

Abstract

This article offers a literary/textual analysis of the perceptions of ordinary Zimbabweans to Zimbabwe–China relations. It does this through an analysis of examples drawn from Zimbabwe’s urban grooves music and literature, namely Wallace Chirimiko’s song ‘Made in China’ and NoViolet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names*. Both texts offer a counter-narrative that contests and subverts the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front’s (ZANU PF) ‘Look East’ policy, which presents an elitist political perspective propagated through state controlled media coverage. This ‘Look East’ narrative is projected as de-linking Zimbabwe from western capitalism and is chiefly considered in a context where ordinary Zimbabweans’ perceptions on Zimbabwe–China relations are essentially inaudible. However, this narrative is severely undermined by most ordinary Zimbabweans who, through jokes, humour, catchphrases, anecdotes, music and literature express their scepticism and cynicism as they mainly view it as a mere desperate attempt by the political elite to cling onto power. Wallace Chirimuko’s ‘Made in China’ mocks and laughs at ZANU PF’s ‘Look East’ policy as it underscores the fact that Zimbabwe–China relations are largely based on deception. NoViolet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names* sees Zimbabwe–China relations as largely benefiting China, which is depicted as crudely exploitative in its relations with Zimbabwe.