

THE ANTINOMY OF EXILE: AMBIVALENCE AND TRANSNATIONAL DISCONTENTS IN TANURE OJAIDE'S *WHEN IT NO LONGER MATTERS WHERE YOU LIVE*

by

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Abstract

*About two decades before the end of the twentieth century, exile literature emerged as one of the paradigmatic, innovative and creative offerings of postcolonial Nigerian literature. The mainstay of this still emerging literary genre is its departure from the much-debated discourses on decolonisation, as well as excavation of Europe's imperial expansion. Thus, the emphasis here is on critiquing elusive notions of home, exile and cultural identity, which are compounded by the blinding subjectivities of globalisation and transnationalism that occlude the true import of mass migration and global capitalist rhetoric. Consequently, Tanure Ojaide's *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* (1998) is steeped in delineating the architectonics of such inquiry, which is yet to be given critical attention in his art. So, the hypothesis of this paper is that the pressures of transnationalism emanating from the blundering promises of globalisation and Nigeria's national dissonance are a correlative of cultural ambivalence and antinomy – both a cardinal trope in the poetry collection. Exile, meaning the relocation, fleeing or movement of people from one social space to another either willingly or forcefully and transnationalism, a social movement in response to heightened interconnectivity amongst nations, are paradoxical as they both engender cultural ambivalence and discontent in the exile.*

Keywords: Transnationalism, exile, antinomy, ambivalence, Tanure Ojaide; globalisation, Nigeria.

An exile may hanker after a sympathetic environment; one that trails an umbilical roots... In such an instance, the writer reflects present reality, but deflects its seductiveness through literary strategies of a markedly different temper from those that define or dominate the space that has given him shelter.

--- Wole Soyinka

Exile is a way of moving the writer from the territorial confinement, where his acts of resistance might ignite other fields into a global 'exclusion'.

--- Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Introduction

A major thematic preoccupation of contemporary Nigerian literature is the subject

matter of exile and transnationalism. The response of Nigerian literature to this type of trope is in view of the trauma of surviving in foreign land that exiles consider their new home as well as alienation following such transition. In postcolonial literature, the question of exile or transnationalism in the wake of globalisation and contemporary global politics is very central in understanding the realities of a nation's political process, culture and governance. This is the case with Nigeria, where the pressures of living have forced people to seek greener pastures in foreign countries. The realities of globalisation, which have exile as their corollary, have enriched postcolonial Nigerian literature as well as contributed to the synergy of responses and attempts towards unearthing the ugly faces of globalisation and transnationalism.

The actualities and disequilibrium which literature of exile addresses animated the craft of *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*, an ideo-aesthetic reconstruction of the tragedies of globalised capitalist system of postcolonial Nigeria and its attendant malaise, which are the canvas of exile and transnationalism in the collection. Accordingly,

The feverish race towards planetisation or otherwise known as globalisation has generated and will continue to generate all manner of debates... these debates and arguments are bound to elicit responses across institutional strata. Tanure Ojaide's *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* is one of such responses. (Oluwa 2007: 242)

One of the sinews of the craft of *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* as an artistic reconstruction that traces the trajectory of transnationalism is the manner it relates the phenomena of exile and transnationalism to globalisation, a major bane of many developing nations; it is behind the environmental, social, cultural and political contradictions that Ojaide narrates in the poetry (Oluwa 2007: 242). Thus, in *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*, Ojaide invites us to a debate on Nigeria's socio-political and cultural discourse with Orientalist temper that awakens our collective social consciousness towards apprehending the backdrop of exile's very personal concerns (Korte 2000: 144) which throw up the thorny questions of cultural politics and national identity. In addition, the poetry collection is a part of aesthetic ensemble on the African continent to

offer an important opportunity for global activists to move beyond the confines of Eurocentric and authoritarian political theories as well as providing a point of departure for anti-authoritarian activists to develop broadened insights into community-based resistance to the predations of neo-liberal capitalist globalisation. (Shantz 2007: 122)

This is essentially why Ojaide asserts thus: "I believe in the artist's activist role. Action counts to remedy a bad situation. Being passive or apolitical will not change things" (1994: 17). The "action" Ojaide's comments foreshadow is that of possessing critical voice and creative vision capable of transcending the evils of globalisation and identity politics. It is on this score that Shantz sees Ojaide as probably "the finest of the post-Okigbo/post-Soyinka generation of Nigerian poets" (2007: 122).

Although Ojaide's tenor of narration is symptomatic of the Niger delta ecological and environmental devastation, it also offers a panoptic view of the larger Nigerian society in

relation to the need for cultural re-affirmation, national identity and environmental sustenance, as well as a protection of the nation from the ruse of globalisation, inept governance and transnational pressures. Jeffrey Shantz statement in his piece, “Beyond Socialist Realism: Glocal Concern and African Poetry”, is relevant here; as he argues, the recent works of African (Nigerian) poets challenge us “to accept the validity of non-Western perspective and way of making sense of life” (2009: 110). This is in consonance with Ojaide’s view about Africa losing its cultural soul in the wake of global identity politics, which blurs Africa’s local identity (1994: 21). Ojaide further buttresses this point: “the shift from a celebration of the environment to a lamentation for its demise reflects the reality of my experience” (1994: 16) concerning the perils of globalisation and identity politics.

In his stimulating piece titled, “Migration, Globalisation, and the Recent African Literature”, Tanure Ojaide brings to light the underlay of exile literature: “Migration, globalisation, and related phenomena of exile, transnationality, and multilocality have their bearing on the cultural identity, aesthetics, content and form of the literary production of Africans abroad” (2008: 1). In this connection, Ulrich Beck’s phraseology of “place polygamy” regarding Africans (Nigerians) living abroad and writing about Africa or African experience is not unfounded; the phrase resounds with the aesthetics of representing African diaspora, what Paul Gilroy calls “black Atlantic”; it is also an assessment of national drama unfolding in the exile’s motherland. In this vein, Tanure Ojaide is one of the African writers and scholars who have allowed exile phenomenon, globalisation and multiculturalism to find expression in their works. This method of representing contemporary African (Nigerian) experience beyond the frontiers of nation-state rhetoric in the wake of the realities of globalisation and transnationalism is the hallmark of *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*. It is in this regard that Patterson and Kelley have remarked that

Notions of globalisation are everywhere. More and more we read or hear about efforts to think “transnationally”, to move beyond the limits of the nation-state, to think in terms of border lands and diasporas. Indeed ... several scholars have contributed to a rebirth of African diaspora studies. (2000: 12)

Thus, *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* is essentially one of such texts formulated as a refraction of African diaspora experience concerning the paradox and discontents inherent in global capitalism.

The consequences of homogenising world ideology, culture and political system so as to perpetually further underdevelopment project in the Saidian “Other” nations is behind the concept of globalisation and its ancillary systems. This is sadly implicated in exilic, transnational experience. The quest for homogeneity is what Onuka considers the “universalism of the world system” (2006: 2). The universalisation of global system is a ruse perpetrated by the West to drive political instability in the exiles’ homeland: one of the reasons for the social movement that whets the exiles’ appetite to seek alternative social space on the heels of the pressures of existence in their homeland. On this score therefore,

In general globalisation involves a relativisation and destabilisation of old identities, whether of nation-states, communities or individuals ... the creation of new hybrid entities, transnational phenomena like diasporic communities. (Albrow 1997: 93-4)

The above conjuncture resonates with what Olu Oguibe dubs the dialectic of “connectivity and the fate of the unconnected” (2002: 175).

Another source of exile representation is the *modus operandi* of governance in postcolonial Nigeria. A lot has been said, proposed, written and discussed regarding postcolonial Nigeria; attempt to delve into this subject matter will stifle the essence of this paper. However, Martin Albrow in his *The Global Age: State and Society Beyond Modernity* offers a telling silhouette of the *raison d'être* behind exile experience. According to him, the “inability of the state to shape the aspirations of individuals and to gather them into collective political aims” (1997: 76) is a cardinal source of transnationalism and exile. Apart from the harsh living conditions that Nigerians face in their homeland, which make exile irresistible, the urgency of transnationalism, a form of globalisation that blurs the congruence of geographic and social space as well as increases national interconnectivity amongst nations and people for enhanced production process and benefits, is vital in this consideration.

In refracting diasporic identity politics and the Du Boisian “double consciousness” (Leonard 2009: 76), that stem from this practice, Nigerian writers have illuminated our minds about the position of race relations and place-based aesthetics in the canonical global ethnic politics and “perceptions about the modern world” (Gilroy 1993: 111). They have equally articulated the dilemma exiles face in foreign environments. The poetry collections that foreshadow the antinomy of exile, as well as subterfuge of globalisation in Nigerian literature include Tanure Ojaide’s *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* (1989), Chin Ce’s *Millennial* (2005), Toyin Adewale’s *Die Aromaforscherin* (1998), Joe Ushie’s *Hill Songs* (2004), Uche Nduka’s *Bremen Poems* (1995), Odia Ofeimun’s *London Letters & Other Poems* (2000), and Olu Oguibe’s *A Gathering of Fear* (1988) among others.

In contradiction to the aspirations of exiles, the new-found home, the transnational world, does not seem to offer succour or alleviate pains of social movement from the homeland to new environments, particularly the West. This motif suffuses the craft of *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*. Apart from the environmental and social disequilibrium that are dissected in the collection, a major focus of the poetry is the paradox of exile experience. In his important book on the phenomena exile and transnationalism entitled *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Edward Said acutely summarises the antinomy of exilic experience through the manner in which the goals of leaving one’s home country have been damaged by “the loss of something left behind” (2001: 173). In “A Song of Exile”, which Okunoye Oyeniya refers to in one of his writings makes the same point about the antinomy of exile and the quandary of the poet-persona:

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. (59)

The contradictions correlative to exilic, transnational movement as well as antinomy of such act as painted in the above poem find continuation in “A Question of Wholeness”, a verse in *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*, which shall be quoted at length here:

I am thirty percent Native American''.
I wonder what percentage
of yellow, black, or white
I carry in my brown face...

Taban says I have Meroitic draughts
drowned in my bloodstream.
I have for long lost my Bini relatives
to the Ethiopie crossing
That contorted my family name.
The longer the the distance here,
the more confused the blend;
black and white wear out.

I am fifty percent oppressed,
sixty percent robbed of rights,
seventy percent hungry for love,
eighty percent a dog or drake.
I am ninety percent native American.

It's a question of wholeness –. (101)

The antinomy expressed in the above lengthy lines, finds counterpart in another versification: "American Fred", where Ojaide touched on this point with piquancy: "I will never escape Africa's fate/from my American home" (102). The paradox intrinsic in mass migration is further given expression in another verse, "Caravanned":

Dry or wet,
something is coming
to tear into shreds
our short expectations
of waiting.
We are still fugitives;
and here is neither home
nor the journey's end.... (89)

The dangers of paradox of exile sketched above are located within the confines of a weak Bhabhain "cultural hybridity", which is neither an antidote to essentialism nor a solution to "the belief in invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity" (Fuss 1991: xi). Moreover, the problematic of this antinomy makes the Bhabhain rhetoric of "third space" prostrate in the sense that it does not diminish the weight of jaded existence, which is the mental fixation of such exile for changing his social space; it rather heightens his trepidation and crisis. Thus, even though the "Third Space" is a site which does not pander to the whims of cultural fixity or monolithic origin, and which is "neither the One nor the Other but something else besides" (Bhabha 1994: 28), it does not still offer fulfilment to the exile as Ojaide illustrates in the collection. In his "The Paradox of Exile in Poetry: A Reading of Eight African Poets", E. E Sule considers the antinomy imbedded in the poetics of exile poetry in Africa, particularly Nigeria:

[...] the images in these poems create a paradoxical discourse which is that somebody goes on exile to seek for comfort, to seek for rest of mind, or, even, to seek for security for his life, but paradoxically ends up not having it, but instead encounters something that may be worse than what he has escaped from in his homeland. (2006: 16)

Thus, the trope of exile touches off “the good we have lost” (Ojaide 1996: 133) following the aftermath of the twin evils of globalisation and national tyranny as well as serves as a mnemonic snapshots of the futility and travails of escaping the homeland in the Saidian “age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration” (2001: 174) and Third World’s (Nigeria’s) frenzied bid to flee Oguibe’s “unconnectivity” rhetoric.

“Immigrant Voice”: Poetics of Antinomy and Culture Shock

The voice that pervades the universe of *When It No Longer Matters Where you Live* reverberates with culture shock, a process that measures exile-persona’s disappointment with his new environment. A consideration of the genesis and development of the concept of culture shock as it relates and forms a major facet of this study is vital. The phrase culture shock was first used by Cora Dubois in 1951 before it was systematically applied in anthropological studies in the 1960’s by Kalervo Oberg, the Finnish cultural anthropologist, who identified basic factors used in identifying culture shock. The stages or processes of culture shock are not discrete rather overlapping (Irwin 2007: 6). In this study, the emphasis is on the three first stages of culture shock, which technically apply here. Thus, in Oberg’s view, culture shock is “precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg 1960: 177). Basically culture shock entails the impact of moving from a familiar culture or environment to one which is relatively alien; it is the shock consequent upon new movement across disparate cultures or social spaces. Within Oberg’s paradigm, there are three phases of culture shock, which are the honeymoon phase (initial stage), negotiation phase (second stage), and adjustment phase (third stage). The antinomy that wrings wet in Oberg’s sequence is the natural corollary of disillusionment following spatial deracination: a transition from happiness to angst. The culture shock experienced by the poet-persona is piquantly surmised here:

Back home to here na long long way.
The picture of here from home is so different
from the wilderness I see night and day.
This na America with homeless for every corner
that I think I de a numberless world?
Where all the fine fine things in that picture:
Everybody dress kamkpe that I think
na angels, Hollywood Heaven they misspell?...

I come back from work so dead I can’t eat or sleep
and before dawn I don get up to begin another slave day.
when I reply their letters from home saying
here no be what they think they see for their minds,
they no de gree with me and call me lie-lie man:...
America na big photo-trick for me. (105)

The stylistic felicity of the above extract echoes interior monologue or stream of consciousness through which the exile's state of mind is uncovered thereby adumbrating his true condition. The exile-persona in the above instance uses a medley of pidgin and Standard English to demonstrate clinically his state of mind, which vacillates between optimism and despondency: a movement from joy to pain. The poet narrator is shocked as he realised that America, a symbol of one of the best transnational movement could offer is not what he thought; America is rather a "photo-trick", a sheer illusion.

The honeymoon phase noticed in another poem "Safe Journey" as well as "Home Songs: IV" morphs into discontent and total chagrin to the poet narrator in the wake of global capitalism's negation of positive values of humanity through "blundering interference and cynical indifference" (Shantz 2007: 121) to the exile's cultural identity. Also in another poem, "Home Song: VI", the "misery" and "gluttonous appetites"(59) of the political class in the poet-persona's homeland have rather been exacerbated by his experience in the new-found world:

[...], Tayo, the world from here is unreal –
the suffering in a lost paradise can only be
to rebuild it out of rubbles of broken dreams!
In this season of seeing what cannot be reached,
hearing what cannot be confirmed,
and taunted by a mirage of treasures still there,
I am fuelled by double love to sing and dance. (63)

The above verse suggests a nostalgic feeling for the exile's homeland: his paradoxical acknowledgement of globalisation is largely within the remit of the universal depiction of the condition of living of the Spivakian subaltern all over the world. Thus, even though the exile has escaped "suffering" in his homeland, he is equally going through mental and social atrophy as well as lack of self-fulfilment in his new social space, the New World. The oxymoron of "insomniac dreams" is a rhetorical device that resonates with the exile's "broken dreams". The sense of nostalgia painted above reinforces the exile's disappointment for leaving his motherland for possible greener pastures in another country. This instance captures in a bold relief a sense of antinomy informed by notions of risks and difficulty associated with adapting to a new set of symbols and norms that constitute the cultural currency that is shared by everybody in the exile's new environment (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982: xix).

The last segment of culture shock is the adjustment phase, which has to do with the exile's acclimatisation to his new environment. In the poem 'American Fred', Ojaide's poet-narrator's sense of glee as he sits at table to feast dramatises his ability to get used to his new social ambience and by so doing begin to enjoy its largesse:

I will never escape Africa's fate
from my American home.
When at table I didn't stuff myself
to choking point or frittered away boiled potatoes,
grandma winced before me and the leftovers:
"Remember those starving Ethiopian children".
I imagined multitude of rickety bones collapsing –

In the above poem, the poet-persona is rather enjoying the goodies of his new environment. This sense of satisfaction and adjustment to the exile's new home finds a foil in another verse, "Grandmother Song", where he remembers his motherland with disdain and discontent:

In grandmotherly hands,
we spent all without bank
rupting our fortunes! (100)

The atmosphere captured in the above lines is that of disgruntlement and displeasure about the homeland; this is a sharp contrast to the exile's new space, where he can afford to send money home. This is unavoidably the case with the exile's adjustment phase irrespective of the trauma that beleaguers him in this new social space – the New World.

In addition, in her *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship* (1999) May Joseph offers a telling portrait of migration, which is oftentimes caused by the pressures of living:

Migration has become a way of life in the latter part of the twentieth century. The large scale displacement of people from rural to the urban or across nations has heightened the precariousness of arbitrary boundaries while fuelling contemporary identifications with ossified national identities. (154)

Similarly in his piece, "From Multiculturalism to Immigration Shock", Paul Lauter argues in the same vein regarding the global urgency of im/migration: "In fact, immigration is an international issue: three percent of the world's population, 191, 000, 000 people, now live in countries other than those in which they were born" (2009: 2). In the thinking of Toyin Falola *et al* this process occurs in diverse patterns "including forced and voluntary paradigms" (xi). Be it forced or voluntary migration, the undercurrent of this nature of social movement is underpinned by removing the "catfish" (87) "... out of the Niger's waters" (87), a metaphor for depriving the fauna, flora and man their rightful place in the Niger Delta, a microcosm of Nigeria.

It is worth noting that irrespective of argument in favour of the ideals of transnationalism, there is however serious contradictions inherent in it. This sort of antinomy – an aporia of a sort realised in a distant land is arguably what Lauter calls "immigration shock" (13). Ojaide captures graphically the unavoidable sense of paradox and social pariah that becomes the lot of his poet-persona in the poem "In Dirt and Pride":

Now that rage begins to strangle me,
I hurl bolts from my guts –
I must recover hope from dire predictions.

I am branded on the forehead
with a painful scar by the country I love
for damming young and old alike...

The world suspects me from a distance,
but I do not blame my despisers. (75)

Ojaide has in the above poem delineated the contours of the paradox of exile as well as relayed the impacts of social exclusion. The imageries like “branded on the forehead” and “rage begins to strangle me” prefigure the harbinger of antinomy of exile; they also exemplify the irony of leaving the homeland, which its realities inflicted “a painful scare” on the poet-narrator.

Furthermore, Ojaide is a realist, political writer, who channels his artistic dart towards engaging, topical issues of the day bogging humanity. If there is any abiding message in the aesthetic and philosophical credo of Ojaide’s art, it is the ability to use his art to interrogate the *zeitgeist* – the spirit of the time. According to Tijan M. Sallah, the fervour of Ojaide’s art is anchored in the following lines:

If there is a persistent and unifying theme in most of his works, it is a single-minded detestation of tyrants combined with an obsessive commitment to social justice. (Sallah 1995: 20)

In Ojaide’s turn from depicting environmental tragedies in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, a crucial source of his poet-persona’s exilic experience - the helicon of *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*, to his preoccupation with the ruse of globalisation, the bitter-sweet experience of exiles constitutes a sense of ambivalence, which shall be looked at presently. This is largely part of the mainstay of *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*, an artistic response to the tyrants referred to in “Dateline: Abuja” as “...vultures that took over the airspace” (43) of Nigeria, a social space responsible for Ojaide’s poet-persona’s transnational movement. The poet-persona’s social space is Ojaide’s native country, the Niger Delta – a geographical space which delineates a penumbra of Nigeria’s inept mode of governance. The activities of the “vulture” (43) in “Dateline: Abuja” are further extended in “For Fela”, a poem in which Ojaide brings to the fore other reasons responsible for the death of Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the maverick Nigerian musician and activist. Firstly, the verse eulogises the political activities of Fela; and secondly, it is more of a panegyrics for political prisoners in Nigeria (including Ojaide himself), who through their works, voices, and activities the bungling, corporatist Nigerian political landscape is unveiled and criticised for societal advancement:

Fela, I know the other diseases that killed you:
the lethal poison of zombies and their retinue of civil dogs
that you sang so loud to embarrass and drive from the
landscape.
You did not prostrate before their brass shoes
you did not partake of their coveted bush meat,
you did not shut your mouth to their naked dance.
You invoked the people’s power to exorcise their evil...
The corruption you fought so hard to cleanse infected you!
disabled, you feared no foreign ambush
to foreswear your faith in the Afro spirit –
[...] Fela, the Nigerian disease cannot kill your voice
that still leads an ensemble chasing out the evil ones. (65-6)

The phrase “foreign ambush” brings to light global capitalist oppression; it is a sort of metonymy for global identity politics.

When It No Longer Matters Where You Live: A Silhouette of Cultural Ambivalence

“When It No Longer Matters Where You Live” is the title poem in the collection, *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*. The poem inheres in the concept of ambivalence, which is a major sub-text of the collection. The trope of cultural ambivalence is richly incarnated in this poem; it also dramatises the intertextuality of Nigerian exile literature. The concept of intertextuality, which underscores the re-writing of consistent, identifiable literary trope (Eagleton 1983: 192), is depicted broadly in Olu Oguibe’s *A Gathering Fear* (1988) and *A Song from Exile* (1990); it is also made manifest in Uche Nduka’s *The Bremen Poems* (1995) and Odi Ofeimun’s *London Letters and Other Poems* (2000): these poetry collections buttress the same point that Ojaide’s *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live* intimates about cultural ambivalence.

This characterisation amounts to the Gatesian thesis of tropological revision in relation to West Indian Literature, which also gauges the rhythm of cultural deracination of West Indians as well as their exile experience as much as Nigerian exile literature does. For Gates, this is “the manner in which a specific trope is repeated with differences, between two or more texts” (1988: xxv). The contradiction that Nigerian exiles face resonates with Ulli Beier “a disgust of reality”. This is the same with their Caribbean counterparts as well as other peoples with similar historical reality. As the Boisean “double consciousness” was a canonical feature of African-American literature, Nigerian exile literature is steeped in cultural ambivalence, an antinomy of a sort. This ambivalence is what Soyinka sees as “... a state of tension where the mind simultaneously embraces an anchor in alien territory yet ensures that it stays at one removed from that alien milieu” (2000: 63).

Even under the rubric of pain and continual yearning for one’s homeland, there is a tinge of rejection of assimilation and unbroken struggle for identity seen in the exile- persona in the poetry. This portraiture in transnational movement however, inverts the exilic social/cultural relations of transnationalism and globalisation. This argument dovetails with Odile Ferly’s assertion that “exile necessarily brings about some cultural adjustment, an adaptation process that leads to a redefinition of identity” (Oha 2005: 14). Ojaide’s reaction to the question of ambiguity, ambivalence, duality and Manichaeism surrounding globalised spatial displacement finds ample expression in the title poem, “When It No Longer Matters Where You Live”. Ojaide adumbrates:

Wild fires have consumed barks and herbs –
What are the chances of catching the lion alive?

...

The rumours of war days blaze memory
with harmattan drought – always beware
of falling from the spider-web’s height.

Except in returning to libate the soil
with the Cock of Abuja’s blood,
for all its refuge, the foreign home
remains a night whose dawn
I wish arrives before its time.

There's no such 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 choose to live!

I don't want to go home
with hands over head. Nor
raised in supplication or surrender.

I will take a drum home –
I know what music and dance
we deserve after the ban.
I want a drum to banish fear.
I will take a drum home. (77-8)

The above versification is quoted at length to underwrite Ojaide's response to the issue of exile and pressures of transnationalism, which are speckled with serious ambivalence that detonates through palpable imageries ensconced by ironic mindscape, atmosphere of trepidation and joy. The morbid vacillation from pain to joy by the exile-persona leaving his homeland is at the heart of the above poem.

In another poem, "In Dirt and Pride", Ojaide brings to the fore the salencies of exile experience and identity problem surrounding mass migration and exile. Let us here the poet-persona:

Now that rage begins to strangle me,
I hurl out from my guts –
I must recover hope from dire predictions.

I am branded on the forehead
with a painful scar by the country I love
for damning young and old alike.
Lost in the labyrinths of self-indulgence,
"where is the way out?" they ask,
who came to this depth with fanfare.

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

Before the cockerel's flung at the sacred crocodile,
let the rage smash the corrupt baron –

The world suspects me at a distance... (75)

The above lines are enmeshed in ambivalence; the title of the poem is rather ambivalent – a melange of Jane Austen's pride and prejudice (good and bad). Here, the poet

narrator is at the crossroads: his new found home “suspects” him; and there is “a painful scare” inflicted on him by the country he loves – his homeland. It could be gleaned that the exile is happy that he left his homeland, which “smothers every flower”, but on the other hand, the rage which stems from lack of integration and recognition in foreign land puts him in a sort of identity crisis as well as makes him a social pariah.

The ambivalence twist to the discourse of exile and transnationalism is further given expression in another poem, “Deportations”, where Ojaide illustrates pains and trauma of cultural deracination with poignancy:

From the way
these great-grandchildren of migrants
talk of deporting newly arrived immigrants,
calling them illegal and other stinking names,
you would think
they don't know their family tree,
don't know their fathers,
and where they came from.
They won't accept they are bastards! (107)

The image painted above is that of intra-cultural crisis, a race fighting itself. Here the “great-grandchildren of migrants” see “newly arrived immigrants” as people without roots. This situation again engenders harrowing realities of social exclusion which Ojaide’s poet-narrator faces; he is not even accepted by people of his own colour, clime and origin in his new social space. Thus, the “peace” (92) of mind for leaving his homeland is truncated by mental, social and psychological torture stemming from the ill-treatment from the people the poet-persona thought would offer him solidarity and warm embrace. This is a clear case of ambivalence: a situation that moves from joy to sadness. This oxymoronic scenario is further given resonance in these lines from the poem, “Pacific Love”:

I think of you Ocean as always full,
your body forever saltsprayed fresh...
Before this daily visit to wash my feet,
I have had my share of troubled waters.
I seek pacific favours to douse home fires.

Even in your peace, thunder clashes –
peace is not a still pose on canvas.
life's a struggle for you too, but more... (92)

“Home fires” a metaphor for “the trouble with Nigeria”, to use the Achebean popular parlance, which the exile thought he could extinguish via moving from his home country on the heels of the promises of transnationalism do not seem feasible, hence, “thunder clashes” in the midst of this seeming “peace”, the ultimate rationale for his transnational movement.

In “Empress of Silence”, Ojaide hones in on the question of ambivalence with a sense of nostalgia and punishment, which the poet-persona experiences as a result of migration that he thought would be an escape route to better life. Thus, the “memories of flagellation” as well as “the flagellation of silence” (125) – both ambivalent conjunctures,

brings him a sense of homesickness concerning his roots; it accentuates his serious longing not to allow his "...remembering to run/into ghosts of slaughtered wishes...." (125), suggesting his hunger for his homeland. On the other hand, the exile's "memories of flagellation" cannot undermine the punishment "silence" and solitude have wrought on his psyche. Also, the exile's "... sun/flower face" (125), an emblem for the reason for migration is being besmirched by punitive reminiscences. The poet-persona is in this instance locked in the grisly world of ambivalence, trauma and hunger for the "music" (125) of his homeland, a metaphor for Nigeria's heydays before "her blow" (125), which Ojaide sees as "loss" (123) in another the poem, "The Floods Ago". The coexisting opposing stances that shape the exile's mindscape as he left his motherland for better opportunities in a foreign land in the wake of transnational exigencies constitute another tinge of sense of ambivalence in the collection, *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*.

Conclusion

To reformulate the essence of this paper, it has been argued that transnationalism, globalisation, migration, exile and related phenomena have a rectilinear relationship with the ideo-aesthetics, form and content of Tanure Ojaide's *When It No Longer Matters Where You Live*, which questions the legitimacy of mutual sharing of global resources informed by global capitalist rhetoric. One of the major foci of this paper is that exile experience is basically a function of the paradox of transnationalism, one of the ugly faces of globalisation. Thus, mass migration on the heels of the promises of global capitalist system is full of ambivalence and antinomy; hence, exiles are locked within the politics of exclusion and identity crises in their new environments.

Therefore, the fate of the Saidian "Other" is the same irrespective of geographical space. Ojaide's main concern in the collection as argued here is that beyond the veneer of globalisation and ancillary practices, there are complex issues that confront exiles, particularly those from the Third World, whom have gone on exile to better their life following the realities of national politics, and more importantly given the urgency of global capitalism.

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