

‘Out of Place’: Abjection in the Early Fiction of Abdulrazak Gurnah

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg 2014

Abstract

This study focuses on the theme of abjection in Abdulrazak Gurnah's first three novels, *Memory of Departure*, *Pilgrims Way* and *Dottie*. More specifically, it engages the way the subjects of these novels share in narratives that position their bodies and identities as a type of borderland where they are caught up in a cycle of power and subjection to various institutional apparatuses, social exclusions and abuse. As such, their bodily and psychic experiences have been subjected to numerous forms of neglect, deprecation, or condemnation and are the expression of all that has been objectified through the process of abjection. Through this lens, this study examines ideas of home, bodies, belonging and the migrant experience by engaging the social and political dynamics of the settings of Gurnah's novels. The research relies on theories of migrancy, home and abjection for its reading and examines the cultural, historical and literary background from which Gurnah's writing has emerged. The study also examines the manner in which Gurnah's fiction engages the abject body to underscore the anxieties and material conditions of existence of migrant subjects. Different ideas of 'home' are presented, which I argue project home as the primary site of abjection, suffering and displacement. Finally, while recognizing the author's contribution to diasporic writing in African Literature this study further highlights some of the finer nuances that enable a deeper understanding of the connections between abjection and migrancy.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Signature 

17th day of JULY, 2014.

Acknowledgements

My supervisor Professor Dan Ojwang, I am very grateful for your time, kindness, patience and support in the provision of material and insights towards this research, without which I would not have been able to complete this report. Many thanks. I also thank Prof. Evan Mwangi for his valuable insights.

I would like to thank the African Literature department for making this opportunity available. I thank Professors Dan Ojwang, Bhekizizwe Peterson, Pumla Gqola, Isabel Hofmeyr and James Ogude whose seminars were very interesting and thought provoking. Thank you Merle for your assistance and kindness.

Many thanks to my family for the material and emotional support, patience and encouragement without which completing this report would have been very difficult. I am deeply indebted to the Oguta family who ensured I was not 'out of place' in Johannesburg and were very kind to me. My deepest gratitude to my husband Sam for always encouraging me even when I had given up. There is always hope. Hawi, I am grateful for your patience and understanding as I completed my 'homework'.

I thank my classmates Lungelo, Grace, Amanda and Lebohang for providing stimulating discussions in class and beyond the academic realm. Lungelo, to you I am grateful for going the extra mile in helping me complete my work and giving me the much needed encouragement. Thank you Grace for the many rides home. I thank Chris Werimo, Jennifer Musangi, Joy Omwoha and Dina Ligaga for encouragement when things seemed tough.

I received immense support from many people but the responsibility for any shortfalls in this study lies entirely with me.

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