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INSCRIBING DISPERSAL: THE POLITICS OF EXILE IN AFRICAN POETRY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2008

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Samuel Senayon Olaoluwa

2nd October
—— day of ———— 2008

ABSTRACT

This study examines the dimensions of exile in Anglophone African poetry of the second generation. Bearing in mind the challenge that arises from such exercise in periodization, the study is clear in stating that the demarcation paradigm employed in identifying the various generations of writers is not absolute. Specifically, the study considers the works of selected poets from sub-Saharan Africa in this generation: Odia Ofeimun, Tanure Ojaide, Olu Oguibe, Kofi Anyidoho, Jack Mapanje and Mongane Wally Serote. Noting that in spite of its commonality, exile is not experienced exactly the same way by its victims or patrons, the study engages the peculiar circumstances that induce the uprooting about which the poets write with respect to their individual nations. Also, because exile can be both internally and externally induced, I examine how the poets reflect upon the combination of internal and external factors in the aggravation of African exile experience. Besides, the study explores the link between exile and other similarly invoked terms such as nationalism, migrancy, multiculturalism, transnationalism, diaspora, globalization, cosmopolitanism, and so on, with a view to discussing how they interconnect and facilitate an understanding of exile in the selected works of the poets. For the purpose of conceptual focus, the study is framed by postcolonial theory, relying on it to ultimately explore the relationship between exile, home and return and its implications for African nation-states and their development.

DEDICATION

To the memories of
Jimoh Awumenu Sanusi
And Sunday Sola Onifade
Friends and soul-mates
Whose sudden disembarkment
From this mortal plane
I still find difficult to accept.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My appreciation goes first and foremost to God who inspires and endorses the actualization of my dreams. I would also like to thank my parents, Mr and Mrs Kodogbo Azinmagba, for taking the initiative at the inception to offer me the option of formal education, and subsequently tolerating my "insatiate pursuit of books". Dear Parents, now I am satisfied at last. I acknowledge my wife, Esther, for accepting to keep the home front─ in spite of our young marriage─ while this programme lasted. In the same vein, special thanks go to our son Maupeawhanji for accepting all this while that Father exists only in Mother's mobile phone; soon I will be real to you.

My acknowledgment also goes to my supervisor Dr Dan Ojwang for his patience, rare thoroughness and guidance. Other lecturers in the Department, especially Professors Ogude, Hofmeyr and Peterson, are also acknowledged for their encouragement and sustained interest in my success. I recognize the immense contributions of the long list of friends I made during the programme: Nkem Umeh-Njamma, Dina, Chris, Kwezi, Agatha, Jacintha, Gugu, Sean; these represent many others I cannot mention for the constraint of space. In the same vein, I acknowledge the community forged by the West African Students Union (WASU) and the friendship and solidarity it has provided especially by Busuyi, Emeka, (Igwe), Ben, Oluniyi, Sidick and others. I thank as well Aloysius, Vedaste, Jaki, Jennifer, and Brima, all members of the Graduate School Front Desk Team, for the experience of working together. I thank in the same way Mpumi, Mapule, Sharlene and all library staff in all the divisions where I have constantly come in contact with them throughout this programme.

I am moreover grateful to my former lecturers, especially Professor Dan Izevbaye and Drs Ezeliora, Okunoye and Remi Raji-Oyelade for giving me all the encouragement and support that have led me this far. Dr Maina wa Mutonya is recognized for being a patient mentor and friend. I am also grateful to Sylvia Vibetti for the debates, discussions, banters, advice and support while the research lasted. My younger siblings deserve kudos for their encouragement: Viwasin, Kenhode, Sende, Denagan and Pesu. Other friends and relations are gratefully acknowledged: Jendele Hungbo, for being the first to show me the gate to university education; Esther Aremu for proving to be an all-weather friend across spaces; Anthony Odiwe for unconditionally accepting to be my emergency landlord in my first year; Grace Musila, for the rare gesture of kindness; Pius Fasinu, for the interesting *Huneenke* tales; Ifeanyi Onogu for the early months; Jacob Olatunji, Tom Ogun, Biodun Oke, Patrick Avoseh, Muyiwa Eboda, Ngozi and Joe Chuckwu, the Oladunjoyes, Abigail Onyekwere, SMA Posu, Emaanuel Faton, Jide Aremu, the Oyakhires and others that may not be mentioned here, for their financial assistance. Members of the Wits Reformed Church/Fellowship are also acknowledged for keeping the faith.

Finally, I am grateful to Professors Elleke Boehmer, Simon Gikandi and Bill Ashcroft for their keynote addresses at the Rerouting the Postcolonial Conference of July 2007 (University of Northampton, United Kingdom), during which I garnered a better understanding of postcolonial theory in relation to exile and this study in particular. I am as grateful to Professors Susan van Zyl and Tawana Kupe for their support and encouragement. On a last note, I appreciate the University of the Witwatersrand for the bursaries

and other funding through which I have also been able to make presentations at international conferences while the study lasted.

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