into the desert
The charm has crossed rivers
The tongue is blunt
The songster has journeyed
Without his voice

So, here I stand
In a strange land
Among a strange people
A lone rooster in grassland (59)

As Susan Suleiman (1998: 3) intimates, “all travellers are outsiders somewhere”, but it is possible to argue that the sense of alienation an exile from a former colony has in a destination like London is particularly traumatic. Ordinarily for exiles from former colonies of Britain, some measure of reception should be expected from the former colonial power. But the reality on the ground does not allow for this. This is because “postcolonial melancholia” is not exclusively limited to the former colonies. Put differently, the former colonial powers are also faced with their own form of this pathology. In a way, it can be termed the ironic multiplier effects which Europe’s domination of the colonies has in turn on the former colonial powers. Just as there is a dissolution and devolution of former existing ontological and social structures in the colonies, the colonial powers today are faced with the Herculean task of preserving an authentic Europe from miscegenation. The said miscegenation arises as citizens of the former colonies are currently resolved, in view of the realities of postcolonial loss of faith in the ideals of the postcolony, to migrate to the West. The “impurities” which this resolution breeds is evident in the impossibility of maintaining the old social and racial absolutism. Another effect is the erection of exclusionary and narcissistic structures for the maintenance of some purity. Talking about Britain specifically as the destination in this poem, her postcolonial travails are as enormous as they are overwhelming. But this inundation from the former colonies around the globe is only to the extent of the reach of her powers in the colonial era. According to Paul Gilroy in *Postcolonial Melancholia*,

Britain currently has to fight over the unstoppable incursion of American culture and its superimposition on the attitudes of British youths. There is also a painful agony over the rate at which British “traditional vowels are painfully Australianized” (2004: 115). The African dimension to the scenario is the instance of the privileging of an “out of Africa” dimension to a Windsor Castle celebration in 2003 (116). Gilroy gives an all-embracing answer to the passion and pressure to which the former colonial power is being currently subjected:

I want to propose that it is the inhuman political body of the immigrant rather than the body of the sovereign that comes to represent all the discomfiting ambiguities of the empire’s painful and shameful but apparently nonetheless exhilarating history. The immigrant is now here because Britain, Europe, was once out there; that basic fact of history is not usually deniable. And yet its grudging recognition provides a stimulus for forms of hostility rooted in the associated realization that today’s unwanted settlers carry all the ambivalence of empire with them. They project it into the unhappy consciousness of their fearful and anxious hosts and neighbours. (100)

It shows already that the choice of the “songster” to transcend the boundaries of his homeland to Britain will be met by much hostility. The envisaged respite which informed the choice of exile might continually remain elusive. The projection of the body and personality of the migrant as an ambivalent incarnation will certainly not allow for the needed welcome. What is more, Gilroy reveals again that “when race becomes an issue a melancholic tone becomes audible” (114). For the African exile therefore the risks of exile are so high as to deny him the least reception where the former colonial power struggles to keep above the water of racial essentialism.

But the above notwithstanding, the poet has given in to the thought of exile and is armed with weapons of memory: “I stand at the gates/ Cold and alone/ With the soil of my land/ In a leather amulet/ With photos and the hair / Of the woman I loved/ A coward fled home/ And the battle front” (59). The whole idea of taking along the “soil of my land” and the “photos of the woman I loved” is significant. On the one hand, Malkki notes that the symbolic act of taking a part of one’s soil on a journey especially a forced one for that matter, is for the purpose of keeping such land in remembrance as a revered homeland (55). On the other hand, as Roland Barthes reveals “the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed

radiations which ultimately touch...” (Marianne Hirsch 1998: 419) But beyond this, it is important to remark that the memory empowerment that these instruments provide are primarily for the purpose of offsetting the deficiency that results from a forced break from a previously avowed spatial fixity. It is indeed a gesture in recuperating memory for “inventing homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases— not in situ but through memories of and claims on places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit” (Malkki 52). So the poet, having been thoroughly overwhelmed by the vulnerability to drift from a homeland, where he has distanced himself from the cry of the millions of the oppressed people, goes about now “drenched to the bone/ With my rage and shame” (60). The consolation that memory provides appears refreshingly redeeming: “There is only memory/ To cuddle for warmth”. However, the question that is of the essence in the remaining parts of the poem is, to what extent can the treasures in the kitty of memory adequately make for the physical loss of touch with homeland?

In the second segment of the poem, the trauma borne is nothing but that of the compromise on social interactions. The moral and epistemological structures of African civility have suffered attenuation, if not contempt in a strange land where fellow Africans/ Nigerians slug it out with survival. They are preoccupied with the survival imperative to the extent that those highly held values by which the homeland is defined are no longer worth respecting. The struggle, to be precise, is essentially capitalist and for the most part unsympathetic to the social courtesies of homeland. So, on the streets of London, the poet sees the impatience and desperation of fellow migrants. The externalization of these feelings betrays an attempt to conform to an existing dominant social order in Britain. This order expectedly spurns the social values of home. It is a kind of compromise in hybridity which does not however live up to the commendable ideals of the concept. It rather betrays the flipside of hybridity in which case its “mechanisms... stall and misfire in the face of what is typically referred to as ‘cultural difference’” (Smith 252). This is why:

On the streets, I see my countrymen...
And everyone is hurrying past
Hurrying, looking away
No word passes between

No sign of our common kin
No elder's blessing to his child
The blood erupts in me
Our blood
And I wonder
These men
And women
With their gazes to the ground
Do they also carry
These needles in my heart? (61)

The succeeding parts of the poem are preoccupied with the sorrows and occasional joys of exile. They constitute veritable reflections on the experience of exile. The third part for instance illustrates what Antoinnet Burton (2003: 1) calls "the inadequacy and the indispensability of the nation". That is, if the previous explorations in the condition of home reveal a hostility that pushes potential exiles beyond the borders, "A Song from Exile" shows the deficiencies associated with yielding to the option of exile. In a sober reflection, the poet asks rhetorically: "And who says there is peace /Away from home? Or honour/ Or pride/ Or a sense of clan?" (62) The initial allure of exile, having paled into a sordid reality of non-productivity, especially for a poet who is the voice of the oppressed, results in an epigrammatic musing on the phenomenon:

The exile is cotton seed on the wings of the wind
A grain in the drifting sand-dunes of the earth
He is like the waters of a river coursing endlessly
Through forests and mountains into the jaws of the sea
Where it is lost forever (62)

The opinion of the above lines attests to the assertion that "the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" (Said 173). Moreover, the knowledge of his exile is a reminder of the pretension that is at the base of the conferment of absolute responsibility on artists and intellectuals generally, as there are moments they fail to live up to this expectation. In other words, the assumption that they speak for the masses is not without its limitations. In the case of the poet under study here, the very fact of his exile, which means a conscious spatial removal from his immediate point of responsibility as a mouthpiece of the people, illustrates the limitations of the brief of representation that we tend to identify with artists. Thus, while there are no questions about the representative roles of artists in every given society, such roles must

however be limned in qualified terms.

The fourth and fifth parts dwell on the effects of the repression of “exile’s private pain”. The enormity of the pain is best assessed when the sense of insecurity of exile contrasts with the assurance of home. So while “the walls crumble” in exile, “they are going up at home”. But since the poet has adopted the fantasy of dreams and dreamlands, it is no surprise that the conditions at home have mercurially transmuted into scenes of trauma where the oppressive forces at work are incarnated in the marauding devastation of a sea rage. In the sixth part, the capture of his mother in the dreamland by agents of state torture and repression opens up the crucial question of the space-in-between within the discourse of exile. In his essay “Home, Exile, and the Space in Between”, Isidore Okpewho (2006: 68-69) has the following to say on the concept:

I believe that many scholars (*and many others outside the fold of scholarship*) who have lately relocated to the US (*and to the rest of the West*) would agree with me that whether or not we are directly affected by these tragedies frequently reported from Africa, they generally have the effect of painfully deferring our cherished hopes that sanity would someday return to our land of origin. Worse still, every time such sad tidings come from home, it is hard to avoid a certain sense of guilt about the fate of those we have left behind. We are lucky enough to have escaped the depressing (*and repressive*) conditions back home and found a safe haven here, where we have an opportunity to raise our children and pursue our professions. But while we may not be directly responsible for those acts of social and political mismanagement by which our leaders deny our people the basic rights and securities of life, we cannot help feeling that in fleeing our countries we have left our relatives and friends to their devices in increasingly insufferable conditions. (my italics)

It is the increasing sense of “guilt” which the poet bears that heightens the tempo of self-excoriation that is pervasive in this poem. For having watched helplessly in the dream-bondage the capture and torture of his own mother in the homeland in the sixth part of the poem, the seventh part cannot help but bring back in an ambiguous way memories of the oppressed of various categories. His empathy is with the imprisoned and condemned of “Gashua” and “Kirikiri”.²⁸ Such empathy extends to motherhood and the trauma of widowhood and childlessness that first played out during the war among Biafrans. It goes without saying that it is still being played out in the aftermath of the war after the country became integrated again to face the challenge of nationhood. Therefore, when the poet

²⁸ These are notorious prisons in Nigeria: they are often perceived as sites for squashing state opposition.

declaims “A Prodigal sings your pain, mothers” (68), the ambiguity this line bears cannot be denied.²⁹ The substance of the empathy for those left behind assumes a panoptic dimension in the eighth and last part of the segment. The concern of the exile is no longer exclusively for the condemned and the traumatized mothers, but also for the entire homeland together with its landscape. No matter the disappointment of the past which informed the option of exile, the grandeur of the analogy of the nation as an arborescent allegory conquers the suspicion that alienation breeds:

Love is the stalk that holds the leaf to the tree
Without it the leaf falls and is trampled underfoot
Love is the hope that holds the climber to the trunk
It is love that holds me to you and your own (69)

The empathy, having developed into love for the people and hatred for the state’s divisive forces, spreads through the land as one formidable essence— “from Lagos to Kano”, that is, from the South to the North of the country. It is about love for the young men and women of the land, the rivers and the various seasons which compare with the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the land— “one kilometre is another language”. The repetitive emphasis that runs through this part of the poem goes to highlight the irony of the postcolonial exile, who in spite of his love for his land is forced to live outside its confines:

I love the grass
I love the sky
I love the pat on the shoulder
I love the blood in my veins
I love that land
I love her
I love...

But

²⁹ Given what the author has personally experienced in the post-Civil War years, to say that he suffers from a crisis of confidence in Nigeria will not be out of place. The Igbo who constituted the major ethnic group of Biafra while the nation lasted, still like the author, suffer betrayals from the rest of the nation. This untoward manner has a way of making one torn between the defeated and now extinct Biafra and the post-war Nigeria. In one of the concluding remarks in his essay, “Lessons from the Killing Field”, Oguibe argues: “For in conquering Biafra, Nigeria has raised a generation with uncertain loyalty and legacy of hurt and betrayal, a generation without nation, my generation: Biafra’s children.” *Transition*, 77, (1997-98), 86-99, p.98.

Where is your love
Nigeria? (70-71)

Subsequent poems in the segment, one way or the other, are replete with the pains of the unrequited love of homeland and the challenges posed by the inadequacies of memory with which the poet tries to assuage the traumas of alienation. “Summer Song” is an instance of such poems. The fantasies and excitement generated by the approach of summer in Britain are, for instance, inadequate to erase his sense of sorrow. The burden of conscience that borders on the space-in-between with respect to the people left behind is enormously overwhelming. This is why amidst the excitement of “Covent Garden” and “speeches at Hyde Park” he will still be identified by others as constituting a curious sight. And when asked to confirm his vocation, he can only answer with a bombshell: “yes, a poet of wounds. A man of constant sorrow/ driven from his homeland/ severed from his kind”. Nevertheless, the primacy of his attachment to home is not in doubt; for he imagines that when he dies in exile people will be shocked, should they open up his “breast”, to “find within”

the barb
The flag, a map of my country
And a sea of boiling tears (74)

Besides, the above lines return the discussion to the inspiration of nationalism that can be drawn from a condition of exile, an issue hinted at earlier on in this chapter. That is, much as the dystopian conditions of homeland act as a vector for exile and transgression of individuals beyond the borders of the space that constitutes the site of their primordial identity, the distance that inheres in the condition of exile can also fire up the spirit of nationalism in a displaced individual. The remark in itself also hints at the irony that surrounds the question of the initial disillusion with homeland which induces exile on the one hand, and on the other, the impossibility of absolute separation of exiles, as in this case, from the nationalist sentiments that sustain the idea of the homeland or the nation. Therefore, whether located as space-bound, or un-moored from the physical constraints of the nation, the apprehension of exile in Oguibe constantly keeps nationalism within view, the limitations notwithstanding.

Related to the question of nationalism is commitment. Like nationalism, there is a sense in which the distance that is forged between homeland and the country of destination can lead to a severance of the commitment an artist has for his home country. Much as this is true, Oguibe's poetry demonstrates how distance from home can be made for through reflections on and responses to the developments at home. The concern that is shown for the homeland in this collection, even during moments of schizophrenic fragmentation occasioned by dreams goes to bear out the level of commitment by which the poetry is animated.

The pain that the thought of homeland produces is a defining message of the poem, "For you, Nigeria". In this poem segmented in four parts, the pains ring through the vignettes of horrors of home. The song composed for Nigeria is nothing but a dirge. It is a song that orchestrates the travails of the oppressed of various shades: "the coal diggers, tin miners, taxi drivers rig workers". The address to homeland in part is that of warning against human waste. Avoiding this must have informed the choice of exile. The waste is perpetrated, one is reminded, by "thieves [who] / walk around in / Uniforms". It shows why he is not able to flinch away from issues at home when he says of homeland: "You are a burden, Homeland/ You are a crown of thorns" (96). Although Homi Bhabha (cited in Smith 249) argues that there is "no necessary or eternal belongingness", there is a sense in which this assertion can be applied only in qualified terms with relation to *A Gathering Fear*. This is because by yielding to the allure of exile in the first place, the poet appears to have challenged what Smith (249) calls the "'old' foundations" of the fixity of homeland and the inviolability of the attachment to it. Nonetheless, the kind of migrancy that Oguibe espouses here is far from that which Smith proposes as interrogating "ancestry and geography" especially. Truly he belongs, as confessed in one of his essays, to that group of Nigerian artists and writers who were caught in the vortex of migration to the West in the 1980s,³⁰ such migration does not rule out the possibility of return. Therefore, much as the collection itself could be said to be autobiographical in a

³⁰ See Olu Oguibe, "Finding a Place: Nigerian Artists in the Contemporary Art World", *Art Journal*, (Summer) 1999, 31-41, p.31.

way, it nevertheless speaks for millions of Nigerian and African migrants who strongly believe in the necessity of return to the homeland, no matter the allure of diaspora. The concluding lines of the collection, “for you, Nigeria IV” attest to this observation. It does not matter if the return is in the form of a cold, still corpse; return necessarily completes the trajectory of exile:

And if my years be blown
Away in distant lands
Like dry millet
In harmattan wind
I want to be buried
In a free country
Among my people
Among my own people
Besides my ancestors...

And as I trail the echoes
Of the valley of death
Among you let it be said:

*There was beauty
In his heart
And the Homeland
Was his song. (100)*

Therefore, although homeland may be inadequate, it nevertheless remains for Oguike indispensable, if not for anything, but for its metaphysical significance.

Agbenoxevi* as Metaphor: Ramifications of Exile in Kofi Anyidoho’s *EarthChild

To be sure, there is an undeniable link between Kofi Anyidoho’s first collection, *Elegy for the Revolution* (1978) and subsequent collections; *EarthChild* is no exception. This preliminary remark is vital in view of the understanding that there is a sense in which the socio-political circumstances that informed the debut also set the tone for his subsequent collections. The incursion of the military into Ghanaian politics in 1966 is significantly

implied in the said social imaginary. The alibi for the overthrow of the anti-colonialist Nkrumah was couched in appropriate but pretentious language in order to appeal to the people and gain their confidence. But more importantly, it presented the military intervention as a revolution. The impression which was ingrained in the social psyche assayed to open up an expectation in the direction of redeeming the nation's image and fate from the destructive order against which they were staked. However, the situation, which turned out to be nothing but the institution and perpetuation of military dictatorship and praetorianism left the nation's social psyche shattered through and through. The observation is more apt if one considers the fact that between 1966 and 1981 not only was military rule entrenched but it also developed a pathology for scuttling democratic processes. Moreover, the frequency of intervention is evinced in the four military regimes witnessed within the time frame (Pellow and Chazan 47). So the fit of pique and disappointment into which the people were thrown accounts for the musing of *Elegy for the Revolution*. It is indeed an attempt on the part of the poet to objectify the anguish and sense of loss to which the people capitulate in view of the military interventions. The medium of this objectification is the appropriation of the Ewe dirge tradition. The said tradition is regarded essentially as belonging to the designation of music or song in the Anlo-Ewe oral tradition (Kofi Awoonor 1974: 3). But the appropriation cannot be regarded as mere "simplistic transference of values from Ewe [artistic] practices" (Oyeniyi Okunoye 2005: 91). It necessarily undergoes a modification in the hand of the poet, who transforms it not only into an objectification of a people's sense of immediate tragedy and trauma, but also makes it a fundamental project in the subsequent construction of the many phases of the condition of a postcolonial state. The poet's salute to the people in the face of the breach of faith on the part of the military class comes up clearly in the dedication:

To the memory of
 The revolution that went astray
 and for
 Those who refused to die

The sequence that one identifies in the subsequent publications understandably looks back to this point in Ghana's history as underpinned by a people's collective elegy and

sorrow. The only reason for this malady, Anyidoho reflects, is nothing but a derailment from a nation's cause and course, all because the revolution, pretending to salvage a nation from the edge of the precipice, is "gone astray into/ arms of dream merchants" (71). The unrealism of the interruption and the attendant failure to deliver on promises are as glaring as they are discouraging. But if *A Harvest of our Dreams* is a vindication of the prophetic reputation of *Elegy for the Revolution* (Okunoye 100), *EarthChild*, which is made up of two separate volumes ("Earthchild" and "Brain Surgery"), navigates the temporal dialectic between the two previous collections to demonstrate the unity of vision as a telling trope that runs through all the collections of the poet. The said unity between these collections is attested in the preface to *EarthChild* where he admits that the two volumes constitute an interface between the "memories" of the seasons that "have... been gathered away in *Elegy for the Revolution*".

One thing that remains remarkable, furthermore, in the artistic adoption of the dirge tradition is how it is acclaimed to offer explanation on a people's survival strategy. The metaphor or narrative of survival has come to occupy a privileged place in the assessment of *EarthChild* (Ezenwa-Ohaeto 1999: 121). This has been limned to be an abiding index of the collection and Anyidoho himself in one of his critical writings has given voice to this stance (Anyidoho 1992). This section of this chapter however stands to argue beyond the survivalist paradigm in order to explore the exilic import and dimensions to the reception of the collection.

First, it is to Ewe cosmology that one must turn for the understanding of the exilic angle to the text. The centrality of the dirge tradition to the Ewe is as old as the people themselves. But beyond the commonplace identification of this tradition as lamentation over the dead, Kofi Awoonor (1974:1) argues that it stands more appropriately to speak to the living in a manner that makes a statement on the collective ontology of the people. He illustrates this through an appreciation of the performance of a renowned Ewe oral dirge-poet, Akpalu:

After all, funeral dirges are not for the ears of the dead. They are for the living. So Akpalu made them vehicles of self-lamentation, philosophy, ideas on morality and ethics,

and comments on the total human condition.

The disillusionment engendered by the failure of the revolution created an elegy whose lugubrious litanies are extended in *EarthChild*. Therefore in *EarthChild* one is confronted with the hard consequences of the failed military revolution. It has created a “human condition” which though universal, has a peculiar implication not just for Ewe nationality, but for the entire Ghanaian world, and the African world in general. Thus it is interesting to note that in putting up the collection for criticism, the understanding of the human condition of displacement begins to get through when one applies one’s mind to the logic of Ewe cultural history as recounted by the author himself:

African societies and communities of African-heritage people worldwide are rushing into the 21st century in a state of despair and even panic. By certain ironies of history, they were stampeded into directions they did not intend to follow. And now, breathless and quite dazed they have arrived at a point where they seem to have lost not only a sense of where they are or should be going, but even a knowledge of where they were before the stampede. They are trapped in a state of stasis, in what has been described as “a culture of survival— not of development”. (1992: 45)

It explains why as an anticipation of African and Black preoccupation in the 21st century he forecasts that it will be nothing but “the problem of the line between death and life” (45). Nevertheless, he unequivocally canvases for development. This returns the discussion to that of a necessary probe of the “stampede” to which African peoples were victims. It is also why the interpretation to which exile yields itself in the collection is as dynamic as it is intricately complex. The indictment of the military could as well be superficial in the face of the historical fact of western imperial entrapment of Africa. In other words, going back beyond the immediate situation in which political generals are deservedly demonized, one will surely arrive at the core of Ghana’s and Africa’s diasporic problems generally. This first confronts one with the dialectic of “moonchildren” as a commentary on the extent of western imperial project, which is a seriatim on the continent. It was a capitalist project implemented against “earthchildren” in various forms. The emerging subtext of the sequence of western imperialism is that there is, on the part of the poet, an acknowledgement of a rootedness of Africans on the continent. It has however been threatened and disrupted by the coming of “moonchildren”. The compromise of the rootedness of the African world is perhaps most

evident in the controversial agency of Joseph's Conrad *Heart of Darkness*: "The conquest of earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much" (1982:10). The "taking away of the earth" from Africans which began with trade by barter with the West in the 15th century, developed subsequently through stages of inequality that favoured the West to the detriment of Africa. But also because "literature", according to Robert Livingston (2002: 256), and imperialism are complexly intertwined, it is just logical that African postcolonial literature, like any other, will employ literary modes in interrogating the complex legacy of imperialism that the centuries-long ideology of the Enlightenment has left Africa with in the wake of independence. That is, the precursory role of western narratives of travel in the establishment of animadversions against Africa cannot be consigned to the shadows. Given its nature, imperialism in itself involves a kind of mobility and travel. The dislocation it engendered first for the imperialist was more or less self-imposed. This explains why "narratives of encounter of the [West with the rest of the world] are dominated by the view point of the mobile culture" (Steve Clark 1999: 5). The barbs of such culture on the indigenous "earthchildren" stung to the bone marrows. But more tragically, it culminated in the institution of racial slavery, which added another angle to the strategy of "taking away" what belonged to the people of the earth. It was a mobility that was simply predicated on "trade and quest" (Dorothy Carrington in Clark 3). The impact of the mobility that the encounter produced through slavery has since been modified with a colonial encounter. If African literature is thus amenable to issues of dislocation then the reason at this point should be clear.

All this accounts for why the pattern of dislocation encountered in *EarthChild* is all-encompassing. It navigates into the past while running a commentary on the present governed by a military cabal that is western in its imperial act. Memory for this reason continually comes in handy in the work. But before further exploration into the realm of memory, it is significant to remark that the import of dislocation is unequivocally attested in the dedication of the collection:

For
All of africa's Children
who live die and still live
in the diaspora
especially for those
who still stand so tall among the cannonades
and smell of mists and powdered memories

One thing becomes clear in the above, and that is the evocation of history both in its distant and immediate as well as contemporary temporality. Concerning this, Smith (254) intimates that “one result of capitalism’s global expansion was the voluntary and (more) forcible dispersion of increasing numbers of people and it is in relation to these impelled dislocations of modern history that the concept of diaspora becomes more widely germane as displaced populations attempted to trace a story of unity in the face of dislocation and alienation”. Without a doubt, the extent to which Africa is affected in this global phenomenon of dislocation is largely traumatic. This is in view of the great number the continent lost to global capitalism beginning from the 15th century. What is designated in contemporary times as mild forms of the “forcible” dislocation as informed especially by postcolonial disillusionment and neo-colonialism could thus be said to be deeply steeped in the history of the past. That history, when invoked, only brings about “an evocation of trauma” (Wole Soyinka 1999: 59). Given this painful reality, Soyinka asks with double interrogation: “But is that all it can be? Should be?” (59) The question is reprieved from the misfortune of hanging in historical limbo when he answers : “Every landmark is a testament of history and in our own indelible instance—from Goree through the slave forts of Ghana to Zanzibar—every fort and stockade, increasingly turned into museums, filled with grim evocations of this passage of history” (59). Such ground clearing enhances the understanding of the dynamics of exile that one encounters in *EarthChild*. By returning for instance to the source and inspiration of the artistic medium, the Anlo-Ewe tradition, one does not only discover, like Ezenwa Ohaeto (1999: 128) argues, that “the dirge impulse proceeds beyond the fact of death; for it projects into what could be described as a synthesization of sadness and hope in terms projecting beyond current sorrow into the future”. The attempt on the part of Ohaeto to impose exclusive absolutes of present and future temporality stands to be interrogated. For by excluding

time past, he denies the constant interaction of the past with the present and the anticipated future. This concentric view of temporality in Anyidoho is necessary because of the all-inclusive reflection that the work offers on the impulse of dislocation which is adroitly disseminated in the medley of delicate cadences of traditional lyricism and rhythm. The need to include the past is made most clear by the poet himself in the symbolic narrative instantiated in the opening paragraph of one of his recent essays:

The story is told in oral tradition of the Ewes in Ghana that in their migratory journeys to their present homes, probably the most important single step they took into the future had to be done walking backward...[paraphrasing Nukunya 1997, he says further] Also, in November of every year, usually on the first Saturday during the Hogbetsotso festival in Anloga in Ghana, when the Anlo-Ewe re-enact their migratory journeys, they perform the *misego*, the special dance inscribed by symbolic forward-backward movements. (2003: 3-4)³¹

The particularity of this narrative notwithstanding, the symbolic significance it holds for the understanding of the impulse of dispersal and the necessary return is what remains crucial. The dedication may have in a way celebrated dispersal with the recognition of African diaspora, this is however to be viewed from the standpoint of the “backward” journey that must be taken for the renewal of the rootedness and progress of “Earthchildren”. It is in a sense an illustration of a people’s demotic knowledge and philosophy which is for the most part hinged on the constant visit to the past for the progress of its worldview. And the poet, not being a product of a strange culture, but that of his own people, is naturally laden with the task of articulating this worldview. The autochthonous knowledge from which the poet has to borrow is of the essence as it is drawn from intimate human experience (Okpewho 1985: 3). It is also part of why among the Ewe the voice of the poet, “is constantly identified with the voice of his people” (Anyidoho 1983: 351). There is an extension of this particular knowledge in the response to the challenge posed by multi-ethnic nationhood and the cause of Africa and the diaspora in general. Taking history and memory into cognizance, the poems traverse all periods and moments, dwelling not only on the rarefied alienation of the poet but the opening up of a liberalized path which offers insight into a general human condition.

³¹ In the cited work above, Anyidoho reveals that the migration of the Ewe to the present day Ghana was in protest against the dictatorial and murderous atmosphere that prevailed during the reign of a particular unpopular King in a kingdom that once flourished somewhere in the present day Togo.

“Fertility Game”, which opens the first volume of the collection, offers insight into resources of history and memory in addressing the contemporary challenge of dispersal. It is essentially about the departure of a male lover for greener pastures in the West while the wife is left alone, abandoned as it were, to the caprices of loneliness. Much as such departure is desirable in a situation where what is termed the claim of “a rational knowledge of administration of the human factor” (Nicolas Rose 1998: 122) on the part of the military has failed to yield any positive result, return, if only for the purpose of recreation, is considered appropriate. But the argument goes beyond its literal import, as “fertility” in this context is the ultimate need for African productivity and development which cannot be achieved creditably by being perennially dispersed without return. This is why as the abandoned lover at home realizes there is only one way to achieve the consummation of this fertility game, she is determined to give the name of the foot-loose husband “to west-bound winds”; this is in order that he may return:

Come back home Agbenoxevi Come back home

Come with me to your rainbow bed

Where you and I shall wrestle again and again

All over again in that old fertility game

First played by gods in the seedtime of our Earth

Just come back home Agbenoxevi Come back home (4-5)

In the above, apart from the repetition of ‘come back’ which serves to emphasize the wish of the abandoned lover to see her partner return, we are fascinated by the ambiguity of the ‘west-bound winds’ which on the one hand could refer to the local direction of the itinerary of Agbenoxevi, and as well as the indictment of the West as Agbenoxevi’s location for which he has abandoned his lover. Perhaps the reason for the insistence on return stems from the observation that it might be necessary to consider other forms or strategies of survival in a neo-colonial age in which “Moonchildren in their greed/ Have eaten up our Earth” (10). Moonchildren, which refers to agents of western neo-colonialism, often find ready collaboration in African leaders. The military was particularly notorious for this. They were taken in by promises of aid which turned out to

be booby traps. So, usually the pattern is to have, as in “Hero and Thief”, a military hero of “a nervous government/ [that] sits on our bankrupt stool/ wearing a gown of fantasy and hope/ telling tales of foreign aid and godmothers/ at Christmas time” (14).

Another dimension to the sorrow of dispersal can be viewed through the desire for higher learning. It has become a tradition since colonialism. It has intensified after independence as a way of reacting to the repression of leadership. Not everybody however lives to tell his tale. The travails and sorrows of such experience in a strange land in the West is the focus of “for Kristofa”. Although Okpewho (71) argues that concerning scholarship the decision to move to the West offers broader insights into the world of learning, not many live to utilize this acquisition. In the case of Kristofa, “the cancer ate away his dream”, and worse still, “they say he had no life-term insurance/ which is to say no coverage for his death” (17). The implication of this is that the corpse cannot be brought back home for burial. But return in whatever circumstance remains vital for Anyidoho’s musing and it is painful when this cannot be achieved: “There is no place to die / but the piece of Earth / in which we put away our old birth cord”. The desire to live above the economic crunch of one’s land is part of what results in the exile of most Africans; however, it is not for all of them that what Brooke-Rose (9) calls “springing forth into a new life, beyond the boundaries of the familiar” is a reality. Death, as suffered by Kristofa, is one such.

Regrettably, however, the pattern of dispersal especially of young minds remains a phenomenon. The lamentation over the situation gets across in “Voices in our Home”:

Once there were many voices in our home
Today,
Across the infinite yawn of distances
of silence

I stretched my mind to clutch at stars of change
Here where now silence reigns
He was once the jubilee hall of sounds
And every laughter was an echo of some inner joy
every scream a record of a fear
Once there were many voices in our house. (25)

The attempt to escape to a distant land, successful as it appears, often suffers compromise when the fact of the space-between stares the exile in the face regarding the conditions at home. The afflictions that befall those at home have a way of rubbing off on those who have escaped the immediacy of the scourge. All these come together to rob exiles of the joy of “springing forth” luxuriantly in their countries of destination. In “The News from Home” the poet externalizes his frustration:

I have not come this far
only to sit by the roadside
and break into tears
I could have wept at home
without a journey of several thorns

I have not spread my wings so wide
only to be huddled into corners
at the mere mention of storms

To those who hear of military coups
and rumours of civil strife
and bushfires and bad harvest at home
and come to me looking for fears and tears

I must say I am tired
very tired
tired of all devotion to death and dying...

And I am tired—
tired of all these noises of
condolence from those who
love to look upon the anger of the hungry
not their heard (sic) and stroll back home
worrying and forever worrying
about overweight and special diet for dogs and cats (25-26)

That modernity is a harbinger of progress and civilization remains a notion that is implicated in migrancy. The historical antecedent to which it turns is however thoroughly imperialist. This brings about another angle to cosmopolitanism in “Slums of the Earth”. While the engagement of the poem goes to confirm the remark that Anyidoho’s poetry displays a concern for “the whole of humanity” (Senanu and Vincent 305), it nevertheless attests to the fact that the fate of the black race and the Third World in general is paramount in his poetry. The teleology of progress and civilization is normally presented in favourable and attractive terms by the West. However, such anticipatory explications are hardly balanced in the sense that they often represent the narratives of the imperial side. Therefore, the degree of progress that is made especially in temporal and spatial terms within the framework of imperialism— national and transnational— is a function of the retrogression forced on another unit of temporality and space. Ananya Roy (2004: 67) elaborates on this:

The notion of progress operates in time and space. If some places are seen as backward, then moving ahead also implies being ahead of such places. Such geographical articulations of development and underdevelopment constitute a key dimension of the modern. They imply that progress can only exist in relation to what is seen as backwards.

The point, then, is that Anyidoho goes beyond the patronizing nature of the above analysis to show the contemporary angle to the formulation of the opinions on the malaise of postmodern gentrification. Globe trotting and gathering of data on world

slums on the bill of institutions like “USAID, IMF, AIC” (29) is not enough. It is more important to look at the causes of the formation of such slums critically. If progress cannot be a temporal and spatial absolute, because it is founded on inequality and binary opposition, then such a notion of progress is fundamentally flawed. Jane Jacobs (1996) offers further insight into this spectre of inequality: “imperial expansions established specific spatial arrangements in which the imaginative geographies of desire hardened into material specialities of political connection, economic dependency, architectural imposition and landscape transformation” (19). It then adds up as the poem queries the basis for the research into “3rd World Development” (28) when in actual fact the world slums, especially those of “Accra, Lagos”, among others, are “the diseased imagination of slum dwellers”. It is arguable that in the so-called First World cities, many Africans still occupy a major part of such slums. The whole argument of binary alterity in the poem could be said to extend beyond the immediate as in the last stanza the basis of civilization is shattered: “Wilson Harris told us once upon a time:/ *All civilization is built upon a series of thefts*/ Beginning of course, with Prometheus” (31). The mythical and allegorical drift of such historical innuendo centralizes and returns the discussion to the “series of thefts” which through spatial crossings from the West to Africa, created contemporary nation-states. As the myth goes, Prometheus’ stealing of fire from the gods to offer as a gift to humanity for progress in the Palaeolithic Age (Karen Armstrong 2005) involves a measure of ruthlessness, perfected in the migratory journey motif to please his homeland, just as the progress of the West is fraught with ruthlessness that was carried out in the journey to the colonies and the establishment of empire. For the postcolonial world in particular, this is the cause for a sort of “languishing at the margins of global change”, and the basis for the articulation of the theme of “Third World envy and mimicry” (Roy 69). Indeed, as Roy, argues further, “memory... forces us to mourn, to take account of a difficult and bitter history” (65). The history of the Third World has been for the most part that of mourning. For in considering the “proud structures of Wall Street” in the poem, one cannot but remember the contribution of the colonies to its making. The neo-colonial structures that empire leaves in the wake of independence have done little or nothing to alter the privileges of the Wall Streets of the First World. This is why in the Third World citizens’ “mimicry” of migrancy in the First World, all forms of

exclusionary measures are taken to prevent the form of “civilization” they too— like First World migrants of imperialism did during the era of colonialism— can achieve for their own homeland. This is worsened all the more by the circumstance of the people in the postcolonial nation-states: “they represent the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the social and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentious, unequal interests and identities within the population” (Homi Bhabha 1991: 297). This condition accounts in the first place for the movement of people from homeland in Africa. But it is also an experience that has notoriously pushed Third World nations to the margins of existence. This is illustrated in “Voices of Silence” where:

Still

there are voices of silence in God’s council chambers

and in our backyard there are moans

disturbing beyond the gurgling sounds of slashed throats (34)

Nevertheless, the prospect of an adopted home for the Third World migrant in the West is as exhilarating as it is challenging. Therefore, “the stinking glory of these States” must be left behind; if not for anything, at least for the the rays of hope that flash “amidst the hopelessness of armed revolts”. Moreover, it is needful perhaps to escape the apocalypse of the West that is animated by technological machinations:

Leaving here where there’s need only for production

There’s no longer need for creation

except perhaps in secret labs

of our planet’s suicide squad (“Bad Debt”, 35)

Yet before return, there is need to celebrate the beauty of diaspora and cosmopolitanism, if only to show that there are, after all, occasional streaks of pleasure in the psyche of exiles. In “Bloomington” there is an illustration of this assertion. Memory at this point navigates more practically into the realm of nostalgia such that “a narrative of loss and eventually a celebration as what was once lost is covered” (Roy 65). This is why “Today the memory comes back still/ and sets a warning flow of kindness” (37). The question then is how has this been achieved? It is simply in the community of exiles who “bring

Ghana home in a feast of highlife cultural things”. It is a telling comment upon the highpoints of multiculturalism achieved through the agency of cosmopolitanism. Immediate diasporic formations in this poem align with the long-standing diasporic cultural structures necessitated by racial slavery. So the Ghanaian “highlife”, a unique genre of West African pop music, blends with the African-American “Selom and Pearl and Selim” (38), whose “home [is] so full of ancestral presences”. The evidence of hybridity is clear in “music’s cross-rhythms” of dance in Avorgbedor’s home (38). The excitement is rapturous and the poet concludes on the memories of the vagrant “waywardness”, although occasioned by studies. The prevailing feeling, in short, is in sync with the book jacket commentary on Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic*:

There is a culture that is not specifically African, American, Caribbean, or British, but all of these at once; a black Atlantic culture whose themes and techniques transcend ethnicity and nationality to produce something new.

The title poem advances this discussion of cosmopolitanism by looking critically at its flipside from a historical angle. It gallops back to the archives of memory to consider the antithesis of African/ Ghanaian migrancy: curiously this moment was initially that of the “Locust Clan” from a distant location into the spatial and temporal enclave of the “Earth”. What follows is a consistently destructive assault by “Moonchildren” on our “Earth”, where “Termites came and ate away our voice/ ate away our rainbow’s wild banquets of blood”. Nevertheless, the renaissance and survival will of the “Earth”, is strikingly epic. That is, despite the continual assault on the “Earth”, which is a metaphor for the continent, it is able to stem and survive every tide, even if that means at a high cost as in the days of slavery and colonialism. The refrain celebrates this unique resilience and survival:

And still we stand so tall among the cannonades

We smell of mists and of *powered* memories... (39)

It is significant to note that the refrain couplet comes in different shades and hues in an alternation and antinomy of treacherous marauding on the part of “moonchildren” and the curious, almost magical survival of the “Earthchildren” imbued with fragrant “smells”. The triumph and survival are illuminated via the transformation of the seeming stasis and

fixity in the opening stanzas to show how cultural resilience is negotiated and integrated into the social consciousness of an unwilling western cosmopolitan nation. Taking us first through the advancing powers of African diasporic music, the poet celebrates the “polyrhythmic miles of Jazz” as led by Seyam Sinaj” (40). The reception that her composition and performance enjoys can be measured in the following lines:

Your Songs traverse this land of hostile winds
you blow brainstorm into banquet hall of Moonchild
you die you live in song
you hate you love in song
you measure our joy in interplay of polyrhythms sounds (40-41)

This is yet another angle to the apprehension of postcolonial hybridity; the fact that the ambivalence of the colonized can result in a blend of both cultures and provide a culturally resounding and refined alternative to western native cultural purism. This goes to vindicate the optimism of Gilroy (2004: 119) on the “complex and challenging narratives” that can be brought about in a “heterocultural metropolitan life by reducing the exaggerated dimensions of racial difference to a liberating ordinariness”. It explains why the heroine of “Earthchild” is understandably a personification of hybridity in that positive drift of the word:

You walk away with our history braided on your head
all woven into cross-rhythms of hair each strand
so linked to every other strand each path
so linked to every other path each destiny
the destiny of every other single destiny (41)

There is an instance of postmodern deterritorialization in the above, and the depiction of the ever mobile songster-diva with a hybridity that infects; there is thus much ground to agree that deterritorialization “implies [truly] the replacement of the bounded by the unbounded... and the triumph of space over place”, as some scholars argue (Jacobs 2004: 30).

More clearly, the Atlantic racial slavery comes up for reflection. Reminding us first that part of the end goals of the obnoxious trade was to silence that which was culturally African after sealing an agenda of dehumanization of Africans. The centuries of severance from African homeland, for the victims of slavery, should be ordinarily enough to wipe out the vestigial remains of the tradition of a people. This would subsequently accentuate, with a monopolistic ego, that which was essentially White and western. The process of executing this comes most convincingly to the fore in the award-winning novel of Manu Herbstein, *Ama: A Story of the Atlantic Slavery*.³² In the poem, the poet argues that where the measures of white racism against the black race have been most strident, there too has black diasporic culture triumphed undeniably:

And in all small alleyways of old London and Paris and Lisbon
And in all harlemways of New York Chicago New Orleans
in Kingston-Jamaica Havana in Cuba Atlanta in Georgia
on voodun shores of Haitia our Haiti oh Haiti!
on voodun shores of Haitia Oh Haiti! our Haiti
you'll find footprints running backways
into lives once lost to sharp rhythms of Panther's greed
lives all lost to cold embrace of Atlantic waves...

And those who took away our Voice

Are now surprised

They couldn't take away our Song (42)

The unflappable spirit of the black race especially as persecuted during the slave trade accounts for why Gilroy (1994: 16) contends that “history...continually crisscrossed by the movements of black people— [is] not only [about humans as] commodities but [as

³² The horror and the torture together with the suppression in Bahia, Brazil after some of the slaves arrive are already bad enough. But their case is worsened by the forcible imposition of Catholicism. Nevertheless, the stolen moments of the votaries of African religions and the creative blend of biblical accounts prove a potent weapon in the prosecution of a liberation struggle, making African deities stand the test of time. More practically, the event assists in upstaging white hegemony and finally serves to attain manumission.

they] engaged in various struggles towards emancipation; autonomy and citizenship”. Again, that these cultural activities show “footprints running backways/ into lives once lost”, lead one to another form of return from exile in the collection: undeniably allegorical and cultural. It is interesting, for instance, to note that to date, despite the preponderance of the *mestizaje* that one finds in the Haitian *vodun*, it still retains a great deal of the religious practices found in West Africa. This is especially so with the evidence available from the unique vodun practice among the Fon and Egun people of Republic of Benin, although some Egun people are also found in Western Nigeria.³³

But if so far the discussion has dwelt on celebration of the triumph and glamour of black diasporic culture, the last poem in the first volume, “The Homing Call of Earth” alerts one to the limits of African postcolonial deterritorialization and cosmopolitanism. More than anything else, it presents the dilemma of the African exile in the West. First, the condition at home remains demoralizing. It is at this junction that one is reminded of the primacy of the Ghanaian nation in the context of the musing. The conditions at home stare the exile in the face:

They say our land has lost her joys
to seasons of teething pains and aches
that stupid elders and wild hunters
took and hid our hopes in foreign caves
and our offspring die of *kwashiorkoric* dreams (43)

Struggling with the consequences of neo-colonialism made more complicated by the complicity of the military class in power, home constitutes a nightmare to the exile. However, the drift in exile may not possess the capacity to be perennial. This is because the various forms of exclusionary measures of racial essentialism erected against the African immigrant in the West cannot allow for an absolute sense of home away from

³³ See Donald J. Cosentino (ed.), *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* (California, USA, 1995) and Suzanne Preston Blier, *African Vodun: Art Psychology and Power* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1995) for comparison.

home.³⁴ Even where the ideals of multi-racial liberalism seem to be triumphant, the fleeting nature of such victory calls for a reconsideration of the migrant's stand. This is why the "triumphs" can at best be referred to as "small" as they "bring real pleasure, but they can evaporate and count for little once invasive immigration has been constructed as an intractable problem with national dimensions" (Gilroy 2004: 146). Moreover, the excitement of "bringing Ghana home" as seen earlier in "Bloomington" is no less fugacious. Truly the remarkable demonstration of the inversion of tradition as "place-based" is commendable (Nezar Alsayyad 2004: 23). One is nevertheless reminded at once that "a migrant group that re-embeds elsewhere through the reconfiguration and performance of tradition may be met with hostility by others who feel that their own tradition and their own authority over locality are being threatened" (Jane Jacobs 2004: 34). The situation can be all the worse when the bid to maintain a white western native culture unalloyed by the incursion of migrant culture and miscegenation results in an alterity which is both state-sponsored (Gilroy 2004: 147), and segregating to the point of quaking the fragile foundations upon which the ideals of contemporary migrancy is built.³⁵ This is why home— no matter how frightening the challenges the thought of it provokes— is for Anyidoho the only hope:

But against the distant gleam of shooting stars
 I chose and will choose again and again
 The Homing Call of Earth
 I am Earth child turned to ghost
 at festival of Moonchildren
 my voices heard only as distant calls of other worlds
 my steps uncertain trods of alien feet (43)

The imperative of return becomes even more glaring in the concluding stanzas of the volume:

³⁴ Much as the remark is true, it is important to admit that there are exclusionary measures at "home" which also create a distinct sense of un-homeliness.

³⁵ Even the whole idea of such multicultural existence in the West is permissible only because of the economic advantage it offers to the host nations. See Gilroy p. 147.

So I must reject the honeyed call of distant dreams
I come back home to ragged hopes of Earth
The wealthy child's wardrobe may not outmatch
The earthy elder's termite-eaten wooden box of rags

Our Earth survives recurring furies
of her stomach pains and quakes
From the bleeding anger of her wounds
volcanic ash becomes the hope
that gives rebirth to abundance of seedtimes (44)

The necessity of return as iterated in the concluding part of the volume raises once again the question of the primacy of home in the present age. This part of the world may have suffered many setbacks which in metaphoric terms are designated 'stomach pains and quakes', 'our Earth' nevertheless radiates hopes of survival, hence the question of return. The understanding becomes clearer for the African postcolony when the discourse verges on the realm of development. This is what Anyidoho himself has dwelt so perceptively upon in the "Back without which there is no Front". Read against this backdrop, the argument of the second volume in the collection, "Brain Surgery" could as well be said to be a peroration of the concern of "EarthChild" as the vagrant metaphor of *Agbenoxevi* reverberates in "The Lost Wanderer" where the travel-weary poet-persona "in a world I can't belong" declares the certainty of his return and invokes the "Spirits of our Land" to "Guide me safely home" (108). A similar concern is expressed in "To Ralph Crowder" where the overwhelming crunch of economic hardship leads to a hopeless migrant existence. In an apostrophic clarion call, therefore, his brother cries out to him to return home even if "all is not well at home" (112). And with the title poem "Brain Surgery" taking one through the path of mythical history and the shattering of an ideal ontology by "Moonchildren", and self-proclaimed "Master Architects", the pervasive traumatic mood realigns with other dirges in the volume to show the degree of depredation and loss

forced upon a land.

Nevertheless, the challenge is in being able to rise above the tide and make home possess a magnetic pull by which migrant minds find their way back home. Above all, this explains why despite the multiplicity of refraction indices billed against the nation-state as patent variables of compromise in the age of multicultural transnationalism (Akhil Gupta 1999: 196), the postcolonial nation may still be far away from approaching its end, as some proponents of contemporary discourse on the purchase of globalization on the nation would argue. And if measured against the background of Bhabha's (1994: 212) heuristic interrogation on the fate of "postcolonial discourse" the answer can as well be that within the context of the postcolonial, such issues that remain at the core of the discourse as they relate to "neo-colonialism" can hardly be compromised. To this declamation *EarthChild* bears testimony, while engaging the question of exile. Importantly, if return in Oguibe is necessary perhaps only at death to fulfil a metaphysical desire, in Anyidoho there is a nationalist advocacy which espouses a return alive to turn the nation around and make development an attainable goal, even on the continent of Africa. On a last note from the angle of cosmopolitanism, if the notion presupposes some kind of deterritorialization towards a Centre, the argument in Anyidoho can thus be read to mean that through the virtues of individual productivity, there can actually be an obliteration of the divide between the centre and the margin. This way every space becomes a centre in its own right. That is, each distinct world, no matter its pedigree of marginalization can, through a return to the exploitation of its resources by its returning peoples together with the resilient home-based population, can produce a unique mode of cosmopolitanism and remain a centre in its own right. This is the wisdom of return in *EarthChild* and a challenge that African citizens must take up in an era in which modernity-inspired cosmopolitanism is a ruse to the Third World.

Conclusion

This chapter commenced by commenting on the historical epoch of overwhelming military dictatorship in both Nigeria and Ghana in the 1980s. Noting the relevance of the epoch to the issues with which the primary texts engage, the chapter demonstrated how

both texts draw inspiration from the historical epoch. United apparently by the commonality of exile, each text is however distinct in the way it addresses the question of exile. This explains why I have approached the analysis of Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear* from the perspective of commitment and nationalism, among other things, illustrating how dictatorial tendencies of the military political elite can short change and refract the place-based ideas of nationalism and commitment which an artist may foster and actualize in his process of intervention on the social scene. I have also, in view of the above demonstrated that in spite of exile and the distance it forges between homeland and the country of destination, the condition of displacement in itself is capable of animating the spirit of nationalism in individuals, whereby they are consistently bothered by developments at home as stakeholders even at the subliminal level of dreams.

On the other hand, I have engaged with Anyidoho's *EarthChild* from the angle of the multiple possibilities that African experience presents as a cumulative reality. In this case, there has been an attempt to examine the hold of African past—from the era of Atlantic Slave Trade to colonialism- on the present and how the exile that one encounters in the contemporary time speaks to the other forms of displacement of Africans to the West. It thus explains why reflections on African Diaspora are as prominent as those on forms of displacement that directly border on the consequences of military dictatorship in Ghana. This aspect of the chapter has also endeavoured to relate the concept of exile to the other possible meanings it appropriates within the context of similar concepts like cosmopolitanism, nationalism and multiculturalism. While shedding light on the redemptive/ liberatory values of these concepts within the context of exile, it has also touched on the limitations of such values. This is because for Anyidoho, especially in this collection, it has become necessary to transcend the euphoria of certain cosmopolitan assumptions, which come with some view of exclusive migrancy, in order to engage in a return from exile for the purpose of enhancing the vision of African development. In this way, then, cosmopolitanism is also practicable at home.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM PRISON TO EXILE: CONTESTING MODERNITY'S CLAIMS IN THE POETRY OF JACK MAPANJE

The focus on prison and exile as two sides of the experience of oppression was almost inevitable, considering that intellectuals and creative artists who insist on fighting oppression often end up in prison, that those who manage to survive prison often end up in exile

— Kofi Anyidoho, *The Word behind Bars and the Paradox of Exile*

Read too often against the backdrop of a national social imaginary, Jack Mapanje's *Of Chameleons and Gods*, tends to be seen as located within the matrix of an absolutely place-based poetic musing. Much as this is an obvious category by which the understanding of the text can be undertaken, there is nonetheless a possibility of adopting an alternative productive reading. The actualization of the alternative approach makes sense—I want to argue—when the text is read against the backdrop of the telling tropes of migrancy, a phenomenon that has come to define postcolonial literary and cultural poetics. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explore the exilic angle to the collection as an important illustration of: (1) how postcolonial migrancy replicates the antecedent travels of colonial and imperial epochs which gained exclusive privilege over narration on the colony; (2) how postcolonial literature remains a responsive counterweight to the erstwhile internalized conception of modernity through the agency of colonialism; (3) how the transgression of postcolonial national boundaries to the metropolitan cities of empire calls for a critical reflection and circumvention of grand narratives by which empire previously dominated the colonies; and, (4) how similarities can be drawn between the postcolony and empire in relation to the ubiquity of infrastructural neglect. Similarly, the chapter will also undertake a reading of *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* concentrating on “New Poems”, arguing that the poems in the section advance the issues raised in “Sketches from London”, the exilic section in *Of Chameleons and Gods*. But more importantly, the poems will be explored as veritable testimonies against the notion of the “fantasies of abundance” upon which the postcolonial state is easily built especially in the formative stages of post-independence emergence. In the explosion of

such fantasies lies the exclusionary persecution into which individuals perceived to be enemies of the state are caught. Therefore, the chapter also intends to examine the poems in relation to the socio-political circumstances in Malawi which propel the author into a second exile experience in an age caught in the webs of transnationalism. By so doing, a brief illustrative reference will be made to the author's prison experience in *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* and *Skippping without Ropes*. This will be to the end of showing their intermediate relevance in linking both the exile's experiences configured in *Of Chameleons and Gods* and *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*. Generally, the chapter will unfold as a critique of modernity, and will explore in its second part the transnational possibilities that result from the abstraction and practice of modernity within the purview of postcolonial nations.

In initiating a discourse on the condition of the African postcolony, perhaps one thing to do is concentrate on the state of the nation as presided over by its leadership, and measure in analytical terms, the level of its success and failure with respect to the social imaginary that predominates. However, it is more important in this chapter to take a more critical approach in coming to terms with such a contemporary reality of the African nation-state. This affords one the ability to confront with a greater sense of critical perception the artificiality of contemporary political mapping by which national borders are defined. Mapanje's Malawi is no exception with regard to this fact. That the modern African state is a product of western imperialism is a trite yet a useful point of departure in this discussion. Considering the spatial distance between Europe and Africa, the imposition of such western terms of geographical mapping could only have been possible through long days of navigation in the achievement of an agenda of colonialism. Travel, in that literal sense of the word, even if it implies adventure, strikes one ordinarily as innocent. What is more, the traversal of one's immediate physical and natural frontiers is natural with humanity and stands as an indexical marker of man's resourcefulness. If such travels account for discoveries, they cannot be said to be limited to a particular group of people or race. Nevertheless, by probing into the informing rationale of European travels from the 18th century and their consequences on the African continent, one realizes that they were to the end of imposing a new cultural consciousness on Africa after the perpetuation

of the Atlantic Slave Trade. The subsequent division of the continent into colonies and the imposition of western ontology upon Africa are a result of the travel. But travel in itself becomes a symbolic and vital pointer to its agential significance, not being an end in itself, but a means to an end, which was the imposition and transformation of a western notion of modernity into an empirical practice in Africa.

Modernity as a concept will therefore require some preliminary engagement at this juncture. There is admittedly the angle of multiplicity to the understanding of modernity, yet a predominant and often cited view of it is the idea of progress which, ordinarily is identified with every human society. However, colonialism, especially from the 16th century,³⁶ tends to arrogate to itself the singularity of the production of modernity both in terms of origin and propagation. It presents the West as its originator with an attempt at propagating modernity around the world in sentiments of singularity. Colonialism becomes the easiest way of achieving this: the denial of other peoples—other than Europeans—their understanding and practice of progress, and the imposition of Europe’s notion of it and ultimately imposing and creating a value system based on this and investing it with the privilege of universalism. As a “claim-making concept” (Fredrick Cooper: 2005: 115), it has been put forward from its originating base at various moments to others in distant and discreet places as the ultimate for progress, thus subscribing and subsuming at the same time natives’ idea of progress. Colonialism was one such moment and the pragmatism of its propagation comes up in form of an audacious teleology. Regarding this Fredrick Cooper says:

Imperial ideologues, at various points in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, put forth either transformative or static versions of a modernity argument: that bringing the backward into the modern justified colonization, or that Europe’s essential modernizing capacity compared to Africa’s inherent backwardness justified long-term rule over Africa. (115)³⁷

³⁶ In his book, *Silences in African History: Between the Syndromes of Discovery and Abolition* (Dar Es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers: 2005), Jacques Depelchin contends that colonialism could not be said to have started only in the 19th century. For it dates back to the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Therefore, to begin to distinguish between colonialism and the Slave Trade is to wittingly or unwittingly collude with the West to extenuate the enormity of imperialism.

³⁷ It must be stated, however, that much as an attempt is made to impose a singularity on the concept of modernity through what Elisio Salvado has termed an “ethnocentric” standpoint, given the manner in which it arrogates modernity to some point in European history, scholars and critics have always contended for a

In other words, modernity's first apprehension was to work within a binary of the "self" and "other", the progressive and the backward, etc. And by making a pretension to altruism, it created for itself a moral ground from which to take off its operations in the colonies. Yet it is ironical that early modernity, which was the Enlightenment, within the western context was originally a reaction against the absolutism of the vestiges Roman Empire as foisted way back in the Middle Ages through the extant epistemology of papal supremacy. Indeed, it was a search for an alternative way of coming to terms with oneself in Western Europe between the 15th and 16th centuries. Presuming to be able to hold its own, Western Europe in the wake of the dissolution of Roman Empire arrogated to itself absolute knowledge about all things. The aggressiveness with which it was carried out remains to date strong enough a reason to question Michel Foucault's (1994: 328) assertion that: "since Kant, the role of philosophy is to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience."

If indeed Western philosophy was invested with the duty of moderating the tyranny of absolutism of knowledge at all, its practical evidence must have been limited to the mapping of the West. This is because one has every reason to disagree with this assertion, as the comportment of the West in Africa during colonialism testified to the contrary. That is, much as western philosophy might have aspired to extenuate the impropriety of colonialism, and stressed the relativism of knowledge, its Cartesian advocacy in defence of peoples of other cultures and the instantiation and practice of their epistemology (Couze Venn 2006:50-51) failed to impact positively on the dynamics of colonialism. Of course, there is a suggestion of the acknowledgment of the relativism of culture and knowledge and the taking apart of the wisdom of imposition of singular knowledge as given when he testified: "during my travels, having acknowledged that those who have feelings quite contrary to our own are not for that reason barbarians or savages, but that

plurality of its understanding. This is when the question of alternative modernities arises. Cooper sheds more light on this when he writes: "Modernity is plural. We have 'multiple modernities' and 'alternative modernities.' These arguments either bring out the way in which non-Western peoples develop cultural forms that are not mere repetitions of tradition but bring their own perspectives to progress. Or else such interpretations focus on colonized intellectuals or leaders who explicitly engage the claims of Western agents to represent all that was modern and seek to put forward alternatives that are forward-looking but self-consciously distinct." (p.114)

many of them use their reason as much as more than we do... it is more custom and example that persuades us than certain knowledge..." (William Ray 2001: 31). The Cartesian philosophical travels and the new modes of understanding acquired about the need for the respect for other peoples' way of life sounded humble and innocent. It failed, however, to persuade the intending empire to desist from casting strange peoples in their own natural space as "barbarian", in order to find an alibi for imposing its own self-acclaimed universal order.

As a matter of fact, a farther reflective travel in time beyond colonialism would reveal how inveterate the biased idealization and attitude of the West towards Africa and Africans had been. In the reflection of Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, the misconception of the West about Africa dates back to the classical times when:

African ...exerted a powerful hold on the European imagination. The ancient world knew little of Africa other than Egypt and the Mediterranean littoral. Imagination transformed the rest of the continent to a strange and wonderful land where were to be found tailed men, men with heads beneath their breasts, and men who did not dream. To this classical heritage were added in time tales of other prodigies and of great riches. (1970:13)

The exceptionable liberty taken by the West to imagine and pontificate on the void created by non-familiarity with the rest of Africa— apart from Egypt— and the formulation of narratives into yardsticks for apprehending the continent then provided the basis for assigning inferiority to African people. It was this that subsequently bolstered the attempt to deny Africans their humanity through the prosecution of trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. As Hammond and Jablow observe further, the continual reinforcement of an imagined Africa's stasis and weirdness which stood in sharp contrast to Europe's western literary tradition succeeded in entrenching a narrative about an African that was more imagined than real. One sure explanation for the spread of these accounts of fantasy in the West was the "ethnocentrism" of Europe, that is, "all perception is made through the lenses of one's own system of values and belief" (15). Therefore by discounting African value systems and beliefs the West ended up painting a picture of Africa that was light years away from reality. This thus accounts for why for the most part the evolution of modern African literature is often discussed against the background of reaction. The most urgent

task for writers at the point in time, whether in diaspora or on the continent, was that of the obligation to set the record straight. This much Chinua Achebe (1986: np) testifies to in his conversation with Nuruddin Farah, that is, the need to refute stories falsely told about Africans for Africans by the West. For, the ethnocentric frame of western narratives inspired through travels guided the unfolding of many of the tales.

Thus in the imperial travel of Europe to the rest of the world, the first order of operation became the denial of other peoples' humanity and progress. This view in empirical terms is the more illuminated in the reflection of Fredrick Jameson (2002: 1) about modernity and the idea of the modern. It is indeed about:

the asceticism of the modern... or its phallogentrism; the authoritarianism and even the occasional repressiveness of the modern; the teleology of the modernist aesthetic [*and by implication imperialism*] as it proceeded on triumphalistically from the newer to the newest...

The credo of modernity was characteristically domineering and intolerant of other forms of ontology. If then here is a view of the modernity propagated by the West, especially with postcolonial discourse, it becomes necessary to examine the substance of its operation and the pragmatism of its agencies. Travel, that is, imperial travel, within the context of this study, deserves some critique. Without doubt, travel was a heraldic agency of colonialism. To put it in other words, the agenda of western colonialism in other regions of the world from its earliest stage would not have been possible without the recourse to travel and exploration of these regions. The substance of the triumph of the various travels rested on one thing: the ordering of difference. It was basically about casting the natives of any of the regions in bad moulds in order to justify the capitalist tendencies of the travels. The natives had to be defined by their backwardness in order to find a ground for the elimination and domination strategies that would follow. It was through this way that travels heralded modernity, which then, as it is now was "always a concept of otherness" (Jameson 211).

An excursion into the travel accounts of the imperial West reveals that perhaps the first instance of the ordering of difference for the imposition of modernity was in the area of naming of natives as cannibals. This has since become a vital aspect of postcolonial

criticism. Cannibalism as a concept dates back to Columbus' travel to the Americas in the 15th century and his identification of the native Indians as 'Canibals', an apparently innocent term that has acquired all manner of negative denotations and connotations ever since. If the Spanish traveller in his account shows the reaction that comes with an encounter with a strange people, for modernity to have his way, the native Arawaks were divided by Columbus' typology which eventually placed a negative tag on the Caribs, who in actual fact put up an opposition to the incursion on their land by strangers, as against the Arawaks, who were ready to accept the supremacy and capitalist posture of the travellers. This in the words of Ted Motohashi (1999: 84) was an illustration of "naming and reciprocity." And it does not matter afterward when the British, as late adventurers into the project of imperialism, launched a foray into the same continent. If any reason was ever given for the elimination of the natives, it was, one way or the other, because they were cannibals, men cast in the mould of primitivism to the extent of consuming fellow human flesh. The elimination was thus justified by the need to propagate modernity and universalize progress.

If the above is appropriately gleaned within the categorization of what Steve Clark (1999: 81) terms "prefigurations of empire", the manifestation of modernity's propagation in Africa from the 19th century up to about the first half of the 20th century cannot be separated from its acceleration through what in Ernest Mandel's estimation was capitalism of machinery revolution which unfurled in three epochs (Fredrick Jameson 2004: 567-8). In specific terms, it produced a transmutation of travel-based modernity in the epoch of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade into territorial occupation that brought about a full-blown execution of the sentiments of modernity in Africa as it was in other parts especially Asia. Indeed the idea of progress was about the imposition of the linearity of western knowledge (Vilem Flusser 2007: 20) upon all after the land had been mapped out and branded based on the whims and caprices of colonial powers. Modernity, considered from this angle, blended with the notion of imperialism and served Europe's condescending imagination as "civilization taking an outward journey" (Andrew Smith 2004: 244).

The veritable substance of this project of modernity mediated through imperialism was the establishment and consolidation of Christianity and western forms of education. Malawi under British rule was no exception. The acquisition of western education especially during and after colonialism stood out as an in-ignorable index not only of modernity but also of modernization. The presentation of the world of writing to the colonies was significant for many reasons; not the least was the counter-factual values it would later assume in the hands of the colonized. For if colonialism had thrived then on the intended instruction to the colonized through the constructed utopia about the imperial metropolis of the West, making it serve as a space, beautiful and urbanely perfect, without the barbarism and cannibalism of the colony, it was also because colonial literature romanticized the agenda as a symbol of western conquest (Ted Motohashi 1999: 85). The idea of the evolution of the metropolitan cities, Michel Foucault (1994: 351) reveals, was to equate and replicate the advancement of the culture itself. The success of modernity however, also brought about a circumscription in the directions travel could take. To aspire and acquire the best of modernity, travel had to also be made by a privileged group of the colonized who were expected to find the preachments of modernity in the West exquisitely faultless and confirm the civilization of the colonizer as against the barbarity and cannibalism of the colonized. This trend has however since multiplied in various other forms. This is because besides acquiring knowledge in the former colonial capitals, postcolonial “figures who address the metropolis using the techniques, the discourses, the very weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European, now adapt[ed] [the techniques] for insurgency or revisionism at the very heart of the Western centre” (Edward Said 1990: 29). The implication of the foregoing is that the course of modernity now necessitates a global nomadism propelled towards sites of primitivism and displaced premodern cultures, (Greg Richards and Julie Wilson 2004: 5), that is, a renewed attempt to rediscover and appreciate relics of cultures overrun by modernity, especially in the formerly colonized spaces. By the same token, the implication also simultaneously and more importantly, induces in the formerly colonized a nomadism committed to exposing and circumventing the fault lines of Western sophistication made popular in the colonies through education

and writing. It is against this backdrop that a reading of Mapanje's "Sketches from London" in *Of Chameleons and Gods* makes a compelling focus of discussion.

Modernity under Postcolonial Scrutiny in London

Most often read as a subsumation of the dominant criticism of a postcolonial Malawi,³⁸ the tendency is to gloss over the discreet argument that "Sketches from London" in Mapanje's *Of Chameleons and Gods* raises. To the extent that the section actually makes sense within the dominant argument of postcolonial disillusionment and repressive measures of the state, it can also be viewed against the discourse of modernity. By so doing, it is possible to reclaim the discreet argument that the section raises on the merit of the obvious questions it raises and explore the important issues that are immanently implicated. The fact that the section provides an interlude in a long criticism of the Malawian postcolonial state is in itself significant. If the nation is a product of a colonial invention, it is important to examine how the dynamics of the imperial project try to exact influence beyond the spatial enclave of the formerly colonized state. That modernity was a product of the Enlightenment can as well be taken for granted; but that it makes its point most clearly through knowledge is a fact that demands some engagement at this point. The principle of "inner logic" (Habermas in Zach-Williams 2004: 22) by which the Enlightenment evolved already indicates the tendency to impose a unilateral and provincial ideal on the rest of the world as if it were inherently so. This was perhaps most efficiently mediated through the agency of the knowledge of that "inner logic", as a measure by which development could be ascertained. The agency to which western knowledge was put resulted in the presentation of western education as the ultimate for the colonies. The travel or journey to the West by the formerly colonized then, as it still applies today for the pursuit of education, is an indication of the readiness to participate in a kind of universal orientation towards development. For as David Harvey has argued, the teleology of modernity is made practicable in the application of accumulated

³⁸See Leroy Vail, and Landeg White, (199) and Landeg White (1995).

“knowledge generated by many individuals working freely and creatively for the pursuit of human emancipation and the enrichment of daily life” (cited in Zach-Williams 22).

If such premium is placed on knowledge and packaged in an innocuous manner to the colonized, it is understandable why its acquisition should be that compelling. Promising in its intimacy, the acquisition of western education by the colonized provides an occasion to confirm the absolute modes of rationality that the West espouses. The pursuit of such rational abstraction becomes an individuated attempt to extend the frontiers of learning. It is also a way of participating in the civilization from an intimate perspective as the whole logic of development, which is measured in infrastructural and industrial terms, is supposed to be concretely witnessed by the colonized or formerly colonized in the western metropolis. Ultimately this is intended to enhance and hasten the rate of growth in the formerly colonized; it does not matter that such development indices are yet to be instantiated in the postcolony. In any case, by posing as a superior and desirable experience, the journey that such curiosity for western education engenders becomes so overwhelming in the postcolony that the whole land, that is, the immediate community of the lucky scholar, is caught in its euphoria. An illustration of this euphoria is therefore what we encounter first in the opening poem, “Handshakes and Best Wishes”:

Late. The heat of September afternoons
Pours hardening your face, cracking your lips
Airport hustle, hubbub, bags and bag slips
In the balcony above the disciples toss
To expected final handshakes and the best wishes
But their zealous hands must falter as a rush
Hand nervously alarms towards the runway
Sentence: Oh, well... drink from the source!

In truth there had been enough handshakes
The village neighbour cursing his son for
‘Getting out through the school window, shaming me!’
The Chief with a bubbling calabash hoping
His best wishes brought back overflowing calabashes
The girl-cousin declaring another marriage postponed—
‘A rabbit must have run between your legs, you!’
And mother’s dry twig pecking at the sere earth, quiet.

The handshakes and best wishes were many and
As we are spared more today: the choking gossip
And the extravagant pomp and speeches; even
The captain’s beaten apology for the delay at

Such a pre-journey excitement, which substantially relies on the deployment of dramatic monologue in acknowledgment of the communal goodwill about the journey, is also significant in the sense that looking back at post-independence Malawi, one realizes how the modernity of Western Europe has become consciously infused into the national psyche by the state. For instance, Lupenga Mphande (1996: 80) engages what he calls the “(un)making of cultural tradition” in the Malawian milieu. In retrospect, he suggests that within this context there is a sense in which Edward Said’s contention about the mediation of imperialism as manifesting not only from the centre of the mother-country to the periphery, but also within the periphery, finds cogency in the Malawian situation during the autocracy of Banda. This he argues further is manifest in many areas, which among other things, includes the making of Banda as an enigma with respect to his fastidious English style of dressing even when the tropical weather of Malawi is not propitious for it (81). But perhaps a more telling attitude that reinforces this contention is Banda’s view on who should qualify to teach in Kamuzu Academy and the University of Malawi. Says Banda himself: “when I built Kamuzu Academy and the University of Malawi, I decreed that anybody who does not know Latin, Greek and Ancient History cannot teach at this school” (87). In this case, it should then be understandable why the knowledge of the prospects of encountering western education from what is considered its “source” should bring about so much excitement. It is the more so as western education in this context is regarded as a vital harbinger of modernity.

To elaborate further on the pre-journey excitement and the unequalled multiplier effects that it creates, it is apposite to consider the issue as captured in the poem from the angle of the creation and maintenance of difference which modernity through colonialism foisted on the colonizer and the colonized. With precise reference to colonial knowledge and its categorization, the response it creates in the colonized is nothing but that of inferiority. This is because such knowledge as acquired in the colony “had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as “Other”... this kind of knowledge is internal, not external” (Hall in Loomba 2000: 182). Therefore, an opportunity to become part of the privileged few to benefit from the place-based benevolence of western knowledge

through a journey in pursuit of higher learning naturally induces some measure of envy, curiosity, condemnation of whoever has failed to take the advantage of it, among others. This is exactly the import of the expletives that parents pour on their wards for “Getting out through the school window, shaming me!”; or the casting of the acquisition of the knowledge as an acquisition of a goldmine through which “overflowing calabashes” are expected to be brought back for the “The Chief”. It then stands to reason why apologies pour from every corner over delays arising from logistics of transit itinerary, which possibly explains the allusion to the Idi Amin and the question of “the pass” released. On this score, experiencing modernity first hand in Britain for African citizens that were formerly colonized people should just be as promising as it is exciting. On the one hand, it appears to enhance the status of the beneficiaries, and on the other, provides an opportunity to behold the concrete beauties of modernity from “the source”.

But as Jane Jacobs (1996: 2) observes, the Manichaean binary that colonialism constructs through the demonization of the colonized, and by implication, the construction of the metropolitan self as refined and desirable, cannot sustain its fixity. This is precisely because the colonized other in the process of his journey to the western metropolis does not act true to type in endorsing the perspective of the colonizer. In other words, the construct of civilization and urbanity, made most potent through racial sentiments of superiority, is threatened in the metropolis by the colonized. The metaphoric urge to drink from the “source”, which is expected to begin with arrival in London cannot but take a counter-productive turn. Reflecting on this further, one realizes that once the colonized transcends the boundaries of indigenous knowledge, he would have cause to be critical of the received notions about empire. This in itself is not so much because he just has to circumscribe the formerly internalized conception, but because the realities often present themselves to the contrary. The subsequent poems in this section illustrate why this critical position of the colonized is justified. In the opening stanza of the eponymous poem, “Sketches from London”, the persona cannot help but make the following remarks in reaction to the construct of London as the “source”:

The source: flaming cardboard boxes with squeaking
Staircases. Like smoked cockroaches we sneak out

Of peeling caches; the conduits bleak behind plate-
Glass; the concrete blocks grey, unmoved — the bush
Won't do. Plastic litterbags burst open drip in mews
Poodles' muck on pavements, the ladies don't mind
Refuse collectors went on strike weeks and weeks ago
Glory be! Whoever said there was a fountain here? (32)

The arrival at “the source” is a validation of what Iain Chambers (1994: 23) calls “the arrival at the centre of the previously peripheral and the marginal”. If his past was inundated by indoctrinations about the exquisite values of the western metropolis as a paragon of modernity, the available evidence of modernity which the colonized witnesses in the metropolis becomes a matter for review and revision. The question then becomes to what extent can one accept the notion of an immaculate source when the first intimate interaction with its social and architectural formations point to the contrary, much as they try to confirm the doctrinaire perception? It is then understandable why the persona raises questions about various issues as encountered first-hand. The disobliging sight that he is confronted with at the source is overwhelming. Where both the architectural and environmental sight reeks of decay and abandon, making an eyesore of the entire metropolitan space, it should then go without saying that the modern metropolitan migrant figure with an antecedent of colonization can appropriately be empowered to rewrite the narrative of the master. This is part of why his presence “disturbs a previous order” (Chambers 23).

Further, the evidence of the disturbance that the migrant causes takes one back to the question of cannibalism as the next stanza provides the migrant greater insight into empire's pretension to civility as against the barbarism of the colonized. The testimony again calls to question the credentials of welfarism that constituted part of the informing *raisondetre* for the prosecution of the agenda of modernity in the former colonies. What is more, the whole idea of encouraging the acquisition of western knowledge especially through formal means, as the one in which the persona is involved, is, in principle, to the end of executing such welfarist ideals in the postcolony. But by not living up to expectation in the estimation of the formerly colonized persona, there is an engendering of a postcolonial critique that continually interrogates the very basis upon which the conceptual drift was laid; this is especially because of the rift between the conceptual

aspiration and its empirical practice. It accounts for why “in post-coloniality, every metropolitan definition is dislodged. The general mode for the post-colonial is citation, re-inscription, rerouting the postcolonial” (Spivak in Chambers 23).

If the discourse of cannibalism is foregrounded in reciprocity and may be discovered in various shades and hues (Ted Motohashi 1999: 99), then the stanza demonstrates this location of cannibalism strangely within the pale of the avowed centre of civilization. By telling a most horrible tale of a deflationary incident at “Thames Banks”, the persona questions the myth of progress whose semiotic signification is foregrounded in narratives of British nationalism.³⁹ For right at the bank of this highly feted river the following heinous act took place; besides as a quotidian experience that lasted for about thirty years, this form of cannibalism cannot be denied in the culture of the space that prided itself on refinement. What is more, the poet relies on the imagery of horror to drive home his point:

...Thames
Banks: they picked up a dead woman the other day
Her lungs were found wrapped up in World War soot
She must have been living here thirty years, they said. (32)

As if this were not enough, the stanza proceeds to expose another angle to the possibility of interrogating British modernity and modernization prototypes precisely because of the ease with which acts of cannibalism have been glamorized and elevated to the status of tourist attraction. This is the more curious for the persona because it revolves around the memory of King Henry:

The Tower: King Henry’ abattoirs. His wives’ regalia
Still trail amid the steaming guillotines
The bath tubs are meticulously kept for ten pence. (32)⁴⁰

³⁹ Although Conrad was only a naturalized British, his works, especially *Heart of Darkness* did much to promote British nationalism. The juxtaposition of British waterscape as symbolized by River Thames with great endowments of navigation as against River Congo, which lacks such navigatory properties, goes to show the deployment of literature in the service of imperialism.

⁴⁰ King Henry VIII (1491-1547) might not be as favoured in history as his father (Henry VII) when it comes to wars and battles of unification. This is because the record of bloodshed remains enormously scandalous, and linked primarily with his desperation to have a male heir. If this primarily led to the severance of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church, it also became the main reason why he became notorious for the promulgation of various suppressive acts, through which many of the

The preservation of the memory of a human abattoir and that of contraptions employed in the termination of human lives cannot be said to have been interrogated only because travellers, as Spufford contends, are “notoriously bad at saying why” (Steve Clark 1996: 13). On the contrary, one must probe further into the informing consciousness of this interrogation. Part of the anthropological grounds upon which colonialism thrived in the African colonies especially was the legitimization of western imperialism through the construct of the “doctrine of polygenism” the subtext of which apportioned inferiority to the black race.⁴¹ It was this that provided the false valence for the colonizer to affirm his superiority in the colonies and to impose a western provincialized epistemic order on Africa in the name of modernity. It accounts for why such interrogation could be said to be an attempt on the part of Mapanje to engage in what James Ferguson (2005: 166) designates as efforts at “decomposing modernity”.

Still preoccupied with the metaphor of drinking from the source, the next title advances a critical stance on the pretension of modernity and modernization. Perhaps just as colonial textuality engages African “primitivism” from different angles, this section of the collection applies its lenses to different aspects of British life as a reciprocal indication of the colonial itinerary in the colonies. Once again, the question of western epistemic order, despite its attraction, receives further scrutiny, not least because at this point the condition of exile cannot preclude engagement with the situation in the homeland. Utilizing the natural status of the exiled personality whose knowledge of home and interaction with outside can result in some kind of objective reflection about both the distant space of home and the alienating aura of exile (Carine Mardorossian 2002: 16), the metaphor of river sources reverberates with a comparison that straddles Malawi and Britain. This is the basic argument in “Drinking the Water from its Source”. Shire River in this instance may not be different from River Thames. If the tendency for beneficiaries of Shire River is to ignore or forget the flipside concerning its sources, this is because

institutions and individuals perceived to oppose to his wish were executed, usually over trumped-up charges. The “guillotine” in the poem must be referring to the reminder of his bloodshed, and the “wives’ regalia”, his record for having been married to six women, an uncommon pattern in English monarchy.

⁴¹ James Ferguson, 2005: 169.

The gliding Shire River mystifies us watering
Our golden lives, and tantalized we then conclude
The source of the waters must be more exotic. (33)

However, the import of this epigrammatic truth is to transcend its complacent veracity in order to subject it to critical interrogation. And once this is done, an alternative truth emerges which, though disobliging, is no less axiomatic. For

...drinking water far from the sources we often
Exalt our images heedless of the minor details:
Streams gather debris from antique sun-spots
Depositing the silt onto infinite sand-beds. (33)⁴²

Conceding to this other less popular fact about river sources is crucial as it serves as an analogous springboard for the poet to consider in the same way the flip sides of modernity in Britain. The whole idea of progress that is at the centre of modernity and modernization is not without its attractions, and like the Shire River, “mystifies” its beneficiaries from the post-colonial nations. But the “salvation”, both secular and sacred, it preaches through the legacy of “the dead empire”, cannot be said to be absolutely defined by the “purity” of its flow. That is, once the source or sources of the project are scrutinized, the not so palatable truths about empire begin to emerge, which is why for all the progress it espouses, the propriety of giving a balanced view of the phenomenon necessitates that one considers the other apparently “minor” but grievous “details” that are crucially concomitant with modernity. Moreover, if Britain to the formerly colonized is the home of modernity and modernization, then considering the logic of the argument Mapanje concludes:

⁴² Perhaps one should add that Mapanje in his account on the Banda years reveals that, part of his (Banda’s) suppression strategies was to order the arrest, binding and blind-folding of “supposed dissidents”, shoved into bags and dumped in the Shire River. See Jack Mapanje 2001. If such revelation on the pollution to which the Shire River is horrifying, it cannot be said to be exclusive. For Jonathan Raban makes a similar observation about River Thames when he writes thus in *Old Glory*: “I went for long walks by the Thames...the river, as it sluiced past their doorsteps, carried plenty of evidence of its deadliness. There were dead dogs in it, and stoved-in boats, and the occasional bloated human corpse” (19). The most important thing in this discussion, however, is how the flip sides of the worlds’ most celebrated rivers is analogous to the flip sides associated with some of the most celebrated concepts like modernity. Though the praises showered on these phenomena tend to overshadow the criticisms, the basis for the criticisms is as valid and strong.

...Drinking water from the sources
We must turn back to the peripheral mosaics of home
Revealing the depth of their natural negatives. (33)

The above poem can thus be appropriately limned as an interface between those already treated and those others remaining in the section. This is because while previous poems have highlighted some “natural negatives” of Britain, beginning with the arrival scene to the incidents of “Thames Banks” and those of “The Tower”, subsequent poems still offer similar kaleidoscopic comments about the other “peripheral mosaics of home”. This observation is important because it also raises questions about the status of Mapanje as an exile whose persuasion is comparable to that of a wanderer and stranger. Not prepared to settle down in his new space, the wanderer is critical of every situation less because of his unwillingness to settle and be integrated than for the consciousness of returning home as soon as his itinerary is over. This in a way explains his status in this collection, given that his mission in Britain at this time was to fulfil one of the conditions of modernization by completing his doctorate and returning immediately thereafter to his home country. Viewed against this form of experience, exile inspires wandering and whets the appetite for witnessing panoramic sights in his country of destination; this is why the sights must keep on changing. As Tibor Dessewffy (1998: 354) contends:

The wanderer, though temporarily among us, may move on at any time, stepping out from our collectively built everyday life and thereby questioning it... Metaphorically speaking, he is not entitled to own the motherland, and indeed he is often literally cut off from this opportunity... The stranger is a strange mixture of nearness and distance, for although he lives close to us, we are always haunted by the nightmare of infinity embodied in his personality. He is a menacing hurricane that can turn our everyday life, peacefully babbling in its gently sloping bed, into an overflowing cataract.⁴³

Central to the project of modernity and modernization is the fetishization of technology and technologization. Going back to Ernest Mandel’s periodization of technological revolution, one realizes how the success of the transition from rudimentary technology to “machine production of electronic and nuclear-powered apparatuses” (Fredrick Jameson 2004: 569) was deployed as a key strategy in the propagation of modernity in the era of

⁴³ The location of Mapanje within the matrix of wanderer and stranger necessary in view of the fact that there is a detachment that pervades the tone of his exile poetry in this collection when compared with the struggle for inclusion that one finds in his second and current form of exile as instantiated in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* and as will be shortly discussed in this chapter.

colonialism. If the western form of modernity ever since its conscious conception and practice by the West has always been about otherness (Jameson 2002: 111), this is arguably because the measure of otherness has always been based on the analysis of the cleavage evinced between the industrialized imperial self and the non-industrialized (usually) colonized other. And thus promoted as the ultimate index of development, the challenge for the formerly colonized has always been how to convert the aspiration for industrialization into a concretely provincial experience. In fact, it will not be out of order to regard this aspiration, desirable as it is, as another instance of “postcolonial mimicry”. Nevertheless, for the entire “source” that Britain constitutes in the evaluation of the development mediated through technology, there is another angle to it which rubs off on the stifling of human relations and, one may add, prefigures the ascension of a post-humanist credo.⁴⁴ This is the preoccupation of “The First Train to Liverpool”, a poem which defies the mystifying powers of technology in order to point out its “natural negatives”. Doing this for Mapanje involves taking a comparative approach between the patently technologized space of Britain and the still communal and sparsely technologized Malawi. It also involves an epistolary deployment as an alternative title to the poem is “A Letter for Angela”:

No last minute haggling about prices
 Of curry-chicken first at Balaka
 No stinking Afro-wigs into your mouths
 No leaping from bags of peanuts into
 Baskets of tomato, cheerfully quarrelling
 Nor finally sitting on half a buttock
 Euston station contacts and dialogues
 Through wires and innumerable papers
 Only comfort welcomes aboard a sudden silence
 That soon reigns, our eyes weighing and
 Quickly avoiding each other between
 The beverages and the local papers.

Runcorn station welcomes aboard a haunting
 Quiet where men obviously build more paper
 Walls against other men. No curios, no mats
 No herbs sell through windows. No mothers
 Suckle their crying babies. No jokes about
 The rains held up by your charms this year!

⁴⁴ Among other things, posthumanism valorizes the replacement of the human essence with machines, partly as a way of pointing to the crisis in humanism; despite its apparent nihilism that renders it suspect (although just like any other neologism), its rebellion against humanism has continued to engage scholars. See Niel Badmington 2000.

At Lime Street itself, not even a drunk staggers
Out perhaps announcing his newly acquired
Cornerstones. Only recorded voices bid you
Come again before the engulfing impenetrable
Crowds. But the maddening quiet soon recedes
Locating a bright tarnished face once known. (34)

Thus values of technology in their most sophisticated stage may be desirable, they are nonetheless not without their deficits which principally authorize an aura of artificiality and “walling” between social interactions and deplete humanity at the same time. Reminiscent of Senghor’s “New York”,⁴⁵ this poem raises questions about the limits of technology with respect to what happens when its operations override the values of human interaction. The otherness that modernity creates through technology between the colonizer and the colonized is thus reversed through a re-inscription that holds up the fault lines of mutual human estrangement. The “maddening quiet” that results from the transportation arrangement thus fails in a way to assure social interaction, a natural and defining attribute of humanity which ordinarily should be taken for granted. The imagery of a space in which “men obviously build more paper/ Walls against other men” goes to the very root of the earliest signification of industrial revolution which promoted individualism and deemphasised communalism. If this then was considered a giant stride for humanity, the subsequent uses for which modernity deploys technology in the West betrays an overkill of its practice. Such experience renders suspect modernity’s apologia and affirmation that it “promised to liberate humanity from irrationality... and the ‘dark side of human nature’” (Alfred Zack-Williams 2004: 22). Where technology-based liberation turns out to be an estrangement of man from man, then such liberation can as well be gleaned as counter-productive as it is nothing but an unwitting captivity of humanity to the thralldom of machinery. Its rationality is no less suspicious. Relying on a consistent deployment of figures of contrast, Mapanje in this poem illustrates with imagistic conjuring of the antimonies of cold individualism and the excited but interactive values of communal existence, leaving the reader in the end to locate where he stands, especially in a context where the appreciation and social practices of modernity are taken too far. That is, by contrasting interactive activities of home and the cold, exclusionary structures of communication in London metropolis, Mapanje exploits the

⁴⁵ See John Reed and Clive Wake 1965.

formal creative space of the “isolated, intelligent, contemplative observer-self” of the lyric tradition which ultimately produces a redemptive moment of re-constitution often articulated through a trope of irony (David Attwell 2005:145).

Subtlety is central to the execution of modernity’s and by implication colonialism’s project (Satish Aikant 2000: 338). The way it confronts the colonized is so disguised and flagged as innocuous that it overwhelms him before long. This is the account of the impact of modernity in every part of the world where its western form has been propagated. The attraction it has for its beneficiaries and victims alike often stems from the manner of its presentation. Its grave consequences are however hard to perceive as it makes pretension to some kind of refinement and urbanity that belie its intent on dispossession and disorientation. Usually, by making or presenting the epistemic order of the colonized as its foil, modernity is quick to point to the obvious crudity and non-sophistication of the colonized. In spatial and infrastructural terms, it for instance points out the extent of its control over Nature and the refinement and taming it can bring to bear on her. Where this kind of taming is not possible, the obvious crudity of nature is presented as overwhelming and indicative of backwardness as in the representation of Africa. But Mapanje circumscribes such conception which underlies the comprehension of modernity when he compares in “Travelling in London Tubes”, the clime and the scenario of dust in Malawi with the impact of dust in “London Tubes” on people and its implication for their health. Ultimately his verdict finds “dust” at home less dangerous than “dust”, that is, the pollution in “London tubes”. There may indeed be “something funny about the dust back home”, yet you can avoid it all so too easily” on those dusty roads. But in London “even the dust is subtle”; and with “travelling in those lovely tubes”,

... it is not until the day is out
if you should stand at your window
facing the breeze apparently blowing cool
it is not until your sudden
aitchoo!
that you begin to see how much
charcoal was in your nose
eye
lungs (36)

The last poem in the section, “From Florrie Abraham Witness” is preoccupied with the contradictions and conflicts of Christian sectarian faiths in Britain. But more importantly, it also brings one to the issue of Mapanje’s pervasive deployment of irony in his exilic interrogation of the concept and practice of modernity and how this contributes pivotally to the realization of a poetic mission. His sense of irony and the attendant humour that rules the world of his exilic reflection on the western epistemic order blends with his boldness to confront postcolonial power in the other sections of the collection. A poetic theorist in his own right, Mapanje is famous for having recommended for poets what he calls “riddling”, the subtext of which “lies in the fact that it surprises the audience into realizing that things are not ‘patterned as they appear’” (Leroy Vail and Landeg White 1991: 285). If the foregoing is true for the postcolonial façade it confronts in the rest of the sections, it is no less true for “Sketches from London” in which it challenges the concept of modernity and demonstrates with the curiosity and insightfulness reminiscent of an oral poet that, its orders may not be as innocuous as they appear after all.

On the whole, “Sketches from London” demonstrates and validates at the same time bell hook’s assertion that for the colonized or formerly colonized, “It is the act of speech, of ‘talking back’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject — the liberated voice” (Chris Weedon 2004: 154). From another angle, on a last note, it is important to remark that Mapanje’s experience of exile, rather than yielding to “apathetic passivity” (Tibor Dessewffy 1998: 360) owing to the impact of strangeness and exile in London, which is the case for some writers confronted with the bitter reality of uprooting, serves as a catalyst for the versification of “exceptional creativity”. However, as will be subsequently examined in the remaining part of this chapter, return to Malawi and the bitter experience of imprisonment have impacted on the poet in his second and present state of exile in a manner that cannot be said to indulge the light humours of “Sketches from London.” The current challenge is more about how to fit into a transnational identity and win a considerable measure of inclusion despite the obvious exclusionary measures of Britain. That is, if his identity in “Sketches from London” is that of a wanderer and stranger passing through and making

remarks on issues of modernity often taken for granted, his identity in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* is that of the exile that must make Britain home while return to original home may be an issue for other times.

Exile and Transnationalism in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*

Transnationalism is implicated in the discourse of exile. The assertion stems from the fact that virtually every discussion of the postcolonial condition is hinged on the tendency of groups and peoples to transcend their homes/ countries of origin and share a previously unfamiliar country of destination. With the passage of time such country of destination begins to offer prospects of exercising rights of citizenship; but more often than not, the question of the exercise of rights comes with the resolve on the part of the exile to take the initiative, which, necessary as it is, is realized through an aggressive demand and self-affirmation. The exile or immigrant does appropriate the other country of destination while not necessarily making a disavowal of the original home left behind. Put differently, transnationalism is expressed in the simultaneous straddling of two or more nations at the same time by an individual without expressing reservations about the claim to all, or the awkwardness the thought of it conjures. Identity in this context defies fixity along spatial lines as a kind of transgressive ambiguity and consciousness becomes a better way of qualifying any individual implicated in this condition. However, this is not to ignore the fact that the condition, especially in contemporary times, is a telling indication of humanity's entrance into an era of global disruption instantiated by the prospects of accelerated movement of people across spaces (Albert Memmi 2006: 73).

More specifically, with relation to the postcolony it is important to remark that transnational identities are fast becoming a defining trope of its citizens. The disruption which usually results in the contemplation of movement to the West points to the fact of the failure of modernity's project itself. This is because when critically considered, transnationalism, even with the most charitable of analyses, strikes one as riddled with many contradictions. In other words, beyond the celebratory aura usually identified with the concept especially in the way it departs from the arbitrariness of the unilateral place-

based imposition of the nation, by offering some latitude and liberation from monopolistic nationalist strictures, the multiplicity of citizenship it espouses is not without its shortcomings. These shortcomings constitute the grand paradox with which transnationalism is identified. Modernity's failure therefore stems from the knowledge that rather than translating into a replication of developmental indices often espoused and practised by the West so that its claim to universal values can be validated, it instead results more substantially in a descent into underdevelopment of the formerly colonized. As a response to this paradox of expectation in the postcolony the tendency is for individuals to seek modernity's pragmatic possibilities in the countries of the West perceived especially to be its originators. The implication of this is that modernity's failure is immediately manifest in the failure of the postcolonial states. The transnational contemplation that follows is thus best understood when one critically views its linear but compelling historiography: "transnationalism and... its dynamic are conditioned by the histories of colonisation, decolonisation and postcolonialism" (Laura Chernaik 1999: 80).

It, moreover, implies that if the postcolonial is today defined by a chronic vulnerability to movement or spatial transgression, one must probe further into this historiography to ascertain how its evolution directly and indirectly impinged on the African postcolonial identity. To begin with, the informing teleology of colonialism was itself conditioned by the precursory ideological order of modernity, which was itself inspired by the Reformation and the Enlightenment in that temporal order. But in concentrating on modernity in this discussion and how it impacted negatively on the history of postcolonial states, Bruce Berman's essay "The Ordeal of Modernity in an Age of Terror" (2006) will be useful. Guided in the West essentially by a form of secularization and radical transformation in the ascension of industrial capitalism, the culture of modernity produced an epistemic order that radicalized its system and recorded some leaps in the enhancement of living (3-4). The journey that brought modernity to the colonies however was thoroughly compromised through the flawed foundation upon which it was laid. Further discussion on this will no doubt reveal the multiple complicities through which this was achieved. In the meanwhile, the basic contradictions of the interaction with the itinerant culture of modernity were ingrained in the tendency

of the African and Asian political elites to desire western modernity without a preparation to yield to its terms of transformation. So for the non-western powers then, as can still be attested now

Their characteristic response was an attempt at a defensive, conservative modernization, moving from the purchase of modern weapons to seeking to develop the means of making them. This selective modernity, taking from the West only what would sustain and enhance their power. It was, however, grounded in the untenable contradiction of seeking the science and technology that they believed was the basis of Western power, but rejecting the secular culture of modernity that threatened to dissolve the hegemonic cosmologies, religious systems, and moral economies on which their power and institutions were based. (7)

If the above encapsulates the immediate crisis antecedent to the decisive colonization of Africa consequent upon the scramble for and partition of Africa, the era of western colonial occupation in the account of Berman further reveals that it was characterized by collusion between the colonial officials and the local political elite whose understanding of modernity was to institute “patron-client relationships” which subsequently “became the dominant social relation of power, the fundamental idiom of politics, and the mode of access to the resources of modernity” (8). Needless to say, the moral poser that arose from this anomaly which granted privileges to a few powerful cliques during colonialism remained unresolved. What is more, this tendency to preserve privilege for a negligible few to the detriment of the masses was introduced and consolidated in the anti-colonialist struggle that produced the idea of decolonization. The fault lines of this culture produced all forms of ethnic identities by which the project of decolonization was prosecuted. And being so flawed, only minimal “progress toward modernity appeared to be occurring through the rhizomes of ethnicity and patronage that persisted even when elected governments were replaced by military regimes and increasingly authoritarian civilian governments” (11). The authoritarian regimes that run the African postcolonial states nevertheless remain malleable to the capitalist goals of modernity as designed by the West. Not being critical enough to be able to tell the difference between the intention and action of modernity, the Third World is hooked today by what Mike Davis calls “the brutal tectonics of neo-liberal globalization” (Berman 11). This illustrates the third unit of the spectrum of the historiography. But more profoundly still, here lies the basis on which one can agree with Laura Chernaik (1999: 86) that “We can argue that the modernity that was called for never really took place, never really arrived”.

This kind of brief illustration of the historiography of transnationalism is necessary in view of the fact that the Malawian nation against whose social imaginary the discussion of exilic transnationalism is going to be examined in Mapanje's *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* fits so appropriately into the question of the failure of modernity in Africa. But first it is apposite to acknowledge that the study of the "New Poems" section in the collection will not be compelling enough, if one ignores the interface between this recent exilic reflection and the sustained preoccupation of Mapanje's previous collections after *Of Chameleons and Gods*. Both *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* and *Skipping without Ropes* provide enthralling, if shocking revelations on the unmaking of a postcolonial state and the unenviable impact of modernity on the African state. Taken for granted that the colonial power established the culture of "clientelism" and privileged a few, among the elite, the Malawi that President Hastings Kamuzu Banda ran was typically that of civilian autocracy. His pattern of autocracy and grip on the nation was so grim as to inspire a consistent comparison of the land with "Chingwe's hole" in the poetry of Mapanje. Banda's career of autocracy which held out for more than three decades from independence is recounted thus:

In many respects, Malawi's history has followed the pattern shared by many other African nations. After decades of exploitation under British rule, an organized political resistance movement directed by the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) led to Malawian independence in 1964. Dreams of self-determination and a more equitable distribution of resources and wealth were quickly revealed to be illusions, however, as the NAC transformed itself from an independence movement into Malawi's sole political party, Malawi Congress Party (MCP), and as Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the figurehead of the independence movement, quickly consolidated power within that party. For thirty years, the people of Malawi suffered under a system no more democratic or less exploitative than the colonial order (David Jefferess 2000: 106-107).

The bastardization of power to please his foreign collaborators and marginalize the people whose mandate brought him to power was done through the autocratic promotion of members of his immediate family to the level of strategic state officials. As Berman (10) has argued, the pattern of political process in the postcolonial states is about nothing but the "politics of the belly". Explaining further, he sees the process as the "arena of political tribalism, not the moral ethnicity of a community of rights and obligations against the competing interests of rival ethnicities [to the extent that there is hardly any

basis for] trust in the state as an impersonal arbiter of conflict or an honest and disinterested distributor of public resources.” But the configuration of ethnic solidarity in such postcolonial states is not as generic as it seems to appear in the explication of Berman. For, with Banda his own brand of “political tribalism” had to do primarily with his mistress Cecilia Kadzamira: “it was the tale of how the permanent mistress launched the promotion of her uncles, sister and brothers and their extended family” (Jack Mapanje (2002: 182). The strategic appointment of Banda’s extended family fortified his mission of autocracy and intolerance to opposition. To achieve this more successfully, various formations like the military, the Police, the Young Pioneers, a special hit-squad, were instituted to terrorize, kill, maim, imprison and exile opposition and whoever was imagined to be a threat, genuine or otherwise, to his government. Crucially important still, Banda also instituted a complementary culture of deceit; for he “maintained order and his hold on power through intimidation while “reality” was moulded in a culture of deceit” (David Jefferess 2000: 108). This is what Mapanje himself in another essay calls “the orality of dictatorship” (2002: 178). It was perhaps for this that as a poet in such a culture of “chameleon politics” Mapanje himself turned into a poet whose creative mien and texture were no less reflective of the pervasive deceits of the state. The subterranean metaphors matched the deceit of the state and pitched him against Banda himself in a contest of wits. His response on the ban of his first collection based on the recommendation of the country’s censor board showed he was actually in a kind of contest for the soul of the nation with the country’s first President for Life. So he writes in “On Banning *Of Chameleons and Gods*”:

The fragrance of your banning order is not
Pungent enough after four years & one re-
print dear sister & your brother’s threat,
How do you enjoy squinting only
At lines without bothering to ask what even
Swallows perched on the barbed wires of your
Central Prisons already know? Who does not
Know who pokes at whose nation’s wounds raw?
& why should my poking at wounds matter more
Than your hacking at people’s innocent necks?
No, for children’s sake, unchain these truths;
Release the verse you’ve locked in your hearts! (35)

Therefore, Mapanje's other two collections can appropriately be limned as a writer's continued attempt as an intellectual to break through the dykes of state suppression and repression in order to engage power in a dialogue of truth dissent. If he dons the toga of an oral artist and is expected to enlist his service in praise of the state, he disappoints state power, for his activism and creativity cannot be located in the mien of an encomiast as he was more of a gadfly and thorn in the flesh of the state. Needless to say, his sympathy then, as it is now, was with the oppressed masses. This point also brings one to the often expressed reservations about the mediation of the postcolonial intellectual, since one could as well have his position and responsibility assumed by, say, the tax payer or union leader, social activist or parent (R. Radhakrishnan 2003: 321). The reason for such reservations, Radhakrishnan explains, is because it is not uncommon for the "the critic-intellectual" to be "divorced from the politics of solidarity and constituency." What is more, "the critic is forever looking for that radical 'elsewhere' that will validate 'perennial readings against the grain' and the intellectual is busy planning multiple transgressions to avoid being located ideologically and / or macropolitically" (321). However, this kind of poststructuralist allegation of escapism cannot, in fairness, be levelled against Mapanje, not least because his solidarity with the people cannot be denied.

The fact of his solidarity with the people as a credible symbol of social mediation runs through both his activism and arrest. And it is because of this fact that it is possible to argue that his poetry, whether written in prison or exile, has always been about exile. Indeed, Mapanje comes in the long list of African writers who have suffered imprisonment (Nadine Gordimer 1992:6). But it is also important to reflect on how his imprisonment and torture speak to the Malawian colonial memory and its adoption in the postcolonial era to silence, either fatally or otherwise, those perceived by the state to be elements of subversion. James Currey's (2008:257-8) account of the memory is important in the way it links the experience of the Malawian postcolony and the high-handedness of Banda to the antecedent of colonial repression. The most cited of the history of repression was the 1915 execution of John Chilembwe and his followers for protesting against the

recruitment and casualty of Nyasas in the First World War.⁴⁶ The ruthlessness with which colonial authorities dealt with nationalists in this period would eventually become a memorial tool deployed by the autocracy of Banda to repress those considered to be enemies of the state. However, Banda found a clever way of labelling subversion, as it would ramify any form of writing capable of being duplicated and circulated without receiving the approval of the censorship board (Lupenga Mphande 1996:81). Punishable by imprisonment, there really was no way Mapanje would have escaped imprisonment by the state, given the vibrancy and the urgency with which his poetry spread as an articulation of a national experience.

The banning of his first collection was already an indication of the alienation forced on him by the state, which means that the prison years which *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* represents does not recount or reflect on the poet's experience in isolation from that of the rest of the oppressed both within and outside prison in the country. For instance, the prologue to the collection after his unconditional release from a three year detention reads:

From the vaults of Chingwe's Hole
Come these chattering wagtails,

Desperate voices of fractured souls
Nestling on desert walls of prisons

And exiles, afflicted or self-imposed,
Laughters and ceaseless tears shed
In the chaos of invented autocracies

Now darkly out of bounds beyond
These tranquil walls of York.

Justice! (1)

Capturing his travails in detention and the eventual release, the collection is a testimony of a conscientized mind against the unconscionable disingenuities of state autocracy. *Skippping without Ropes* is an ascension of the reflection on the aberrations of state power; however, it also significantly announces in a more direct way the second commencement of

⁴⁶ Nyasaland was the designation of Malawi in the colonial years.

Mapanje's exile which has continued to date. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remark that not being totally off the trauma line that his imprisonment constituted, the collection reflects further on his experience. The section that directly deals with exile, "the impressions of exile", though unambiguous in stating the desire for a therapy "to diminish the lament of this exile club foot" (52), can be said to be more preoccupied with the excitement and euphoria of freedom from the suffocating inundations of imprisonment at home. Moreover, the challenge of settling down predominates and provides some kind of therapy for trauma with light humour here and there. This is not to say however that, overall, the collection does not make a compelling read. For his ordeals and testimonies confirm the veracity of the assertion that

The place of writers, at home and in exile, acutely reflects social and political conditions. Writers' fates provide direct testimony to those conditions, and their capacity to write makes accessible an experience that they share with many others who are less artistically endowed. (Jane Guyer 1997: ix)

But it is to "New Poems" in the *Last of the Sweet Bananas* that one must turn to assess the full impact of exile on the writer and the challenges it throws up within the ambience of transnationalism. If this section of the chapter began with the deficits of the concept that is not to say, however, that that is all there is to it. This is particularly so if one takes as instructive the assertion that transnational formations "may [also] encompass the economy; politics; the definition of individual, group, and national identities; or the territorialization and reterritorialization of spatial practices of spatial practices" (Clara Irazabal 2004:160). Therefore the status that is conferred on the exile in this circumstance is no longer that of a stranger in his country of destination; he is, furthermore, not completely severed from happenings in his country of origin. The clarification is crucial in view of the fact that while both the intermediate collections may have attuned one to the annunciation of a second arrival of the exile in the United Kingdom, and its immediate attendant challenge of settlement, it is in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* that one encounters a transnational kind of exilic existence as the poet takes up the challenge of redefining his relationship to both countries of origin and destination. There may have been mere "reflections" on and observations about exile in the previous collections, but *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* objectifies the process of involvement in the condition of exile, not as an outsider to the

host country, but as an immigrant-insider whose rights must be defined and defended, and whose involvement as a stake holder in the social configurations must be taken seriously. Simultaneously, one also finds a continual transcendental backward reach towards the country of origin, confirming again the contention that transnationalism must be seen “as interlocked, enmeshed, mutually constitutive social formations” (M. Smith in Irazabal 160).

The understanding of home in this case becomes doubly ambiguous. For both the country of origin and that of destination are conjured up in the imagination of the transmigrant as home to which he must be simultaneously attached. Not considering himself a stranger to neither of the homes, the sense of exile that accompanies their existence is no longer patently couched in overwhelming lamentations about the forced migration that is at the core of their double identity. So “transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nations” (Linda Basch 1995: 7). Needless to say, that those salient traits by which a transmigrant is identified in his home country are likely to be utilized in his country of destination. Specifically for writers and artists for whom solidarity with the oppressed has become a commitment, the challenge is thus that of reaching their readers and audiences no longer in one but two or more countries with which they identify. Their community for that matter can be limned as an “imagined transnational community”, a coinage which Daniel Mato (2003: 282) cautions should not be read as following from Benedict Anderson’s conception of the “imagined”. This is because there is an uncommon immensity immanently gleaned in the proposed community and the mental image produced of this community is greater than the ordinary, which is why the producers of transnational representations “are not lonely spirits dreaming in a vacuum” (282). Therefore for Mapanje, the imagined transnational community straddles both the United Kingdom and Malawi on the one hand and perhaps Africa and the diaspora on the other; this is the import and value of what will be encountered in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*.

The section “New Poems” can be conveniently divided into two. The division however only goes to illustrate the poet’s straddling of multiple spaces in tune with the configuration

of a transnational identity punctuated by an exilic consciousness. While one aspect deals with questions of memory in a manner that fuses the disjunction between the past and the present, and accentuates reflections on conditions and experiences in his country of origin, the second part takes on existential issues about the space of his country of destination. The idea at this point is to treat the preoccupation of the first part and subsequently link it with the concerns of the second. Although published in 2004, the poems in the first part bring up once again the question of memory together with the important place it occupies in the understanding of a “personal past”. Yet as a poet and intellectual whose solidarity is not refracted by a poststructuralist deferral, in engaging a personal past about his country of origin, the social and the communal are also engaged to a point that confirms that the postcolonial writer, especially the African writer, is after all, a product of his society and to this society he must strive to give back what he has previously benefited (Kwame Gyekye (1997: 35). For that matter, distance should not constitute a barrier.

Perhaps one of the finest illustrations of this assertion is found in the opening poem, “The Stench of Porridge”. While on the one hand, it is reminiscent of Mapanje’s years of imprisonment without trial, it also transcends at the same time the easy yield to an interpretation of the obvious. Therefore, it is more substantially a humanitarian concern that echoes Michel Foucault’s contention that “there have indeed been studies of prisons as institutions, but very few of imprisonment as a general punitive practice in our society” (1994: 224). Put another way, the poem’s preoccupation is an ascension of the Foucauldian interrogative “*how* does one punish?” (224). In other words, there may not be questions about why certain people are subjected to punishment by the state, knowing that beyond the indelicate and unjustified tyrannical orders by which perceived enemies of the establishment are hurled into prison and detention, there is nevertheless a basis for subjecting some other people to imprisonment for reasons bordering on anti-social practices. But the crucial question within the scope of the argument in this poem is “how does one punish?” Therefore casting his mind back to his detention days, Mapanje raises a pivotal question about the condition of the prison space, and one can argue, not only in Malawi, but also in many other parts of the world, where conditions of the experience of serving out jail terms are more often than not counter productive and, ironically, an

indictment of the state whose measure of ensuring sanity in human morality goes against the very grain of this objective. The trauma that such condition breeds lasts longer than the actual terms of prisoners' sentences. That this is a matter requiring a deep reflection is borne out by the rhetorical question that follows the memory of a past prison life:

Why does the stench of porridge
With the maggots and weevils floating
The scotching heat trapped
Within reeking walls,
The irritation of shrilling
Cicadas and centipedes at night,
The hyenas forever *hooing*
The scorpion's ugly sting
Splitting down the spine,
Track us wherever we hide? (191)

The mediation of the poet on prison conditions, moreover, does more than testify on the personal because by adopting the historic present tense he touches on a matter that affects millions of people all the world over. His medium of articulation thus confers on him a responsibility that, even at its most hamstrung, must be respected. If memory is a major ground upon which the poet relies to get across to his readers, it is also important to remark that this memory relies on testifying for the accomplishment of its mission. He has however done this in a way that defies the compartmentalization to which Lawrence Langer (1991: 40) subjects oral and written testimonies when he contends that oral witnesses "are concerned less with the past than with a sense of that past in the present", but writers "re-create details and images of the event through written texts". Instead what the poem embodies is a fusion of both the vital elements of oral and written testimonies. Indeed in recalling the past, there is no gainsaying the fact that Mapanje is also particular about the present, if not the future with regard to the persistent crucial question, "how does one punish?" The images that are arranged in the course of this written testimony, rather than seeing them as separable from those perceived values of orality, should be seen as dissolving into the oral to create a compelling symmetry of testimony. Or how does one ignore, or treat as merely imaginative the following imagery of horror? "The groans of prisoners dying next cell/ The pangs of prisoners gone mad,/ The weeping blisters on our elbows,/ Knees, balls, bums, buttocks, wherever/ And the blizzards blustering/ The rusty tin roofs/ Where helpless chickens/ Drip in the storm?" (191) The

fact that even after many years of regaining his freedom and relocation to Britain, he still feels bound to make a case for transformation against the dehumanizing condition of prison services at home goes further to validate the assertion that transmigrants take actions that touch on both spaces they occupy at the same time. His testimony may be divested of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's aura redolent of post-apartheid South Africa during Mandela's presidency; it nonetheless suffices in the meanwhile as it serves this purpose in its own right.⁴⁷ Once again, his testimony is worth ruminating over because unlike the reservations held about some kinds of memories precisely because they emanate from congeries of "imitation packages... constructed out of dreams and fantasies that were never paid for with experience" (Bruce Ross 1991: vii), Mapanje's, if re-created, is nevertheless configured concretely against the backdrop of an intimate experience shared not exclusively, but with million others on behalf of whose subaltern communication he has chosen to intervene across spaces.

An extension of the question of how (not) to punish resonates in the next poem "It's the Speed that Matters, my Dear Padre" more personally in that it reflects on the refusal of the state to grant Mapanje permission to witness the burial of his mother while in prison. Given the fact that he was imprisoned in the first place without trial, the imprisonment process itself is already fundamentally flawed. That the denial is traumatic is beyond contention. Yet one must recognize the import of this testimony as an indictment which betrays the level of callousness of state power in dealing with opposition personalities and groups. But if there is an inspiration that stirs at the core of this poem, it is that of the bold and daring attempt on the part of the priest to put his life on the line to rally people through various media to ensure a befitting burial is accorded the deceased mother of the poet. By defying state threat and blackmail, the padre becomes a deserving subject of

⁴⁷ In his afterword to the book, *A Democracy of Chameleons* Mapanje laments the non-institution of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) after the inauguration of Muluzi. He considers this a serious "oversight" of the administration that took over from Banda in that it failed to address the many injustices of the past. To him it would have provided an opportunity to "talk and write about pretty much anything that came to mind" (178); also because "People who have suffered tend to have long memories of their suffering; and not all die before their torturers and jailers" (181). His own creative contribution along this line can therefore be seen as serving a vicarious purpose, in a sense. Yet for all its colour and sophistication, the TRC experience was not without its shortcomings especially because of the desperation of the state to secure collective amnesia from the public domain in a bid to forge ahead in the new dispensation. I engage with this issue in further detail in Chapter Five.

celebration in the estimation of the poet. Thus if he should replicate the praise-songs of the oral poet, it is in praise of the padre and not of the repressive personality of “our Life Excellency”.

In the same vein, the succeeding poems continue to draw on memories, not necessarily those of the poet in the direct sense of the word, but re-created all the same as to accentuate the notion that the “conjunction between (external) stimulation and (internal) resemblance will remain, for us, the crux of the entire problematic of memory” (Paul Ricoeur 2004: 17). It goes without saying that Mapanje’s poetry in this context can also be appropriately gleaned as an autobiographical piece. And granted the possible autobiographical angle to his poetry, it then becomes understandable if one shares with Bruce Ross (1991: ix) the assumption that “if one acknowledges the inevitable social forging and shaping of personal memories... [one finds that] it is somewhat arbitrary to limit influences that affect memory to the lifetime retention-span of a single individual and not also consider memories that are communicated between individuals and institutions”. Mapanje’s activism and struggle against the despotic regime of Banda also involved interactions, both cordial and otherwise, with other peoples, Banda himself included. It is in the light of this that one considers for instance “On David Constantine’s Poem”. The poem which was originally written in solidarity with a Russian activist committed to prison in his own country somehow also managed to find its way into the cell of Mapanje. The inspiration and solidarity the poem by Constantine induced must have bolstered the prisoners’ will to dare and endure the challenge of festering “in this dungeon...within/ The walls of the tropical summers”, just as the unbearable prison condition in far away Eastern Europe has resulted in “Another poet crackling in the Russian/ Winters of icicle cells”. Thus the universal appeal that Constantine’s poem has as demonstrated in the effect it has on Mapanje and fellow inmates in Malawi, as it must have had on those in Russia, goes to show how each human’s memory and personality can be described as a collage of diverse experiences exhibited on one canvas. Just as solidarity is deterritorialized so also is despotism, which is why the confidence that results from the encouragement of Constantine’s poem speaks to despotism across spaces and enhances the optimism of seeing through repressive regimes:

But secure in your voices of solidarity,
We'll crush the crocodiles
That crack our brittle bones.
Do not falter then, brother,
Do not waver, dear brethren,
But craft on the verses
Whose ceaseless whisper resonates
Beyond the Whitehalls of our dreams! (195)

“On Driving his Political Enemy to Scarborough” and “Rested amongst Fellow Hyenas, Finally” show that even after release from prison and the breather that followed after moving to Britain, the harrowing experience of his imprisonment notwithstanding, his passion to engage the despotism of Banda was not depleted. For instance, he still testifies to have personally rallied “within the city of York those rebels you/ Could not stomach only weeks of our independence,/ Seeking not their scholarly papers, but their learned/ Memories of your wrath at the first cabinet and other/ Crises you’ll bequeath this tender nation.” Definitely here is a list of a section of Malawian intellectuals much older than Mapanje, who must have played some active part in the emergence of Malawi as a new independent state. However, Banda’s intolerance saw to it that within the formative years of the new state these intellectuals had all been exiled from the continent.⁴⁸ Their ordeal in the hand of Banda and which preceded that of Mapanje must have also constituted a source of inspiration, which several decades after settled for a banding together with them. The making of the activist intellectual in Mapanje must therefore also be attributed to these older intellectual figures whose reckoning, true to the fact of making the personal self, must “transcend more than one generation” (Bruce Ross 1991: ix). His intervention in taking the “rebels” is so strong that if this is a crime against the state, he will not mind being imprisoned again. It brings up again the question about the appropriate way to punish, as from hindsight, he realizes there were only phantom charges against him then based on the allegations of treason preferred against. So “If you should invent/ Another prison for me... let it be for reason/ Not the conjectures of your mistress about my

⁴⁸ David Rubadiri, one of the personalities to whom the poem is dedicated, went into exile early in the post-independence history of the country, obviously in order to avoid being eliminated, (although he had prior to this time spent his early life in Uganda where he had his high school and university education). The paradox of his career is that today, his contribution to the creation of modern African literature is best assessed within the core East African region, especially Kenya and Uganda. See K. Senanu and T. Vincent 2003.

treason”.⁴⁹ Of course, whether for ill or for good, but especially for ill, Banda’s autocracy has been a major inspiration for Mapanje’s creativity. This is why “Rested among Fellow Hyenas, Finally”, is important in what is considered the first part of “New Poems”. It is a kind of retrospective look at a long, unending era of autocracy gone smash by the terminal hand of death. Banda may have branded some of his perceived enemies “hyenas” and “rebels” in order to justify their elimination through state machinery. He has also, ironically, joined these hyenas and rebels that have gone before him, pointing ultimately to the futility and transience of power.

Other poems in this thematic section extend the exile’s transnational concern on the original home front. But beyond the home front, an equal measure of concern and involvement can be perceived. This is to the extent that the perception of exile is no longer necessarily that of a passive observer as one finds in the days *Of Chameleons and Gods*. Indeed, his sense of consciousness regarding the politics of inclusion is as vigilant as that of the natives of the host nations. So while he mediates in matters concerning his country of origin, he also mediates where necessary in the politics and overall social affairs of the host country. The pattern of identity is one that justifies the contention that “in their daily activities transmigrants connect nation-states and then live in a world shaped by the interconnections that they themselves have forged” (Linda Basch et al 1995: 8). The idea of the interconnections in which transnationals have located themselves goes to show how ambiguous their sense of belonging can be. Anxious always to affirm their presence across spaces, the contradiction that emerges reads like: “the nostalgia for homeland, the affirmation of an original identity, and the remonstrative, often guilty, wish for a more complete acceptance by the host country” (Albert Memmi 2006: 86). Yet the exile’s sense of belonging in the transnational scheme of things cannot be gainsaid, this is despite the fact that his status is a reflection on the “agonizing tensions between two histories” (R. Radhakrishnan 2003: 324). This is why in “Fleeting Child of the 3-Day Week”, one encounters a bold affirmation of belonging and the right to comment on social disruptions resulting from failure of the social system. Apparently

⁴⁹ Mapanje and others have testified that Cecelia Kadzamira, Banda’s mistress together with other members of her family were more responsible for cooking up stories that resulted in the arrest, torture and death of so many people in Malawi during the Banda years; Banda’s role was merely to accent to the persecution.

confronted with some state agents who do not regard him as qualified enough to comment on issues bordering on a disruptive riot at Brixton-Wood, not only does he tell them about what he reckons as his place in the system, he also punctures the lack of adequate preparation for winter that results in the closures of public places like libraries at unusual hours. The sanitation crisis that also results from the neglect of the bin also comes up for his criticism. But certainly the most significant of the reactions verging on self affirmation is the need to make clear the fact that if he is regarded as a poet in his home country, nothing stops him from being regarded as one in his country of destination:

...And when the Brixton-Wood
Green riots blazed, they stopped my car

At Tally Ho to hear if I spoke Birmingham
— Where they thought the riots originated.
Besides, you've never watched Notting

Hill Carnival from Chepstow Road nor
Published poems in Alan Ross's *London Magazine*— with real poets! Where were

You when they knocked out Red Ken for
The socialist GLC they invented ? What have
You done to dub me economic migrant?

What do you know about the economics
Migrants suffer? By your piddling dossier
You have not even run from IRA Tube

Station bomb scares! Get real then, if you
Are truly serious about global village,
This is no fleeting child of your 3-day week! (201-3)

Again, the poet relies on the virtues of dramatic monologue to initiate a dialogue of morality between himself and his county of destination. On the one hand, the reaction illustrates the notion that within the context of transnationalism “the local politics of belonging gets variously reinscribed and reterritorialized” (Dhooleka Raj 2003: 206). If the preconception of his interlocutors was that of a timid African immigrant and exile whose critical sense can be taken for granted, they are however jostled by his response. As a keen watcher of the development of things and one conscious of his relationship to his country of destination and the historical circumstances that informed the definition of

that status, his feelings are as strong as those of others who can in the inclusive sense of the word be regarded as natives. The process of reinscription of identity also implies the redefinition of the recognition that goes with the configuration of art and artists. That is, if his feelings concerning rights and relationships are not to be trifled with and his observations about the turns of events must be uncensored, the same thing must extend to his general assessment of the convention of inclusive practices.

Owing to his background as African he may have been previously excluded from the privileges that accrued to writers and poets in the United Kingdom, but the contemporary exigency of transnationalism already necessitates a disruption of the understanding of such an initial purist perception. The exclusion, which may not be unconnected with the unique tropes of African poetry, which may as such be at a disconsensus with British writing, can now hardly be sustained. Therefore where he publishes now does not matter. This is because “the ‘forced poetics’ that emerge from the prison house experience of slavery, racism and colonialism” only reveals ‘the [previously] submerged experience and...sensitivity that lie within the standard stereotypes of English language and literature and cultures’ (Iain Chambers 2005: 68). The wall of such stereotypes are giving way fast, however, because of the new sense of belonging that formerly colonized people locate for themselves within the space of the western metropolis. If previously marginalized in the metropolis, the tendency is to challenge such marginalization and redefine the entire process of inclusion and exclusion:

While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery..., it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis — beginning, perhaps, with the latter’s obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself.” (Mary Louise Pratt in Iain Chambers 2005: 69)

The pervasive feeling of challenging the preconceptions of postcolonial exiles and migrants in the imperial metropolis is extended in “After Celebrating our Asylum Stories at West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds”. Again, in this poem, the historical facts of exile as predicated on the history of colonialism and the multiplying effects that it bred stands for scrutiny. Besides, it constitutes a clear illustration of the tension that arises from the

insistence of the formerly colonized people on affirming dual, if not multiple citizenship that involves former imperial metropolis. Reckoned perhaps more explicitly as the crisis of colonial and postcolonial holdovers, both the postcolonial migrant and the former imperial colonist find each other perennially drawn into negotiations and renegotiations of their previous relationships and how it should bear on the present. But more often than not, there is never a time a mutually palliative compromise can be reached. Perhaps the only reason for this is the flawed historical process of the master-servant relationship that preceded this negotiation. The enabling aura of redefinition of roles to the level of equality especially with respect to the journey of the formerly colonized to the western metropolis will continue to jar the serenity of the imperial metropolis. Since the colonialist's earlier travel and domination in the colony was without negotiation, it is just logical that the formerly colonized should express reservations about the erecting of bottlenecks in his current journey, redolent of the colonialist, to the metropolis.

Albert Memmi's (2006: 79) analogy of this tension is that of claim and counter claim: while the colonialist from hindsight may want to declare plaintively "paid in full", as a way of claiming to have succeeded with civilizing the colonies, and spreading of the benefits of modernity, the formerly colonized contend that "They've stolen enough from us! Now they owe us compensation!" Back home the compensation is perceived to be essentially tied to journeys, after all, the impact of colonialism was felt most through the signification of travel. So "We didn't ask them for visas when they wanted to come here". The failure to resolve the albatross of the historical past is most often highlighted in the tendency to deny exiles and migrants their place of dignity in the West and their reaction of circumventing and protesting the attempt to be excluded from the social benefits and rights of the metropolis. The solidarity that the consciousness inspires is as bold as it is discomfiting to the metropolis:

So, define her separately,
She's not just another
Castaway washed up your
Rough seas like driftwood,
It's the nameless battles
Your sages burden her
People that broke her back;
Define him differently,

He's not another squirrel
Ousted from your poplars,
It's the endless cyclones,
Earthquakes, volcanoes,
Floods, mud and dust that
Drafted him here; define
Them warmly, how could
Your economic émigré queue
At your job centres day after
Day? If you must define us
Gently, how do you hope
To see the tales we bear
When you refuse to hear
The whispers we share? (203)

“The Seashells of Bridlington North Beach” provides another remarkable illustration of the implications of exile and its import with transnational discourse. It raises questions about the contradictions and paradoxes that lie at the heart of such identity especially when it is exponentially imposed on an individual by the establishment. The affirmation of rights in the country of destination notwithstanding, the country of origin continues to beckon for attention in a manner that puts lie to the attraction of dual or multiple nationalities. It is at this point that the harrowing circumstances of that induced relocation haunt the exile, and bring other pleasant reminders of home into an entangled conjunction. Above all, it more often than not dawns on one that for all its hostility, the country of origin as home remains particularly more important for the exile than the benefits that the teleology of transnationalism can offer. Usually in such circumstances Africa becomes a metaphor for an invaluable possession whose intimacy is lost and is thus continually desired. Yet the process of that loss and the knowledge that the other option against that loss was the readiness to lose one's own life can be sobering.

To the activists and intellectuals who have suffered imprisonment for challenging the repressive status quo foisted by the state, the tendency is to consider home after escaping such alienation as a place that abnegates personal freedom. Any reminder of this experience is swiftly protested as in the poem: “She hates anything caged, particularly,/ Fish caged in glass boxes, ponds, whatever;/ ‘, ‘Reminds me of prison and slavery,’ she said”. Mercy Angela, the lady to whom the poem is dedicated displays child-like excitement over the freedom found at Bridlington Beach, where she plays and allows “the

sea breathe in and out on her”, shouting “Free at last!” But the paradox is that home is not without the abundance of such sights of recreation and freedom. This is why when asked “Do you remember eating porridge from/ Beach shells once?” the reply from another tornado-turned exile is in the affirmative: “He nodded, smiling at another/ Memory of the African lakes they were forced to/ Abandon”. What follows in the sequence of the exchange is crucial: “‘Someday, perhaps I’ll take that home/ To celebrate!’ She said staring into the deep sea.” Such exchange goes to justify the contention that the transnational identity that the postcolonial identity acquires translates only into some kind of diasporic orientation in which case the new space occupied is, even at its best, “neither home nor not-home”(R. Radhakrishnan 2003: 324). Home, that is country of origin, therefore, becomes a recurrent metaphor to be desired.

The image of Africa comes up automatically in this discussion. Kofi Anyidoho (1997:1), taking a cue from Okinba Launko’s poem “Birthday Card”, reflects on this and the relationship, as well as the paradox that it conjures up in the minds of her exiled citizens who have suffered one form of forced migration or the other:

The writer’s persistent attachment to a home/land which history has often denied and contemporary reality is constantly transforming into quicksand; a land reputed to be among the best endowed in both human and material resources, and yet much better known for its proverbial conditions of poverty; Africa, the birthplace of humanity and human civilization, now strangely transformed into expanding graveyards and battlefields for the enactment of some of the world’s worst human tragedies. This is the Africa of the intellectual and creative writer’s hope and despair, the Africa of the glory of vanished civilizations and of the pain of mass possibilities. At the root of this paradox, it may be argued, has been oppression in many forms, oppression that imposes severe constraints on the creative, productive potential of the land and its peoples.

The status of the creative writer and intellectual is however merely generic as it can more appropriately be gleaned as representative of what many who are left with the option of exile face in postcolonial Africa, especially when the drift is towards the West. The apparent relief that the idiom and practice of transnationalism offers and as mediated through other viscerally linked projects like multiculturalism and globalization have not proved to assuage the sense of loneliness and alienation that accompanies the consciousness of exile. This observation is the more so in view of the last poem in the collection “Justine Cops of Clapham Village”. The cold consciousness of loneliness and

alienation and the desire to keep company drives the exile into offering a lift at an automobile junction where it is prohibited. From the confession of living “raw exile” and living from pillar to post” in fear of the terror of the police, it is clear that whatever gratifications there are in maintaining an exilic life through the mediation of transnational initiatives are nonetheless eclipsed by the sense of harassment that trails the exile. And if postcolonial exile and transnationalism cannot but be linked to the memory of colonialism and the informing ideology that guided its prosecution, then the success of such springboard for the evolution of modern Africa deserves, by way of conclusion, another look.

The idea that the modern subject is a frontier subject may be true of the contemporary technologies of humanity; but the paradox of this identity is overwhelmingly disproportionate to the leverage it offers. This is why the horrors it produces can neither be tamed by philosophical apprehension, nor can it be easily subjected to dissolution (Franco Rella in Iain Chambers 1994: 40). Applied more specifically against the backdrop of the postcolonial identity, the evolution of the postcolonial figure, as a product of modernity, strikes one as precariously configured. For, it is the postcolonial identity that is a metaphor and byword for perennial migrancy. Mapanje’s failure to live within the scope of the space-based location of his identity may on the one hand be considered an attempt to comply with the direction of a postmodern age, however, the process of this migrancy, being thoroughly fraught with tribulations and fragmented with trauma, cannot be said to have achieved the goal of preserving the dignity of his humanity. The fact that he is caught in the web of the “shadows” and “horrors” of his frontier’s identity raises posers about the history that has produced him; and if so, modernity as propagated by the West is not only questionable, but can appropriately be gleaned as a failure, no matter what promise the transnational agenda shrewdly inserts into contemporary exile experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Jack Mapanje's *Of Chameleons and Gods* from the angle of exile and with specific exploration of how the experience is informed by the antecedent experience of Western modernity through the desire to acquire higher education in the imperial metropolis of Britain. To achieve this, the chapter has centralized the discourse of travel and how the project of modernity through the agency of colonialism cannot be said to have succeeded as much as expected in Africa. This is because to the formerly colonized, the sense of fulfilment that is desired from the reversal of the travels that the colonialist first engaged in, and which brought him to Africa, does not have the same intimate attraction and gains that the colonialist derived from his occupation of Africa. Moreover, various scenes and events which are on ground in the imperial capital do more to deny the modernizing claims of colonialism than confirm them. The intimate experience of modernity in the postcolony of Malawi is no less a failure, considering the fact that the nation itself is a product of colonialism. The overwhelming background of dictatorship thus points to this failure. The failure is made poignant in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* as it shows how the oppressive relations of the state with the nation have resulted in the elimination, torture, detention and imprisonment of many. In such a situation, exile of a traumatic kind becomes the only available option. There is, however, some form of liberation from this experience through the abstraction and practice of transnationalism, whereby the exile straddles two or more countries at the same time as a way of still retaining his citizenship of homeland while asserting his presence in his countries of destination. Yet it may be important to state on a final note that where the possibilities offered by transnationalism provide greater guarantees of stay for the exile in the Western countries of destination than in the countries of origin in Africa, only little can be achieved in terms of development for the postcolonial African nation.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM CITY TO CITY: EXILE AND AFRICAN URBANSCAPES IN OFEIMUN'S *LONDON LETTER AND OTHER POEMS* AND OJAIDE'S *WHEN IT NO LONGER MATTERS WHERE YOU LIVE*

The geography of globalization contains both a dynamic of dispersion and centralization.—Saskia Sassen, “Analytic Borderlands: Race, Gender and Representation in the New City”

I see globalization as basically a phase of imperialism or capitalist modernity.—Biodun Jeyifo, “Globalisation and Afropessimism: Some Preliminary Observations”

In fact, remarkably few of globalization's fence-out people turn to violence. Most simply move: from countryside to city, from country to country. And that's when they come face to face with distinctly unvirtual fences, the ones made of chain link and razor wire, reinforced with concrete and guarded with machine—Naomi Klein, “Fences of Enclosure, Windows of Possibility,”

But there is enough blame to go around — Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*

The anxieties over globalization are as legion as the multiple meanings that the concept itself generates. This chapter engages one of such concerns as it relates to cities and urbanscapes both in Africa and the West, exploring in specific terms how the discourse of exile is implicated in urbanization. To achieve this, the chapter focuses attention on questions such as: how is the notion of globalization received in its various conceptual drifts? How can we perceive the conditions of African cities? What is the relationship between the dystopian conditions of African cities and western cities? To what extent can a meaningful demarcation be drawn between African cities and western cities? Where exile becomes the option for Africans as they migrate from African cities to cities in Europe and America, to what degree can this movement be blamed on globalization? Therefore what are the internal dynamics in African cities which account for the continual movement of Africans to the West? How then may we perceive the notions of

migrancy and cosmopolitanism within this context of African exile experience? At what point does return strike us as necessary? The chapter hopes to undertake an exploration of these concerns through the examination of Odia Ofeimun's *London Letter and Other Poems* and Tanure Ojaide's *When it no Longer Matters where you Live* (1998).

As has been discussed in the theoretical chapter to this research, globalization means different things to different people. While some regard it as the consequence of the tripartite history of trade, colonialism and nation state (Michael Murphy 2006:139), others insist that it should be best read as the consolidation of economic and business internationalism which increasingly renders the nation state prostrate in obsolescence (Liam Connell 2006:167). This is besides the sundry and other insights which link the concept to the antagonism of spiritualism and secularism; or at other times the rise and presumed universalism of English Language and the other cultural undertones that such assumption signifies (Stan Smith 2006:1-2). Related to that is the continual criticism of the concept for its holistic cultural direction which does more to impose Americanism on the rest of the world than it allows for the cross-fertilization of world cultures (Alberto Martinelli 2003:97). Having turned into a fiercely contested concept no less for the controversies surrounding its historical origin than for what it signifies in principle and in practice, it is not surprising that various schools of both sceptics and enthusiasts have emerged with passionate commitment to the articulation of their take on globalization. Martinelli (96), for instance, identifies three conceptual axes of globalization:

1. 'Hyperglobalizers vs sceptics' — where the key distinction concerns the degree of novelty of globalization and its impact on nation-states
2. 'Neoliberals vs neo-Marxists and radicals' — where the key points are the balance between positive and negative impacts of globalization and its truly global or western hegemonic character; and
3. 'Homogenization vs heterogeneity and hybridization' — which focuses on the cultural dimension of globalization.

Globalization more often than not also comes across as a phenomenon that serves to consolidate the polarization of the old axes of the centre and the periphery, the haves and the have nots, the margin and the centre, and perhaps most importantly, the North and the South. But it has also become apt to transcend the lines of permutations so as to engage

with and appreciate the facilitation that the media provide in the process of the evolution of globalization. There is, for that matter, an acknowledged engendering of the connectivity of one remote end of the earth to the other through the acceleration of information transmission. The acceleration of information transmission, both visual and audio, has also impacted on how capital/ business, culture, politics and current affairs are generally accessed and responded to by all parties: individuals, governments, groups, corporations etc. Put another way, the acceleration of information transmission has also meant the acceleration of the flow of capital, people, images, ideologies. Together with all this, is an unprecedented culture of interdependence which cuts across spheres, including the consistently historical as politics and economy, needless to mention the burgeoning field of the ecological (Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo 2008: 7-8).⁵⁰

But Inda and Rosaldo reveal further that there is more to globalization than stressing the acceleration of connectivity processes. This is when attention shifts more profoundly to the temporal and special implications of time and how these serve to provide perspectives on the dynamics of the connectivity. With globalization there is thus “a fundamental reordering of time and space” (8). Drawing upon the theoretical antecedents of Harvey and Giddens, they shed more light on the spatial-temporal concerns of globalization, and in view of the relevance of the analysis to this chapter, it will be congenial to bring the analysis into focus. Basically, by combining the views of both Harvey and Giddens we arrive at a balanced impression of what globalization entails, at least in principle. For instance, with Harvey there is an emphasis on the “time-space compression” in such a

⁵⁰Yet, because as Avtar Brah (2002:30) rightly remarks, in view of the contradictions and complexities that globalization dramatizes across regions and hemispheres, it is difficult to be “straightforwardly” about globalization. It is so precisely because of the problematic that the concept poses. This is also why one must admit that even in Western Europe and North America protests, especially among labour unions, abound over what citizens perceive to be the import not only of cheap products (Duncan Green and Matthew Griffith 2002:55), but also of cheap labour from Asia, Africa and South America (Owen Worth 2002:298). The situation results in the redundancy of local labour and a complication of the variables of social security in these advanced countries where globalization is believed to be receiving highest patronage and advocacy. This is why even where Helma Lutz (2002:89) has dealt with the internationalization of domestic labour in Western Europe and the terrors of the imported labour from Eastern Europe, South America and Asia, it is equally needful to remark that by virtue of such cheap labour import, there is a sense in which it registers negatively on local labour.

manner that empowers time to annihilate the previously known barrier of space. The empowerment is evident in how the economic and the technological have translated into the fusion and collapse of both spatial and temporal domains (8). For Giddens, however, the emphasis is on “time-space distanciation”, an idea which takes account of the complementarity of face-to-face-interaction among people and the remote interaction among people which are made possible through communication, transportation and other means that testify to the advancement of technology as it is today (10).

So far, the discussion of globalization has been engaged in terms that point to the contested views it inspires. However, one thing that is not in contention, especially based on the insights of Harvey and Giddens, is the centrality of space to the agenda of globalization. The knowledge of this centrality then should illuminate the discussion of African cityscapes as contextualized in the collections under study in this chapter. On the one hand, the privileging of the African cityscapes also makes possible the engagement with how the compression and distanciation of time and space opens up a migration discussion on the connectivity between the African cities and western cities. In this regard, the exploration of the conditions of African cities has implications which verge on exile for a number of the cities in them. The accelerated interaction between different parts of the world then compels us to observe the events in African cities and the links they have with events in cities in the West. In other words, the index of flow both of human and non-human resources in time and space has served, more than any time before, to stress the connectivity between cities in the globe. Nevertheless, the factor of location and the designation of each city have their way of drawing up differences between world cities, which is why for all the virtues of connectivity, the disequilibrium in the activity configuration of individual cities goes a long way in determining what becomes of them in the present age.

This is not to say however that the determining factors in the place and placement of individual cities as global or non-global, aligned with the North or South, are a function of recent history. Indeed, the initial history of “trade colonialism and nation state” remains a crucial factor in determining the roles that cities assume in the present global

dispensation, as not a few critics are united in remarking that what we are witnessing in the present form may be new but it may not be too different from the polarizations of the past through which socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics were determined. For the formerly colonized countries of the Third World especially, the struggle in the global domain is that of how to influence the reconfiguration of the world structure in a manner that will change the old order through which they were kept in subordination. Therefore, the connectivity opportunity that globalization provides may be one way by which the reconfiguration of the world structure can be negotiated. Nevertheless, events have proven that on the contrary Third World countries especially those of Africa may still have longer periods to fight subordination than they initially conceived of it. For, whatever globalization claims to offer as a relief from imperialism, particularly of a western capitalist hue, may just be yet another guise to moderate and consolidate the centuries-long history of imperialism.⁵¹ But just as past histories of imperialism have recorded local collaborators, the present exclusion and subordination of cities, that is, African cities in the global scheme of things cannot be entirely blamed on imperial advances from the West.

Therefore, it requires a dispassionate criticism of the condition of African cities in order to get to explore their vulnerability in the age of globalization. According to Ranka Primorac (2008:1), in spite of the vibrancy and creativity of African cities, we cannot ignore the unpalatable side of the African city experiences in recent decades:

For decades now, large numbers of African residents have had to contend with urban living marked by decaying infrastructures and long-term dearth of formal employment, as well as increased levels of violence, disease, political oppression and incursion of external economic and political interests.

The remark above does much to capture the experience of the city of Lagos as portrayed in Ofeimun's *London Letter* and the Niger Delta urbanscapes as represented in Ojaide's *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*. To begin with, Lagos, especially the with

⁵¹ For, as Claude Meillassoux (1991:323) puts it, "Freedom is won little by little through the exploitation of the interstices created by contradictions in every social system which force the exploiters to give in so that they themselves can survive. Each conquest is not sheer victory: it can also be an adjustment necessary to the perpetuation of the mode of exploitation."

respect to the material time against which *London Letter* is set, is reminiscent of the decades of military brigandage when principles of democracy and rule of law were trampled upon by the political class. What is more, the disregard for civil rule and the invention of new political elite of a military hue announced at the same time the neglect of state responsibility. The result was the collapse of public infrastructures with a stupendous streak of consequences for the citizens. What is more, the period between 1980s and 90s witnessed an unprecedented vulnerability of the entire Nigerian nation to economic recess.

The situation was made poignant by the level of corruption which started in the short-lived civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari and became consolidated if not legitimized by the military that toppled his administration. Of particular mention were the regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. While the lack of accountability, an attitude that often defines military regimes, was substantially contributory to the level of irresponsibility by this class, the situation also placed the nation on the edge of an economic precipice, which was evidenced by the drastic surge in unemployment and crime. The instinct for survival had thus warranted on the part of citizens a search beyond the borders of the country. For Lagos, the most populous city in the country, the desperate situation for survival was most evident. Most evident understandably because, as the first city of hope, it was just logical that many would leave their rural states and communities to seek a living in the city, a response which was in order, given the long history of the city as the most attractive potpourri of modern living and survival.

However, the economic and infrastructural crisis which plagued Lagos at this point in time could not have solely been attributed to internal disorders of administration. Indeed, this is when one begins to take into account the impact of western imperialism on Nigeria and how this version of imperialism also coincided with globalization. Nigeria, to be specific, was also a victim of the various international monetary programmes which were dangled, mainly by the West, before the Third World and for which a number of them fell. Apart from the fact that a number of these loans which came through financial

agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Structural Adjustment Programme hardly redounded to the development and economic enhancement of the beneficiaries, the huge interest rates and the other conditions of obtaining them left the affected nations in conditions of bankruptcy that contributed to the loss of hope the individual countries by their citizens. To be sure, the condition not being without its polarizing consequences between the creditors nations of the West and the debtor countries of the Third World, can be said to have provided the groundwork for the current order of inequality that is evident in the new global order today in spite of connectivity and equality that globalization aspires to achieve. Peter Abrahams reflecting on the polarization antecedent on world scale during the decisive moments of western capitalist incursion in the post-independence era of the Third World has the following to say:

By 1976, world economic conditions had changed so much...and the Third World [,] was in such a bad state of indebtedness that there were no classes of credit-worthiness. We were all flat broke, up to our ears in debt, and the IMF had become the world's loan shark, acting for the rich at the expense of the poor. Yet this was not what it was originally intended to be... It was only later, when the former colonies gained independence that the IMF was transformed into the international moneylender of first resort, imposing its harsh economic prescriptions on the world's poor... it demanded a massive devaluation of the currency, a freeze on wages, cuts in government spending, an end to price controls and subsidies on basic foods, and no restraints on prices and profits. (Abrahams 2000:299)

To that extent, the contribution of these external factors to the collapse of functional economy in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized. As the city of Lagos betrayed the consequences of this unfortunate siege in all spheres, it becomes understandable why it lost the initial attraction it had for its citizens. Moreover, also because, as hinted in Chapter One, where people have been subjected to much violence, one way of resistance becomes migration. This is where the discussion links the citizens of Lagos, victims of both economic and infrastructural violence to the option of exile beyond the borders of the nation; that is to another city in the West which is London. Of course Lagosians and Nigerians in general have a long history of migration with London, but the accelerated movement and exile of Lagosians to London in the last two decades of the 20th century did not only indicate a historical continuum, but more significantly point to the desperation to escape violence of all kinds. What is more, going by the level of acceleration of the

movement, the liberty that goes with the collapse of borders in the age of globalization contributed significantly to the exilic responses to the conditions of home. The subsequent aspect of the chapter therefore examines the imaginative response of Ofeimun to this experience precisely because the exilic response on the part of citizens of Lagos was evidence of their reconstitution of survival strategies. For that matter, Ofeimun's work, like that of Ojaide, passes as a textual intervention which bears out the remark that "strategies of reconstitution and survival are ...often imbricated in ...urban textualities" (Primorac 2008:1).

At Home in Lagos

Ofeimun's engagement with the socio-political and economic crisis is, therefore, what one encounters first in this collection, yet not without some sense of hope and nationalism as the segment, "My City by the Lagoon" opens. In "Lagoon", he writes:

I let the lagoon speak for my memory
though offended by water hyacinth
waste and night soil...
I still let the lagoon reclaim
the seduction of a land moving
with the desire of a sailing ship
pursuing a known star. (3)

Like most coastal cities and settlements, the place of the maritime phenomenon of the lagoon in the history of Lagos cannot be over-emphasized. It also perhaps explains why there is a personification of the 'lagoon' as both a primordial and contemporary witness to the urbanization of Lagos. For the lagoon has always been there from time immemorial. It was indeed a witness to the pre-history of Lagos and when this island was founded in the pre-colonial time by the Yoruba bounded by the Egun of Badagry to the south, the lagoon must have played an active role as a collaborator and facilitator of movement, migration and settlement. In the various political and succession crises between the ruling families of Akitoye and Kosoko, and the intrigues of installation, dethronement, exile, reinstatement and war, there was no way the lagoon could have been excluded. As the British colonial government cashed in on the situation of succession

crises to colonize Lagos in 1961⁵² after the abolition of Slave Trade— which was, to say the least, an abolition of convenience— the lagoon played roles that were beyond the navigatory. So, by arousing the lagoon’s sense of history which straddles both the pre-colonial and the colonial on the one hand, and the independence and post-independence eras, on the other, there is an acknowledgment of the visceral link between the fate of the city and the lagoon.⁵³ In its unrivalled position as a witness to history, it then becomes clear why at the close of the 20th century, when both internal and external dynamics of violence had taken their toll on the city, both physically and otherwise, the agelessness of the lagoon as a natural phenomenon to which the fate of the city is tied, becomes a compelling choice of weaving yet another narrative around the city. It explains why the lagoon occupies the place of a privileged and sustained motif throughout the collection.

However, the city as well as the lagoon now constitutes a site of pity upon which the violence of state neglect is written. First at the environmental level the lagoon is an eyesore because of how it has been overtaken by “water hyacinth”. And as if in connivance with nature, the improper management of “waste” in the city has resulted in the unfortunate mutation of the waterscape of the lagoon into a receptacle of all kinds of waste including, “night soil”. While at one level the situation points to the environmental violence as foisted on the city, it also raises questions about the economic viability of the city especially where it has become clear that the former attractions of the city are fading fast. This is why the image of the city as a moving land is crucial precisely because the efforts being made now are geared towards reclaiming its “seduction”. The intimation about efforts of reclaiming the seduction of the city can also be extended to the general plague of irrelevance with which many non-global cities of the South are confronted in

⁵² As from the 1830s, Lagos was caught in the web of succession crisis which came to a head during the tussle between Akitoye and Kosoko. It was characterized by a scenario of alternation between enthronement and dethronement as well as reinstatement. By 1851, however, the British had succeeded through their military might in reinstating Akitoye who, unlike his nephew Kosoko, agreed to sign a treaty putting an end to slave trade. But beyond this apparently humanitarian intervention of the British was the undercurrent of imperialism as a decade after, specifically in August 1861, “under the guns of H.M.S. *Prometheus* anchored in the lagoon, Oba Dosumu agreed to cede his kingdom to the British” This would mark the beginning of the rapid and systematic colonization of the rest of the southern and northern parts of the Niger— See Robert Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, (London: Methuen 1969), pp 170-172.

⁵³ For, Lagos being the first part of Nigeria to be colonized by the British naturally became the colonial capital of Nigeria and for many years after independence until the early 1990s when the seat of central power was moved to Abuja.

the age of globalization (Sakia Sassen1997:167). Such efforts of reclamation are best apprehended in the polarization paradigm that is used today in defining these cities. While for instance the designation of “global cities” fits those conurbations based on the location and the roles they are assigned as articulators and headquarters of financial and economic matters in world system (Friedmann in William Carroll 2007:2297), the antithesis of these features identified in other cities may basically account for why they will only fit into the categorization of the non-global.

What is more, “the more globalized the economy becomes,” the higher the agglomeration of central functions in relatively few sites, that is global cities” (Sassen in Herman Boschken 2008:24). But because the polarization between cities catalyzes struggle and competition, no non-global city is expected to be content with its position. The desire to progress and attain global relevance, more than a mere wish, remains at the core of the not-so-acclaimed cities of the world. They therefore try to copy or simulate the dynamics of the relevance and privilege of the global cities in order to keep hope alive. For as Boschken (24) remarks, owing to the influential status of the global cities, and “eager to exhibit benchmarks of their own status-centrality in the new world order, many minimally global cities have sought a short cut by mimicking the more physically evident attributes of global cities”. No doubt, there is a tincture of derision in the Boschken’s perception of the mimickery of the non-global cities. But one must go beyond this model of mimickery in order to identify with the “desire” of Lagos as “a sailing ship/ pursuing a known star”. Once the bill of sceptism is expunged, it begins to dawn that London, for Lagos, exudes global features of relevance at political, economic, cultural and social levels, and there is a challenge this holds for Lagos and indeed Nigeria to be so globally relevant someday, a desire that is far from disingenuous.

In an extension of the aspiration of the city, despite the daunting challenges, it remains undaunted. Rather, for it, the present becomes an interface between history and the future:

The lagoon speaks
like a foetus remembering the future.
listening from the depths of formlessness song
for the Words that break

against the voyages of discovery
in the discovery of voyages. (3)

Here is a postcolonial attempt to relive the process of colonization and the tension that was bred and contained between the British or the entire Western exploration of the city and the natives who naturally stood to resist, no matter how feebly, and their posterity that is charged with the responsibility of subsequently contesting such narratives of discovery. The picture painted of Lagos in this segment is understandably panoramic. Understandably panoramic because memory, what Richard Terdiman (1993:8) calls the “present past”, is an agglomeration of various previous experiences woven into the fabric of the present. This explains why in “Demolition Day” Maroko comes to the picture.⁵⁴ In the demolition of this slum, thousands of peoples in the category of “the wretched of the earth” were rendered homeless just by one act of military decree. Perhaps because the language of domination and dispossession has often been semanticized along sexual lines by constructing power in masculinity (Jean Franco 1988: 503), it begins to add up why the image of suffering is often cast in the feminine mode. So, a woman becomes the symbol of the Maroko demolition victimhood without any prospect of resettlement or compensation:

Face to face with the demolition squad,
she wept, a wet rag trembling
against the drone of bulldozers...

She knelt, dry leaf against iron hoofs
among the forgotten of Lagos,
the homeless of Maroko, wishing
the Lord would nod at her withered hands
stretched pleadingly towards the law-mighty
epaulettes glinting with a merry stamp
towards her vale of sad wire.

She wept, a wet rag trembling against

⁵⁴ A little well over a decade ago, a military dictatorship ordered the demolition of a popular slum on the far side of Victoria Island. The manner of the sudden dispossession was so grim and lacking in human face that in the words of Ofeimun himself in a recent review, “it was promptly memorialized across Nigerian literature” — from Soyinka to J.P.Clark-Bekederemo, to Ogaga Ifowodo to Maik Nwosu, Chris Abani, etc. In fact, these works, including Ofeimun’s contribution on the demolition in this collection, he suggests rather appropriately, can as well be regarded as *Maroko corpus* today, and find parallel in such literary response as Jorge Amado’s to the insatiate slum clearance of his country, or South African writing’s memorial on the demolition of District Six during apartheid. See Ofeimun “Daring Visions: *Invisible Chapters* by Maik Nwosu. *English in Africa* 32. 1. (2005): pp 135-41.

gruff indifference and glee-toothed power—
the snarl of antlers and implacable mortars
rolling the earth over her Cathage
over her world of cardboard and decayed zinc
over wishes, tired bones, her Maroko
escaping from the throes of History. (6)

One thing to which one is uncomfortably held spell-bound in the above is the extremism of domination and dispossession, as the poem becomes a dramatization of an excessive performance of power. The victim, having been stripped of all access to good living, has suffered a callous diminution which is interpreted in her reduction to “a wet rag trembling” or “a dry leaf”. It will be no exaggeration, therefore, to see her as representing the living dead which the establishment has made of these people, the sealing of which is their final expulsion from their ‘world of cardboard and decayed zinc’. But the sadism and impunity of the government of the day are brought to the fore in the abhorrently gleeful acts of the demolition as exemplified by the uniformed agents whose agenda of human and environmental vandalism raises a very serious existentialist question in the sense that even “the Lord” could not grant her wish to avert the demolition. The scenario thus speaks to one of the ways in which the city loses its “seduction” through the internal dynamics of state violence and exclusion. Where ordinary people are evacuated from slums without any welfare package of compensation and relocation, the credibility of the establishment comes into question. The aggravation of the dystopian condition of the city moreover will refract from whatever agenda of global competition there is to execute.

By the time “Self-Portrait of a Lagosian” is brought to focus, Maroko, having been replaced by “flashy skyscrapers”, becomes for the victim of the demolition a tantalizing scene with its expected elusiveness:

You, you travelled to your old Maroko of the mind
before the Slum Clearance Act overcame the seething swamps
with futurist architecture; you met the friend
that you have always been to yourself who wore his knowledge
of your rise and fall with the finality of a fatwa. (7)

The victim, having been thus eternally denied his old Maroko, is now haplessly left with a self-consolatory pastime. This pastime comes in form of an autistic travel during which

some surrealistic satisfaction is attained by having “a feast”. The scene, furthermore, is a commentary on the brigandage and extreme disposition of the military elite during this material time to excluding the masses from social and economic benefits.

It is clear that this is a testimony against the totalitarian tyranny of the military regimes in Nigeria. The promulgation of their various decrees and proscription of all forms of civil and rightful organizations and movements justifiably critical of their aberration were some of the most trying moments of the country’s travails. It was an era which spanned more than half of the nation’s independence history until 1999. This class of the military, defined essentially by an abiding pathology for political opportunism and adventurism, in its successive interruption of civil regimes, acted true to type when viewed against Leo Tolstoy’s observation on its vulnerability:

Military service always corrupts a man, placing him in conditions of complete idleness, that is, absence of all intelligent and useful work, and liberating him from the common obligations of humanity, for which it substitutes conventional considerations like the honour of the regiment, the uniform and the flag, and, on the one hand, investing him with unlimited power over men, and on the other, demanding slavish subjection to superior officers. (cited Udentia Udentia 1996:101)

The dismal performance of the military in Nigeria as in other countries does not only raise questions of the legitimacy of the incursion of the military into politics, it also in the specific case of Africa constitutes an indictment of western external influences which in the heady days of military rules garnered support for dictatorship. Indeed, the destructive authoritarianism of most of these regimes was known in some cases to have been openly sponsored by western nations (Ankie Hoogvelt 1997:172). And when viewed against the negative impact on globalization in the entrenchment of dystopian conditions in the postcolonies, such external influences come together to explain why for all its ideals, globalization in some instances is held in suspicion in the Third World.

In “Eko— my city by the lagoon”, one encounters a more comprehensive panoramic version of the features of the city of Lagos. To achieve this successfully, there is again a gendering of the city; after all, whether in matters of honour or dishonour, women stand to represent the collectivism of a nation (Nira Yuval-Davis 2003: 114), and in this case,

one may add the collectivism of the city. The features in themselves reveal a continual implosive contestation between binarisms such as poverty and wealth, hunger and satisfaction, with a tilting imbalance of the overwhelming treacherous impact of the unfavourable. The situation may not be surprising as globalization in the reality of its operation sanctions exclusionary strategies for which there is some recognition of “foreign capitals and regional centres of culture and commerce” (Berger and Huntington, 2002:332). For cities that do not fall into this category, there can only be a readiness to be content with the socio-economic and cultural manipulations from the “capitals”.

So cast in the mould of a woman, “my city by the lagoon” begins:

A woman to love whose beauty hides
in tantrums and shredded decorum;
she breaks the combs that hold her braids
from bursting into a scream for help
she curses the lagoon and the wayward sea
and the glinting hour of shopping First Ladies
who tighten her lockjaw of traffic
with outriders streaming from hell. (9)

Such overbearing flamboyance of the “First Lady”, representative of the ruling class, contrasts sharply with “malarious mangroves” that are also abode to some other categories of the city denizens. Subsequently, there is the reference to the “commerce of pain” and the “zinc shack kingdoms in joyless dancing/ angling for living room in the hugging spaces/under hooves of marching skyscrapers”. This obvious instance of the gentrification of the city of Lagos accentuates the veracity of such assertion as the unprecedented social inequality and exclusion experienced in the last decades of the 20th century being a result of global changes to cities (David Thorns 2002: 175). To elaborate on the idea of “commerce of pain”, the remark is a pointer to the downturn in the Lagos and Nigerian economy at the historical time that also marked the height of military bungling. Therefore, by comparing and contextualizing the extremism of wealth and poverty through the juxtaposition of the First Lady, representative of the military class, and the “woman of shredded beauty”, the poem reveals how the whims and caprices of a

negligible political elite can result in the pauperization of an entire city like Lagos. The social inequity in focus in the city structure further speaks to the restructuring of world economy which results in the privileging of few cities as global and commanding huge capital support while many others usually from the South sink into poverty and irrelevance. All this points to how a combination of both internal and external dynamics can result in the economic exclusion of a city. The diminishing relevance of Lagos in matters of economics after it has been confirmed to be a victim of “economy of pain” is already an indicator that the confidence of its citizens in the city is already being eroded. And for those of them who are affected towards the global North and its cities, it may not be long when they will begin to seek migration as economic exiles.

It is therefore no surprise when in the last stanza of the poem the effects of the negative aspects of the city are compared with the act of “drowning”. But hard as the city fights against this drowning by striving heroically with an unmistakable patriotic nationalism “to outshine the moon”, “and cure polluted lagoons (11)”, her denizens seem to be incurably caught in a fever of disillusionment which finds collusion in the delirious yarn of the borders “for exiles (11)”. Further reason for this is perhaps best explained in the words of Dilys Hill:

The effects of global economic restructuring are evident in changes to labour markets...The changes have affected employment, migration, house hold formation and housing. The results have a polarization both within cities and between cities. (1994: 246)

Besides, it needs to be clarified that the above is just an aspect of the consuming mementoes of the questionable concentration of the world’s wealth in the hands of few nations, leaving the rest majority of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America to wallow in abject poverty (Sherif Hetata in Julian Murphet 2004: 128). The situation creates at the same time a postmodern simulacrum which necessitates the valorization of the *surfaces* of the cities of these few nations, hiding as it were, their *depths* which are nothing but the wealth of the poorer nations. Needless to say, such shift of attention from the depths to the surfaces thus explains significantly why the changes that have affected employment and migration are along one way traffic which forces citizens of the Third

World into moving helplessly towards the First World nations. They do this in search of the wealth of their own nations from which they have been, ironically, alienated. Worse still, there is usually no guarantee for any better living for such immigrants because of the attendant oppositions to the nature of their spatial dispersal, the result of which is usually the devaluation of their status. This often contrasts sharply with the enhancement and preservation of privileges that define the status of citizens of the First World nations when they engage in such migration to the South, a dispersal experience which, in any case, they rarely have.

Dispersed to London

Naturally, it is this inequality “between cities” that lures citizens of non-global cities to the global cities, just as from “my city by the lagoon” the collection transits segmentally to “London Letter”. It must be admitted that here is a textualization of migration from Lagos to London where globalization in its Western bias seems to have created a utopia of London with a pull of attraction for the citizens of the city of Lagos. As Arjun Appadurai (1996:4) reminds us, the phenomenon of migration is not new to human history, but there is a way in which the role of the media has also accelerated the level of displacement in the present dispensation, especially with respect to “a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities”, not least because of the packaging of certain “sensations”. Definitely one of such “sensations” is the projected prosperity of the global cities as against the dystopian conditions of the non-global cities.

Again, this textual transitional route from Lagos to London cannot be wholly surprising given the special historical link of colonialism between the two cities. London— having served as the colonial mother-city and capital to Lagos from the second half of the 19th century up to the second half of the 20th century— emerges in the consciousness of Lagos as a collaborator and hostess, of a kind, in the period of hardship.⁵⁵ So, exiles, armed with this kind of false impression, naturally commence a march to London. Yet, it was during this colonial period, it can be argued, that the foundation for the dichotomy between the

⁵⁵ Throughout the era of British colonization of Nigeria, Lagos citizens were privileged to carry special British passports with benefits that other citizens of the colony did not enjoy.

two cities was laid. One was the colonizing city, while the other was the colonized city. For the British myth of modernizing and civilizing the colonies of Africa— which was akin to that of the French vulgate and political prophylactics, and other forms of colonization— the undercurrent of gaining economic advantage over the colonies was underscored by the systematic depredation of the colonies’ wealth and resources. Needless to say, it was in a bid to ensure an advancement of the precursory imperialist stage of slavery.

Nevertheless, the postcolonial Lagos, because of the apparently unique link with London, may be content with the illusion of finding reception from the latter. It is an assumption that has its antecedent in the spirit that moved West Indians of British colonization to London in the 50s, the frustrating impact of which is best illustrated in Samuel Selvon’s *Lonely Londoners*. The reality of antagonism then, as of now, remains alarmingly constant, undermining and exploding at the same time the invention and proposition of globalization that otherwise appears to confer world citizenship on every willing individual that is prepared to subscribe to migrancy. Above all, the construction of the Western city into a utopian constituent, whether in France or London or in the farther America, gives cogency to the interrogative that “If the Western city can be read like a book and books are now virtual, how do city dwellers read themselves in the twenty-first century?” (Patricia Yaeger 2007:23). It then means that the absolutism that textual formations on Western cities authorizes, and which has been promoted further in the virtual age of overwhelming information technology and globalization, faces a critical test of truth, where the result of such performance of utopia creates the movement of Third World citizens to the West. The next section of the poem, “London Letter”, thus offers Lagosians-turned-compulsive dwellers of the city of London to read themselves against the backdrop of the inscribed conception of the city of London.

It will suffice at this juncture to take a look at “London Letter I”, a poem divided into seven parts:

*Na London we dey. Pooling vast memories
across the Atlantic, we witness*

the red bus careering towards Marble Arch
so free from the swarm and crush of Lagos
the sweet journey turned to a fiasco
fiercer than the wars of democracy

we dey for London, spoiling our best wishes
in strands of rueful remembrance— *the god*
of boleka packing bins upon human cattle
to redress crowded busstops;
ah! we pitch for undergrounds haunted to delirium
by highlife numbers only a Lagosian can hear
in the snakes and ladders of the mind
Seducing Big Ben to dance '*na so so enjoyment*'. (14)

In the pidgin, “*Na London we dey*”, or “*we dey for London*” (We are in London, or we have arrived London), we encounter a conscious announcement of the movement of the site of battle of the cities from Lagos to London. However, for all the excitement which stems from the arrival, the memory of Lagos remains inalienable from the migrant minds. They may have found “Marble Arch/ so free from the swarm and crush of Lagos”, but the success of this finding is seriously inverted and shadowed by the fact that they are now confronted with a counter-reality which makes the thought of Lagos a “rueful remembrance”.

In the second part of this title poem, the critical and discerning perception of the persona shatters the myth of utopia constructed around London; for just as there can be found “in my city by the lagoon/ generations under bridges and rampant flyovers/ there are also in Thatcher’s clockwork orange natives as hopeless as truth at Hyde Park”. This goes without saying that the continual refrain of “*na so so enjoyment*” (it is so much of enjoyment) is, at its best, sarcastic. There is an extension of the commentary on the decadence of the city of London in the Third part of the poem. In a way, this exposes the insincerity of the hyper-reality which the media, as an integral part of the project of globalization, create about the cities of the First World. They consciously in their movies shield the vulnerabilities of such cities to make effective their magnetic pull from the Third World. But having arrived in London, it becomes clear to these migrant characters that London is also of “filth, sick city falling/ artlessly begging my city by the lagoon”. Also owing to the overarching nuances of capitalism, the dignity of labour may have

been seriously compromised as the developments in Pecklam and Brixton are not different from those in Mushin and Aguda of “shuffering and shmiling” fame.⁵⁶

By the time we are in “London Letter IV”, the argument of the invention of globalization no longer holds water. Memory again becomes compelling as the migrants review the oil boom wealth of their nation and cannot make out why the ‘surplus value/ of hope’ has become “raised to the brim of vomitorium”.⁵⁷ The question of race, identity and nativity in the First World has been found to constantly undermine any form of global knowledge of welfarism. It explains why the migrants in the end find themselves again on the rueful path “against [the] loony chatters ringing: ‘*Nigger go home/there is no black in the Union Jack*’. It is significant to note that this part of the poem is not only quoted, but also italicized to illustrate the double emphasis on the question of racial prejudice within the western psyche and as an albatross to the achievement of common human progress on a global scale. This was true of history in the middle ages as it was on the threshold of the 20th century, and may remain an issue in the 21st century so long as the precisions of science can be enlisted in a service of compromise to indulge the sentiment of white racism. Howard Winant is unambiguous about this when he puts in perspective what can be termed the unfortunate historiography and dynamic of race:

We may be more afflicted with anxiety and uncertainty over race than we are over any other social or political issue. Time and time again, what has been defined as ‘the race problem’ has generated ferocious antagonism: between slaves and masters, between natives and settlers,

⁵⁶ This parodied allusion calls to mind the Nigerian legend of Afro Beat Music, the late Fela-Anikulapo-Kuti, who in one of his tracks, “Shuffering and Shmiling” analyzed the collective psyche of the Nigerian suffering masses as the one that lacks the gravitas to confront and dethrone the oppressive hegemony of the ruling class, preferring to adopt a quietism through which their suffering contrasts curiously with their smiles. He elaborated on this view further in one of his interviews granted in the late 80s entitled “Animal can’t Dash me Human Rights”— See Jack Mapanje (ed.) *Gathering Seaweed: African Prison Writing*. (Heinemann, 2002), p. 315.

⁵⁷ It should be recalled that the first time Nigeria was wheedled into obtaining a World Bank loan in the 1970s, she actually had no cause for it because of the buoyancy of the economy mainly attributable to crude oil boom. Yet, the West succeeded with the rationale that it was necessary for Nigeria to obtain the loan as she was, technically speaking, “under borrowed”. This would subsequently result in the inclusion of the country in the long list of World Bank and IMF debtors of the 70s and 80s. Needless to say, the travail of debt servicing coupled with the compulsion of paying back has since paralyzed the economies of most of these Third World Nations while the facilitators of such loans of the Western nations have continued to make extremely profiteering gains — See Peter Abrahams, *The Black Experience in the 20th Century*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 299.

between new immigrants and established residents, and between workers divided by wage discrimination. Time and time again, this problem has been declared resolved, or perhaps supplanted by other supposedly more fundamental conflicts, only to blaze up anew. (1993:108)

The implicit ordering of the difference in terms of race overwhelms every other consideration of globalization and establishes the myth of the racial *other*. This ordering of difference, as Foucault reminds us, permeates every form of knowledge and explains why the presence of black immigrants is often considered suspect, to the extent of exclusionary extremities. With this kind of knowledge, it is not surprising that the present form of imperialism which makes people willingly leave the city of Lagos for London sucks in the African content without leaving anything behind. Nevertheless, it has become imperative to rise above the parochial indictment of racism in order to confront an all-important, crucial question which speaks more pragmatically to the situation on the ground in the city of London, as in any other city where the pull engendered by the agglomeration of global capital has resulted in the subsequent agglomeration of labour from other parts of the world believed to be a major source of such capital accumulation. To face the fact, the interests at stake here are both those of the migrants and the citizens of the host nation. As Jon May et al (2007) put it,

But it is less useful in helping to think through the rather more difficult question of how to address the needs of those previously distant others now 'here', without undermining the equally pressing needs of others Londoners, many of whom were once migrants. Put simply, how can we champion the cause of Britain's new migrant workers, and their dependants elsewhere, without undermining the interests of British workers? (164).

For sure, the poser above verges on the domain of the ethical consideration that must be kept in view and placed at the core of what I prefer to designate as the globalization of migration. Once the ethical concern is given some thought, it does not take long to realize how the question of equity which may help to redraw, if not erase permutations of polarity between the global and non-global cities will apportion to all parties certain measure of responsibility from each space of home in order to check the disproportionate flow of both capital and human flow.

But while this mandate of equity is yet to be executed, in 'London Letter' V and VI, the western capitalist basis on which the structures of globalization rest is exposed as the migrants, despite their repetition of "*so so enjoyment*!, pay as we pee or peel" (18-19). This is the case whether at the parks by London seashore, or any other place where public infrastructures in spite of their dilapidated condition, are viable sources of income to the British establishment, especially when patronized by migrants. But whatever blame is implied in this observation, the oeuvre of self-criticism is also articulated in the remark that the nostalgia that the littoral sites in London inspires about Lagos, chides the home government for not taking advantage of the economic values of the leisure that Lagos lagoon provides. At this point, in casting their minds on home, the migrants can only remember the "absent parks by the lagoon" (18). To that extent, the exploitation of these migrants in London may be evident, it however does not exonerate the home government for refusing to take advantage of the tourist attraction of Lagos lagoon to boost its economy, a situation that might have reprieved some from migrating to London in the first place.

The consumerist bias of globalization underscores this fact. Further, there is a revelation that in this "tale of two cities" (19), there is a rhythm between the levels of decadence that pervades infrastructural systems in London and Lagos. For instance, London "broken lifts in undergrounds [and] clockwork trains", according to the poet, "emulate the dry taps and blackouts of my city by lagoon". (19) It is at this point one begins to take as instructive the levelling paradigm of Jennifer Robinson (2006: 109) who contends that the polarization between cities especially in the present age deserves revision, after all. For beyond the smokescreen of the sophistication/mundane of certain cities as against the peripheral insignificance of others particularly in the permutation of global and non-global cities, what we are likely to find in the end is the bracing commonality of both utopian and dystopian elements in the definition of all cities. Therefore, rather than maintain these hierarchical, artificial categories, it may just be as well to level all permutations by developing a paradigm of "ordinary cities" where all cities are treated as the same.

Yet, these black immigrants are subjected to the most basal and degrading of undertakings to earn a living in London:

in this city of many navels and absent centres
see my countrymen sing *owambe*⁵⁸ to the garbage can
knowing that the pound yields no stink at dusk
after the sweat of day returns to Thames. (19)

The said situation of “my countrymen [who] sing *owambe* to the garbage can” is consistent with the telling revelation made by Jon May et al (2007: 151) about the new forms of labour dynamics in London from the late 1990s. For prior to this time the London welfare package for immigrants was “relatively generous”, making the situation a lot better than what obtained in other western cities, say New York and Los Angeles. Again also because the formerly controlled labour immigration into London has given way from this period to a more relaxed influx, possibly to allow a commensurate flow of both capital and labour into the global city, labour survey dynamics have changed significantly to the extent that the high demand for labour at the bottom end of the spectrum can now absolve, more than any other level, immigrants whose high formal trainings in their countries of origin can no longer receive cognate/commensurate labour recognition.

To that extent, although London falls into the category of those worlds cities that “are understood to have emerged as key sites of ‘command and control’ (ibid.:152), it can hardly meet the expectations of labour migrants from the cities of the South. So downgraded and consigned to eking out living via refuse clearance as in the poem under discussion, the situation of the migrants speaks to the condition of many who in spite of their high qualifications have the same misfortune of Kobena, a Ghanaian who lives behind his state housing job as an honours degree holder only to take up a job in the UK where he works as a cleaner and takes home a miserable amount of pounds per week (ibid.:151). The situation thus compels us to challenge Hannerz’s view which argues that because cosmopolitans “came equipped with special knowledge, and they could leave

⁵⁸ *Owambe* refers to the musical pop brand played and enjoyed mostly among the Yoruba-speaking people of Nigeria, South-West.

and take it with them without devaluing it... they are the ‘new class’, people with credentials, decontextualized cultural capital” (cited in Gary Bridge 2007:35). Knowing that Hannerz’s enthusiasm about the magic of renewed cosmopolitanism was expressed in the 1990s, the situation on ground today more than instructs to the contrary as a result of the complications arising from the mandate of reconciling theory to practice. The issue of gentrification highlighted earlier comes up here again as in London there are found “prostrate denizens, lying low” and consigned to knowing “London from the heap-bottom of highlife”.

All this goes to show why the seventh and last part of the segment rivets on the double tragedy of these migrants from Lagos. Their movement from their homeland was occasioned by a sense of alienation engendered by the folly and decadence of governance and infrastructural system that fails to deliver on comfort; coupled with this is the need to be reconciled with the native wealth already swept to the city of London. However, they have ended up in London where the aggregation of all this, in addition to unfavourable temperate weather as well as the racial question mediated through capitalist operations, has left them more confused and traumatically alienated, having no place they can actually call theirs:

Like *them* who sang ‘*Lagos, na so so enjoyment,*
we dey for London like we no dey at all’
dreading the winter like the old woman in nights
without firewood to hold harmattans at bay
we dey for London like we no dey at all
chewing cud in the birth of freedom as tragedy
a used up hope mocking the human condition
on both sides of the Atlantic: *Na so so enjoyment.* (20)

The repetition of “*we dey for London like we no dey at all*” (we are in London as though we were not at all) explodes with a tone of finality the rarefied proposition of globalization. It is, after all, in the context of this work, a “mocking of the human condition” in which the migrant citizens of the Third World have been most hit.

It invariably implies that to the Third World cities, globalization remains a space of contestation; for even where there is a convergence between Lagos and London, it is only to the extent of decadent similarity. Otherwise, the postmodern simulacrum has only led to a double devaluation of the condition of these citizens of Lagos across spaces, making them, ultimately, victims of an advanced imperial strategy. Therefore, rather than forging a collaborative and dialogic alliance of cities for the purpose of mutual progress, Lagos and London in this case have laid out as two cities in conflictual contestation emanating from the potency of the North-South binarism. And with the tableau of Lagos' travails of resource dispersal as against the manner of London's resource pull, globalization, assessed against this backdrop, emerges, even at its best, a concept as suspect as it is contradictory. Therefore, as the formulae of the new economic cartography emerge in their discounting of the primacy of distinct and individual geographies for the purpose of executing a project of planetization, there seems to be little hope for the Third World cities. For in the envisaged consolidation of the New World Order, one sees from a more sober and reflective angle, like Richard Helgerson (2001: 241), not only "the folly of [such] maps and modernity", but also, one dare add, the folly of the present construction of geography and the tyranny of the management of its postmodern space. In the end, however, we must be fair enough to admit that for most of the Third World cities and their economic exclusion, as in the case of Lagos, and which often leads to the migration of their cities to the cities of the First World, the blame cannot be entirely put at the doorstep of western capitalist strategies as mediated through globalization. Indeed, a substantial part of the blame also rests with the dysfunctional internal dynamics of socio-political administration that exposes their cities' flanks to exploitation and depredation. In the succeeding part of this chapter the focus will shift to *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*.

Transplanting the Iroko: Exile and the Niger Delta Urbanscape in Tanure Ojaide's *When it no Longer Matters Where you Live*

Once driftwood,
then transplant;
I am still
the iroko (*When it no Longer Matters where you Live*, 20)

So far, this chapter, using Ofeimun's *London Letter and Other Poems*, has illustrated how the battle between global and non-global cities results in the experience of exile. It has done so by foregrounding the juxtaposition of Lagos and London in the text. However various dynamics, internal and external, are responsible for the subaltern status that exiles and migrants in the work assume. Nevertheless, in the remaining part of the chapter, the study stands to contend further that a similar battle rages from another part of the Nigerian nation. The oil-rich Niger-Delta cities are no less affected in the global battle between cities of the North and the South; while the outcome of such battle is replete with multifarious effects, the dimension of exile will be worth considering by examining Ojaide's *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*.

The evolution of Niger Delta cities, like many other African cities, must be construed against the backdrop of Western imperialism. When European activities began in this part of the country in form of trade, it was on equal terms. The Niger Delta people then had enjoyed the envious status of middlemen between Europeans and other African neighbours, especially those from the other side of what came later to be known as River Niger. But the equal relations soon gave way to an interaction of inequality, whereby trade in African slaves, rather than exchange of African commodities for European products, became the core definition of commerce. Truly, the Niger Delta retained for a long time its position as a link in the trade; however, the knowledge that it was made to compromise the humanity of its fellow black people, either from within the region or outside, already indicated the devaluation of the people's relationship with European merchants. Nevertheless, the trade relations laid the foundation for the formation of Niger Delta cities. The period between the abolition of the Slave Trade and the formal colonization of the region as part of Nigeria in the late 19th century, made obvious the foundation of the Niger Delta polis. If the Western polis, after which most of African

cities were ostensibly patterned in their evolution, exuded vibrant productivity and were ultimate beneficiaries of such productivity, Niger Delta cities were created in a qualified simulation. Qualified simulation because rather than being the ultimate beneficiaries of the proceeds from oil palm trade, the benefits accrued almost exclusively to Britain and other European cities. Whatever benefits of urbanity they could garner in the era of occupational colonialism were also soon to be eroded, laying the foundation for the paradoxical dystopia created thereafter, from the colonial to the post-independence era. Ebigberi Alagoa (2004:10) gives a vivid account of the historical and contemporary dynamics at work in minimizing the spatial privilege and relevance of the Niger Delta urban space.

The above then explains why the imperative of subnationalism in the Niger Delta politics can no longer be ignored. Going by Joshua Forrest's (2004:2) account of postcolonial African subnationalism, there is no doubt that the political mobilization of ethnic and regional nationalities as counterweight to aspirations of national governments is in most cases a response to the attempt by the political class to endorse and perpetuate national narratives and practices of marginalization instituted in the colonial days. As well as the collectivism of subnationalism, individuals have also taken it upon themselves to articulate the fears and aspirations of their ethnic and regional formations. This is what Forrest refers to as "individuals' conscious or ascriptive adherence to ethnic or regional identity patterns" (ibid.). Specifically for Ojaide, the recurrence of the Niger Delta condition in his poetry stems from the huge paradox that dogs the history of the region, that is, the "paradox of sitting on oil and yet remaining impoverished" (Ojaide: 1999:244).

Any wonder then that the collection begins with a reflection on the ships, the mnemonic and symbolic reminder of the genesis of marginalization and despoliation of the Niger Delta space. But to fully explore the allegory of ships, and the memory they conjure up in the Niger Delta space, both the present and the past are mobilized in the collection, which is why the narrative begins more or less *in media res* with an announcement of the migrant/ cosmopolitan breed that history has made of the persona:

Waters have carried my boat
wherever they had their way,
which is everywhere on earth,
My course ran through the clear
and dark rivers— I recognized
signs of imminent downpours,
and none drowned me the length
of the overcast sky through which
shone a veil-wearing star.
Migrant birds kept me company
and broke the silence and chill—
visions of flames incensed paddles
to redouble their strokes.
my thirst never left me
despite the battering waves—
there wasn't always a shore at hand
My heart still burns from storms
though I have been back home.
Waters give me power
to contain unforeseen flames (The Course of Waters, 12).

The deployment of maritime metaphors reinforces the persona's consciousness of his spatial origin. Again, these metaphors and the import they bear are therapeutic in themselves as they intervene to soothe the migrant mind, reconciling him to the distant happenings of home. That is, there is an undeniable sense of alienation that attends the deracination that the migrant suffers. However, the enormity of the deracination is extenuated and moderated through the succour that comes with the utility of social symbols of culture and communication through which an individual's fraternity with his original social milieu is negotiated. Nevertheless, it is crucial to ask, how far can the utility of social and cultural symbols of homeland compensate for the uprooting? The question is the more pertinent in view of the coerciveness of the uprooting that has in the first place occasioned the search for reconciling the paradox that is precipitated in the efforts of reaching out to homeland through the creative simulation of allegories of home culture in exile?

"Colour Me" provides the earliest indication that, even when rated among the best beneficiaries of cosmopolitanism in the North, the condition of African exile and the chasm it creates between homes do not provide the desired sense of actualization. Autobiographical in texture, the poem navigates through memories of childhood to

adulthood, reliving moments of rootedness and experiences of home, which ramify not only the Delta space but the national space in its entirety. But also because, in his itinerary, he has found himself traversing lands far flung beyond homeland into the social crevices of Western spaces, the need to reflect on social and institutional practices together with the hypocrisies that dog them becomes necessary. At the core of all this is the capitalist fundament which, for instance, makes “people called/ white/” but whose “religion was blood-toned”; yet he has also known and “seen people called/ black/ whose gods command hospitality”. Knowing the role religion played in the despoliation of Africa by the West during periods of earlier brands of capitalist globalization designated as slavery and colonialism, the emphasis on the paradoxes should not be surprising. It must be that which informs the announcement of a poetic mission of the collection in the last stanza of the poem:

Now that I have gathered
a world of colours
for a splashing vision,
let me spread my thoughts
on a clean canvas. (15)

The poem “Ships” provides insight into questions of memory and identity particularly as formulated through the commonality of experiences, both internal and exponential, that come together in shaping the political economy of a people or nation. As Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (2006: 111) assert, attention is beginning to shift from “‘sites of memory’ that act as placeholders for the memories of particular groups... to the cultural processes by which memories become shared”. Nonetheless, the veracity of such an assertion may need to be articulated with some measure of qualification. This is in view of the fact that considered from the purview of the duo, the abstraction of memory can be sometimes interpreted to underwrite hegemonic discourses. To appropriately get to the heart of “Ships”, therefore, one must begin to conceive the idea of memory as one that straddles both the “sites” and “processes” by which it is legitimized. Therefore, one may have to turn to the notion of counter-memory to situate the social condition, which is both historical and contemporary, and with which the poem engages. Drawing this kind of distinction is also needful because:

Current interest in memory has largely been driven by a desire to explore the various ways in which people remember the past and the many versions of the past that have fallen outside the purview of professional historians. As a result, 'memory', has tended in practice to become synonymous with 'counter-memory', defined in opposition to hegemonic views of the past and associated with groups who have been 'left out', as it were, of mainstream history. The study of such memories has been based on a belief in the importance and possibility of 'recovering' memories which were once there and which have since been 'lost or 'hidden'. This recovery project is itself linked in complex ways to contemporary identity politics and to the desire of particular groups to profile their common identity by claiming distinct roots in a particular historical experience. (Ann Rigney 2005: 13)

Therefore, in "Ships", the sight of ships also induces the unpalatable binary unit of the spectrum of memory: "moments of bleak despair" as against the other much desirable side of memory coin: "its happy times" (American Archivist 2002: 2). Rather than be reprieved from the question of what accounts for the usual cleavage in the spectrum, one is instead drawn into probing further what happens when one side of the parties of memory shares the "moments of bleak despair". Within the discourse of counter-narrative, the assumption reveals a guilty propensity and liability for lack of fair play on the part of the other side whose shielded but calculated corner-cuttings must have yielded "happy times" to the detriment of the brunt-bearing party. To face it, the foundation of Western capitalism and its practice in Africa were heralded by mercantile voyages. These voyages, rather than produce equal partners between Africa and the West, resulted in a relationship tilted to the binary permutation of the superior and the inferior, the master and the slave, the colonizer and the colonized, and within the analysis of materialist shemma, the rich and the poor. The link that the sight of "ships" provides for the defeated between the past and the future brings into perspective the question of the process of memory sharing for a people or nation. This is why the persona in no unambiguous terms expresses his reservations about the sight of ships. It will be worthwhile to quote the poem in full:

Ships have never been
a good sign to me.
Once launched, they
dispossess pious lands
of their gold and youth
and taint waters with
cadavers of stowaways

The banditry of the Armada

could only be pride to the godless!
The fleet that devoured captives
could only be libated by torturers!
The piracy of conquistadors
could only be blessed by evil priests!

In Rhine-flushed Rotterdam,
the vast port and museums
told tales of wave-borne ships.
I recalled the Middle Passage,
the blacked-out holocaust.

Ships are still setting sail
for distance seas
to wreck inland peace.
And there are ports as far apart
as Mars and America
reserved for the next fleet!

But no new ships bring back
what has been hauled away
with fire-spitting wizardry.
They can only savage more,
infesting coastlines with mines.

May *Olokun* break their spell⁵⁹
and dump them on the sea-bed! (16)

Broadly, the poem bears out the remark about the history of imperialism and how this history precipitates the present world order within the domain of globalization. For there is indeed a sense in which the poem provides an incisive and concise account of imperialism as experienced in various parts of the world and as an act of coercion perpetrated and driven by the same form of consciousness and epistemology emanating from the West. Laying the groundwork for the present world order, it becomes clear how ships in the histories of imperialism are crucial to the various experiential epochs that define these histories. This is why in the conception of globalization as closely linked to the historical experience of “trade, colonialism and nation state”, the centrality of ships cannot be ignored. It definitely accounts for why Ojaide weaves a web that connects the depredation and exploitation of Spanish “Armada” to the imperial experience perpetrated by the conquistadors of South America, and to the maritime commerce of continental Europe. It was this that metamorphosed in its abhorrence into the climax of the “Middle Passage”, an experience through which Africa lost a huge productive population in

⁵⁹ *Olokun* is one of the several Niger Delta gods that Ojaide invokes in his poetry, usually for justice intervention and revolution.

millions over a period of about four centuries. But in specific terms, there is also a sense in which the poem, especially in the last three stanzas, speaks to the contemporary state of imperialism and in which ships still remain crucial in the execution of its agenda. Therefore when the persona remarks that “Ships are still setting sail/ for distance seas/ to wreck inland peace”... infesting coastlines with mines”, the truth of such remark also applies in particular ways not only to the Nigerian nation but more specifically to the Niger Delta from which the poet hails. Indeed, the exploration activities of crude oil by Euro-American transnational oil firms in the region have led more to the impoverishment and exposure of the people to various industrial hazards. As an externalization of a subconscious trauma, it then explains why in the concluding couplet the persona invokes one of the many Niger Delta goddesses, “Olokun” to “dump” perpetrators “on the seabed!” For African transnationalism or migrancy, therefore, the neutrality of attachment to place is an impossibility for as long as transnationals and migrants are alive to the knowledge that the comfort of other lands may have been reaped off their homes of origin.

Moreover, the despoliation of ships in Africa has created nation states in the wake of colonialism. By virtue of their colonial design, these nation states have given rise to cities and other urbanscapes but have not all endured in terms of the sophistication and material prosperity of Western cities. What then could be responsible for the decadence of African urbanscapes? In the case of the Niger Delta, like in other places, the factors are as internal as they are external. For instance, the dynamics of the imperial relation of the West to Africa is perceivable in “Accents”, which relates again an experience of homecoming in which the longing for a “rediscovery of the ordinary” (Njabulo Ndebele 1992:434) in terms of the reunion of old lovers, becomes a onerous task since the process of reaching out by the foot-loose exile to his old lover means a “walk through the slums” and a “jump over gutters” (17). But it is not enough to assert that the evolution of Niger Delta urbanscapes in the wake of colonialism was bound to hit a social and economic dead end evidenced in the undermining visage of “slums” and filthy “gutters”. Truly the exploitation of the natural resources of this region has to a large extent constituted a source of fortune for the West through its prospecting firms; nonetheless, the level of

urban degradation and economic emasculation that results in the experience of exile as being discussed in this work is also significantly attributable to the level of irresponsibility of the governance of the country. Therefore upon the persona's realization that he has been forced to make home of a distant land, he laments the fact that "I have left behind/ a delta of fortune". The anger and the rage that the paradox of living far away from the "fortune" of home breeds is unleashed in the concluding stanzas, in which the persona also holds a critical view on the narrative of the sophistication of western urban landscapes:

And here, the parade
that illuminates the street
into a constellation of stars.
I am asked to compliment
the vulture for its face-lift
that translates beauty
into marketable beef.
I am asked to practice love
that is doomed to flowers,
cats and dogs...
I lock away sad airs
from creasing my face

The sunbird left behind
can never be matched
by this made-up face. (18)

The use of "vulture" in this part of the poem reminds us of one of Ojaide's earlier collections, *The Fate of Vultures* (1990). If in the said collection the metaphor of "vulture" is said to have referred to the Nigerian political class of the Second Republic that fleeced the nation of its wealth and created undue privileges of insulation against the accountability, in this particular case in *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*, one can argue that there is an attempt to balance the narrative in such a way that exposes the collaborators of the ruling class from the external end of the spectrum of oppression. Thus the continued culpability of the West in the economic oppression that most African nations suffer is once again brought to the foreground. But more crucially, the poem is an incisive commentary on the widely held view regarding the present condition of western postmodern cities. That is, in a bid to celebrate the "surface", not only is the "depth" undermined, but the source of the ostentation of such cities— the developing nations—

goes completely unacknowledged as people bask in the infrastructural wonders that the cities provide. It accounts for why the persona refuses to tow the popular path of praise singing about the wonders of western cities; instead he questions the artificiality of the manipulation by which “the vulture” “translates beauty/ into marketable beef”. Thus the artificiality of conditions in western cities forces a comparative response on his consciousness as he remembers home and declares “The sunbird left behind/can never be matched/ by this made-up face”.

The anger and pain of uprooting are on the ascent in “I am the Iroko”, which as usual, deploys tropes and images of movement and migration textured in riverine metaphors to articulate the continual deracination of the persona. The self awareness of his migrant condition and the dislocation from home nevertheless inspires some kind of compensatory therapy by which “Migrating birds/ carry home my name” (19). The greater consolation comes from the cosmopolitan advantage that his status has been invested with, and it does appear that for the moment the invocation of memories of home with a national and subnational tenacity will compensate for the alienation and inadequacies of exile: “The salt I imbibed/ from the old nursery/ fortifies the body/& foils predictions/ of early stunting./ Once driftwood, then transplant; I am still/the Iroko” (20). If the idea of “driftwood” speaks to the desperate moments of instability in the life of an exile, the notion of “transplant” points to a reconciliation to the fact of accepting that another home can be built far away from home where the status of home can be garnered again; hence “I am still/ the Iroko”. But to what extent can one take seriously this attempt to equate an exile’s status with that of a home-based figure?

There is a growing tendency on the part of African intellectuals to obscure and underplay their exile status by claiming to be willing beneficiaries of contemporary cosmopolitan cultures which, sad enough, are perceived to be located almost exclusively in the West. Truly some are qualified to fall within the category of cosmopolitans, highbrow migrant workers who would still have been away from home if the conditions were attractive and stable on all fronts. But as things stand today, even at his best, the self-professed African cosmopolitan in the West is only engaging with an exercise in illusion through

“narratives of cosmopolitan self-aggrandizement” (Paul Zeleza 2003:16). If the reality does not catch up with him in his Western country of destination, it will definitely stare him in the face in the event of his return to the homeland, no matter how short-lived. This is the import of the subsequent sections of the collection.

What, moreover, is interesting about the collection is the way it engages with the incapacitation of the Niger Delta urbanscape on the one hand, and on the other, some other major cityscapes of the Nigerian nation, showing that the author’s subnational consciousness blends with the national. Putting Abuja, into perspective, “Libation” engages with the monstrosity of misrule that the military represented in the 1990s. The economic emasculation that the system engendered is metaphorically captured thus:

the republic shrinks from its shores into a mole on the map
and populates the states with dunes of dry leaves
fishers and hunters return without consolation—
when the brush fire flares with frenzy, exodus
of the sharp-witted, skilled, and divining ones;
the sack folds without storage of corn or millet. (39)

On the one hand, the various sanctions imposed on Nigeria by the international community in the wake of the annulment of the June 12 1993 election already had a way of taking tolls on the entire nation—from Abuja, the country’s capital city to other spaces, both rural and urban, creating all manner of crises in the nation. At the centre of it all is a one-man dictatorial imposition of General Sani Abacha who turned himself into an unquestionable figure and held the entire nation to ransom until he died later in 1998. But before he died the poet responded to the condition his regime created and the precipitous edge to which he had pushed the nation, to the extent that even those who had escaped as exiles or cosmopolitans to other lands could not be at rest. “Libation” engages with this Abacha phenomenon further:

This crisis cripples with pain
Fatalities rub eyebrows with wet rags
My people herded into a hole
Suffer the suffocating smoke of want
Nowhere’s secure from approaching flames

The land will continue to suffer for a long time,
Even if it survives this spate of bloodshot eyes. (40)⁶⁰

But if the above speaks to a national situation of paradox, it is in fact a preliminary commentary on the paradox of “resource curse” in the Niger Delta: the fact that the region whose wealth redounds to the prosperity of the nation is the one ironically typified by poverty and crisis.⁶¹ For it is “In search of a Fresh Song” that there is a complete unfurling of this paradox. The search for environmental sanity in the foremost oil city of Warri can at best be compared to the search for rivers in a desert. The environmental eyesore must also be viewed as an indication that poverty rules the space and whatever myth of the “House of Wonders” that may have been woven around the city has completely disappeared.⁶² The evidence reinforces the argument that although “the dream of the successful city which...accompanied independence for African nationalists can be characterised as a modernist dream” (Bill Freund 2007: 142), the realization of this dream has however been vitiated by the connivance of both the political elite and the overbearing influence of the multinational companies, in the case of the Niger Delta cities.

In the specific case of Warri, the paradox becomes most evident when the poem unfolds, with an objectification of scenes and conditions compatible only with socio-economic exclusion. As usual in this collection, there is a sustained deployment of metaphors and

⁶⁰ The reference is General Abacha, the Nigerian military dictator whose eyes were always bloodshot from an incurably inebriated lifestyle.

⁶¹ Explaining the concept of resource endowment, Scott Pegg (2006:1-2) intimates that the “resource curse” phenomenon is closely associated with the proverbial “negative effects the North Sea oil revenues had on Dutch industrial production.” Taken out of context, the term is now being used as a descriptive term for the negative consequences of over-dependence on the fabulous revenue from export of mineral resources by producing countries. Some of these are the drawing of “capital and labour away from agriculture and manufacturing”. Besides, he cites Michael Ross, who explains in a related manner that the situation also encourages the development of a *rentier* psychology which makes government less interested in levying domestic taxes, and ultimately makes it feel less accountable to the citizenry. All these are telling epiphanies in the history of Nigeria since the commencement of crude oil prospecting.

⁶² In “Verandahs of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa” Garth Myers (2003:1-2) reflects on the late 19th century colonial edifice in Zanzibar named House of Wonders. It was regarded as an achievement in its replication of a Western city structure in Africa. But the sorry and frail state of the structure today can as well be described as a metaphor for the abandonment that many African cities have suffered in recent times.

images of motion and movement to drive home the point about the dystopian state of an oil-rich cityscape:

I wandered into Igbudu Market road,
a labyrinth of dishevelled uniform—
ochre-painted, grey, and unlit.
I have seen an armada of fecal trash
assault with toxic blast that lays waste
the afflicted neighbourhood— damp, sour air
that disperses death in the isolated ward.
I have witnessed bloated feet wade naked
through this slush of unlettered street
everywhere urinary, toilet, or vast spittoon;
I faced sweat-logged wraiths as easily knocked
down by motor-bikes as by fever and want.

I walked through malarial rot—
fetid pools of floors, evacuated hearths;
pots rust from dearth of naira.
Can I, burning from thirst, drink from here
without contracting one of the many plagues;
Or ready for lunch split the leftovers
without a running stomach to contend with?

O heart sore from this graphic vision,
what love of residents of drifting detritus
will lead me to share that loaf
ever stale in the mouth, ever damp
but fills a million mouths?
I have encountered the raw end of another life,
the smothering mire I want destroyed.

And my song rises out of this haunting vision,
a vast net that's caught so many
that they don't even know how deep
and gone they are in the trap,
Igbudu Market road. (44)

The case of “Igbudu Market road”, a symbol of economic and social capital in the city of Warri, brings to the foreground the contradictory condition of the Niger Delta cityscape. This is the more so when one reckons that, assessed against the backdrop of the global capitalist consolidation of division of labour, the relevance of the city is in its identification with the production of crude oil which is thereafter exported mainly to the West with greater values to its buyers than for the seller. According to Garth Myers and Martin Murray (2006:3-4), African cities, right from the earliest period of contact with the West, had been central to the prosecution of global capital and commodity flow; however, “the current phase of global economic restructuring has brought about a

wholesale transformation in transnational division of labour that, in turn, has put into motion new urban dynamics on a world scale”.

The basic idea of the current division of labour presupposes that cities that have resources of whatever kind to contribute to the global commodity and capital flow, even if they are rated in the “second tier” category, will find relevance which will tell on their economic buoyancy, and rub off positively on their dwellers. That the city of Warri with the entire region it represents is buoyant is not in contest. Not least because, if there is a growing American and indeed Western interest in Africa, following from “threats of terrorism and interruption in oil production” in the Middle East (Sandra Barnes 2005: 1), Warri and other such Niger Delta cities are considered major hosts and attraction of such economic structure and practice. This then, forms the basis for arguing that the Niger Delta cities’ condition turns the paradigm of the dialectic of cities on its head. Besides, the whole idea of basing connectivity of one city to the global scheme of things on economic productivity and viability, within this context, conflicts with practices of globalization which ultimately exclude African cities for their resources and productivity. Or how else does one take the assertion that “cities with little or nothing to offer in the global marketplace have faced the dire prospect of disappearing into ruin and decay, and thereby ‘falling off the world map,’ at least in terms of connections to the world economy”? (Robinson and Smith cited in Myers and Murray 2006: 4) For Warri, as can be seen in the poem, it is not a case of being faced by the “prospect” of decay of ruin and decay, the reality is already evident.

But we must also transcend the fixation on global politics in the casting of the dragnet of blames. This is because on another plane, the deplorable condition of the city of Warri is also an indictment of the political elite that refuses to channel the proceeds from oil to the development and maintenance of the region. On yet another plane, the mood and diction in this particular poem— from the imagery of the “armada of fecal trash” to “vast spittoon” to “damp, sour air” to “fetid pools of floor”— points to the fact that the division between cities as global and non-global among other such permutations cannot hold water in absolute terms. Not the least because for all its perceived dystopian condition the

mood and the images invoked in this poem are reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's depiction of western cities in his poetry, pointing ultimately to the commonality of dystopia in every city structure irrespective of its location. Of course, this much has also been confirmed earlier in this chapter in Ofeimun's reflection on his intimate encounter with the city of London.

If cosmopolitanism presupposes a kind of feeling "at home in the world" (Timothy Brennan 1997), there is a sense in which this is redefined by Ojaide in *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*. For him, the idea of feeling homely in the world must also mean a cosmopolitan existence predicated upon a compelling home mooring. Hence, the cities by which one's national and subnational spaces are defined deserve reflective attention; not least because these cities are best at appropriating both the subnational and national pulses by which the state of the nation is measured. The passion behind the search for home in the world does not preclude Ojaide's search for decency of living in the world created within the subnational and national domain of his country. Not for him the complicit silence on particularity of identity that arises from the "continuing emphasis on hybrid, interstitial" posture and which "all too readily occludes the particularities of identities of the lives of specific hybrid groups" (John Thieme 2003:1). This is why much as his articulation lends voice to the hybrid identity that the cosmopolitan existence precipitates, an idea extensively explored in poems like "Safe Journey", the question about "the death of the nation-state" (Timothy Brennan 1997:2) does not arise within the domain of Ojaide's cosmopolitan practice. That is, the nation as well as the subnation is alive and kicking in his poetry. Therefore, the idea of the "rootless cosmopolitan", to borrow cautiously from Anthony Appiah (2006:4), the one without a community but who is of every place in the universe, requires re-inscription in *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*.. Therefore, the justification for a claim of this nature is informed by the traversing within his immediate cityscape of the Niger Delta and the extension of the travel across the nation through a dialogue with cities of other parts outside the Niger Delta. To that extent, where the subnational mandate may become vulnerable to indictment of essentialism, the involvement of other cities provides the broadly needed reflections that do more than centralize and unite the cities. But this involvement of other

cities also shows the exponential threat of globalization in dynamics of the cities and how the dystopian condition that results becomes an inducement for exile.

To draw an illustration from “Home Song” alone, a poem in nine parts, one encounters a constellation of issues which mill in cities of other parts of the country. It then points to the nationalist consciousness of Ojaide, but this does not occlude his subnationalist vision. In “Home Song I”, a poem that reflects on the city of Abuja, the capitalist tendencies of charismatic churches in the country come under criticism. By Nigerian standards, Christianity may not be a new phenomenon; but the recrudescence of excessive emphasis on prosperity in most recently established sects is. And if thus considered, the American antecedent of this new wave of sectarian tendency throws light on the subtlety through which the idea of capitalist disposition legitimated through processes of new forms of communication take toll on Nigerian populations in the cities. In the poem, the streaks of paradox that dog the practice range from how “robbers of all denominations assemble from all states/ to share the loot of faith” to the mocking of “gospel of flagellation” by “rotund and bright bodies”. Whereas in other places, “devotees would incur sore knees/ to exorcise hell”, and people overfill church “with tithes from robbery” (48). With these scenarios a dog-eat-dog kind of situation has already been created, whereby the nation’s capital is turned into a site for the constellation of “robbers” from different states of the country. While, on the one hand, it is an indictment of the complicity of religion in the oppression of the masses, it also exposes, on the other hand, how the political elite and economic merchants, who are corruptible beneficiaries of the gross mismanagement of the country, have turned the capital city into a hideout including its religious centres. Yet the piety of other worshippers in other places is without the ostentation and flamboyance of the so-called Abuja worshippers. Not surprisingly then:

The horizons blank of stars and storms,
there’s fear of empty souls serenading the ogre
to their pocket advantage and praise
& we await with fevered hearts
the wails to follow the delusion of faith...” (49).

In the second part of the poem, the “theatre of the absurd” that had characterized the nation since independence, climaxed in the material time of 1997.⁶³ The nation was continually plagued by the same political undoing, the syndrome of which shows that “several times the rule of succession/ has been broken by strong hands/ and none of the princes of the patriarch/ can claim right of succession without a war” (50). In particular, “Home Song III”, reflects on the crisis that General Abacha’s regime bred. His case compares with that of “The complete gentleman [who] transforms into an ogre/ before our very eyes” (51).⁶⁴ The ruthlessness with which he handled Niger Delta agitation for resource control and ecological protection was perhaps best seen in the state murder of Ogoni activists including Ken Saro-Wiwa. But beyond the Niger Delta, his iron hand held tight on the nation and provided easy access to Euro-American multinational oil corporations for milking the oil resources of the nation. It should not then come as a surprise that in the northern city of Kuru, the reflection becomes vicarious, measuring the extent of state damage of confidence in nationhood: “Epidemics have broken out all over the land/& misery like convulsive miasma spills into every home— now half-blind and hard of hearing, my people/ stare at themselves grave patients/ without herbs or healers in sight” (59). Although the sixth part of the poem is a revitalized hope for the people as “We’ll not all die from the tyranny of ogres/ in the rain-flushed season of our troubles”, the incongeniality of city dwelling already overwhelms most people caught in its vortex.

“City in my Heart” for instance, provides the contrast that the northern city of Jos conjures when the oil city of Warri is mentioned. Thus, the celebration of the ecological sanity of Jos becomes for the Niger Delta poet, a lamentation of a subnational texture over the dirt and pollution that have turned Warri as well as other Niger Delta cities into an eyesore. The environmental neglect which is one of the many ways of “killing the goose” (Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas (2003:56) has also aggravated the whimsical state campaign of exclusion and unemployment that runs hand in hand with the multinational corporations’ collusion to “diminish the humanity of every person and

⁶³ This year was the peak of military dictatorship under General Abacha; the despot died in the following year, paving the way for the restoration of democratic rule.

⁶⁴ The initial impression of many Nigerians of the dictator was that of a mild-mannered and compassionate ruler; but he soon turned out to be perhaps the worst ruler the nation has known.

every institution involved”, be it in Port Harcourt, or Ughelli, Yenagoa, Bonny or Warri or “all the other urban centres in the Niger Delta.” (192).⁶⁵ It then becomes understandable when “City in my Heart” opens with mixed feelings: “I come to familiar paradise for a season— /I come to the plateau of hills and rocks, driven out/ by dirt and doubts from Warri’s delta lows” (61). If the narrative of “Home Song” is unique in the way it articulates the exilic implications of the deplorable condition of the cityscapes, it is not however in the last part, as would be expected, that one encounters the exilic consequences.

While the fourth part expresses the initial wave of this exilic experience as one that is first internal by announcing proleptically, “we shall be homeless within our frontiers/ as long as the looting riots continue” (55), the third part comes to terms with the full blown implications of external exile as the direct and logical consequence of the neglect of the economic exclusion of the masses in the country by the tripartite alliance of the state, the elite and the multinationals. Therefore:

The eyes blurred from exhaustion
see no farther than the next half-meal
& next week fresh exiles will take to flight
to distances without roots (51).

The inconvenience of homeland is further reinforced in “In Dirt and Pride” where it is revealed:

Hardship has smothered the firebrands
that once blazed a liberation trail.
The land smothers every flower
That flourishes a salutary fragrance...

Every blessing that falls into the land
vanishes from hands, eyes ablaze—
the jinx of failure litters dead dreams around. (75-76)

⁶⁵ Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas (2003) cite the case of Shell which “maintains its own private police force, imports its own arms and ammunition, and at least in two instances has admitted payments to the Nigerian military” (58-9). The multinational is also notorious for keeping, among other units, “a special ‘strike force’, which ... was deployed to suppress community protests, armed with automatic weapons and tear gas canisters” (60).

The above may then be summoned as the basis for making a beeline for one form of exile or the other. And because this is usually to the West, the hopes that motivate such decisions may not be unconnected with the utopian view that is created about Western cities and the promise they presumably offer especially in the age of globalization. The “mobility of capital” (Brennan 1997: 6) has also come to be associated with mobility of human capital from the South to the North. It is, as seen earlier in the study of Ofeimun’s *London Letter where you Live*, a logical consequence of Africa’s capital flight to the North. The frenetic search is however concealed in the smokescreen of a better life that is presumably offered in the North. It is more so in view of the efficiency of information technology through which there is compression of space and time.

Buoyed by this attractive assurance, the dispersal of Africans, now more than ever before, is presented in the parlance of cosmopolitanism; yet for the most successful of such cosmopolitans, the attraction of exile in the euphemism of cosmopolitanism can in reality be worse than a nightmare. This brings the discussion in this chapter to the title poem. Perhaps the artistic value of “When it no Longer Matter where you Live” and indeed the entire collection, lies in the concealed irony of the title. Rather than subscribe uncritically to the contemporary cosmopolitan teleology, which tries to conceal continuities of Western capitalism, the content of the poem departs from the title and reveals the irony that is inherent, particularly for the African cosmopolitan in the capitalist cities of the North:

For all its refuge, the foreign home
remains a night whose dawn
I wish arrives before its time,

There’s none so hurt at home
who forgets the pain outside—
that’s the persistent ache one carries
until home’s safe to return to,
when it no longer matters where you live! (77)

The irony that defines this title poem consists in the way it, out of context and ordinarily, gives an impression that in the age of globalization it no longer counts where people choose to live. To that extent, this first impression is a false signal about an uncritical

reception of cosmopolitan ideals by the poet. From another angle, Terhemba Shija in his essay “Exile and globalization in the poetry of Tanure Ojaide: A Case Study of *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*” (2008:33), weighing both options of living at home and exile concludes that in the case of this particular poem “Ojaide views both his home and his country of exile as equally strewn with hazards”. Nevertheless, one cannot but see beyond the balance and the dilemma that such critical view as Shija’s creates; for the option in the end tilts towards home once we recognize that even at its best the “refuge” of “foreign home”, remains a night whose dawn/ I wish arrives before its time”. The irony and multiplicity of interpretations it allows is also significant in the sense that it serves to punctuate the values of ambiguity in the poetry of Ojaide.

The last poem to be considered in this chapter is “Immigrant Voice”. This is primarily because there is a sense in which it advances the explosion of the myth of Utopia that is associated with the narrative of cities of the North, especially where issues of development and enhancement of human living are concerned. The crisis of development which arises in African cities emanates no doubt from obvious reasons of non-performance on the part of governments. But such crisis has always also festered for long precisely because it is in the manipulation and despoliation of African capital that the West has more often than not created the favourable horizon for the economic and social advancement it has prided itself upon in the last four to five centuries. The evidence is obvious once the trajectory of Western capitalism is juxtaposed with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Ever since then, each transformation of the West’s means of economic development from one form to the other has also been described as a form of victory for Africa and the rest of the world’s subaltern groups. But to what extent can such victory be taken seriously when it could as well be conceived as a concession on the part of architects of Western imperialism to formulate a more subtle, usually far more sophisticated means of enslavement of the subaltern groups?⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Claude Meillassoux (*The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold*. Trans. Alide Dasnios. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 323) critically reflects on the deceptiveness of freedom of the oppressed from a perceived epoch of imperialism and capitalism when he says, “Freedom is won little by little through the exploitation of the interstices created by contradictions in every social system which force the exploiters to give in so that they themselves can survive. Each conquest is not sheer victory: it can also be an adjustment necessary to the perpetuation of the mode of exploitation.

After all, Africa's resistance to Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade paid off only when various machines took over manual labour on the plantations. But with this development also came colonialism of occupation, and in some cases, settler colonialism, which rather than diminish the depredation of the continent advanced it. The post-independence manipulation of African leadership and economy has shown the capitalist efficacy of neo-colonialism. Needless to say, globalization in its latest form merely advances the strategies of capital flight. So, whether in terms of the transformations from the agrarian economy to an industrial and manufacturing-driven economy, or the currently idea-knowledge-driven economy in which there is a fetishization of service delivery legitimized through the sophistication of information technology in the post-Fordist era, African capital in all forms has always been driven into flight to the West. This may do well to reinforce Brennan's argument that "mobile capital is a very problematic idea... [precisely because] there are continuities concealed within proclamations of a radical break" (1997:6) with the past of capital mobility, which for Africa is nothing but capital flight. The unidirectional route of capital from Africa to the West and the imbalance between flow and what trickles back to Africa should therefore be a source of worry. The basis for worry becomes all the more founded when one realizes that the current obsession of a number of Africans with the practice of cosmopolitanism emanates in reality from the need to become beneficiaries of the accumulation and constellation of Africa's capital in the West.

Besides the question of capital flight and the exilic and cosmopolitan response it engenders, the question of the city also arises. Therefore, where African cities have been mismanaged and milked of the capital they should retain, the dystopian condition created in these cities ingest a search for the "mobile capital" in the global cities of the North. The utopia created by the thought of fulfilling dreams of good living, and further fortified by the desirability of such cities as projected by media practice, propels desires of intimate experience for which there is an initial implication of denigration of the sense of community that comes with cities of homeland. But to what extent are such dreams fulfilled in the global cities of the North, especially when "what is most revealing [about

Utopia] is not what is said, but what cannot be said, what does not register on the narrative apparatus?” (Fredric Jameson 2005: xiii) This is why the realization of such dreams is certainly fettered, if not permanently undermined by the constitutive “closure... exclusion and inversion”, by which, as Jameson reveals further, all forms of Utopia are defined. Explaining further on the issue of closure as the antithesis of Utopia, Jameson writes that within the context of city abstraction, it manifests in form of projections of “spatial totalities... in the aesthetic of the city itself” (3). Viewed against this background, the paradox of the conception of global cities of the North begins to emerge against the actual practice on whose receiving end are the exiles and cosmopolitans who seek fulfilment through the transgression of their national boundaries from the South. Making America and its cities the main focus, “Immigrant Voice” opens thus:

*Back home from here na long way
The picture of here from home is so different...
From the wilderness I de see night and day
Where all the fine things in that picture:
Everybody dress kampe that I think
Na angels, Hollywood Heaven they misspell? (105)*

Home is a long way from here
The impression of this place at home is different
from the daily wilderness that confronts me
Where are the beautiful things said about this place:
Where everybody is supposed to be smartly dressed
Like angels or is Hollywood a mere make-believe?

To say the least, here is a testimony that turns the myth of the glamour of America and its many cities on its head. Through the globalization of American films, Hollywood that is, the simulation of the prosperity of American cities has taken an obsessively pretentious dimension which makes imitation of art in this case light years removed from the reality on ground. Moreover, by alerting us to the inconsistency between what is relayed in global media and the actual happenings in American cities we are confronted by the blurred vision of those subordinated groups of the Third World who seek salvation in migration to the West. As Appadurai (1996:4) puts it, there remains a link between media, globalization and migration; however the mirage that is created on the minds of those affected towards migration as a result of what they garner from the media can really be misleading when compared with the actual situation of things as in the poem above:

The lines between the realistic and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the farther away these audiences are from the direct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects, particularly if assessed by the criteria of some other perspective, some other imagined world. (35)

This explains why in place of the sight of “all the fine things”, all that the persona sees on daily basis is “wilderness”. At another level, the adoption of pidgin is both aesthetically and culturally significant in this collection. This is because aesthetically the form of *grandeur* that is expressed in the lines above mocks the superciliousness of any “elitist” criticism that may want to assign only facetious values to the use of Pidgin in literary practice. In fact, it is for this that Ezenwa-Ohaeto (1994:45), echoing Achebe in a positional criticism, warns that such critics of Western critical bias against Pidgin must “cultivate the habit of humility appropriate to their limited knowledge of pidgin”. The appropriateness of the choice of pidgin in this context comes to the fore on account of the fact that “merging vernacular languages, folk arts, European avant-garde forms, and secular concerns” has become a defining feature of postcolonial literature (May Joseph 1999: 142). Besides, it must be understood as the necessity of taking serious the Lyotardian injunction to “wage ...war on totality” (1989:82). At the cultural level, it is important to note that the postcolonial culture of the Niger Delta is unique in the way it privileges the use of pidgin. This is a result of the multiplicity of indigenous languages which are far from being mutually intelligible.

The adoption of pidgin is, therefore, one way by which these people are linguistically and culturally united, irrespective of social and educational backgrounds. The recognition of the unifying role of pidgin thus provides a strong basis for the poet to engage with their common problem in the only language they all can appreciate. Put into context, this further strengthens the argument of subnationalism that this section of the chapter has pursued so far. Ojaide himself gives rein to this view when he writes: “Pidgin in Nigeria was for a long time a Delta monopoly. Sapele, and Warri in the present-day Delta State and Port-Harcourt in Rivers State are the bastions of pidgin English. Of course, these cities are ports in which there was a lot of exchange between Europeans and Africans... With the examples of my writing in... pidgin English, the writer could be seen as the socio-cultural product of his birthplace” (1999: 239, 241). Besides, by highlighting the place of Niger Delta cities in the evolution of the language, it will not be out of place to contend that in the poem under discussion, there is an indicting confrontation of the cities of the South with the hyperreality of the cities of the North in America. That is,

colonialism and other subsequent forms of imperialism may have given centrality to English, but the domestication of English and subsequent invention of pidgin and its deployment in creativity of this kind go to stress the primacy of postcolonial hybridity in all spheres and the circumvention of received colonial knowledge.

The demystification of the claims of the global cities is advanced in the succeeding lines of the poem which, beyond the centralization of the sight of the wilderness to the American cityscape,⁶⁷ also speaks to the disjunction between distantiated appearance and the mirage that confronts exiles and cosmopolitans from the South when they arrive in American cities. The dialectic of dystopia and Utopia, divisively constructed and respectively deployed to denigrate the South and celebrate the North may not, after all, hold water in the naked truth that stares one in the face in this poem:

*When I reply their letters from home saying
here no be what they think they see for their minds,
they no gree with me and call me lie-lie man:
“you de already there and you no want us to come.”
I know my people hate me for telling the truth.
Wetin they see geographers de call am mirage—
America na big photo-trick to me. (105)*

When I reply their letters from home saying
the truth about here is far from what they imagine
they refuse to agree and label me liar:
“now that you are there your intent is to bar us from coming”
I know my people hate me for telling the truth.
what attracts them is what geographers call a mirage
America is nothing but a huge photo-trick to me

The above lines are crucial in the sense that they are interlinked by the poem’s critique of capitalism. This brings up again the question about the fetishization of “mobility of capital”. Like in the predicament of the characters in Ofeimun’s *London Letter and Other Poems*, the persona in “Immigrant Voice”, like the millions others he represents, is doubly a victim of capital flight from the South to the North which is tendered as the logical reason for labour flight from the South to the North. If the justification of such labour flight is hinged on the possibility of bringing back the capital in flight, the process of reclamation has proven to be far from efficacious. It instead reveals the double

⁶⁷ The dialectic of wilderness and city or metropolis provoked so much debate in the making of the American nation especially between the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian schools of thought (Richard Lehan (1998:167-8). The antebellum dispensation however gave the impression that the reification of the metropolis carried the day, thus turning America to a generally, if not totally metropolitan nation. If on the one hand, the wilderness option could be said to have lost out, it was because the city was considered a departure from backwardness in all areas of life. This is why in Ojaide’s choice of the word “wilderness” in the description of the daily experience of America in the last year of the 20th century, the poem puts the lie to American cityscapes’ absolute claim to progress; there are therefore as many indices of progress as there are of backwardness.

swindling of a subordinated group within the capitalist scheme of things. That is, the capital is mobilized from the South to the North, labour from the South follows suit, only to discover that in America, the mobility of capital is qualified and restrictive to the extent that it hardly transcends the boundaries of the country of the North back to the South. This then typifies the “mirage”, the fact that the morality of capitalism precludes communality but promotes a mean gesture of individualism, making its universalism suspect as:

*Neighbour no de, friend no de except them dog; Neighbourliness and friendship are inconceivable except with dogs
you de for your own like craze-man de pursue dollar your individualism is enmeshed in a crazed chase for the dollar
which no de stay for hand— they say na capitalism, which refuses to stay in your hands— they call it capitalism,
when dollar de circulate, circulate without rest. (105) when dollar orbits without end.*

Where capitalism places greater value on animals than it does on man, then of what attraction are these cities of the North? This is beside the fact of crime which in its multiplicity leaves the persona bemused: “*the street de explode kpa-a kpa-a like Biafra, / you no know whether the person saying “Hi!” / want to shoot, rob or rape you*” (the streets explode with ricochets like a Biafran battle field,/ are continually wary of greetings because, the one greeting you is out shoot, rob or rape you) (105). These streaks of contradiction serve to underscore the definition of America and its cities by Foucault’s idea of heterotopias, that is, “spaces of the real world, chaotic, contradiction-laden, spaces within spaces” (Ross King 2007: 117). Put another way, the contradictions inherent within the space of the American cityscapes accentuate Baudrillard’s remark that whereas Disneyland is portrayed as unreal in order that it can serve as a foil to the reality of America and its cities, the truth is that America “is no longer real, but belong(s) to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation” (cited in Stephen Graham 1999: 121).

The fact of unmasking the simulation must then be seen as analogous to the demystification that follows:

*When somebody don naked for you for daylight, Once the nakedness of a person is revealed to you
Nothing de the big boast of beauty He has nothing again to boast about feigned elegance
For the cloth e take cover crawcraw and eczema. When his clothing has covered up his sores and eczema
No be as e be for the picture they don retouch— what is before us is adulteration and far from reality
Beggar, thief, poor poor, all of them boku (105-6). Here there is only an abundant collage of beggars, thieves and the poor.*

From this point on, the desire is to make a return to the homeland in the wake of the explosion of the myth of American and American city's Utopia: "*Sometimes I cry my eyes red for night in bed./ Wetin my eye don see for here pass pepper/ make me de prepare to go sweet home.*" (Sometimes I weep sore in bed/ I have been witness to peppery persecution/I had better prepare for a return to sweet home) (106). The idea of "sweet home" returns the discussion to the home within a home that the Niger Delta cityscapes presuppose for people from this region; but also presupposes return to the nation and could apply to any other part Nigeria. The implication of the subnationalist consciousness as "a distinctively African cultural emphasis on respect for locally specific autonomy within a set of territory-wide identities" can thus not be ignored. The very deployment of pidgin for the articulation of the desire to return, as explained earlier, reinforces this claim.

Conclusion

In all, this chapter has engaged with the question of exile from the viewpoint of African cities and urbanscapes and the way this question is impacted upon by the phenomenon of globalization. It has also dealt with the consequences of exclusion of the masses from economic and social benefits in Africa and how the exclusion breeds exile beyond the boundaries of the continent as victims migrate to western cities in hope of better conditions of living. By so doing, it has exploded the myth of the concentric or "annular" study of Western cities as prosperous global metropolitan centres that are beautiful all together. The utopian narrative that is woven around these cities in Europe and America has, therefore, come under the scrutinizing lenses of a counter-narrative approach by which the historical antecedents of imperialism that dog these Western spaces of urbanity, described in contemporary parlance as global cities of North, deserve re-conception once their relationship, both historical and contemporary, with cities in the global South is taken into account. Emphasizing in particular how the migration of Africans is engendered by capital flight to the North, the dynamics of contemporary capitalism mediated through globalization is brought to the fore. More particularly, by focusing on Odia Ofeimun's *London Letter and Other Poems* and Tanure Ojaide's *When it no Longer Matters where You Live*, the chapter has explored these dynamics of

migration in concrete and experiential terms in which case the capital flight from the South to the North and the subsequent labour flight can also be construed as a staging of the battle of survival of the cities of the South against the capitalist cities of the North.

The uneasy interconnection between these cities is illustrated in *London Letter and Other Poems* where the dystopian condition of the Nigerian city of Lagos can be blamed on the internal dynamics of state negligence and administrative bungling. But the condition is also partly blamed on the toll that external, western imperialist agenda of imposed economic programmes of the 1970s and 80 especially have taken on the economy of the city. The despoliation of the city thus provides the alibi for labour mobility to the city of London, where it is hoped that an improved style of living will be guaranteed. However, the facts of exclusion and “closures” negate this possibility. This is in addition to the failures of the social and infrastructural systems which ironically compare with the condition of “my city by the lagoon”. But if Ofeimun’s engagement with the question of exile and the precipitatory role of neo-liberal capitalism pitches Lagos against London, Ojaide’s *When it no Longer Matters where you Live*, locates the interconnection between the attraction of America and its many cities and the implications they hold for the disorder and chaos of Niger Delta cities. But the case is the same for the rest of the country’s urban landscapes— from Kuru to Abuja— where the indices of a failed state have both epidemic and disastrous economic consequences, as military dictatorship and the collaboration of other economic and political elite rob the masses of the assurance that home should offer. The import of all this has reached out in this chapter through the discourse of subnationalism.

But if it appears that the discourse of subnationalism on *When it no Longer Matters where you Live* in this chapter tends to be swallowed up in the general narrative of the nation it is because:

Modern historiography is inextricably linked with the modern nation... *Truly* it has also been disabling, silencing stories both smaller and larger than the nation... *This is why* today ... in an era of intense discussion of multiculturalism and globalism, it may be easier than ever before to

recognize the plenitude of historical *and contemporary* experiences and narratives imbricated in a national history. *Therefore*, to historicize the nation is to relate its dominant narrative, its national narrative, to other narratives that refer to both smaller histories and larger ones. (Thomas Bender 2002: vii; italics mine)

In the end, the attraction of exile as migrancy or cosmopolitanism is demystified, just as the lure of America comes under criticism for its features which are light years removed from reality. This thus becomes the criticism against the objectification of American hyperrality to the rest of the world. Just as in the case of *London Letter and Other Poems*, *When it no Longer Matters where you Live* turns the utopian narrative of American cities on its head and shows the double deprivation that exiles and migrants of other categories suffer when they transcend the borders of the marginalized cities of their homeland in the South to search for fortunes in the North where capital has taken flight.

The above then brings the discussion to the need to review the existing ethics of cosmopolitanism as a transmutation of exile, an issue which will be given greater attention in the conclusion of this thesis. Put another way, it calls for a formulation of African postcolonial aesthetics of cosmopolitanism, in which case, the catalyst for migrancy will not be precipitated by shadows and mirages that are seductively cast as bait from cities of global North to the cities of South. In other words, if the level of dystopia experienced by African cosmopolitans and exiles in the cities of the North can be comparable, if not worse than their experiences in the homeland, then it is high time one began to take seriously the collapsing of boundaries between the various categories of cities, especially, among others, as global and non-global, (post)modern and traditional (Setha Low 2005:12-18), categorizations that have been used generally, if not totally to capitalist ends by the West. Therefore, the values of “the potential creativity and dynamism of all cities” must be espoused in such a way that will encourage the development of cities of the South so much so that such call for the categorization of all cities as “ordinary” (Jennifer Robinson 2006: 109) will translate into the realization of economic balance in which case, the consolation of cosmopolitanism will not necessarily be precipitated in the South by the chase of elusive, mobile capital to the North. This is even so when globalization and cosmopolitanism are expected to be defined by

abstractions and practices of global fairness for humanity. To affirm the contrary is to short change this morality of equity and fairness.

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM EXILE TO RETURN: HOME, NATION AND ‘TRANSNATION’ IN SEROTE’S POST-APARTHEID POETRY

remember
i do
since to forget that as the world did the untidy middle passage
is to repeat the evil of man
i will not forget or let it be forgotten— Mongane Wally Serote, *Freedom
Lament and Song*

This chapter focuses on two of Mongane Wally Serote’s post-apartheid epic poems: *Freedom Lament and Song* and *History is the Home Address*. By so doing, the chapter hopes to explore the intersection between the two collections as speaking to the past and the future respectively, while keeping the present consistently in view. Specifically, *Freedom Lament and Song* is analyzed against the backdrop of history and memory in a post-apartheid era. To achieve this, the chapter makes reflective enquiries on certain questions: Why is exile central to the discussion of apartheid literature? Why is the texture of post apartheid literature framed by the memory of exile? How does this frame and shape engagement with the past in both collections? While the above questions seek to guide the discussion on *Freedom Lament and Song*, my analysis of *History is the Home Address* is animated by questions that probe how the articulation in the former is advanced in the latter: in reacting to a post apartheid dispensation, how do the signs on the ground anticipate a future of possible dispersal? To what extent can globalization be said to lay the groundwork for this exile of the future? How is this prospect being accelerated by the orientation and compromise of the state? In all this, what is the relevance of the concept of “transnation” in the discussion of this concern? And to what extent does the formal deployment of epic structures enhance Serote’s mission in the poems? On this score, this aspect of the chapter deploys Bill Ashcroft’s theory of the “transnation” to engage with the dynamics of exile and diaspora generally in the present epoch.

South African Past and the Centrality of Exile

Viewed against the preceding decades of apartheid, South African literature written as from the mid-1990s strikes one as literature evolving out of exilic antecedents. That this is an obvious fact is ordinarily sufficient to preclude an examination of how the past impacts on literature of the post-apartheid era. However, the very knowledge of the exilic antecedents compels one to explore, first and foremost, the dynamics of the past as the overwhelming context of exile was only operational because it was the logical consequence of an informing socio-historical and political order. Once accepted as a necessary conjuncture that must be negotiated, even the apparent fact of exile begins to acquire a complexity that transcends its ordinary import. On this score, the South African experience must be seen as fundamentally connected to the hub of the pan-African narrative of subjugation that dates back to the 15th century. The implication of the relations of power that such revelation presupposes foregrounds the impact of Western modernity in the convoluted history that presents itself on the discourse of the nation today. Apartheid remains the last reminder in the subjugation spectrum of a continent by a Western civilizing project gone most awry in the Southern part of Africa. What is worse, it is arguable that whatever universalizing merit the agenda purported to espouse was compromised to the point of creating spiritualities and cultures well outside its expectations (Kelwyn Sole: 2005: 188). In all this, the fetishization of white racial superiority was at the core of the extremism, which this cultural subjugation represents. It was the experience of the extremism upon which the idea of racial superiority was based in the prosecution of settler colonialism in this part of Africa by European explorers that first set the tone for the various tensions and crises that followed. For instance, the various wars prosecuted by both white settlers and Black natives were underpinned by racism.⁶⁸ Colonialism, in the spatial sense of the word, and the granting of independence that came after in the beginning of the 20th century for South Africa also functioned along

⁶⁸ Even the Anglo-Boer war, which culminated in the institution of the Union in 1910, was fought in order to gain ultimate supremacy over the black natives then known as Africans or derogatorily called natives. As of this time, it was fashionable to refer to the white in South Africa as Europeans and not African.

the line of racial exclusionism.⁶⁹ The intimate experience of this racial subjugation made poignant by the agency of state power especially in its apogee during the apartheid dispensation explains why Lewis Nkosi, by way of retrospection, comments on what he considers the exposition of the unpalatable in Cornell West's book:

When Cornell West published a book *Race Matters* it was not to elevate Race to a new status but simply to mention the unpalatable fact that is one of those nebulous categories which are used conveniently to divide people up according to colour, place of origin or religion, a sentiment which acquires a deadly reality from its very use as myth. (Stephen Meyer 2004:127)

The extremism of the institution of racism in the forced evolution of the South African nation also produced perhaps the world's longest and fiercest resistance and liberation struggle. And because it produced a long-drawn battle between the state and the various groups suppressed by the imposition, South Africa, especially in the last quarter of the 20th century, was designated as fighting the last battle against the Western imperialist project in which the continent was embroiled since the institution of racial slavery which has since produced a prominent Africa diasporic culture and identity, although brutalized and agonizing. It is for this reason that the inauguration of a democratically elected government in 1994 headed by Nelson Mandela is seen by many as signalling the end of Africa's struggle against Western racial and imperialist hegemony.⁷⁰ Pallo Jordan, for instance, remarks that:

When Mandela was sworn in as South Africa's first democratically elected Head of State in 1994, in every part of the world his inauguration was hailed as marking the official end of the system of institutionalized racism that had assailed the dignity and human worth of every person of African descent for five hundred years of interaction between Europeans and Africans (qtd. in Thomas Olver and Stephen Meyer 2004: 1).

But between the period of resistance and inauguration of the said democratically elected government a plethora of atrocities had been committed. Needless to say, the horrendous crimes committed against the subordinated groups and individuals, which cut across races

⁶⁹ When South Africa was granted independence the black were excluded in that they were not recognized in the constitution of the Union especially with regards to citizenship rights the way the Europeans were.

⁷⁰ However, it must be admitted that this is an optimistic view which glosses over the challenge of South Africa's and indeed Africa's long march towards true liberation from Western imperialism. Specifically, the institution of democratic rule in the wake of the official dismantling of apartheid may be better gleaned as signaling the beginning of the struggle for emancipation from apartheid.

of all shades and hues, but especially the groups and individuals opposed to the abstractions of racial superiority legitimated through practices of segregation, created a multiplicity of cultures of opposition literature. This culture was entrenched both in the distant past, and from the late 1950s to the period of the collapse of apartheid. Not being an agitation to be rewarded on a platter of gold, the brutality and suppression that was the reaction of the establishment to this literature produced, perhaps in the most unique manner, what Mazisi Kunene (1996:16) refers to as “fighting literature”. This was exhibited in the main opposition cadres of the ANC, but also significantly linked to the more widely accessible literature of writers whose concern was “creating a significant critique of apartheid in order to mobilise the intellectuals”. The production of this literature of resistance alongside other cultures of resistance explains why today it is impossible to undertake an assessment of South African literature without recourse to the admittance of the centrality of exile to the question of definition of its literary history. This is because “in no other country, save perhaps 1930s Germany, did the state mount such a concerted effort to expel and destroy the most innovative representatives of non-official culture” (David Bunn (1996: 33). In other words, while literature of this category of resistance evolved to “mobilize” an intellectual response to the social injustice authorized by the state, most of the literary figures— white and black— whose art fell into this category, found themselves at one time or the other forced out of the country.

But to limit the mass and forced movement of people from South Africa during apartheid to the category of resistance writers is to gloss over the fact that such writers were only representative of the great number of victims of exile whose status was also connected, one way or the other, to the fact of state repression. What the opposition in the broad sense of the word experienced, both in terms of severance from home and the travails of exile, became so overwhelming that it could not be ignored for decades in South African literature. Worse still, the experience of exiles was hardly different from the sense of marginality which informed the initial removal from home. Therefore, whether as writers, or intellectuals, or ordinary individuals, or groups caught in the vortex of exile, their experience could not have been different from what Homi Bhabha (2006:198) identifies as the fate of exiles:

Gatherings of exiles and *émigrés* and refugees; gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present.

The actual reality of exile in the configuration of South Africa's past, especially in the era of minority apartheid rule, transcends the simple, unidirectional understanding of the concept. Its ramifications in the present era account for this observation. This is why it is crucial to remark that in actuality, exile emanated from both ends of the national spectrum. That is, the half-measure existence to which those physically forced out were subjected was not in any radical departure from what those repressed others left behind suffered. From the imprisonment and detention of political agitators of various cadres and persuasions for de-racialized democracy, to the fate of writers and critics' intimate experience of incarceration and banning of their works, not to talk about the plethora of restrictions to specific regions for the purpose of keeping the opposition's political activism in leash, exile ruled the air right from the psychological realm to the physical. Yet, from the other end of the battle line, that is, the location of the establishment, exile also had its impact. Looking back at the moment in history, Serote reminisces that "In one sense all South Africans were in a kind of exile. If you look at South Africa as a country, you will find that the whites pretended to be Europeans, and just by having committed such grievous crimes against humanity, they were in exile from humanity" (Rolf Solberg 1998:186). The pertinence of such observation is reinforced by the level of international opposition that the apartheid government received despite the tacit politics of support that it enjoyed from some world powers during this period. Tellingly, it was the strength of the moral valence of the opposition that placed the white minority in the circle of exile in terms of the disapproval of its human relations on a global scale. It was also this that contributed to the system's eventual surrender to the moral will of the majority. So, while the state, with its minority supporters of racial segregation, rode roughshod over their perceived opposition, black or white in pigmentation, forcing them into various exilic states, it was not, ironically, elevated beyond the exilic immiseration it unleashed on the opposition.

Ordinarily, with the turn of events in 1994, the euphoria that accompanied the inauguration of a democratically elected government, and which substantially signalled the passage of not only minority rule, but the dismantling of official structures of racial segregation, should suffice to make the nation forward-looking only. What is more, prior to this time, specifically from 1990, the prefigurations of the reversal of relations of power were evident in the opening up of borders to allow exiles of various kinds the right of return:

Over the past few years in South Africa we have witnessed the emergence of a new nation not only in our first national elections or the forging of the new constitution, but also in the dramatic, tidal return of an exiled and sequestered population. With our border posts now thinly defended, electric fences dormant, and prison doors swinging open, every day brings scenes of jubilant reunion, at airports or docksides, with gaunt refugees returning. (David Bunn 1996:33)

The gesture from the apartheid government then not only created an atmosphere of tolerance for the opposition amidst fears and uncertainties, it also created what from that period onward became part of quotidian national spectacles to which many people looked forward and through which the dying days of apartheid scored points on image laundering around the world. It goes without saying that while exiles, victims of state oppression, were physically returning from prisons and countries of destination to be united with their loved ones and the land of their origin and birth, the minority-run establishment of apartheid, as well as its affiliations, was also returning, in the metaphoric sense of the word, from an estrangement trauma unleashed upon it through the national and international condemnation of its atrocities against humanity.

The imperative of memory, however, presupposes that the nation goes beyond the euphoria of transformation, which the election brought about in order to probe into the despicable cesspit of the past. Owing essentially to the enormity of the scars and wounds the apartheid system inflicted on its victims, who, with the reversal of relations of power have since assumed political headship, it was just in order that the newly established status quo look into the past on a grand and official scale. Doing this, however, was hardly for the purpose of staging “the revenge of the repressed” (Fredrick Crews et al

1997:158) as it was for reconciling the various parties on different ends of victimhood and perpetration. More substantially, it was for the purpose of coming to terms with the past. At the national level, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) headed by Desmond Tutu, was regarded as government's own way of promoting "the redemptive power of memory and personal testimony" (Jean Comaroff 2005: 126).⁷¹ By giving further centrality to the exploration of memory, one is bound to agree with Richard Terdiman (1993:7) that by interrogating the past, the wisdom of the process and act is etched in the understanding that "what precedes us seems to constitute the frame of our existence, the basis of our self-understanding".

Convinced about the primacy of memory, not only at the official level, but also by South African writers in the post-apartheid era, various writers have committed themselves to the act of interrogating and reinventing the past in order to confront the challenges of the present. Not least because by dint of the enthusiasm shown by all towards the project of a post-apartheid dispensation, there is among South Africans an unstated avowal in the institution and concept of the nation, no matter how imagined and demonized that has become in the postmodern era. It is on this account that memory, rather than being seen as exhibiting conceptual "rupture" from history (Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (1994: 10) can be seen within the South African context as forging an alliance for the task of making the present worthwhile through a simultaneous look into the past. In the words of Andre Brink (1996: 17), this is perhaps because "the need to revisit history has both accompanied and characterised the literature of most great 'thresholds of change'". Therefore, the centrality of memory in the mediation of literature in the post-apartheid era is considered to be crucial if it is to retain its relevance. This fact holds much water in spite of the knotty nature of the responsibility with which the writers are saddled:

The influence of the historic moment on literary activity in South Africa has been no less conflicted and dramatic. No longer directly burdened by the presence of colonial and

⁷¹ Beyond the state efforts at addressing the past for the purpose of reconciliation through the agency of the TRC, a number of other efforts were made along this line on the part of individuals and groups as members of a society in search of a revitalized framework for confronting the challenge of cohesion and nation building in the wake of apartheid. In the words of Comaroff, the efforts demonstrated "a democratizing spirit" on the part of the various institutions and individuals involved in the efforts: "evangelical churches and NGOs, popular journalism, and TV talk shows." (128)

apartheid social practices, it may be expected to tract a fresh trajectory. But this may be less of a linear journey than anticipated, for it finds itself with a creased Janus face, vigilant of the past, watchful of the future. (Ingrid de Kok 1996:5)

It is against this backdrop of memory and the consciousness of building a new South African nation that I begin to read the two selected post-apartheid texts of Serote in this chapter. If the end goal of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to initiate and execute an official theatre of reconciliation and negotiated settlement for the nation as a way of bringing the transition process to a conclusion (de Kok, 5), compelling the nation to be content with some measure of social and collective amnesia, the task of literature goes beyond this negotiated line. For:

When the literary project revisits history, it does so not to produce an authorized account, not to resolve history. Its charge is private, not public. Its bid is to unwrite, retell, and reorganize the nature of the record, investigating the relationships between stories and history, staging the drama of individual and collective experiences and perspectives, examining the discontinuities and lacuna. (de Kok, 5)

Serote's poetry falls into this category of revising history precisely because, beyond the official tendency to almost invariably approach issues of memory and history from a convenient point of conciliation and amnesia, owing to the presumed primacy and urgency of building a "Rainbow Nation", Serote, like most other writers in the post-apartheid era, cannot but engage with the past at the "private" level. Not only will this allow for "retelling" and "reorganization" of history, but it will more substantially enable a thorough and critical contextualization of the past in a manner that will justify its relevance as an order by which the present is framed. On this score, and by giving centrality to the sub-structural relevance of the past, there is an exposure of the fault line that is inherent in any call that hankers unnecessarily on the present to the exclusion of the past. Avoiding a detour of the past in order not to be complicit in the tendency to undermine its values in the building of a new nation thus provides the springboard for having insights into how the various struggles of the past, both at the collective and individual levels, constitute the meaning the configuration of the present holds. If so, then, written against the antecedent of the protest collections of the 1970s and 80s like *No Baby must Weep* (1975), *Freedom Lament and Song* is a retrospective assessment of South Africa's "long walk to freedom", to borrow a phrase from Nelson Mandela.

Granted that the much sought freedom was not attained in a vacuum, but was passionately fought for by individuals and groups, some rites of remembrance become necessary. The pertinence of this remark is reinforced by the poet's observation that "changes take place when people are informed, when people are conscious, when people identify common goals and common objectives, and in certain circumstances, are prepared to make sacrifices" (Rolf Solberg 1998:182).

Liberation Struggle, Memory and Freedom in *Freedom Lament and Song*

The socio-political struggle which enlisted, both in the formal and informal sense, various groups and individuals in the search for non-racialized democracy and freedom, has its own huge record of sacrifices. This is why one must take a critical look at the assertion of Njabulo Ndebele (1992: 434) that, with the passage of the struggle and successful transition to the ultimate desegregated dispensation of democracy, writers should immediately launch and readdress themselves to tropes in a "rediscovery of the ordinary" in their literature. While such critical charge remains instructive for the examination of the erstwhile sublated aspects of the South African ordinary and quotidian life, Kelwyn Sole (2005: 188) warns that, except there is a painstaking assessment of the multifarious dynamics at work, especially the political and economic, as well as the local and the global, one may end up with an aesthetic that is light years away from reality. This is because the unqualified reification of such experience might as well translate into nothing but "curiously haphazard, idealist, and idealistic notions concerning the constitution of ordinary experience within South Africa". If, as he contends further, everyday life is a product of the "interlinked wealth and misery generated by capitalism" (185), then it is understandable why Serote goes to the root cause of the present quotidian experience from the angle of memory and history. This is why even when he talks about the intrigues by which love and relationships are defined (12-13), or the disturbing presence of "cheats and betrayers" in Cape Town (27), or the antinomy of the "hard looks of township women", as against the sly looks of the rural women", not to talk of "the possibility of passions", no one is left in doubt about the fact that these possibilities of the quotidian present are framed essentially by the more compelling facts of history and memory.

It is, therefore, not out of place to look back at the liberation struggle and the euphoria of the present with a view to, at a private level, composing an elegy for the past. And if for the past, as for the memorializing of the passage of an epoch, one defined by racial and capitalist oppression, then the various dynamics and intrigues that defined both ends of the spectrum of the struggle and the much blood that was shed in the attainment of freedom should not go unmourned. This certainly is the thesis of *Freedom Lament and Song*. In other words, it is not enough to make encomiastic comments about the merits of the present transformation without a sober reflection on the past. It accounts for why the poem opens with deep reflections on history as well as memory:

Here we go again
history is a life and it is a death
it reincarnates
in words
feelings and deeds
it walks the streets
it repeats itself
at your doorstep and window and at your eye (1).

The idea that there is a persistence of the past in the present is crucial to the import of the lines above, which register their significance through a strong personification of history. Reference to the past, therefore, facilitates the necessity of resisting any organized attempt to foist a kind of collective amnesia on the new social order. That is, if the TRC was commendable in its approach to the resolution of the tension and crisis of history and memory, and by so doing, also became an incarnation of a grand political elegy for the nation, there is a sense in which Serote, like some other writers, has necessarily extended the lyrics and rhythm of this elegy in order to address the lacunae in the figuration of the past. In other words, the limitations of the TRC are transcended when writers resolve to ply their trade within the space of history and memory. It is in line with this that Andre Brink (1996: 17) asserts that addressing these grey areas of silence in South African history will be crucial to its representation.

That how the desirable present came to be, obtains so much from the struggle of the past, and that the struggle caught a particular racial group more in its vortex than others are

very clear issues that cannot be swept underground. This explains why, still in the first part of the collection, he painfully recollects:

I am a black manchild who has had not one day in my life
i
me
my youth
my love
my childhood was spent in war
in struggle
for non-racialism
non-sexism
justice and equality for all
our day
all of us
to build what we want and break what we don't want (3)

The need for such struggle was necessary because, the historical apartheid of colonialism scripted wealth and poverty in racial terms, ultimately politicizing skin pigmentation. Wealth and prosperity are expected to rest with a side of the racial divide while poverty and squalor reside with the other. The resistance to such colour bias in the allocation and flow of privilege becomes a catalyst for the struggle. For “the air and the wind and the heat/ here/ what you see and can touch/ poverty smells in it” (5). Yet the fight against racialized poverty is as historical as it is contemporary. Going beyond the present in the aftermath of the dismantling of apartheid, the poet gives an insight into the past in order to illuminate how the climax and triumph of the struggle for liberation in the last decade of the 20th century follows from its commencement by African forebears in the previous centuries. The struggle may have taken long, but the passion for true freedom was exhibited first by the ancestors: “in Makanaland in the land of Mqhayi/⁷² in the hills of warriors who fought wars/ who with fierce anger and courage/ caught and clutched/ held

⁷² As I have amplified elsewhere, Mandela’s first realization of the illusion inherent in the acquisition of Western education in order to become a black European was catalyzed by the oral performance of the Xhosa poet Krune Mqhayi; this was because of Mqhayi’s incisive and informed analysis of the condition of racial inequality in the country then. Mandela’s training at Wesleyan College in Fort Beaufort really became productive after this encounter with the influential oral poet. Thereafter, he realized the need to seek privilege and equal rights for all, both black and white in South Africa, a decision which “fired his imagination into a life-staking and uncommonly heroic liberation struggle.” (See Senayon Olaoluwa, “From Simplicity to Performance: The Place of Second Generation Anglophone Poets,” *English Studies*.89.4. 2008:474)

with bare hands this history/ which keeps repeating and again repeats itself/ they held it/ they intervened/ in life and blood/ generations upon generations/ they lay/these African men and women/ they hurled themselves into time/ into history which was rattling/ flying/ repeating itself” (7). That the foundation of the success of the struggle was laid in the resistance of the forebears who “held” history is very crucial. Again, that there is a continual emphasis on the activity of history in the repetition of itself especially in the wake of apartheid appears less presentimental than cautionary. For the tendency to curry favour for a group to the exclusion of others is part of human nature; but the ability to resist its divisive attraction is what can ensure a truly democratic unfolding in the South African nation.

In what follows in the second part of the poem, there is a reinvention of memory and history in the horizon of passion and emotion. This is perhaps necessary because the process of the “lament” becomes more compelling when facts of history are conflated with emotional elements of narration and remembering which conventional African historical scholarship however tends to elide. It is for this obvious but painful fact about African history that Jacques Depelchin in his book *Silences in African History* (2005) argues that, where the narrative involves human experience, it is impossible to rule out the conflation of passions and emotions in history. Therefore, as Deplechin further contends, if contemporary African history fails to live up to this expectation, it is then to the arts, especially literature, one must turn for an un-detoured account of the African past. The logic of this argument is that the exclusion of these elements only helps to perpetuate the many silences that are evident in the narration of the African past.

Viewed against the strength of the foregoing contention, the second part laments the passage of the struggle by bringing into remembrance the various horrendous circumstances in which liberation struggle fighters, ordinary and unknown nationalists, whose names may never have come up at the TRC, lost their lives. What is more, the process of remembrance also hints at the fact that the figures of the struggle were also locatable within communal spaces of struggle which for some reasons were as protean as they were crucial in this personal testifying. The panorama into which the knowledge of

this brings one raises even more substantial questions about the existential exile into which groups and individuals involved in the liberation struggle were subjected during this period. Put differently, and as shall be seen subsequently, the second part of this collection aspires towards a representation of the struggle in the understanding that it is more acceptable to conceive history and social change in terms of a “total human phenomenon” and not the exclusive privileging of hagiographies of generals and other leaders alone (Paul Ricouer 2004: 240). Therefore, as well as the major figures that history locates at the centre of the struggle, Serote’s poetry goes further than their celebration and remembrance to recount the heroism and tragedy of those anonymous volunteers, both in the direct and indirect sense, who sacrificed their lives to kindle the fire of the struggle to its ultimate stage of functional transformation. This is more so when one realizes that the struggle, for sure, was also to be found in and reinforced by what Jeremy Cronin (1989: 35-6) designates as “semi-insurrectionary uprising”:

Mass stayaways, political strikes, consumer boycotts, huge political funerals (including anything up to seventy thousand mourners at a time), factory occupations, rent boycotts, schools and university boycotts, mass rallies, and physical confrontation over barricades with security forces. This wave of mobilization and struggle has spread into the smallest rural village. It has interwoven with a substantial organizational renaissance: youth, civic, religious, women’s trade union, and student organizations have sprung up and spread countrywide.

The benefit of hindsight that the deployment of poetry offers is, therefore, doubly significant because the genre, like the uprising, was simultaneously involved in the witnessing and testifying against the aberrations of the apartheid regime, especially where other genres had failed (Nadine Gordimer 1976:132-133). It is thus logical that the end of the struggle would also take into consideration the various anonymous deaths that the struggle produced, perhaps not so much because the departed have to be mourned as because their own instance of death— especially as following from their undisguised activism and confrontation of injustice— was wholly redemptive. This is why, it can be argued that Jacques Lacan throws up a conundrum when he declaims that “it still remains to be decided which death, that which is brought by life or which brings life” (Abdul JanMohamed (2005: xiii). However, the lamentation that one encounters particularly in the second part of *Freedom Lament and Song* resolves the polemical puzzle and indecision in the sense that the death of the departed was, ironically, precipitated by the

need to extract a guarantee for life within the domain of a subordinated group. In other words, their departure can be gleaned as a guarantee for life and freedom for those that would be left behind in the post-struggle era. Their death thus ramifies both possibilities. Moreover, their passage must be remembered and mourned in the era of freedom, precisely because of the sacrificial and redemptive cause it charted for the overthrow of a social order made despicable by imperialist and racial abstractions and sentiments.

The first figure of remembrance is Jabu. He has, in an indefinite way, been introduced at the end of the first part of the poem, and the tragedy of his liberation adventure has been conveyed by the analogy of “dead meat” in this closing part of the poem. The subsequent mention of his name leads us head on into his involvement in the struggle. Having prioritized the struggle above his family, even his wife at a point had to learn “to use the guns and grenades” (10). Such was the life led by Jabu and his wife Fikile. It thus becomes understandable why the poet observes that he will miss these friends claimed by the struggle “the way i would miss life when i am dead” (10). Needless to say, the couple thus predeceased their minor offspring and left a long threnody to define their growing years. Similar to this is the fate of another couple of passionate young lovers: Thule and Thuli. The passions and emotions that went with the killing of the husband Thule remains a point that cannot be glossed over. For he was not just killed: “they killed him one early morning/ and left the back of his head empty” (10). The horror of the act is undeniable; how then does one sweep this underground? Another victim in line is Vusi. The dramatization of his victimhood is significant:

he fell at the border one day
in a battle
without a grave he lies
somewhere on the road from Gaborone or Lobatse
at the border
when you go on holiday across the border
please
don't break his bones
don't spill his blood
don't wound his soul. (15-16)

If Vusi's fate was pathetic, Thabo and Dikeledi's was even more so. Their space of struggle as a couple is “a foreign land”, yet the repression of apartheid catches up with

them. The intensity of the surveillance and hostility mounted against them by the establishment is captured in the testimony about the manner of their fate: they “were shot dead when they were naked/ on the head/ on the heart/ on the backbone/ everywhere they were shot/ in the night/in the eye/ on sight/ in their house/ they were put against the wall naked” (17). Their fate is similar to that of yet another victim, Joe, whose remains cannot be gathered “except a lump of flesh” all because “the bomb took everything” (18). Their death at this point reveals another angle to the import of exile in the days of apartheid struggle: the fact that for the victims, exile was not completely free of the adversities of home. In fact, their fate has shown it could even be worse.

Alexandra is another site of struggle as it comes next to Soweto in black segregated settlement and in terms of popularity in the apartheid days. The poverty, squalor, depravation and hopelessness that it bred as a site of struggle could only lead to wanton perpetration of crimes of the black against one another. For it is filled with a desultory scenery that is as disturbing as it is curious: “of laughter and howling screams/ of men being killed/ of women being entered/ as a bus enters a wall/ the dirty stench/ the dirty muddy water/ the urine/ the sperm/ the streets/ the falling houses/ this thing is so real and alive” (20-21). The disturbing image of squalor that emerges when compared to say, Sandton, a white elite neighbouring suburb, could naturally provide instigation for a black boy to enlist in the guerrilla movement, MK, in order to right the wrong of racial segregation. Therefore, among others,⁷³ Alexandra produces a fighter in Tebello, more as a communal contribution to the struggle than an individual sacrifice, because Alexandra “took him from home/ from nothing into far lands” (21). From his days of struggle as a liberation fighter to the days of exile in London, where he expires alone in his room and is buried “in a cemetery in the English city” (23), it is impossible to overlook his struggle and fate. The loneliness that accompanies his death like that of others like Duma Nokwe, Thuli, Vusi, Chris Hani among others, accounts for why the persona calls on Alexandra to always remember him. Ending this section with a kind of philosophical reflection on the loneliness that accompanies the reality of death, a grand irony nonetheless persists. By calling on the departed of the struggle to note that the community “remember(s) you

⁷³ It is important to remark that Serote himself is a product of Alexandra.

in loneliness at that moment of parting” (26), the address gives pertinence to the assertion that “regardless of how one dies or how one views being dead, death means separation not only from the flesh but also from the human community”. Nevertheless, their contribution in paying with their lives for the liberation of their land produces a sense of community in which their memory goes with the present.

The third segment of the collection is a logical ascension of the second as there is an extension of the elegy on Tebello on the one hand, and an illumination on the similar fate suffered by others like Mohani, Lenkoe among others. But there is also a lament over the fate of other nationalists whose achievements have since been counted among the notable contributions in the official history of the struggle. In the long list also comes Hector (46), the school boy who was shot dead by the apartheid police during the June 16, 1976 students protest in Soweto, and whose death, historians contend, marked the beginning of the climax of the liberation struggle.⁷⁴ What is significant, however, about this segment of the poem is the predominance of a reconfiguration of pan-African consciousness in a manner that gives centrality to the discourse. In other words, the narration of the South African nation cannot be said to be complete if divested of the narration of the rest of Africa. This is why the travail of the nation is not considered to be entirely exclusive as it also doubles as the travail of Africa. The violent racial and imperial conspiracy suffered by Cabral, Neto and Lumumba thus becomes a repetition instantiated in the fate of Hani, Moyo, Make (33), among others.

More significantly, Jacques Depelchin’s argument about the artificiality of compartmentalization in the reckoning of African history comes in handy. The consciousness that is espoused in this part of the poem makes insignificant whatever reservations and allegations that had previously trailed the perceived marginalization of South African nationalism within the larger scheme of pan-African history.⁷⁵ By blurring

⁷⁴ The ANC-led government has since immortalized Hector Peterson through the establishment of a museum in his memory in Soweto.

⁷⁵ There is a whole essay by Laura Chrisman (“Du Bois in Transnational Perspective: The Loud Silencing of Black South Africa,” *Current Writing*. 16, 2004: 18-30) committed to engaging with what she considers Du Bois’ refusal to “textually acknowledge black South African nationalist agency” within the broad-

the artificial borders and walls erected consequent upon colonialism, Serote traverses the distant pre-colonial African past, linking it with the present, so much so that it becomes real altogether within the context of pan-African values. It is particularly so with respect to the interconnections and visceral bonding and banding together in trials and travails, and triumphs that have characterized Africa, right from the era of slavery.⁷⁶ This is why it can be appropriately limned as another intellectual attempt to explore the ideals of “African-centeredness”, that is, a consciousness that can facilitate the possibility of an African scholarship that orbits the totality of African peoples’ experience both on the continent and in the diaspora (Zizwe Poe 2003: 8).

On this score, one is taken through the horrors of the Atlantic Slave Trade which essentially eventuated in the major diasporic presence of Africans in the West today (31). But beyond this, other forms of interruption and expropriation to which the continent and its peoples had been subjected in the past come up for reflection in form of an emphatic deployment of parallelism:

Africa was in perpetual combat with life
in the embrace of this fate
in the fate of the sound of the chain
in the sound of the whip
in the fate of the sound of the gun
in the fate of anger and hate
in the fate of the sound of the floodlight
in the fate of the sound of the plastic (31).

Yet, it is remarkable to know that Africa had survived all this in the past. This was because, “even as they ground and pounded my life/ even as they put heat and fire on it/ to my semen/ to my ovary/ i flower, i rise, i emerge/ i flower in the gloomy day like a mushroom/ i repeat me in bounds and leaps/ i enter/ space and sound and i am here/ handsome like the dance” (32). Nevertheless, the celebration of Africa’s incredible

based framework of Pan-Africanism “despite his personal friendship with African National Congress founder Sol Plaatje.”

⁷⁶ Yet, it must be admitted that the history of Pan-Africanism dates back to a much earlier time, the most credible of which Kwabena Nantambu cites as the unification of lower and upper Egypt in B.C. 3200 “to form one country under one rule to be able to resist foreign aggression and invasion” from the Greeks, the Arabs, the Romans, etc. (Giselle Aris, “Pan-Africanism: Competing Interpretations,” Gaines Junction. 2005, 177-184).

survival amidst the barrage of external hostilities leaves one with the paradox of its present lugubrious state of poverty. This is in view of the fact that Africa's poverty cannot be ignored: "it smells/ it can be touched/ poverty here laughs with ghosts/ poverty/ poverty of the blacks. Of what use then is survival, if it cannot alleviate poverty; or what sense does one make of the deplorable condition of a people's will to survive when their self-understanding is so strongly passionate as to be externalized in the unequivocal persuasion of rootedness?:

i
i belong here
my laughter
my tears
my agony and ecstasy
they belong here
in the thin sand they belong here
they belong here where I live and lived
no one must forget
i
i am the issue of time and the wind
i the African child
i come from here everywhere now
remember
you made me a slave
you maimed me and maimed my children
you branded them with the burning rod of poverty
i will allow no one to forget (44-5)

Certainly, for the remnant of the people on the continent, the challenge has to do with transcending a mere chronicling of centuries-old travails. This is why the subsequent segments of the poem are preoccupied with the challenge of nation building. As mentioned earlier, the conception of the South African nation easily flows into the wider conception of Africa and the line between the two continually snaps. Therefore, South Africa becomes, in a way, a metaphor for Africa. But specifically, it is more compelling to see the challenge of nationhood as speaking immediately to the South African space in the wake of apartheid. If the various instances of memorializing the struggle and the recognition of those who have sacrificially laid down their lives in the course of the struggle are worthwhile, the necessity of nation building steers one further into the poet's focus on the primacy of realizing the imperative of freedom for a nation. It goes without saying that one can at this juncture, take for granted the fact that the various forms of

violence that have characterized the formation and consolidation of the South African nation, even at their most unique, fall within the scope of the painful understanding that deeds of violence have always defined the origin and political formations of nation states (Ernest Renan 1990: 11). The “*imagined community*” that evolves out of this formation, Benedict Anderson (1991: 7) remarks, is conceived “as a deep horizontal comradeship” that makes a fraternity possible, “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that prevail”. The primacy of the comradeship that has been achieved in the South African context through the institution of democracy upon a horizon of freedom then makes certain specific demands of national transformation.

True freedom after all the centuries of struggle will be evident only if it translates into better standards of living for the people. Without this, the violence done against the departed will amount to an exercise in nugatory vanity. If truly the dead “freed me in blood” (54), then it is necessary that freedom is spelt out in concrete, life-enhancing terms. But first and foremost, it must be spelt out in abstractions that will “let us be intolerant of evil/ of racism/ of sexism/ of poverty/ of disease (50). Subsequently, it must be spelt concretely in the provision of social infrastructure: “electricity/ a house/ a school/ a hospital/ a street or bridge/a crèche/ (55).

The fifth part extends the reflection on what constitutes true freedom; but it also invites one to recognize that metaphorically “freedom is history” and because “history repeats itself” (59), the air of freedom that defines the post-apartheid era is a repetition of the freedom of the pre-colonial days of yore. In the present repetition, however, the challenge of experiencing freedom has become huge, but this is not to say that it is not attainable. Living up to the challenge of the time is not a task that is limited to South Africa, but ramifies the entire continent. If the fifth part blends a South African concern into an African-wide concern, the sixth and last part is very clear in touching on the specific implication of freedom in South Africa. By apostrophically addressing O.R. (that is,

Oliver Tambo),⁷⁷ memory traverses all the various spaces of liberation struggle in KwaZulu Natal, which serves as a metonym for resistance to the dismantling of an initial freedom. Tambo must, therefore, also hold conference with Shaka and Cetshwayo, two historical figures, that remind us of the prowess of Zulu Kingdom prior to its subjugation by Europeans, whose summoning and proposed conference with Tambo speaks to the cumulative import of the struggle by which one must acknowledge the dismantling of apartheid hegemony in the 1990s. After contributing so much for the actualization of freedom, the poet reminds the generalissimo of the recent struggle, O.R. needs to ensure the people find it a freedom they can identify with. The conference with O.R. must therefore be extended to a direct address and plea with freedom to stay:

freedom has not been here in a long time
 it passed here
 it went by once many centuries ago
 it forgot to come back here
 if flew and went to other lands which we watched
 freedom come you have been in our minds
 you have been in our memory like a prayer we know by heart
 come
 we kept you here like a seed
 see the hills
 their beauty screams in delight to the sun
 come here
 stay with us here in our hills
 you have been away too long
 KwaZulu Natal
 South Africa
 Africa (68).

If the mood in *Freedom Lament and Song* has been generally elegiac, living up to the suggestion of mourning in the title, it will be helpful on a last note to examine briefly the significance of this overwhelming mourning. South African post-apartheid literature is generally replete with narratives of mourning— from Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* to John Kani's *Nothing but the Truth* to JM Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (Sam Durrant 2005:441-5). The impulse to follow the ways of mourning in the wake of apartheid for Serote, as for other writers, may be said to be significant for a number of reasons. More specifically, for Serote in *Freedom Lament and Song*, the mournful

⁷⁷ Oliver Tambo's place as the president of ANC in the decades of liberation struggle while Mandela and others were in prison cannot be overemphasized. It accounts for why in most cases his name is synonymous with the struggle. Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* gives cogency to this observation.

intervention constitutes an attempt to reconnect with an age and movement defined by the struggle for liberation. Both the age and the movement for all the pains and anguish they engendered are not without contents that those involved in them wish would not pass away. Like the age and the movement, the figures, both dead and living, but especially the dead that run through the lines of the epic poem, are reminders of the process through which an undesirable domination of apartheid was upturned. This understanding gives voice to the series of suffering and sacrifice that lined the road to the democratic dispensation, better referred to as “freedom” in the poem, that the South African nation now enjoys. With this approach we are reoriented that the idea of heroism, mourning, sacrifice and suffering does not, however, end with the nationalist narratives of the public figures whose privilege often eclipses the contributions of the ordinary people.

Perhaps the necessity for this ritual stems from the capacity of mourning to open up doors into the future. Its therapeutic and productive significance at both individual and collective levels accounts for why Esther Schor (1994:5) contends that mourning is “a force that constitutes communities and makes it possible to conceptualize history”. She reveals further that losing sight of the sense of mourning can only “be at our personal and social peril” (ibid). Put another way, in mourning the dead, as Serote has done, there is a sort of engagement with the past, an activity which Michel de Certeau contends cannot be complete unless we put into perspective the interchangeability and interaction of the “past” and “the dead” for the realization of meaning in our discussion of mourning (cited in Schor 4). But if the stress on the past and history suggests an engagement with the elusiveness of the experiences that punctuate the ambience of the dead, mourning nevertheless is not only reflective, but also forward-looking in the way it illuminates the path to the future. This is what Gail White (2007:68) sees as possessing the illumination that allows one “to find meaning in the world again”. In highlighting the significance of mourning with respect to *Freedom Lament and Song*, therefore, the artistic value identified also fuses with that of the designation of the poem as an epic and its capacity to not only assume a historical and social responsibility for an entire nation or community—an issue that will be given greater attention in the conclusion of this chapter—but to also engage with the imperative of the future. To that extent, the illumination of *Freedom*

Lament and Song provides the groundwork for the study of *History is the Home Address*. This is precisely because *History is the Home Address* does not only engage with the past, but also significantly illuminates the present while contemplating the future in the wake of the collapse of apartheid and the confrontation with globalization together with the migratory drift it engenders.

In Anticipation of Tomorrow: Globalization and ‘Transnation’ in Serote’s *History is the Home Address*

The remaining part of this chapter will focus on Serote’s *History is the Home Address*. It will locate the text within the discourse of “transnation”, a concept the chapter explores below. The central argument will be that even in a national dispensation of post-apartheid transformation, which has brought about a massive return of people to the country, South Africa’s present configuration is also ramified within the contemporary planetary order of globalization. For this reason, I will argue further that despite the pervasive nationalist rootedness that characterizes the previous text, Serote reconciles the contradiction that may emerge in the juxtaposition of both texts by maintaining a balance between the pragmatism of a nationalist rootedness, and the simultaneous inevitability of experiences of deterritorialization in the age of globalization.

Perhaps, the need to maintain a delicate balance between a space-based nationalism and a flexible type which is amenable at the same time to the dictates of postmodern times of migrancy informs the need to reckon that both *Freedom Lament and Song* and *History is the Home Address* complement, rather than contradict each other. It can be said that the former comes across as an immediate response to the phenomenal transformation from institutional apartheid to a non-segregatory democracy in the early 1990s. However, the latter takes into account the complexities that arise from the challenge of managing a nation that has come to be identified as the newest arrival to the class of *the* postcolonial state (Jean Comaroff 2005: 129). Comaroff intimates further that one telling trope of the postcolonial state as a class or category is the systematic manifestation of “polities in

motion” with integral diversities. If “motion” is integrally implied in the condition of the postcolonial state, it is made more pronounced by the fact of the demands globalization makes on the nation state.

For that matter, *History is the Home Address* becomes a preoccupation with the implications of the constitutive “motion” and the migrancy that this motion generates. It is more cogently so because, like any other state, South Africa is not impervious to the intensity of external polities that impact on African nations. Needless to say, even after the return of many from exile in the wake of apartheid, the intricacies and intrigues that are found at the centre of neo-liberal capitalism, will continue to impact on the way South African citizens perceive themselves in relation to the consciousness of “collective being-in-the-world” (Comaroff 129). On another plane, however, the orientation and attitude of internal governance in itself is a crucial variable in determining the progress or otherwise that the nation makes. In other words, it is impossible to adopt a totalist criticism of globalization by putting all the blame on the acceleration of western imperialism. To an appreciative extent, therefore, the collaboration or complicity of the home government remains crucial to how economic violence, among others, acts as a vector for migration.

Appropriately, then, *History is the Home Address* is a response to the intimate experience of the post-apartheid South African state in an age of neo-liberal capitalism. But because Serote also appears to have conflated “the ordinary” and partisan politics in the articulation of this response, the tendency is to gloss over the currency of his response to planetary politics; or submit that it is for the most part occluded by his involvement in politics as a member of parliament. One such criticism is found in Ian Gilfillan’s review of the poet’s relevance in the post-apartheid era with respect to how we may understand *History is the Home Address*: “the Serote of the 70’s (sic), the passionate writer lyrically pouring out the agonies of apartheid, has been replaced by a praise-poet for Thabo Mbeki” (2004: 1). At another level of criticism, and as inscribed in the blurb, the understanding is that the poem “examines the relationship between African identity and ancestral guidance, and the impact of colonialism on that identity”.

This study, however, aspires to transcend what is ordinarily perceptible in the collection to point at the sensitivity of the collection to the more compelling articulation of the poet, arguing in the end that it will be an over-kill of criticism to state, like Gilfillan, that the “new Serote [is] muted”(1). Again, the understanding of the privileging of “ancestral guidance” goes beyond mere expression of centuries-long relationship with the dead, but more substantially, must be read as providing veritable vistas into the understanding of how the abstractions of time and place can be utilized as resources for the apprehension of the present. I return to the explanation of this later in the chapter. With respect to the condition of the postcolonial state, the assertion that “the impact of current global conditions... have forced the coincidence of liberation and liberalization” (Jean Comaroff 128), is particularly and intimately true of South Africa. To take one illustration on how the global impacts on the local, or how “liberation and liberalization” have coincided, Kelwyn Sole’s account of a particular epoch in South African post-liberation history will be helpful:

By the mid-1990s, it had become clear that the government was deviating from its previous position of “national democracy plus economic egalitarianism” in order to create a local climate that might gain access to and compete on world markets. The ANC’s Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), formulated before the first election as the hub of its equity and development strategy, was replaced with the 1996 Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Policy (GEAR), which formulated national economic policy in terms of neoliberal principles compliant to the dictates of the global market. The GEAR policy emphasized growth of exports and foreign investment as the principal machinery for stimulating economic growth. Development goals, and the eradication of the country’s huge apartheid-given legacy of social inequalities, were seen as realizable through a so-called trickle-down effect that would result from macroeconomic gains. Both the IMF and the World Bank became significant players in steering the country in this direction through advice and expertise, with policies encouraging privatization, tight fiscal discipline, downsizing, and retrenchments. Such structural adjustment policies limited autonomous policy choice on a national level. (189-90)⁷⁸

In view of the foregoing, the overwhelming purchase of globalization, evident among other things in the compression of time and space, illustrates how the distance of Western

⁷⁸ The enduring impact of the shift from the execution of the ANC-authored RDP blueprint to the patronage of GEAR is evident today in the controversy that surrounds how this patronage came to be and how IMF and the World Bank have been key players in the derailment process. Nevertheless, it is also important to remark that the shift in government economic policy was not an absolute imposition of the world financial firms: the shift in paradigm occurred because key figures in the ANC-led government gave their consent and subsequently provided the groundwork for the execution of this policy which is continually perceived to stand between the actualization of the initially envisaged agenda of development and welfare and the masses. See *Mail and Guardian* February 22-28, 2008, p.23.

economic powers does not reduce their influence on the postcolonial states. This is why a more aggressive effort must be made on the part of the postcolonial nation state or victims of neo-liberalism to negotiate the terms of its existence. The situation is what Iain Chambers (1994:110) describes as the “co-presence of globalisation and differentiation” through which the limits of the nation-state are both supplemented and interrogated. But even with this negotiation, where the autonomy of the nation-state is limited, as in the illustration by Sole, the capital flight that results or the economic hardship that it precipitates is bound to ingest a pull towards some kind of deterritorialization. Considered against the backdrop of the South African nation state, therefore, the logic that emerges is that institutional apartheid may have crumbled, and the exilic victims it produced may have returned, nonetheless, the experience of dispersal remains yet a challenge that the nation faces as a result of the contemporary world order.

The vulnerability of the postcolonial nation state to the manipulations of globalization and deterritorialization that it produces must have accounted for the all-inclusive, almost fabulous, approach that Serote has adopted in the collection. Perhaps, it is his own way of extenuating the level of threat of irrelevance and un-connectivity that the postcolonial nation state faces at the postmodern moment which celebrates migrancy with intensity and perpetuity. In the process, the original connection of the subject is forgotten or erased completely. Therefore, if personages of deterritorialization are ordinarily expected to be the living in their physical forms, Serote extends this to the abstraction of death as well. Doing this must be recognized as transcending the commonplace acknowledgement of the dead and the ancestors as being spatially located in the metaphysical realm. Such conventional demarcation between the dead and the living in the conception of time and space falls in line with the philosophically inflected remark of Simon Critchley (1997: 87) that “being-towards-death permits the achievement of authentic selfhood, which... repeats the traditional structure of autarchy or autonomy, allowing the self to assume its fate and the community to assume its destiny”.

But more than that, Serote reconfigures the existence of the dead in the imagination of the living by asserting that even in their incorporeality and transition to the metaphysical

spatiality, they, contrary to popular assumption, owe their origin to the world of the living, the postcolonial nation state. It thus negates whatever optimism of “autonomy and autarchy” that anybody would want to accord the dead. The reason for this, to Serote, is simple and he lays it out without any modicum of ambiguity: “for heaven is forever a strange place to live/ because we know nothing about it now” (52). Therefore, within the context of the conception of the South African nation, not for Serote the dismissive submission of Kwame Gyekye (1997: 257) that “Africans ... pay unnecessarily excessive and incessant attention to their ancestors ... One reason for the excessive veneration of the ancestors is the belief that, having gained a spiritual status that presumably is invested with power that human beings do not possess but that they can exploit to enhance their mundane interests and welfare, the ancestors are believed to be in a position to bestow honors on their living descendants.” Needless to say, if the dead in their “going” must remember this patch of the earth that is their home, then, it is the more so for the living for whom the tide of the global times turns and beckons to consider the attraction of other lands. In such circumstance, the deterritorialization that results certainly produces various categories of diasporic identities (Chambers 1994: 110).

Therefore, for both the living and the dead, the blurring of the line between the various categories of temporalities and spaces is total. As a matter of fact, the situation is one in which every time, past and present, rather than being considered irrelevant, assumes a place in a temporal system that is functionally cumulative. This brings up the need to reflect further on the title of the collection itself; that is, the idea that history is essentially constituted by place. There can be no question about the centrality of place to history. This explains why when relating or recounting events and issues having to do with the past, there is always a stress on specific places in order to bring the contexts of specific narratives to bear and invest every expression about the past with credibility. This much is apparent in the title. Yet the location of time at the other end of the spectrum in the conundrum that the title poses cannot be ignored. So, if “history” becomes “home address”, the assumption is that contemporary postcolonial identities are framed by history, and if history, it is then logical to deduce that they are framed by time as well. It will thus be besides the point to consider any form of postcolonial time past as irrelevant.

The position makes greater sense when one realizes that the present postmodern age of globalization draws currency from the age of modernity; it goes without saying that the evolution of the modern age itself was enhanced through the “abstraction of time-as-history” (Paul James 2006:175). If cumulative time was thus crucial in its abstraction as history in the old order, and in the present world order of globalization, it still remains as germane, even if “empty time” appears to be dominant.⁷⁹ James sheds more light on its contemporary utilization in global relations of power when he says:

In the present then, we can find across the world all forms of temporality..., from the analogical to the virtual, and from the tribal to the postmodern. Empty time, the dominant temporality of this period has become filled with the possibilities of other times and other sensibilities, but dominant it remains — a dominant and savagely demanding ontology that frames objective and subjective relations in the twenty-first century. (172)

If time is this crucially implicated in the abstraction of history, James intimates further that so is “space” implicated in the abstraction of territory (175). What emerges from the reconstitution of both time and space in the global scheme of things, at least for the postcolonial world, should then induce caution especially because of the implication of power play along North-South lines:

The reconstitution of time and space has political consequences, with more abstract means of connecting time and space giving increased potential for power at a distance. As the dominant way in which we live time and space has become more abstract, it has become more open to processes of rationalization, objectification and commodification. Thus the way that power is generated has itself become both (potentially) more extensive in its reach and intensive in its depth, as it has become more abstractly constituted. (James 176)

But it must be remarked that the reconstituted abstraction of time and space in the period of globalization has found concretization in practices of multiculturalism, migrancy, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism, among other terms that dominate the discourse of postcolonial theory today and are centrally entrenched within the discourse of diaspora. Indeed, the instantiation of the unstoppable pull to the centre from the postcolonial world

⁷⁹ In the categorization of Paul James (2006:169), empty time is the latest mode of temporality, having been antedated by others forms like the analogical, genealogical, mythological, the tribal and the postmodern. However, it remains the most contested site of temporality because of the way it, among other things, encourages unbridled capitalism.

at the moment is a veritable illustration of the power “generation” that is involved in the abstraction of both time and space.

Perhaps, it is in response to this that Bill Ashcroft (2007) contends that though diaspora is a term that has been in active intellectual use since the 1970s, it fails alongside other similarly reckoned terms to account for the challenge of the moment. To this end, he proposes the concept of “transnation” and in the following explication, he launches the term for reflection:

‘The’ transnation represents a state of inbetweenness not adequately accounted for by the terms ‘diaspora’ ‘migrancy’ or ‘multiculturalism’ but becomes a post-colonial intervention into the debates circulating around the questions of cultural identity, diaspora, language and literature in a global future (1).

Although most of these terms levelled with inadequacies by Ashcroft have been reflected upon in the previous chapters, it is expedient at this junction to extend the argument about their inadequacies by looking at two of such terms: transnationalism and diaspora. Transnationalism because there is the tendency to confuse it with the idea of ‘transnation’, and diaspora because it assumes a ubiquitous presence within the discourse of exile and migration. Various scholars with necessary disciplinary inflections of their backgrounds have attempted to tackle the term transnationalism and have come up with various definitions. From the migration-based definition of Van Amersfoort, Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, to the economistically sprained submission of Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, to the abstractionist models of Clifford (Valentia Mazzucato 2004: 131-2), one thing is constant, and that is the simultaneity of straddling of nations by peoples, materials, ideas and feelings. Nevertheless, the status of simultaneity of presence is fraught with its shortcomings as more often than not, there is a feeling of absence, which is usually perceivable not in the country of destination but in the country of origin. Put differently, in this simultaneity of existence or presence, the allegiance ends up getting tilted to one side, and this is where the nation state suffers a kind of loss both in material and abstract terms. Turning to diaspora and relying on the criticism of Ashcroft, “the diasporic community”, for instance, “has been understood as fundamentally absent from the nation. In this discourse, diasporic subjects are crippled by absence, loss and

alienation rather than empowered by a presence in the fluid reality of everyday life. The constitution of the nation as already in some way transnational circumvents this binary” (2007b: 5).

What is clear from the foregoing is that within the postcolonial geography, there are anxieties over the place of the nation state in an age that is increasingly defined and influenced by the dynamics of migration and migrancy. The natural response with relation to the implications of positionality, therefore, is to fashion, both creatively and conceptually new tropes that can favourably and adequately provide one with the understanding of the times within a global spectrum of existential politics. Thus in fighting for the soul of the postcolonial nation state, the concept of transnation comes in handy for a proper integration of the nation into the ambience of relevance and primacy. This is why transnation in Ashcroft’s further explication becomes:

The embodiment of transformation: the interpolation of the state as the focus of power, the erasure of simple binaries of power, the appropriation of the discourses of power, and the circulation of the struggle between global and local. But most importantly, it is the fluid, migrating outside of the state that begins within the nation (2007b:2).

The urge to challenge the nation state to a dynamism and transformation that rises to the occasion of the present world, and which is expressed through the abstraction of “transnation” can, therefore, be said to find creative alliance in Serote’s *History is the Home Address*. It also explains why the analysis of the text will be largely guided by the idea of the transnation as espoused by Ashcroft. From an apparent stand point of the concept, there is the possibility of charging transnation with some measure of intellectual fantasy and ambition. But this is where the question of utopia and the necessity of social transformation come up particularly with respect to literature.

The idea of utopia or utopianism in this context allows a creative liberty in literature and authorizes the possibility of thinking upon the horizon of potentiality.⁸⁰ In other words, the creative artist or writer utilizes the liberty of the imagination to express possibilities

⁸⁰ It must be admitted that the use of Utopia in the context of this chapter is different from the meaning it appropriates in the previous chapter. Essentially it is used here based on its reputation for its instrumentality in engaging with imaginative creativity for social transformation.

which at the moment may sound incongruous at best; however, such thinking often lays the foundation for an ontology of the future. The creative response itself, one must remark, never emanates out of idle intellection or without sensitivity to the currents of things within a given social imaginary. It is thus the ability to understand the semiotic significations of the present and the way they anticipate a future cast in transformative tropes. The said signs are significantly different from their antecedents, though logically emerging from the socio-political dynamism of the past. This accounts ultimately for the writer's creative projections that must anticipatorily capture the existential ethics of the future. It also explains why Ashcroft links the novelty of the transnation to the concept of Utopia: "I want to connect the transnation at this point to the concept 'Utopia', or more specifically Utopianism as the agency of liberation in writing. The realm of the possible, the realm of utopia is pre-eminently the realm of literature" (12). He further refers to Ernst Bloch whose appreciation of literary thinking is in terms of the narratives it produces for the purpose of having "a conception of a radically changeable world" (12). In a similar vein, David Bleich in his book *Utopia: The Psychology of a Cultural Fantasy*, sheds more light on the place of utopia in modern times as an exercise placeable within the matrix of cultural investigations by which it is possible to conflate both personal and societal issues in conscious response to the necessity of social change:

Such modes of understanding, aiming to unite personal and societal issues, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century in psychoanalysis and pragmatism and continuing on into the present, suggest how to revise our traditional "naming" procedure through a new *principle of understanding* that accounts more regularly for the emotions involved in cultural life (1984: 12).

But it is pertinent to intimate once more that the prosecution of utopia in literature can also be linked to the deployment of dialogue. As a literary device popular with the project of utopia, dialogue right from the Renaissance era, as Nina Chordas (2004: 27) contends, has been deployed in matters of response to cultural exigencies. But more importantly, with respect to utopia, the "affinity for dialogical settings, is a quintessential humanist production". Yet, there is an interesting angle to the abstraction of this literary deployment which foregrounds the revelation that in its early stage of evolution, dialogues in the context of the foregoing discussion was also "closely allied with nascent

imperialism” (27). No wonder then that when Serote opens the six-part poem,⁸¹ it is with a reflection on the impact of imperialism not only on South Africa, but also on Africa in general:

must I believe that
I asked
that there was slave trade
there was colonialism
there was apartheid
and because these were there
there is racism (10)

This leads the discussion to Serote’s specific deployment of dialogue through the foregrounding of dramatic monologue in the poem. One is led into the world of his reflection on global issues of the times through his involvement with an implied female interlocutor whose name is Linda. The value of this artistic device in the work hinges on its ability to initiate his reflection from various angles and through this, he is able to create multiple voices and characters as the occasion demands. The context of their dialogue, though hopeful of extending the horizon of alternative living in a global context, creates an atmosphere of calm where lovers intimately reach out to each other amidst the challenge of engaging issues of national and global importance. So, rather than yielding itself to boredom, the romantic interpolations and reports on the simultaneous activities of love and love-making, create a necessary vista of digression by which the narrative of postcolonial utopia on the politics of globalization unfurls. For instance, the speaking voice invites one into the romantic world where the narrative character talks about their lying together (9), their turning to face each other and the passionate union that follows (12), to cite but two examples. But this also leads crucially to the mission of the poetic musing: the fact that such digressions, which adhere to Ndelebe’s espousal of “the ordinary”, are intended to point to the more political and consequential of the essence of the union of lovers. The urgency of the need to respond to the challenge of globalization and rescue the soul of the nation thus remains the ultimate intent of this apparent romance-inspired intervention. That their reflection is on the need for the right step towards the apprehension of what becomes of the nation in the age of globalization

⁸¹ Although a full publication, we are instructed by the author that the text contains only one poem. This is why the full citation is *History is the Home Address: A Poem*.

is evinced by the fact that the instituted atmosphere of romance is at best a means to a very crucial end: This is why:

she looked at me
I held her hand
she held mine
and the sun like someone peeping appeared
we have been up all night
searching for the address

Therefore:

if you go away
remember your home address
when one day your are lost (sic)
remember where you put it
tsikitsikitsiki
like something waking up (26).

Indeed, the choice of dramatic monologue in addressing questions of globalization and the centrality of the migrancy it engenders cannot be said to be fortuitous in *History is the Home Address*. This is because going by its very inventive definition, the dramatic monologue is typically conversational and discursive (Cornelia Pearsall 2000: 68). Adopting this style in speaking to the phenomenon of globalization thus becomes a conscious effort to find the right artistic match for the discourse. For as Paul Zeleza (2003: 1) intimates, globalization in its discursiveness is “used by scholars, artists, politicians, businesspeople, and the media to refer to a wide range of complex and contradictory processes and phenomena characterizing contemporary history, it has become a powerful but malleable metaphor that accommodates widely divergent theoretical, empirical, and ideological paradigms, positions, and possibilities.” The complexities and controversies that arise out of its abstraction and practice have resulted in the various meanings and attitudes that it produces in peoples and institutions today (Peter Dicken 2003:11). Bearing this in mind and the “burden of memory” that goes with it (Wole Soyinka 1999), as well as the necessity of positional articulations on the discourse, since the location one occupies in the discourse of globalization determines one’s response, Serote’s response and the choice of dramatic monologue become understandable.

To appeal to Zeleza (2003:8) once more, progressive African intellectuals often express anxiety and reservations over globalization because of its practices which tend to subject Africa to conditions of marginalization redolent of the previous phases of Western capitalist imperialism. Ironically, this fact of marginality, often expressed in terms of the North-South dichotomy, has also brought with it the “migration of African intellectuals to the North [as] part of the complex processes of globalization, a process that offers both opportunities and dangers” (401). But this is where the discussion differs with Zeleza because, the truth of the matter is that the vulnerability to the North via migration and other forms of dispersal dynamics is not limited to African intellectuals. As I have argued in the introduction, the experiences that intellectuals relate concerning exile and diaspora are not necessarily confined to their intimate encounters, but should be more appropriately conceived as possessing a vicarious import and ramifying all cadres of African humanity. If this is thus Africa’s experience, then South Africa is not excluded despite the respite it seems to have experienced from exile since the institution of non-segregatory governance. The threat of migrancy that Africa confronts in the face of globalization also becomes the threat that South Africa faces. But in responding to this, Serote begins first with the location of history in regard to time and space of the past in order to confront the present and the future.

This understanding comes to the fore in the first part of the poem which situates time and space within the cosmological coalescence in order to bring history to focus. The location of these variables aligns with the affirmation of the specificity of home in the transformation of the nation. The instantiation of the reflection on time and space as history and territory begins with the recognition of the ancestors whose existence and sacrificial antecedents formed the basis of the continuity of life within the South African and African space. Being and consciousness of identity thus begin with them: “why if you believe do you doubt/ are they not your home address/ did they not make you go away by your birth?” (14) Their struggle for the retention of the autochthonous existence, even if it must be transformed, is considered a test of strength. The struggle and the resilience in the face of the previous phases of globalization constitute a lesson for the present:

believe, I said —
 not because what does not end is ominous
 but because tribulations are a test of strength
 slave trade
 colonialism
 apartheid
 were like acid which melts flesh to powder
 hear me please, I said —
 this, my home address, is almost a smudge
 a blood smudge
 almost like nothing
 I squint to see it (14)

With a past that is so fraught with “tribulations”, the tendency is to struggle against its remembrance or discard its memory altogether. The temptation to dislodge such memory becomes more compelling when the news from the nation, the poverty and the various pandemics led by HIV/AIDS, find some comparison with the history of African post-independence crises of political instability, and economic sabotage made poignant by the syndromes of “extraversion”.⁸² The reflection borders specifically on African nations like Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Conakry, DRC, Zambia, Kenya, among others (16-19). Indeed, “all is here from the past”. This may be why Linda insists her lover-co-narrator must “speak of the future” (19). But in the contemplation of the future, the past, symbolized by the ancestors, must not be forgotten. This is also one sure way of ensuring the place of the nation. In other words, even when you must “go away”, the commitment to the land of the ancestors remains crucial:

give us strength and wisdom and council to make life liveable
 Africa of our ancestors
 of the lush and diamonds and gold
 of flora and fauna
 of dapple variety
 Africa
 of diverse languages
 issues forth their wisdom and knowledge
 knit us into land of our ancestors
 and let harshness of now pass
 for we are your children

⁸² According to Harri Englund (2002:19), “through processes of extraversion, the external politico-economic environment has become an indispensable resource in the pursuit of power and authority in the internal politics of Africa.”

she moves, stretches and yawns and lays back on me
the silver blades of dawn shimmer
and birds chime and cocks crow
another day is coming and the night makes way (20)

The consciousness of rootedness in the nation which begins in the section yields a tone of concession in the second part of the poem. The earliest indication of this is clear in the deployment of the imagery of motion and movement in an attempt to instruct on the proper attitude “when the global village emerges” (21). Participation in the agenda of the global village is a necessity; but when the “son of Africa does this” he must exercise caution in his “walk” and simulate the wisdom of the “breeze” that “travels/ and comes from the spinning earth” (21). It is through this kind of knowledge that the migrant African can “remember your home address” (21). The whole idea of the spinning earth is an attempt to give voice to the assertion that humanity is bound by the space of the earth. Nevertheless, the oneness that this suggests does not rule out the cognition of the space in which each category of humanity is originally based. This is particularly so in view of the positivist assertion that globalization triumphs for all when everybody is a contributor to the concretization of its ideals. However, for some, especially in the postcolonial space, and as the poem stresses, this will necessarily involve trespassing the borders of their nation-state. But even when there is something to contribute along this line, the nation state as well as the heritage it bequeaths to individuals should not be undermined: “for/ we can bring nothing else to the global village/ but what we dream and what we bring from home/ as others bring their baskets (22). The view is in line with what Ashcroft considers the palpable situation that predicates the experience of displacement within the abstraction of euphoria:

In the displaced postcolonial world of diasporic subjectivity utopia is the constant horizon of the present, the horizon *that is at the same time* the horizon of the past. This is the striking and irreducible power of the myth of return, to adumbrate, as utopia, the fusion of past and present as the perpetual horizon of the present (13).

Therefore, the insistence on the remembrance of “the home address” and what is brought from “home” in to the global village has a way of speaking to the question of naming and identity. The “home address”, that is the consciousness of the inheritance of the nation-

state despite the distance that travel forces between the migrant and home, becomes a vital mechanism for reconnecting or staying connected. On the one hand, it resolves the question of identity specification. On the other, because “the absence of a name is the point of potentiality at which the diasporic subject can be either recognised as cut adrift, absent from the nation, or launched into the possibility of new life” (13), taking the home address along becomes a way of remaining connected to the nation state, even when the assumption of a “new life” has become imperative.

In this regard, the demands of the present sanction a situation where the younger ones are not as space-bound as the generations that have gone before them. But even at that, the older ones must “give them the address/ and hope/ they will not forget it/ or lose it” (24). The continual implication of the past in the present also aligns with the recognition of the spatial origin of the nation state in the dislocated migrant’s consciousness. For the younger ones who must tread the path of migrancy because “you cannot live as we did” (27), the necessity of return remains crucial. Also because they constitute the “dreams” of Africa, and by implication the nation-state, if they “go away from... home”, they must “remember the address where you were brought up” (27). The knowledge that must be brought with them ramifies all African experiences and the categories of time they conjure up. Besides, Africa, as symbolized in the partitioned nation states, must therefore constantly stay in view:

in the light
in the sunshine
in the glitter and warmth
of the day as I looked at her
and saw
with the eyes of a woman
she looked at me and said —

Africa!
we remember our home address
come
we come
tsaaa! (29)

The primacy of remembering the “home address”, which also predicates the necessity of return in the age of globalization, speaks to the emulation of the practice of taking “the

home address” serious through the present festive rerun of the African diaspora produced significantly through the Atlantic Slave Trade. Even if the narrative character reckons that the return from “Brazil... America... and Islands of the Caribbean” to “Accra the Ashante” may not be in the right direction, perhaps because they are on “a one way street” (30), their return provides the virtue from which those contemporary Africans faced with travel should take a cue. From another angle, here is also an attempt to show how the management of time past merges into time present. It then goes without saying that the inter-space dialogue that such return suggests and ingests goes to reinforce the relevance of the African postcolonial nation state in the scheme of things. As well as the above, the reflection on the present drift of people from the postcolonial nation state to the West does not end at the level of the physical. It is also crucially intellectual. However, the danger that this poses can be far greater in some instances. For the retention of the relevance and development of the nation-state presupposes that there is an abiding intellectual and cultural sympathy for any given nation state. Where this is lacking and in its place there is an unbridled patronage of western imperial ideologies, the consequences can be dismally annihilating. Consequent upon this the third part of the poem, among other things, addresses this menace of intellectual drift as a metaphorical form of exile and migration.

To achieve this, the narrative voice assumes the position of an old, disappointed uneducated South African but who constitutes the link between the present and the past. By the same token, he is also a veritable source of the prosecution and success of the liberation struggle. The voice in its justifiable agitation displays a knowing analysis of the social malady of “the poverty [that] smells like... sweat/ and blinds and deforms” (41) in the South African nation many years after the end of the liberation struggle. The foregoing then forms the basis for arguing that much as globalization impinges on the integrity and survival of the postcolonial nation state through the perpetuation of resource dispersal and flight to the North, the resultant human flight that follows in form of migration to the North cannot be entirely blamed on the concept. In other words, the violence and exclusion engendered by globalization— that is, where the occasion demands a foregrounding of its shortcomings— are necessitated by the complicity of the

dynamics of internal governance of the nation states. It must therefore be admitted that where imperialism is constructed as externally motivated, it can only be effective in its expropriation and violence if it finds a ready collusion in the agency of the internal structure of the state.

With respect to the unfurling argument, there is a sense in which the violence and exclusion of apartheid can be summed in the poverty that it bred for the subordinated group of the blacks. It was largely owing to this that exile was prevalent during the notorious dispensation. However, where the condition of the previously subordinated group fails to improve under a new socio-political order as heralded by the institution of democracy, it then stands to reason that the current perpetration of violence and exclusion, which is congruent with apartheid in the new dispensation, will necessarily yield the same result of dispersal. To that extent, the acceleration of the dispersal that may be levelled against globalization must also be read as obtaining significantly from the internal dynamics of the nation state where the leadership can as well be regarded as representative of the intellectual class that is charged with improving the lot of the formerly subordinated groups. But this class has already begun to show signs of failure with respect to improving the condition of the people. Where the basic amenities are lacking, the confrontation that ensues is best captured in the succeeding rhetorical questions:

tell me, when the people are illiterate
when the weight of the oppression breaks their sight
when poverty smells like their sweat
and when it blinds and deforms them
and renders them deaf
when it breaks their heads
where
African intellectual
where are you (41)

Obviously with the deployment of the historic present tense in the above section of the poem, it is already clear that the envisaged gains of freedom are as elusive as they had been in the days of apartheid. It then stands to reason that the elusiveness of the dividends of the liberation struggle, much as it can be blamed on the impact of neo-liberal economic

agenda of globalization, has nonetheless gained ascendancy through the complicity of the intellectual class. The feeling of betrayal and disappointment this situation registers on the minds of the ordinary people that gave their support to the intellectuals who led the struggle in the days of apartheid is expressed further in the lines below.

African intellectual,
who are you
what resides in your marrow...
when European intellectuals plotted our demise
where
where were you, my deodorant brother,
don't you know
how with our illiteracy, ignorance and poverty
we resisted
we built liberation movements... (41)⁸³

The sense of betrayal that is palpable in the above also appropriates the feeling of desertion that the disappointed class of the uneducated has. The refusal of the intellectual class to speak in the language that their illiterate but committed elders understand constitutes a signal in the refusal of the intellectuals to remember their "home address". For they may have become famous, but the largely illiterate generation of their parents "gave the last we had" and their "children to armed struggle". The paradox that results from the realization of freedom coincides with the ascendancy of the sentiments of

⁸³ But one must also acknowledge the fact that there is a coincidence of the articulation of the disappointment and frustration of the abandoned and uneducated African elders, and the general disappointment that is palpable in the comportment of African intellectuals for whom policy and economic formulations from the West are paramount. Here again, refer to an earlier reflection on this issue: "To adopt Njubi Nesbitt's paradigm, those postcolonial intellectuals for whom the fetishization of postcolonial theory is paramount, have formed themselves divisively into categories such as "comprador intelligentsia, and postcolonial critics".⁸³ These two have connived wittingly or unwittingly to frustrate the decolonization mandate further. According to Nesbitt, those in the first category end up shuttling between universities of the North and policy formulation institutes where their agency for tackling Africa's problem is recognized by the West through "their uncritical adoption of the free market ideology of globalization". Those in the second category compound the problem further through their denial of Africa and African-based scholarship meant to expose the root of African developmental problems. Yet when he identifies the third category as "progressive exile" which has the potential of turning the tragedy of "brain-drain" into "brain-gain",⁸³ one still finds this possibility suspect. Suspect because, while many African social scientists are quick to point at the possibilities inherent in the abstraction and practices of globalization, by specifically pointing to the movement of people across spaces, they shy away from the incongruity of the movement which, to hit at the stark truth, is nothing but the one-way movement of Africans, intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike, and citizens of other poor countries of the South to the North, a phenomenon that subtly robs Africa of its intellectual capital base." See Senayon Olaoluwa, "Decolonising the Social Sciences in Africa: The Unfinished Agenda," *Africa Development*: Forthcoming.

“liberalisation”, an issue which this chapter has hinted at earlier. The retention of the soul of the nation state from the excessive drift to the West in terms of material, capital and human resources must, therefore, begin with the cultivation of humility on the part of the intellectual class to communicate with the rest of the nation. For this, the movement in the right path is agonizingly recommended: “we made you/ come and talk and laugh and cry with us/ come be here with us” (42).

Intergenerational dialogue, for that matter, becomes a vital intervention in the reclamation of the dignity of the nation from cultural and intellectual exile. When this is achieved there is definitely a sense in which it will rub off positively on the economy and the revamping and protection of the national capital and other resources from flight to the North. But where this call is not heeded the alienation that it produces can be analogous to Akinwumi Ishola’s report on the agonizing comments of a Nigerian community elder sometime ago: “We spend all our money sending them to school, but when they become capable they stop talking to us. Isn’t that a big loss?” (1992:17)

In the fourth part of the poem, there is an attempt to interrogate the perception of death with respect to the import of the finality it registers among mortals. The spatial transfers it is believed to precipitate, whether heaven or hell, thus deserves further scrutiny. This is perhaps because “globalization... is primarily about the transformation of space” (Gerard Delanty 2000: 83). But this is also perhaps because there is the need to engage in a reconfiguration and re-designation of spaces in a manner that will cohere with the understanding of the intervention of “transnation” in a global dispensation that threatens the place of the nation. When viewed from this angle, it then becomes clear that the re-designation of “heaven” as a space that owes its existence to “the earth” is only geared towards securing and enhancing the dignity of the nation. For in the end, the attempt to stress the primacy of the earth as against heaven deconstructs the understanding of final eternity of heaven while transferring the attribute to the earth. In this transposition of spatial qualities, the earth assumes a greater sense of importance:

if we leave
we must remember our home address
the earth
for heaven is forever a strange place to live
because we know nothing about it now
no matter science, religion or tradition, (52)

The proposal for the extension of human memory in death in order to identify with the consciousness of his earthly stay in a way indicates the need for continual commitment; but it also goes beyond the borderless import it appears to present of the earth. While in the “spinning” of the earth the oneness of its dwellers is reinforced, and while the spatial transformation agenda of globalization sanctions perennial deterritorialization, individual categories of humanity have designated spaces with which to identify originally. This is the space of the nation, which in turn yields to a “transnational” mutation. Yet, the nation strives in the present world order to remain relevant by its heritage of investment on its citizens and for which they owe it allegiance of remembrance and return both in literal and metaphoric terms, no matter how complex this may sound:

The concept of the ‘transnation’... while incorporating the separation of state and the nation, and endorsing the utopian potentiality of the state’s transformation, accommodates the constant, ubiquitous, oppressive and combative discourse of particular nation-states. It emphasizes the fact that the transnation is a product not only of the nation, existing as a kind of ‘smooth space’ running through it, but also a product of movement, displacement, relocation, travel... The transnation, by seeing the *movement* of peoples in globalization as a fundamental feature of the spatiality, accentuates the *circulation* of the local in the global (Ashcroft 2007b:11).

The reflection on the primacy of return takes other forms in the fifth part of the poem with Robben Island as a kind of space within the new South African space that deserves a revisit. Yet, even when the phenomena of migrancy and travel come up again in the “breeze” and the “ocean wave” (57), one thing is sure, and that is the constancy of being “embedded in my home address” (57). It explains why in the last part, even when the poem subscribes to the Breytenbachian notion that “through expansion, skirmishing, coupling, mixing, separation, regrouping of peoples and cultures... everywhere is [now] exile” (Leon de Kock 2004:1), there is nonetheless a space in contemporary terms that is for South Africans, and by implication Africans. This must be cherished at all times even when it produces the space of the transnation. The space has definitely been reconfigured

within the cumulative temporality which dates back to the incursion of the West into Africa on an imperial scale: “these six hundred years of Africa fighting” (64). The reconfiguration of space, which also has an implication for time, has consequently ingested a reconfiguration of citizenship and Africaness as well. That is why there is a recognition of Africa’s peoples as being cast “in shades which [range] from blue to black to ginger to honey”; and they “dance with the light of the sun and the shades of the moon.” (64). Therefore, in the present temporal and spatial reckoning for these Africans, and more specifically South Africans, “black and white”, the space of the nation becomes paramount even when “going away” is imminent. For that matter, even when they must go, the recurrent cautionary caveat stills sounds out clearly in a tone of solemn finality:

so if we go
all of us will remember our home address
to let the plenty of the earth
from its belly bring centuries of peace
to this earth
which spins and spins and spins on its pin (65)

If the hypothetical high moments of globalization are to be measured by the degree of world peace it generates, even when many from different spaces will be caught in the vortex of the ‘spinning of the earth’, by emphasizing the need to “remember the home address”, Serote makes a highly useful and proactive statement on what should be South Africans’ and other Africans’ right attitude toward the nation. Put differently, the concept of the transnation as a counter-narrative within the discourse of postcolonialism, while pointing to the inadequacies of diaspora, it can be argued, has also succeeded in redefining the abstraction of diaspora in a manner that keeps the nation safely on board. This is the import of Ashcroft’s assertion that in the end “diaspora begins at home” (8). There is no doubt that Serote’s *History is the Home Address* speaks inventively to this declamation in the age of globalization.

Besides, if as Cornelia Pearsall remarks, the utility of dramatic monologues is reinforced by the transformative cause that defines them (71), Serote’s *History is the Home Address* lives up to this expectation in the way it charts a new course for the pursuit of a new diasporic identity in the age of globalization. It is important, however, to remark that he

has done this with a unique blend to it, which is why it is divested of the Victorian dramatic monologues' typical destructive endings. Lastly, by initiating the monologue as essentially between two lover-characters, the path of history and memory charted, and which links and speaks to the present, indicates the recognition that both men and women were involved in the liberation struggle that has produced the current post-apartheid dispensation. It also speaks to the future and the recognition of gender equality in the response to the definition of the making of the African postcolonial nation in the period of globalization mediated, among other things, through practices of migrancy. On the overall intervention of Serote through these poems, especially from the angle of the place of the poet in traditional South African society, and when considered against the backdrop of the precipitating history of the nation, perhaps it will be in order to corroborate Zolani Mkiva's assertion that truly "people feel no event is complete without a poet" (Susan Kiguli and Dunca Brown 2004:80). Yet, Serote transcends this mandate in his intervention in the way he engages with events from the future.

Concerning the narrative of nationalism and the spotless dimension it assumes in the two epic poems, it is crucial to remark that Serote may have consciously shielded away the discordant and acrimonious dynamics of the years of struggle within the nationalist movements. This romantic approach to the idea of history with respect to the struggle brings up again the remark of Gilfillan, as the partisan position of Serote as a poet of the establishment must have accounted for this. If the apartheid years saw Serote singing a critical song against the then establishment, it must be because of the exclusion of the ANC and other similarly configured movements that were up in arms against the apartheid regime. To that extent, should we return to the question of mourning, it is just in order that those days of disunity and the formation of splinter movements from larger movements like the ANC will go un-mourned. For in his essay "Mourning the Movement" Isaac Balbus declares that no "group is all-good or all-bad but nonetheless worthy of care" (2005:86).

Beyond partisanship, however, it is important to comment that Serote brings an angle of freshness to nationalist narrative in the way his epic poems serve to illuminate the

gendered blind spots of the previously received narratives in which nationalism is constructed almost exclusively in masculinity. That is, whether in his account of the struggle with respect to sacrifice, and commitment, or his response to the present dispensation as well as the contemplation of the future as framed inevitably by drift, the centrality of women is kept in view in a manner that is consistent with the ethos of gender equality and social equity. This brings us to the question of how we may approach and address the texture of African contemporary epics as looking back to much older traditions like those of *Sundiata Epic*, the *Nwido Epic* and the *Ozidi Saga*, among others.⁸⁴ As epics predating colonialism, the way they centralize women goes to give cogency to African feminists' assertion that the exclusion of women from the dynamics of power—economic, social and political—began with colonialism when the chauvinistic epistemology of Europe was imposed on Africa.⁸⁵ Besides, rather than remember and amplify exclusively the immortalization of only the official heroes after whom various institutions and sites have been named, Serote also celebrates and immortalizes many ordinary heroes of the struggle—men and women—whose names may never feature in the official account of the struggle. Moreover, in comparison with the western epic tradition and its unstable narrative essences over the ages—having shifted focus from the heroic public figures in Homeric tradition to something of a personalized venture in which the poet also assumes the hero as advocated by the Romantics (Paul Cantor 2007: 375)—African epic tradition, especially as advocated in Serote's poetry, continues to centralize social equity. Thus, the African epic still remains consistent in the way it adopts a broad-based approach with a view to accommodating all the dynamics that account for social and historical transformation. Speaking in specific terms about the values of this approach in Serote, David Attwell (2005:155) remarks that such formal

⁸⁴ Tony Voss (2006:449), feeding into the existing prejudice against the existence of epic in Africa contends that the genre is not as developed in Africa because “indigenous black history has not, to a sufficient degree, generated the imperial or state-making energy that can drive the epic poet.” But it is important to counter that the kingdoms and empires with which names like Shaka, Sundiata, Ozidi, among others were associated, in each case, were much larger than some of the largest states that western imperialist history claimed to have generated. And just as the configuration of these kingdoms and empires appropriated the complexities kingdom and empire structures so were the epics they generated, comparable those of the most acclaimed in the European tradition.

⁸⁵ See Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books, 1987.

transformation from the essentially subjective articulation typical of lyrics and as found in his earlier collections like *Yakhal'inkomo* (1972) and *Tsetlo* (1974), soon paved way for much longer poems like *No Baby must Weep* (1975) and *Behold Mama, Flowers* (1978) in which he seeks “a seamless connection... between the self and the nation, a connection that demands... both longer and stronger forms, forms that seem best described as epic.” Similarly, Tony Voss (2006:450) says of Serote that such “shift from minor (lyric/ pastoral) to major (epic) is an archetypal trajectory of the poetic career, the assumption of a communal and public voice for longer, more encyclopaedic forms”. Both *Freedom Lament and Song* and *History is the Home Address* are to that extent a continuation of this epic tradition. This may then account for why in an attempt to reflect on the South African community, the liberty that the medium of epic provides allows him to add his own version to the pan-Africanist ideals which often show the interconnectivity of anti-colonial/imperialist struggles throughout Africa. And given the way his epic engages the future, especially in *History is the Home Address*, there is no doubt that, like Atwell observes, it lives up to the expectation of “*an epic of futurity*” (cited in Voss 452).

Conclusion

Arising from the understanding that South African literature during apartheid was read for the most part against the backdrop of exile, this chapter began by exploring the concept, showing the pervasiveness of the experience both for the victims and opposition to racial discrimination on the one hand, and the establishment and groups favoured by this rule, on the other. The dismantling of apartheid was thus considered the passage of exile experience on a general scale in the nation. Yet, the discussion in this chapter has argued against the backdrop of the possibility of exile in an era of de-racialized democratic dispensation in South Africa. To achieve this, the discussion has concentrated on Serote's *Freedom Lament and Song* and *History is the Home Address*. In the first poem, we have seen the necessity of revisiting the past through the agency of history and memory. Through this agency, the articulation of the poet has been described as a personal intervention. While not shying away from the mandate of national reconciliation

epitomized by the state-instituted Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Serote's intervention does more to point at the grey areas of history that culminated in the long-drawn struggle of liberation from apartheid, a historical epoch in which majority of blacks suffered much death, exclusion, repression, dispossession and exile. Therefore, if the liberation from such state-backed acts of discrimination eventually came to an end through the collective efforts of the advocates of human and racial equality in South Africa, the place of the unknown fighters, martyrs of the struggle whose shed blood brought freedom, should as well be mourned. This is why the poem can also be limned as providing the missing links in the official framework for revising history for the purpose of moving forward in the post-liberation era, in which the entrenchment of democracy has been interpreted in this chapter to mean a kind of double return from exile for both victims and perpetrators of apartheid.

But also because liberation in South Africa has also coincided with liberalization, the overwhelming purchase of globalization has caught the nation in the mesh of mobility, which may be why there can be no absolute guarantee that all South Africans will live only within the enclave of the nation. Diasporic experiences are therefore imminent. Yet the chapter has also partly established that the blame for dispersal at the present time cannot be completely heaped at the doorstep of globalization as the nation state is also complicit in how exile and migration are engendered. The anticipation of this has thus informed the interpretation of *History is the Home Address*, where the inevitability of "going away" is engaged. And by deploying Ashcroft's concept of "transnation", the poem has been read as one in which diaspora is reconfigured to give centrality to the nation of origin. This is important because it is only through the knowledge of the nation and the utility of this knowledge that we can remain relevant in the global scheme of things: "for we can bring nothing else to the global village/ but what we dream and what we bring from home". And if this stricture is adhered to by those South Africans and indeed Africans caught in the web of migration, the reconfiguration of diaspora will put the homeland at the centre. This way, the threat to the relevance of the homeland and the nation in the age of globalization will be reduced, giving credence to Ashcroft's (2007a:8) assertion that diaspora, like charity, must begin at home.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARDS THE FORMULATION OF A POSTCOLONIAL MORALITY OF EXILE: A CONCLUSION

“It is something within art, not outside it that produces... striving for justice.”—Elleke Boehmer, “A Postcolonial Aesthetic: Repeating upon the Present”

Not a few scholars and critics are agreed on the notion that there is expected to be, after all, a modicum of morality by which the planetary constitution and practice of migration should be guided in contemporary times. For the postcolonial world especially, the suggestion holds much water and remains too obvious to be ignored. As has been discussed in this thesis, the overwhelming propensity to be lured towards migration of any kind has defined the postcolonial space to the extent of allowing one to observe, rather painfully, that it has become an operative modality upon which the postcolonial category is anchored. Exile in its various transmutations as migrancy, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, globalization, among others, and the alarming dimension it has taken in recent times in the postcolonial world thus compels us to take another look at the concept in a bid to come to terms with the realities on the ground within the spectrum of the existing global order. This, it is hoped, challenges us to attempt, no matter how brief, a reflection that will point at the inadequacies of the current situation so as to progress towards the formulation of an ethos by which exilic practices in the broad-based discourse of migration can be viewed.

To appeal once again to Gikandi (2007:np) on the historical concerns of postcolonial theory in its evolution, it is possible to contend that the initial postcolonial preoccupation with exile, like with other areas of focus, has experienced some kind of shift in orientation as the field is currently fascinated with the concept and practice of cosmopolitanism. The situation stems from the current fixation of the world on the all-important phenomenon of globalization which can be said to have found a strong ally and framing in the practice of cosmopolitanism. In line with this argument, there is a presupposition that there is a sense in which all forms of migration and exile are imbricated in the cosmopolitan concern. At this point, we may as well disregard the

previous attempts at drawing a line between these permutations since they are all constituents of the one and same grand formation of cosmopolitanism. The assumption of liberty to collapse the conceptual boundaries that are constituted in exile provides us with a more congenial basis for grappling with the issue at stake. This is essentially so because the migration of the postcolonial world, especially to the West, has not been and cannot be measured or appropriated exclusively in human terms. It is therefore in the design of the cosmopolitan structure that we can take a holistic view of exile in order to have a clear articulation and demonstration of the pervasiveness of African deracination.

The question thus becomes to what intent and purpose is such cosmopolitan design, which privileges a planetary ethos to keep a continent's resources on perpetual flight? Once a question of this kind is given centrality in our response, it does not take long to apprehend the imperialist and capitalist scheme by which the design unfolds as a logical but unfortunate rapture from the antecedent of colonialism. To cite but two works in the study, Kofi Anyidoho's *EarthChild* emphasizes the impact of colonialism by continually reminding us of the imperialist and oppressive activities of the "moonchildren" against "earthchildren". On its part, Mongane Wally Serote's *History is the Home Address* stresses the disruption of African past by colonialism, showing how South Africa dramatizes the unique reality of this disruption: "there was pre-colonial time/ there was slave trade/ there was colonialism/ there was apartheid/ and because these were/ there is racism" (2004:10).

This further compels us to remind ourselves of the fundamental preoccupation of postcolonial theory as the confrontation with and interrogation of colonialism together with its language (Elleke Boehmer 2007:9). By the virtue of the interrogation of colonialism, there is already a drawn line between the formerly colonized and their colonizers. The binary that colonial history imposes on the relationship between the North and the South thus remains one of the challenges that still confront the postcolonial world especially Africa today. Much as such binary has often found basis for perpetuation in notions of the "developed" and the "underdeveloped", the rich and the poor, the centre and the margin, the self and the other, the included and the excluded, the

white and the black— to refer to the divisive plague of racism in other words— the overwhelming mediation of all this through the prosecution of a capitalist and imperialist order cannot be ignored. The permutations constitute the more visible constituents through which capitalism’s impact is felt on the postcolonial world. They further account for global inequality, which is reflected for instance in the imbalance in the flight of resources from Africa and indeed the rest of the postcolonial world to the West. It therefore stands to reason that in a bid to confront the sub-structural factor of capitalism, the extent to which these permutations account for global inequality should not be undermined. On this score, the task at hand compels us to explore for the last time the dynamics of the binary in order to come to grips with the way the permutations have compromised the development of some parts of the world to enrich and enhance the development of others.

Yet in so doing, we must not lose sight of the fact that a view as the above runs into collision course with the position of Anthony Appiah (2006: xxi), whose self-imposed mandate is that of discounting such permutations, collapsing the binaries as he goes, in order to formulate a new cosmopolitan ethos in which the apparent divisive lines will disappear for a new world order to come astream. However, such a conceptual formulation as Appiah’s, much as it aspires towards the development of a universal framework for humanity with a leveling of differences, fails to take into account the dissections that have been previously created in the historical formation and sustenance of these binaries. To be more direct in the engagement, Appiah has in the introduction to his work *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* presented the challenge before us: “the challenge, then, is to take minds and hearts formed over the long millennia of living in local troops and equip them with ideas and institutions that will allow us to live together as the global tribe we have become” (xiii). In response to these binaries, he however admits of their existence but not without the intention of indicting the intellectual class: “we’ve been encouraged, not least by well-meaning intellectuals, to exaggerate their significance by an order of magnitude” (xxi).

But whether the commitment of African intellectuals to the mandate of speaking to these binaries in the perceived “exaggerated” way is worth engaging or not is a matter of opinion. This is why for now it will be more important to consider how the binaries and their interrogation have served to illustrate millennia-old practices that have done more to maintain division and mutual suspicion among various groups and peoples of the world than they have united them. This also accounts for why the challenge of resisting capitalist imperialism in the present fashion, especially as it relates to the migration of postcolonial African resources to the West, requires that we take first and foremost an inward look at the situation on the ground within the African space. It is only after this that we can begin to relate to others within the global scheme of things and manage, if not put in check, the uncritical reception of a universal ethos of humanity which, even at its best, remains exclusionary. Again, Boehmer’s (10) observation that the postcolonial world for all the arguments put forward against it with respect to the way it expresses reservations about universalist ideals of aesthetics, remains, and rightly so, anchored first and foremost on the primacy of objectifying the (postcolonial) *world*. On this score, “there is that within an aesthetic that we might call postcolonial that draws in the postcolonial world, imbibes its affect, constellates and reconstellates its meanings through reading of it, our participation in it” (16). Perhaps one work that best bears out this remark is Serote’s *History is the Home Address* in which we are reminded among other things that even where “going away” in the contemporary age has become imperative, we should not forget that “we can bring nothing else to the global village/but what we dream and what we bring from home” (22).

If as has been noted, the primacy of the postcolonial world and the mode of representation it authorizes cannot be compromised at the expense of aesthetic, it is then possible to contend that the Western imperial structures by which the postcolonial world is categorized as the Other in the new global order deserves to be dismantled. Achieving this while remaining relevant in the planetary dynamics must thus be seen as placing a responsibility of endeavouring to take a look at the steps taken so far and to ask like Achebe, “where the rain began to beat us” (1975:70). This order of morality is obviously at variance with the materialist proposition of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri who

contend that for the subordinated groups of the world the way out is not to pursue the mandate of liberation from the global structure through “delinked alternatives”:

Any proposition... defined in racial, religious, or regional terms, “delinked” from Empire, shielded from its powers by fixed boundaries, is destined to end up as a kind of ghetto. Empire cannot be resisted by a project aimed at a limited, local autonomy. We cannot move back to any previous social form, nor move forward in isolation. Rather, we must push through Empire to come out the other side... Empire can be effectively contested only on its own level of generality and by pushing the processes that it offers past their present limitations. We have to accept that challenge and learn to think globally and act globally. Globalization must be met with a counter-globalization, Empire with counter-Empire. (2000: 206-7)

Brilliant as this argument sounds, it fails to take into cognizance the fact that the foundations of Empire which have bred the kind of exilic experience by which the postcolonial world is hemmed in today have always privileged fixed boundaries by which privileges accrued to some parts to the detriment of others. It thus renders suspect the viewpoint that subscribes to the notion of perpetual rootlessness in cosmopolitanism, a contemporary mantra and smoke screen for exile. Cosmopolitanism is read this way not least because of the grand design to accept it at its face value, when in actuality its alignment with globalization is geared towards the consolidation of the already existing boundaries and the tales of inclusion and exclusion that go with them. It explains why, for instance, the imperative of return rings through Anyidoho’s *EarthChild*, and for all its celebration of migrancy, the question of return remains constant in Ojaide’s *When it no Longer Matters Where You Live*. In Mapanje’s *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*, the continual insertion of concerns about home also dramatizes this view. The subtext of the foregoing is that there is more to cosmopolitanism than engaging in endless migrancy.

Therefore, while not rejecting outright the suggestion that resistance to Empire should be “delinked”, it is nevertheless important for the postcolonial world to redesign the domain of cosmopolitan practice in a manner that will make it actively involved in the determination of the over-determined global ethos. In other words, as Gerard Delanty (2006:27) has argued, because “cosmopolitanism refers (in actuality) to the multiplicity of ways in which the social world is constructed in different modernity... the very notion of cosmopolitanism compels the recognition of multiple kinds of cosmopolitanism”. A

view like the above, is akin to Frantz Fanon's assertion that there indeed "are civilizations without neckties, civilizations with loin-cloths, and others without hats", modernities with wrapper, among others (cited in Prasenjit Duara 2004: 3). Also because not all postcolonial spaces are equally postcolonial, cosmopolitan practice and the whole idea of migration of Africans especially to the West deserves new designs, whereby rather than be fixated on the search for capital flight which instigates human flight in the direction of capital from the continent, it is about time the continent began a revitalization of its original modes of modernities which would return the continent to the center of things.

In this case, cultural, economic, and technological productivity, anchored on good governance that is not subservient to western imperialist suggestions will bail the continent and her people from the exclusion and dehumanization they suffer even at their most privileged in the West. For instance, the continent might as well begin to borrow a leaf from the practice of what I prefer to call "product cosmopolitanism", which, to make but one illustration, is evident in coca-cola cosmopolitanism. The production formula may be different from country to country, but its American origin has never been in doubt. Thus, rather than give in to platitudes of intellection and the uncritical movement of African peoples across western spaces, the movement of our products around the globe will confer greater respect on the continent precisely because of the economic relevance and gains that will ultimately accrue to the continent. The contention can then be summed as being in tandem with the very idea of the Ashcroft (2007:8) assertion that "diaspora begins at home", and like Serote has concurred, we can bring nothing into the global village except "what we bring from home" (2004:22).

Once this is adhered to, Africans can actually reverse the tide of resource flight in all ramifications. Migration at this point will also provide for the continent a face of global equity as economic fecundity of the continent will necessarily bring about productive movement across her borders from the rest of the world and with material gains to boot. To borrow an idea from Philip Emeagwale (2007:3), the challenge is also about taking advantage of contemporary technological advancement and using it to the continent's

betterment. This way Africans bragging about their cosmopolitanism will no longer leave us with intellectual and productivity gaps in the continent as their pride will no longer be in advancing the development of the West with their exile contributions, but will be more interested in remaining at home. Even if they must “go away,” it will essentially be for the advancement of the economic, social, cultural and technological status of the continent. This then is the morality that should serve as the groundwork upon which the postcolonial world should launch itself into the new millennium.

On the basis of the above proposition, we may choose at this point to respond to Appiah’s indictment of “exaggeration” against postcolonial intellectuals. First, we must accept the fact that the poets whose works have come under study in this research are qualified to belong to that class of intellectuals whose interrogation of colonialism via the abstraction and practice of migrancy in the name cosmopolitanism of whatever hue, has done so to the extent of disagreeing, in varying degrees, with the dimensions of contemporary African migration to the West. At face value, the deracination caused by factors both internal and exponential in the various African countries, have done more to refract from the development of the continent than they have advanced its vision. What is more, there is a leveling of both intellectuals who exude the air of free cosmopolitans and non-intellectuals who more often than not are perceived as the real exiles since the circumstances of their dislocation from their home countries are easily designated as coercive. Thus where home has become undesirable because of its many dystopian indices, it has nonetheless remained indispensable. This is why the dialectic of home and exile in the works under study compels a coordinated platform for the preservation of the integrity and survival of home, which translates into the nation state and ultimately the African continent. The discussion thus returns us to the question of nationalism. However it must be remarked that nationalism, being a relatively recent concept, more so in the postcolonial context, should not be seen as an end in itself; not least because its colonial antecedent compels us to admit the artificiality of its imposition, which continually accounts for why subnationalist solidarity and agitations are on the increase even in the 21st century. Nevertheless, these subnational modes of articulation have always relied on the broader template of the nation for expression. It then accounts for why the nation

should be seen as a tool, that is, a resistance strategy within the domain of the postcolonial to challenge all forms of western imperialist agenda that may confront the postcolonial world.

On the whole, the foregoing argument verges on the issues surrounding the engagement of this research. Chapter One, for instance, has been preoccupied with the conceptualization of exile within the domain of postcolonial discourse. By so doing, it has not only endeavored to undertake an exploration between exile and postcolonial theory, but has also equally engaged with the thin line existing between exile and other similarly configured concepts within the broad-based discourse of migration such as diaspora, migrancy, transnationalism, transnation, globalization, cosmopolitanism, among others. Importantly, the chapter has shown how in a sense these concepts do not only relate but also display a disposition towards mobility and interchangeability, that is, once we do not subject their individual drifts to finical rigidity. It is this flexibility of conception that has enhanced the discussion of exile in the selected texts.

It thus explains why in Chapter Two the study has examined the dialectic of home and exile using Oguibe's *A Gathering Fear* and Anyidoho's *EarthChild*. The task in the chapter has essentially been that of demonstrating how military dictatorship had served as a vector for the deracination of people from the West African countries of Nigeria and Ghana, and by implication, many other parts of African that came under the bubonic plague of military jackboots. Yet beyond this obvious background against which the chapter sets out, I have also shown that by taking liberty with colonial memory, the high-handedness of the military class could be read as an unfortunate rapture from and consolidation of the same rule of force by which colonialism was perpetrated on Africa. Thereafter, the pains of exile are explored beginning with *A Gathering Fear* in which the divisive condition of the Nigerian nation state as home shortly before and after the Civil War accrued to deny the author as well as many others that were victims of the war, especially from the East, a true sense of home. The aggravation of all this in the wake of the war by military dictatorship then leaves many with the option of fleeing the land to the West. The tragedy of escaping from home in search of a space of peace and survival

however turns out to be a search and existence in trauma. Much as home has failed to be accommodating, exile has not proved to be worthwhile for its exclusionary practices which on the one hand give the exile a sense of “the outsider”, and on the other, a guilty conscience for abandoning the fight against dictatorship at home, leaving others that are not as privileged to continue the fight all by themselves. This then accounts for the continual longing for home no matter its condition; and if the wish of return cannot be fulfilled in life, the idea of return must then be concretized in the ritualistic return of the body in death for burial.

Similarly, in *EarthChild*, the study has demonstrated beyond the previously received notion that survival is all there is to the collection, as I hope to have shown that the exilic texture in the text compels a more critical consideration. This position accounts for why the work has been read against the backdrop of the many faces and phases of exile in African history including cosmopolitanism. Unlike in *A Gathering Fear* where there is an overwhelming aura of pain of exile, *EarthChild* radiates with occasional moments of the liberatory values of exile and the continual movement across spaces that it sanctions. From the multicultural practices of the “bringing Ghana to the US” to the conviviality that defines the philharmonic performance of the spellbinding performance of the African American singer and dancer, exile proves relatively worthwhile after all. Nevertheless, the overall reality of cosmopolitanism catches up with the character in the end showing that the tribulations far exceed the gratifications it appears to offer. It then explains why return— not as a dead person as in the case of *A Gathering Fear*— is imperative in *EarthChild*, which speaks to the question of the developmental challenge with which Africa is faced. For the informing catalyst for return in *EarthChild* is nothing but that of being able to bring the knowledge acquired in exile to bear on the development of home, otherwise home becomes the ultimate loser.

Setting off against the background of the understanding that the much contested abstraction of modernity drove the prosecution of colonialism in Africa as well as the other regions of the world that fell victim of Western imperialism, Chapter Three has engaged with this fundamental assumption as well as the perceived processes of its

consolidation in the post-colonies. By specifically focusing on Jack Mapanje's *Of Chameleons and Gods* and *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*, I have argued that the postcolonial aspiration towards the appropriation of western sophistication is nothing but the appropriation of a mirage. Not least because the travel and navigatory quest that aided the West in imposing its ontological order on Africa, as was the case elsewhere, failed to anticipate the prospects of demystification that would ultimately follow as the colonized and later formerly colonized people would engage in reverse travel to the West where they would on their own either uphold or critically dispute Western modernity's claims. For the most part in the Mapanje collections, the latter is the case. If the pursuit of further studies informed Mapanje's first travel to Britain where he was expected to "drink from the source", the social, spatial and structural realities, on the contrary, do more to deny the West the claims of civilization with respect to the previously derogated backwardness of Africa.

The aforesaid sums the mandate of re-reading which I have done *Of Chameleons and Gods*. However, in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*, the argument which has set off more viscerally against the backdrop of civilian dictatorship of Kamuzu Banda, shows that the option of transnationalism within the context of exile can be instigated by state hostility in the postcolony. This at the same time makes a statement on the legacy of colonialism as not having succeeded in enthroning administrative fairness that would allow for the freedom of articulating dissenting opinions. If subsequently a transnational identity becomes the only available option of escape from state oppression and repression as the case of Mapanje represents the lot of many others that were incarcerated and later released by Banda regime, the fleeting values of the sense of freedom from repressions of home leave the transnational migrant with the challenge of survival and feeling at home at the same time in the West. It must therefore be the ordeals and challenges of being designated and treated as outsiders and strangers despite the right to be considered citizens of the West that continually inform engagement with issues affecting home from exile as is the case in Mapanje's poetry and writings. Thus writing about Britain also means writing about Malawi at the same time which illustrates the simultaneity of the import that transnationalism espouses. Nevertheless, home, despite its memory of trauma,

takes precedent over exile in Mapanje, which is why the longing for return cannot be denied.

The kernel of critical exploration in Chapter Four has been the interrogation of the liberalization of border-crossing of various kinds as a positive development and response to the unprecedented and accelerated compression of time and space in the age of globalization. To engage this assumption, the study of Ofeimun's *London Letter and Other Poems* and Ojaide's *When it no Longer Matters Where you Live* has been positioned as direct responses to some of the claims of globalization. In more specific terms, the chapter has been concerned with how such response of border-crossing from Africa to the West highlights the socio-economic tussle between the global cities of the North and the non-global cities of the South. Needless to say, at the base of the instigation, which stresses the dystopian condition of African cities as a reason for human flight to the West, is the subtly disguised motive of neo-liberal capitalism. For once the migrants from African cities arrive in the global cities of the North, they more often than not discover to their chagrin that the utopian texture which the cities of the North appear to radiate to gain attraction from the South is nothing other than a grand design in make-believe. The situation is worsened by the realization that the pursuit of capital that has taken flight from Africa to the West can hardly be a success, much less for the availability of engagement than for the exclusionary practices of host nations which consistently drive a wedge between labour and capital acquisition especially if such is intended to be taken back to countries of origin. Common to both texts, however, is the impossibility of discounting the degree of complicity of the internal dynamics of state misrule as highly contributory to the exilic option that citizens take in the end.

While for instance *London Letter and Other Poems* illustrates the contradiction of expectation and disappointment in the case of migrants who have moved from Lagos to London, *When it no Longer Matters where you Live* speaks to the limits of cosmopolitan euphoria in the movement from the Niger Delta Cities of Nigeria to American cities. Both texts thus appropriate the memory of colonial and imperial travel to chart and illuminate the current movement of Africans to the West, and concluding in varying, yet

similar ways that the objectification of the hyper-realities of Western cities may have done more, after all, to deceive postcolonial nations than they have illumined them. In the case of the two texts, there is a clear illustration of how the collusion of the West with its multinational firms and African governments in exploiting the resources of Africa for the aggrandizement and gratification of Western cities have spelt doom for the continent and induced human flight in varying designations. This is the case in *London Letter and Other Poems* with respect to Lagos and the flight to London, as is the case of the Niger Delta cities where the oil “resource curse” is aggravated by the neglect and conspiratorial repression and pacification of the peoples’ agitation for better conditions of living by both the state and the oil multinationals. It is also this fact of the repression and pacification, which is anteceded by colonial repression and pacification of the region that today accounts for the rising profile of the Niger Delta space in matters of sub-nationalism. Nonetheless, in both texts, the realization of the smoke-screen of attraction of western cities catalyses a thought of return where global capitalism can be fought on home front.

Chapter Five has engaged with two of Serote’s post-apartheid poems, *Freedom Lament and Song* and *History is the Home Address*. Both texts are unified by the fact that they constitute a poet’s expression of the historical antecedent of a nation once defined by the experiential precariousness of liberation struggle and exile. But beyond the privileging of memory and history, the texts also stand out in their formal innovations as epics of a nation’s long battle against imperialism made poignant by racism. Yet beyond the rituals of remembrance and celebration of the resilience of a subordinated black group, a sensibility which finds solidarity in the larger pan-African consciousness and courses through *Freedom Lament and Song*, *History is the Home Address* has been read against the hypothetical backdrop of the possibility of future exile. Thus, by deploying Bill Ashcroft’s theory of transnation, the chapter has also looked into the ramifications of Serote’s reflection on globalization as a phenomenon whose capacity to engender “going away” cannot be ignored. On a last note, it is important to note however that the failure of a post-liberation South Africa to tackle head-on the challenges of transformation with

respect to improvement on the lives of the people will also be contributory to this “going away” that Serote hints at in the collection.

Finally, it is important to remark that the aesthetic highpoint of the works that have come under study in this thesis, taken individually or together, can be summed in the observation that they stand the test of postcolonial art. This is evident in the way they, among other things, engage with what Boehmer would prefer to call the contention “with English... as the vehicle[s] of empire by subverting the language from within, and... infusing English with the rhythms of local orature” (9). The assertion is true of Oguibe with his resort to the deployment of elements of oral tradition such as myths, proverbs, etc. as it is of Anyidoho, whose reliance on the Anlo-Ewe dirge tradition serves to reinforce the enormity of the phenomenon of exile in the postcolony. A similar artistic current runs through the poetry of Mapanje whose deployment of the verbal art woven around the mythical character of the chameleon finds relevance in the quest to engage with power. As well as the recourse to other elements of the oral tradition, Ofeimun and Ojaide, the two Niger Delta poets in this study, also endeavour to bring the subversion of English to bear on their work through the intentional inclusion of Pidgin in demonstration of a form of linguistic hybridity that serves to brace the indigenous linguistic fragmentation of the region. The recurrent repetition which serves as a distinguishing hallmark of Serote’s poetry also, no doubt, owes it to the oral tradition, allowing us in the end to concur that poetry within the postcolonial context does not only engage and interrogate imperialism, but also impacts on considerations of art through its reputation for linguistic subversion as demonstrated in all the works.

However, beyond the argument about the convergence in the way the poets have deployed language, it is important to also remark that the works are also punctuated by aesthetic differences which of course foreground the inimitable stylistic signature of individual poets. For instance, Serote’s conscious composition of a long poem in form of a book is significant in the way it brings an African epic aesthetics to bear on his art. It moreover speaks to a poet’s attempt to grapple with the reinvention of his peoples’ struggle against a brand of colonialism which, owing to its unprecedented gestation,

passes always an epic struggle. This much is evident in *Freedom Lament and Song* as well as *History is the Home Address*. On his part, Ofeimun engages with exile and its imbrication on colonial past by constructing a spatial juxtaposition of the postcolonial city of Lagos and the imperial city of London. In the dialogue that ensues, the poet brings freshness to literary discourses on exile and postcolonial understanding of this phenomenon. In the other works, each poet justifies the merit and uniqueness of his arts. Oguibe, for instance, fuses his reflection on exile with the Nigerian political instability and military tyranny of the late 20th century in order to dramatize the link between them. From a generally satirical angle in “Sketches from London” in *Of Chameleons and Gods*, Mapanje adopts typical clarity and lyricism to usher us into the world of “New Poems” in *The Last of the Sweet Bananas*. The sobriety that is prevalent in “New Poems” reinforces the seriousness of exile/ transnationalism which is forced on people by the prevailing hostile circumstances of home, in this specific case, the Malawian state. By privileging the metaphor of *Agbenoxevi*, the foot-loose personality, Anyidoho stretches our imagination of African exile in a manner that blends distant history of African diaspora in the West with the contemporary nudge of exile, while at the same time reflecting on the values of return for development. The highpoint of Ojaide’s aesthetics lies perhaps in the grand paradox and suspense that he registers on the title of *When it no Longer Matters Where You Live*; not least because contrary to the expectations of readers, the overall impression in the poems, especially the title poem, is that exile, even at its most hospitable, cannot compare with the sense of gratification and dignity of home.

Finally, in view of the scope and limitation of this study, I make no claim to exhaustive exploration of the discourse of exile in African poetry, which leaves room for further study by other scholars and students of literature. Importantly, a study of female poets in this generation can be undertaken either within the sub-Saharan division or as an African-wide study still dealing with the question of exile. It is also my recommendation that similar studies can be carried out on poets in this generation by comparing them with poets of the first generation or those of the third. On a more ambitious plane, a multilingual study of this generation can be carried out in which case by transcending the

boundaries that language erects, an all-encompassing research can be carried out from Cairo to the Cape.

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