



**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION**

**DISSERTATION TOPIC**

**Exploring the nexus between the Zimbabwean Crisis, Migration and Identity in Brian Chikwava *Harare North* (2009), Daniel Mandishona's *White Gods Black Demons* (2009) and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013).**

**By**

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**A dissertation submitted to the Department of English and Communication, Midlands State University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts English and Communication Honours Degree.**

**May 2014**

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**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

BBC:	British Bottom Cleaners
CCJP:	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
ESAP:	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
MDC:	Movement for Democratic Change
PF ZAPU :	Zimbabwe African People’s Union Patriotic Front

TTLs: Tribal Trust Lands

UK: United Kingdom

WOZA: Woman of Zimbabwe Arise

ZANLA: Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army

ZIPRA: Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

ZANU PF: Zimbabwe African National Unity Patriotic Front

ZCTU: Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

ZHRNF: The Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum

## **Acknowledgements**

I am indebted to my supervisor, Mr. T. Musanga for his mentorship and Stephen Mutingwende for his support and encouragement.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father who continues to inspire me even though dead.

### **Declaration**

I solemnly declare that this project is the researcher's individual efforts – not the efforts of any second hand person – scholar or student. All the scholarly citations, references, hints and/ or allusions, however, are duly and carefully acknowledged.

## **Abstract**

This study attempts an eclectic approach on the nexus between the Zimbabwean crisis, migration and identity using postcolonial theory in exploring Zimbabwean post-colonial politics. An extensive investigation into the nexus between the Zimbabwean crisis, migration and identity through re-tracing the past historical experiences of Zimbabwe is made while at the same time consulting a wide range of post colonial literature that falls within the field. I also consider the phenomena of migration within and beyond national boundaries. In addition, the study considers the formation of various immigrant identities particularly in the diaspora as well as the factors which trigger these identity formations.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Understanding Zimbabwe in the context of crisis, migration and identity.**

This study explores the nexus between the Zimbabwean crisis, migration and identity in Zimbabwean literature. The research focuses mainly on the Zimbabwean experience from 1980 to 2010 underscoring the impact the Zimbabwean crisis which imploded in post 2000 had on migration and identity. The research also considers the different types of migration and identity formations in the homeland and the diaspora.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 opened a new chapter in the lives of the majority black people who had been victims of colonialism. The dawning of Zimbabwean independence invited great hopes to the black majority who looked forward to a new dispensation under black leadership. It marked the cessation of the unilateral colonial regime which created laws that only favoured whites and disadvantaged Africans. This is testified by colonial laws such as the 1930 Racial Discrimination Act, the 1934 Land Apportionment Act, the 1954 Land Husbandry Act and the 1962 Hut Tax. Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 marks the history of Africans as a free and independent people. In order to relieve those who had suffered colonial repression like landlessness, discrimination, homelessness and wage slavery, the newly formed government constituted positive acts to accommodate the victims.

Mlambo (1987:10) argues thus:

the harsh economic situation in the 1990s, [in which] the government relaxed some inherited colonial laws to permit people to engage more easily in the informal loom of

backyard enterprises, flea markets and the ubiquitous development of city slums. [This was meant to] cushion those who had lost their jobs because of the shrinking national economy.

The newly constituted government instead of pursuing a politics of revenge chose to reconcile with its former colonisers. This was typified by Robert Mugabe, the then Prime Minister, who had this to say about Zimbabwe:

Henceforth, you and I must try to adapt ourselves intellectually and spiritually [...] as brothers bound one to the other by a bond of comradeship. If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interests, loyalty rights and duties as myself. ( Raftopoulos 2004: x).

However, shortly after independence, all the hopes towards positive national re-building and reconciliation dissolved into a nightmare as the nation was plunged into a protracted political and economic crisis. Raftopoulos (2009:201) observes that “from the early 1990s Zimbabwe entered a period that has come to be generally known as the Crises in Zimbabwe.”

At Zimbabwean’s independence, every citizen was hopeful of the future as noted by Raftopoulos and Savage (2004: v) that “Zimbabwe was a beacon of hope at the time of independence in 1980. It promised a move beyond the kind of coercive rule entrenched by colonialism and Ian Smith’s minority regime.” However, the hopes and aspirations of the 1980s were betrayed as the government became more and more autocratic. This implies that as an independent government just weaned from colonialism, the black majority government had a mandate to re-build and re-structure the country. Most of the Zimbabwean crises were triggered by the nation’s 1980s Gukurahundi, so termed after the first rough and often destructive winds marking the onset of the

rain season. Accordingly, Gukurahundi political onslaught led to massive movements of natives as it was punctuated by destruction of homes, torture of citizens and other exclusionist operations.

The backdrop of Gukurahundi was rooted in the split of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) from the Nkomo-led Zimbabwe African People's Union Patriotic Front (PF-ZAPU) back in 1963 before the Rhodesian Bush War. The political rift widened and amounted to tribalism as ZANU-PF's military wing, being Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) increased most of its armies from the Shona tribe while PF-ZAPU's Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) recruited most of its armies from the Ndebele tribe. Following independence, the intensity of the rivalry from both parties found it difficult to unite the two armies together to form a unity government. The first presidential election of 1980 saw ZANU-PF winning 57 seats out of 100 and making its leader becoming prime minister. In an effort to integrate both parties into a unity government, ZANU-PF deployed a North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland and Midlands Provinces which were predominated by the Ndebeles. The Fifth Brigade massacred an estimated 20 000 civilians suspected as dissidents. The reluctance of PF-ZAPU to quickly succumb to the courtship of ZANU-PF was immediately suspected as an act of secession and therefore the attack became inevitable. This vast onslaught caused great waves of migration across the country and across national boundaries.

Mainly suspects quickly sought refuge in neighbouring countries and as far as the UK. Many families were orphaned or left parentless and as a result education was dropped with most of the child population turning to streets and vagrancy. However, it is a cause of concern to ask why the Zimbabwean government did not focus fully on such victims. Though most of the

Matabeleland and Midlands disturbances remained undocumented reports like the *Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace* offer an indispensable foundation of how Gukurahundi amounted to national crisis, migration as well as the formation of various identities.

Apart from Gukurahundi, the emigration of white Zimbabweans soon after the fast track land reform programme in 2000 had a profound effect on Zimbabwe's commercial farming and agricultural industries. Consequently, the food export decreased drastically which meant reduced foreign currency from exports and agricultural tourists. Nyathi (2004:72) thus observes that "the country-wide land seizure [...] led to drastic fall in agricultural production since most of the black farmers who had just acquired land had no enough farming expertise."

Land distribution during the fast track land reform programme was often debated as unilaterally privileging the affiliates of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party. Raftopoulos (2003) argues that most of the fertile and large farms were allocated to the elite who were affiliates of the ruling party in the political, military and business sectors. This raises the question of citizenship as some citizens are considered more Zimbabwean than others as the land reform programme was largely conducted along partisan lines. Similarities can be drawn with colonial land acts in which big and fertile farms were appropriated by the European colonisers while the African majority were relegated to dry and inhospitable marginal lands called Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs).

The breeding of crisis in the Zimbabwe is largely centered on the "coercion and authoritarianism" that have since "intensified to the point of crises." (Raftopoulos 2009: 202). Raftopoulos (2009: 202) further notes that:

a key aspect of the crises was the rapid decline of the economy characterised by, among other things: steep decline in industrial and agricultural productivity, historic levels of hyperinflation, the formation of labour, the dollarisation of economic transaction, displacement and a critical erosion of livelihoods.

The Zimbabwean crisis was also triggered by the World Bank which urged Zimbabwe to structurally adjust its economy. This resulted in reverse production and had severe repercussions on the Zimbabwean currency as well as the promotion of poor standards of living among Zimbabweans. Muzondidya (2009) argues that the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) led to the decline in economic growth, massive retrenchments and closure of industries. Similarly, Nyathi(2004:70) argues that “by 1994 government statistics revealed that 20 710 workers had lost their jobs [...] Unemployment rose from 32,2 per cent in 1990 to 44 per cent in 1993.” Mlambo (1987:10) also notes that as a consequence of ESAP:

In October 1994 out of 280 companies in the textile sector had closed down in 1990 and in the clothing sector 60 companies closed between 1992 and 1994,...by 1992 about 25 000 employees had been retrenched.

To compound issues, the government in 1998 decided to award gratuities to the war veterans of Zimbabwe’s liberation war. The government offered about 50 000 war veterans Z\$50 000 gratuity each in addition to a monthly salary of Z\$ 2000. Muzondidya (2009:189) argues that as a result of this move “[...] prices skyrocketed and the workers’ real wages declined.” Muzondidya (2009:189) further argues that as a consequence “more people left the country [...] after 2000[...] large numbers left as a result of political violence, forced removals and general economic meltdown.” Potter (2007:88) also argues that much of the emigration was “driven by

the country's economic decline and negative political factors." The provoked economic and political crisis resulted in the formation of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 as an opposition party contesting to unseat the ZANU-PF ruling party. In 2000 ZANU PF lost the constitutional referendum to MDC and Raftopoulos (2004: 9) argues that "this constellation of factors set alarm bells for the [...] government in February 2000 when it [ZANU PF] lost the referendum on draft constitution." The following June 2000 preliminary elections in which the MDC nearly won as it acquired most of the urban seats witnessed an intensification of political violence as ZANU-PF sought to entrench itself in power at all costs and "undermine the new forces of opposition" (Muponde and Primorac 2005:iv).

This political violence was followed by successive political operations such as Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order). Vambe (2008:3) commenting on Operation Murambatsvina, observes that "when the government begins to rule by military operations, it is a symptom of powerlessness, it is governance under duress." ZANU-PF, following the vote in the constitutional referendum of 2000 in which the majority of the citizens voted against it; and the 2002 vote in the preliminary elections in which the MDC won most of the urban seats, began to use land as a political and electoral resource. Raftopoulos (2004:9) therefore argues that "land issue now became an issue of political survival in the election year. Land hunger could be manipulated to improve the electoral fortunes of ZANU PF."

Nyathi (2004:72) also echoes this when he observes that:

in February 2000 ZANU PF suffered its first-ever defeat at the polls...within two weeks of this poll defeat, land invasion began. This led to the country-wide land seizure which

led to drastic fall in agricultural production since most of the black farmers who had just acquired land had no enough farming expertise.

The emigration of white Zimbabwean farmers and the closure of agricultural industries resulted in forced retrenchment for most ordinary Zimbabweans. The occupation of the farms by the war veterans, some civilians and government ministers who constituted a large number of farmers without productive farming expertise and enough capital further led to the dearth of employment in the agricultural sector.

The wave of Operation Murambatsvina in May 2005 intensified the crisis as it resulted in homelessness, intra-urban and urban mobilities as well as massive depopulation due to transnational migration as Zimbabweans sought to escape the crisis. Operation Murambatsvina resulted in indiscriminate evictions of a relatively huge number of people. Barrister (2007:4) therefore argues that Operation Murambatsvina “led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, destruction of homes, businesses and property, widespread loss of livelihoods and the injury and deaths of some residents.”

This study also focuses on various migrant identity formations especially in the diaspora. Apart from individual identity, the research also looks at the concept of national identity as conceived from within and beyond the borders of Zimbabwe. Initially, the term identity is an elusive and complex one as it is in a state of flux due to individual constructions and stereotypes laid upon those who define and those who are to be defined. Jenkins (2004:5) defines identity as “our understanding of who we are and who other people are and reciprocally other people’s understanding of ourselves and of others.” Hall (2003), in his study of cultural identity, argues that identities can be fixed such as in the cases where a particular sedentary community shares a

common ancestry and history. It can also be fluid, that is, it could change at any time. To him sometimes cultural identity is stable due to individual identity constructions particularly in the case of diasporic identities. Diasporic identities, as Pasura (2012:258) argues, result from “dispersal from a place of origin may create new identities and opportunities for women while simultaneously threatening both men’s self esteem and the traditional power relations within households.” McGregor (2007:129) argues that Zimbabwean transnational migration especially to the UK has resulted in most migrants working in the care industry. McGregor (2007) further argues that coming to Britain is caricatured as subjection to a dirty, demeaning and ‘feminised’ area of work. Zimbabweans joke derogatorily to their compatriots “joining the BBC (British Bottom Cleaners”) and call care workers and cleaners “bum technicians” or “ma.dot.com” (“dot”implying dirt).”

Interesting in this research is Adeyanju and Oriola’s (2011) observations on the conditions that govern migrants to assume certain identities. Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) are of the argument that identity is constructed by a diasporic migrant. The individual hides some of the characteristic that he conceives as undesirable from his ‘significant others’ particularly people of his/her ancestral homeland. The two scholars gave an analogy of an actor who to use their phrase is in the process of ‘garnishing the front stage’ by defensively lying and/ or sending beautiful items to their relatives in their ancestral homes such as their photos snapped them from diasporic photogenic scenes, and even if they buy a new car, the first thing for them to do is to send the pictures of that car back home to present a false sham-constructed identity of the self in diaspora. Goffman (1959) suggests that the presentation of the self in the social world require “social actors just like artists act[ing]out their scripts on the theatre stage and convey certain impressions of themselves to others” (Goffman 1959 cited in Adeyanju and Oriola’s (2011). Goffman (1959)



goes on to argue that African immigrants are always hiding their identities to their families back home.

Adeyanju and Oriola's (2011) back stage presentation in actual fact reveals very poor, debased living standards of the Zimbabwean diasporas. In diaspora Zimbabwean expats are 'suffering and smiling' and their diasporic painful experiences remind them 'of the popular aphorism 'not all that glitters is gold' (p.944.Ibid) meaning to say that the diaspora is not always any oasis of hope for anyone. According to Pasura (2008: 153) "Zimbabwe reclaim and forge new identities...in which different special settings shape diasporic identities and cleavages..." In diaspora the system has been known to reverse gender roles finding men and women working in reversed unconventional gender roles as Pasura (2010:153) argues that "For most men, migration has meant work that is not seen as 'suitable' for a man; that is incompatible with gender masculinity." Pasura (2010:154) goes on to expose some of the 'back stage' forged identities of the transnational diasporas that "the majority of undocumented migrants work in low paid service sector jobs where the security of their jobs is precarious.

The fear of arrest and deportation restrict the undocumented migrants to working in the 'private' places of care homes." It is true of Ngugi waThiongo (1986: 13) that literature mirrors reality and is a carrier of culture, "language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture. In Chikwava's (2009) text, the un-named protagonist, and everyone who lives in the slums of London's Brixton is fighting to create a forged identity against the backdrop of working a debasing and feminine job as British Bottom Cleaner (BBC) to some wages for a livelihood. McGregor (2007) elaborates on de-skilling in which most expats are stressed due to demeaning work and the acquisition of low status as carers. Pasura (2012) observes that the emigrants are always hiding from the government police enforcers for fear of

arrest and deportation. Zimbabwean asylum seekers are always on the run from the police. To sustain a living they have to work indoors, forge identification details and use someone's papers. Pasura (2010:1450) illustrates a point from an ethnographic statement by one of his interviewees on how the Zimbabwean expats precariously earn a living abroad, "What do *maZimba*[Zimbabweans] do if they don't have papers? You use somebody's name or get a fake identification and you go and work." Identification details are important documents of one's identity.

Apart from the fact that the Zimbabwean immigrants suffer from factors such as racism and de-skilling, they also feel alienated from their homelands to which they fail to return due to lack of money, high tariff charges and embarrassment to return home empty-handed. However, most of the expats have always maintained linkages with their ancestral homes through remittances. Pasura (2010:450) argues in support of this idea that "Remittances suggest the attachment of migrants to their homeland [...]"

Migration as a phenomenon also affects migrants' identity due to cultural fusion. This leads to double consciousness in the minds of the expats. In Adichie's (2013) text, the character Ifemelu goes through a gradual cultural metamorphosis towards acquiring European cultures just because she has migrated from Nigeria to America. What she refers to as an Americana is a person who is a returnee from the American Metropole and such a person must have passed into American cultures and tradition. Fanon (1952) elaborates on the relationship between superiority and inferiority arguing that a black man yearns to be white in order to acquire superiority. He illustrates features which are often emitted by a returnee who has been to a Metropole that he/she emits an attempt to pass as white as shown in the change in language intonation, dress code and

other cravings. In the following chapters elements of cultural assimilation shall be textually illustrated with close look at the attitudes and behaviours of characters.

Muponde(2004:191) argues that “some citizens [...] have continued to be spiritually dissociated from the land that gave birth to them, hoping for the day when they would return home.” It is true that some Zimbabwean diasporic individuals are even unwilling to return home due to the effects of cultural assimilation. They have also stereotyped and seen their ancestral home in the eyes of the white men. The discourse of migration covers quite a large area which includes the causes and effects of migration as well as different identity formations. It has been seen that in diasporic geographies the fusion of cultures often leads to distorted or unconventional identities such as in the case of gender role inversions. Most migrant asylum seekers are always in the habit of forging identities or work in confined spaces as a precarious strategy to evade the police and immigration laws. However some immigrants as shall be seen in textual analysis have long ceased to think of their homeland as they have acquired citizenship abroad. Some scholars as illustrated above argue that diasporan Zimbabwean citizens continue to maintain a close cultural link with their relatives in their homeland through, for example remittances send through the Homelink programme. Due to inferiority complex, most people in Zimbabwe still think that whoever goes to the diaspora will meet all fortunes. This hazy view about the diaspora is also necessitated by diasporic Zimbabweans who continue to garnish a positive picture about the diaspora while hiding the true reality behind the scenes.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Most of the literature on the Zimbabwean crisis, migration and identity is largely historical, sociological and journalistic. This study therefore seeks to complement the growing body of literature on the Zimbabwean crisis, migration and identity by providing a literary analysis of the depiction of the Zimbabwean crisis, migration and identity.

## **QUESTIONS GUIDING MY STUDY**

The following are the questions guiding my study:

- i) Does crisis result in migration?
- ii) Does crisis result in the change of identities?
- iii) How is home (ancestral home) projected in migrant imaginaries?
- iv) How does the culture of the hostland impact on migrants' gender roles and identity formation?

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is important as it can help in promoting a culture of tolerance and understanding in our national politics. Zimbabwe, since the 1980s, has witnessed political violence and intolerance which had deeply divided and polarized our nation. This culture of political violence and intolerance coupled with economic instabilities has provoked an unprecedented wave of migration in modern Zimbabwean history. The study therefore seeks to complement the existing sociological, historical and journalistic narratives of the Zimbabwean crisis, migration and identity.

## **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The study seeks to:

- i) Explore the relationship between crisis, migration and identity.
- ii) Explore the significance of 'home'(ancestral home) in the formation of diasporic identities.
- iii) Explore the impact of migration on the formation of diasporic identities.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Post colonial literature is any literature that responds to colonialism and usually falls within the period after colonialism. Bhabha(2003) observes that postcolonial theory has largely been known for opposing colonial subjectivity and its subjugation of the former colonies of former European countries. Its main focus is to decolonise colonial mentality in both the former colonisers and the colonized in terms of cultural, religious and political phenomena. Post colonial literature is heavily built upon the backdrop of colonial writing and therefore, it duly responds to misrepresentation of the colonised by European literature. Vast instances can be drawn from post colonial literary writers like Achebe, Fanon, Said, Amah, Emecheta, Spivak and Bhabha which help subvert and re-invent against Europe's cultural and racial superiority over its former African colonies. Ngugi (1986) attempts to decolonize the colonial mentality in most Africans. In his introductory chapter to *Decolonising the Mind (1986)* Ngugi elaborates that African literature should be written in African indigenous languages and even brags to have penned most of his texts in Gikuyu. According to the literary convention held in 1963 in Makerere on what constitutes African literature, Achebe, among others points out that the coloniser's language is a blessing to African literature since it can be indigenised or Africanised to suit an African

audience. In postcolonial literary texts the once voice-less subalterns are given a voice to speak for themselves and comment on the race relations. As is always the case, in post colonial African writings, usually a protagonist constitutes the once colonized being who is in quest of lost identity due to a prolonged exposure to dominant European cultures and hegemony. The so called hero is not a flat one, but changes in his quest for knowledge and disillusionment. He/she seeks to transform the identity of the self and the nation socially, historically, religiously and politically since he/she is inspired with a voice. Accordingly, the plot of postcolonial texts casts a hero who experiences a psychological conflict of sort, but finally he regains his senses through disillusionment. An illustrious example of post colonial reaction to colonial European writing is Achebe's (1956) *Things Fall Apart*. In the context of postcolonial African literature, its movement typifies that of the Negritude movement whose reaction by black writers was against Europe's subjugation of what Said (1968) terms the Orient. These colonial attitudes, Said observes, are neither based on research nor facts but on assumptions and generalisations about the Orient by the Occident.

## Chapter 2

### **The paradoxes of Zimbabwe's post independence migrancy and identity in Harare North in the face of national crisis.**

Chapter I focused on introducing the area of study. However, this chapter focuses on Brian Chikwava's (2009) *Harare North*. The text explores the experiences of the Zimbabwean migrants in the United Kingdom. The text features 'Harare North' as London and Harare South as Johannesburg, the major hostlands of Zimbabwean immigrants. The narrator's migration to the UK introduces an important discourse of post independence Zimbabwean migration. Pasura (2008:6) highlights that the geographical dispersion of Zimbabweans covers a vast terrain and in a nation "...of thirteen 13 million, it is estimated that three to four million Zimbabweans are living in South Africa, some 400 000 residing in Botswana and more than 200 000 Zimbabweans in Britain" It should be noted that most of these movements were largely provoked by the Zimbabwean crisis which imploded in post 2000. Bloch (2008:156) therefore observes that "the recent exodus from Zimbabwe has been a consequence of economic crisis and repressive policies aimed at curbing political opposition."

The anonymous protagonist in the text migrates to Britain as a way of escaping jail. He commits murder and escapes to Britain where he expects to raise \$ 5000 to buy back his freedom from corrupt police officials. Chikwava, therefore, explores the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants to the UK who live a precarious life defined by demeaning jobs such as care work.

Surprisingly, from the moment the narrator arrives in London, he becomes neurotically homesick. He feels immediately reduced and robbed of his entitlements of citizenship as the idea

to return home haunts him. He begins to question his identity and the meaning of home. It must be noted that the ideas of family represents the nation and Chikwava (2009) deliberately capitalises the common noun, 'Mother' throughout the text as a means to emphasise the significance of home, nationality and citizenship. The writer, therefore, employs a witty extended familial metaphor to foreground the conditions of the Zimbabwean nation through the protagonist's experiences. Thus, the death of the protagonist's mother; her restless spirit; the case of his brother, Chamu; the 'umbuyiso' ceremony and his diasporic experiences are familial experiences mirroring the conditions of the Zimbabwean nation.

In this case, home is linked to the 'Mother.' The familial discourse is metaphoric of the nation and the protagonist's love towards his 'Mother' is reflective of his love towards his nation. Skey (2011:235) therefore argues that "the nation is defined as a homely space, both in relation to familiar local settings (cities, districts, regions) and above all 'other' places."

Chikwava's anti-hero deeply yearns to hold the 'umbuyiso' ceremony to bring 'home' the spirit of his mother to the ancestral abode. Parrinder (1962: 98) argues that "funerals are transitional rites, introducing a man into the world of spirits." This transition, however, conflicts with the government's aim as the narrator's mother's grave is situated in an area where emeralds have been discovered. The anti-hero emotionally remarks that "Mother she is heavy in my heart [...] back in my rural home when Mother's bones lie scattered, trampled and broken by JCB" (p.178).

The significance of the land or home can best be understood through interpreting Zimbabwe's post independence evictions and forced transmigration through the perspective of African traditional religion. In African traditional religion, citizens are identified with their land. It is



sometimes called 'Mother Earth' as it is believed to be the chief provider of family necessities like water, protection, food and animals. Skey (2011) observes that such basic necessities as land offer ontological security necessary for an effective livelihood of a citizen.

Land is therefore an ancestral heritage handed down to the living by the 'departed ones' who are deified as the family's ancestors. It is the same land on which the living grow crops and on which every form of livelihood depend. When someone dies (as is the case of the narrator's mother) his/ her body is interred in her womb "for it is the earth that receives the dead into her pocket" (Parrinder 1962: 48) and when the new born baby is received in the family, his/ her umbilical cord is cut and buried in her, thus linking the new born baby with the land he/she is identified with, the very heritage handed down to him/ her by his/ her ancestors. In the African belief system death is considered a necessity since it is the way to increase the family's ancestors in the spiritual abode. In the text the idea to hold the 'umbuyiso' ceremony is grounded upon the belief that the spirit must be united with other ancestral spirits from the wilderness where it has no rest.

Therefore, evicting a citizen from his/ her land which he/ she is identified with from birth is tantamount to erasing his/ her nationality and citizenship. Skey (2011:234), commenting on the significance of home in shaping identity argues that:

by being away from home, the things, places and activities and people associated with home become more apparent [ and perhaps valued] through their absence." And "the idea of national home as a secure place to proceed from and return to may be crucial in underpinning these movements [...]

Skey (2011) further argues that home provides ontological security which he explains as the reliance on certain things necessary in one's life like people, places and other objects remaining the same today and tomorrow. However, Chikwava's migrants are largely depicted as insecure as they are jobless and have not regularised their migrant status.

Chikwava portrays Zimbabwe as a nation of evictions and migrations. The author through accounts and testimonies by various Zimbabwean immigrants manages to unravel the crisis situation in post independence Zimbabwe. The writer manages to capture the indispensable link of the land and the Zimbabwean citizens by depicting the melancholic psyche of the anti-hero whose homesickness yearns to divert the untoward political operations by the Zimbabwean government that is at the brinks of evicting the villagers from their land and ultimately grading away the grave of the narrator's mother. Thus the author deliberately capitalizes the word 'Mother' throughout the text to emphasize the significant cultural semantics of the land as it is identified with its citizens, just like the maternal relationship between mother and child. The narrator's emotional violence is deeply grooved in his chronic pain and the desire to quickly return home to hold the 'umbuyiso' ceremony before the government can grade away his mother's grave.

Zimbabwean migration was triggered by many factors. One such factor is the Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order) by the municipal police under the auspices of the Zimbabwean government. Potts (2007:80) argues that "in 2005 the government embarked on a massive campaign against informal housing and employment in towns. This led to massive internal movements within cities." Similarly, Barrister (2007:4) argues that Operation Murambatsvina was a very violent process which "led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, destruction of homes, businesses and property, widespread loss of livelihoods and the injury and

deaths of some residents.” The annihilation of the informal business sector and shanty towns around many urban areas drastically resulted in homelessness, joblessness and urban to rural migration. The narrator therefore notes that “The Government has sent bulldozers to demolish people’s houses ...in second wave Operation Murambatsvina. Now many people become homeless, Zimbabweis no more.” (p. 204). This violent displacement echoes the violent eviction of people from the narrator’s village:

Mother’s village area is now going to be take over by mining company that belong to commander of armed forces and villagers that don’t want to move have been telled that the army and Green Bombers is coming to move them.(p.91)

The narrator’s love and fear for his ‘Mother’ is symbolically connected to the love that he has for his nation and the fear of its destiny in the context of a crisis that is forcing people to migrate. The ‘Mother’s’ restless spirit which is said to be wandering in the wilderness waiting the day of the ‘umbuyiso’ ceremony is suggestive of the diasporic Zimbabweans who are wandering in the diaspora waiting to ‘come back’ home after the crisis has been resolved.

The narrator also notes that “family squabbles ended up preventing the ‘umbuyiso,’ this has not been done for years now.” (p.16). I therefore argue that this is suggestive of Zimbabwe which has a long history of unaddressed crises which include Gukurahundi, Operation Murambatsvina and political violence. Eppel (2004: 43), thus observes that:

Zimbabwe is a nation with more than half a century of unresolved conflicts... [it is] a nation with a poor tolerance for political diversity and a leadership that has been committed to never leaving power voluntarily.

In addition, Gukurahundi also triggered internal and external movements of the Zimbabwean people. It can be argued that the text uses the imagery of the wind as reference to this historical incident.

Eppel (2004: 48) argues that the Gukurahundi disturbances affected “hundreds of thousands of civilians.” *The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP)* also notes that “Between June 1984 and August 1985, they [ 5TH Brigade] caused extensive damage in Gweru, Beitbridge, Plumtree, Silobela and Harare. This left around 4000 homeless, hundreds injured and scores of people dead.”

Thus, Gukurahundi, political violence and Operation Murambatsvina or Operation Restore Order are the main political movements that contributed largely to migration and the creation of fractured identities. Chikwava’s imagery of the wind is reflective of the internal challenges that provoked Zimbabweans to migrate across the country and abroad. I therefore argue that the wind is suggestive of the causes of the crises and migration while the scattered litter which include leaves, grass and the leaves refer to the immigrants themselves. This is epitomized by the following statement; “ the wind [which] is blowing through the house of stones, tall tree is swaying and people’s lives beginning to fall apart, everything start to fall apart”(p. 204) This ‘falling apart’ echoes Achebe’s(1958) *‘Things Fall Apart’* which tells a history of a state under political anarchy.

Like the strong wind with scatters sand and leaves away, Operation Murambatsvina ‘scattered’ citizens internally and externally. In addition, the Green Bomber youth militia was established to team against every suspect who supported the opposition party and was castigated as the enemy of the state. Thus, the narrator notes that “the Green Bombers is there to smoke them enemies of

the state out of them corrugated hovels and scatter them across the earth.” By corrugated hovels, the narrator implies the destruction of the shanty settlement which included the informal sector by the Operation Murambatsvina which resulted in the ‘scattering’ of citizens across Zimbabwe and in the diaspora.

In the text, the discourse of the ‘ngozi’ and the image of the ‘blowing wind’ or avenging spirit are very important. The ‘ngozi’ which haunts Shingi because his father spilt innocent blood is a pointer to the need of reparation on the part of the deceased who was allegedly murdered by Shingi’s father as depicted by “Shingi’s father came back from war disturbed because he spill wrong blood and those bad spirits is avenging now and affect whole family, taking as Shingi’s real mother away to punish Shingi for sins of his father.”(p. 121)

Ordinary Zimbabweans who are homeless and the jobless are just like the wronged who seek reparations which implies that the government should conduct remedial political redress to pacify the victims and end the crisis. Shingi suffers from the sins of his father just like ordinary Zimbabwe who are suffering from mismanagement of the government.

Chikwava’s Zimbabwean diasporic community is populated by Zimbabwean asylum seekers living in dilapidated and rat infested slums. The property and furniture which furnishes the slums is the refuse picked from London’s rubbish bins. Pasura (2011:6) therefore argues that “It has been noted [...] the diaspora [is] a place of suffering and hardships, the biblical equivalent of Babylon and Egypt.” The narrator deeply yearns for home as he comes to realize the ugly living standards in Brixton. London is depicted as largely inhospitable to Zimbabwean migrants. They make life move on, however though forging identities. Pasura (2011:6) therefore states that “the

majority of them [Zimbabwean migrants] are undocumented migrants, having overstayed their visa, forged documents and/or had their asylum case rejected.”The narrator’s initial stay with Sekai and Paul is largely defined by tensions as the narrator is viewed as potentially dangerous due to his former Green Bomber activism. The narrator hates Sekai as she “no longer remember who she is nor where she come from” (p.5).

The protagonist leaves Sekai and Paul’s apartment after the tension had become explosive and squats with Shingi, his old school friend in Brixton.

The narrator describes Shingi’s room and windows as resembling Shingi’s head with his sad eyes respectively and this symbolizes the psychology behind diasporan life. Shingi’s description is thus reflective of life in the diaspora with its sad conditions.

The battle the narrator has with the big rat that constantly steals food in his room is symbolic of the poverty that is associated with the slums. Wright’s (1940) *Bigger Thomas* also typifies this as he wrestles with a big rat in a family’s crowded rented room. To eke their living Shingi, the narrator, Dave and other asylum seekers however, rely on faking EU passports as they roam the streets of London in search of food and part time jobs. The foreign restrictive conditions also bar the narrator from work throughout London since he is an illegal migrant. The kind of occupations that the Zimbabwean immigrants work is very dehumanizing. The work that befits women is mostly done by men and vice versa. The narrator, Shingi, Dave, Aleck and other male characters work as British Buttom Cleaners (BBC), washing underwears for middle class whites.

In the text it can be seen that the characters are assuming new identities, for example, the protagonist and his friends most of the time secure part time jobs as BBC and this is evidenced when the narrator notes that “the BBC graft for 8 pounds per hour. Immediate start [...] that’s the

trick thing about living in Harare North” (p. 65). It means therefore that most of the immigrants have to compromise their masculinities as BBC employees. Aleck tries to hide his identity from his colleagues and lies that he works in some factory. Here, it means he is trying to construct or forge a false identity before his colleagues. Shingi also tells his relatives back home that he works in the British Parliament when he is a BBC. This constructed identity resulted in his uncles requesting him to send them Range Rovers and to invest a lot into their mining back home. Pasura (2012:258) therefore argues that “dispersal from a place of origin may create new identities and opportunities for women while simultaneously threatening both men’s self esteem and the traditional power relations within households.”

The narrator also resorts to the use of fake identities to secure work. The impersonation causes the narrator to be identified in the name of another person. However, he has managed to forge a new identity for himself in order to eke a living. In addition, all the asylum seekers in the text are secretly conniving to have fake European passports.

The idea of hiding one’s true experiences resonates with Adeyanju and Oriola’s (2011) notion of African migrants hiding their true experiences from their peers back home. Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) argue that migrants hide experiences they consider undesirable. Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) further argue that an immigrant is analogous to an actor acting on the stage. It’s up to the actor to garnish issues he needs the audience to see and to hide from the audience what he doesn’t want them to see. Goffman (1959) observes that the presentation of the self in the social world require “social actors just like artists act[ing] out their scripts on the theatre stage and convey certain impressions of themselves to others.” Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) call this act ‘garnishing the front stage and concealing the back stage.’ Adeyanju and Oriola (2011: 944). Using this notion the two scholars argued that the positive identity is achieved when the

immigrants send beautiful items to their relatives in their ancestral homes such as their photos snapped them from diasporic photogenic scenes, even if they buy a new car, the first thing for them to do is to send the pictures of that car back home to present a false sham-constructed identity of the self in the diaspora. However, the presentation of the Concealed Back Stage presents an ugly scenario of things defined by poor, debased living standards of the Zimbabwean diasporas. Adeyangu and Oriola (2011: 944) conclude therefore that in the diaspora Zimbabwean expats are ‘suffering and smiling’ and their diasporic painful experiences remind them “of the popular aphorism ‘not all that glitters is gold.’”

The precarious living conditions of the Zimbabwean immigrant labourers are defined by hard menial tasks with poor wages. When the narrator at one time works in Wimbledon, he gets 2.45 pounds per hour and about 98 pounds per week which when taxed goes down to 68 pounds. He even testifies that “the graft end without warning. Everyone on the site has to move it now after we go to work one morning to find the site closed.” (p.49).

Lack of part time jobs, poor wages, overcrowding in slums, and lack of trust or suspicion among immigrants mirror a diasporic life characterized by anxiety and fear. The immigrants steal from one another. This is evident when the narrator complains that “someone have been going through my suitcase [...] I forget to lock it before I leave. Someone have sniff sniff and look inside my suitcase and they even thief my US9.55” (p. 69). One thing which characterises the Zimbabwean migrants is maltreatment. This behaviour reflects and is associated with corruption back in their ancestral homes. Sekai treats the narrator in a rather patronizing manner and she suspects any person from her home country. In Brixton, despite low wages and shrinking opportunities for part time jobs, Aleck charges high rentals to his fellow immigrants for his personal gain.



To sustain a living, Chikwava's immigrants work indoors, forge identification details and use other people's papers. These conditions are even worse on female migrants as testified by Tsitsi. Tsitsi is depicted as a person who solely relies on Aleck for her survival in London.

Zimbabwean female migrants are also depicted negatively in the text. The narrator notes that "there is getting funny those Zimbabwean girls, especially in Luton, all of them is turning into lesbians or prostitutes nhayi." (p. 92).

The text ends with the narrator wander[ing] thro' each charter'd street [of London with] marks of weakness, marks of woe. (Blake 1794). He holds an empty suitcase that smells of Mother and as he walks he remarks "I feel like umgodhoyi [...] the homeless dog that roam them villages scavenging...umgodhoyi have no home like the winds" (p.226). The reference to the homeless dog reinforces the fact that the UK is hostile to illegal migrants. The text approaches its denouement after midnight when the narrator paces up and down the deserted Atlantic Road clear of vendors. It is a moonless, cloudy and windy night. We notice the wind which blows his hat off onto the train bridge above him and since he has forgotten to lock the suitcase, it breaks open and the wind scatters all the papers all over the tarmac leaving the suitcase empty and "nothing is left inside the suitcase except the smell of Mother." Here the metaphor of the wind which runs throughout the narrative presents us an ominous ending. This ominous ending is symbolic of the narrator's impending insanity and presumably death in the UK. The wind which empties the suitcase also epitomises the vanity of diasporan life defined by painful experience.

This chapter explains Brian Chikwava's Harare North. The text focuses on the experiences of Zimbabwean transnational migrants in the UK. It highlighted that Zimbabwean migrants in the

UK live a precarious existence and that their hopes of returning home are in vain. The next chapter will consider Daniel Mandishona's (2009) White Gods Black Demons.

### Chapter 3

#### **Ambivalence and polarities in Zimbabwean politics, migration and identity in *White Gods Black Demons*.**

The previous chapter examined Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*. Chikwava's Zimbabwean migrants tend to assume new identities and suffer the impact of racial discrimination, deskilling, betrayal, poor standards of living, rampant unemployment and sometimes failure to return to their ancestral homes upon landing in the diaspora. However, this chapter considers Daniel Mandishona's *White Gods Black Demons*. Mandishona's text is an anthology of ten stories exploring the experiences of ordinary Zimbabweans. I will focus on six stories namely "Cities of Dust," "Smoke and Ashes," "Blunt Force Trauma," "A Wasted Land," "A Secret Sin" and "Kaffir Corn." The title itself "Cities of Dust" is evocative of Zimbabwe's 2005 historic Operation Murambatsvina that ravaged most of the urban informal settlements. The story also explores the drastic economic meltdown, electoral violence, Operation Murambatsvina and poverty, all of which culminated in a massive exodus of ordinary Zimbabweans. The narrative features an unnamed narrator who meets Yolanda at the bus stop. The narrator and Yolanda work at the same camp. Through the sensitive conversational exchanges, the two characters mirror and probe deep into the conditions which have trapped Zimbabwe in a dire crisis

The passengers who are aboard in the public bus come from various city backgrounds and each of them is given a room by Mandishona to comment on the crisis which they are currently facing in the country. This kind of literary technique in which the author chooses an appropriate and public setting to communicate his case accommodates overall and objective anthropological truth about the Zimbabwean crisis from a multifocal experiential perspective. For example, one of the

passengers commented on the effects of Operation Murambatsvina arguing that “the bulldozers were merciless. There was nothing left. Nothing,” (p. 29) while Yolanda also commented that “The municipality bulldozers destroyed the cottage I was renting.” (p. 28). The effects of Operation Murambatsvina on Yolanda’s life is emblematic of many more people who were affected by the Operation. Yolanda therefore assumes every victim’s voice and experience. Raftopoulos (2004:222) argues that the year 2005 was a turning point in the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans in the informal business sector as that year was “exacerbated by Operation Murambatsvina [...] in May 2005 [...] 650 000 to 700 000 were directly affected by the operation.”

Similarly, Tibaijuka’s (2005: 31) also observes that:

The effects [of the Operation] will be felt for many years to come, across all four dimensions. In social terms, the Operation has rendered people homeless and destitute, and created humanitarian and developmental needs that will require significant investment and assistance over several years. Economically, substantial housing stock has been destroyed, and the informal sector has virtually been wiped out, rendering individuals and households destitute. Local municipalities that used to collect taxes from informal traders have now lost this source of income.

In “Cities of Dust” the narrator is also displeased at the alarming fuel shortages in which the cities are experiencing a “crippling fuel shortage” (27), with employees being forced to rely on public transport instead of using their personal cars in commuting. The unnamed narrator reports that “The bus is full today [...] the country is completely dry, the only fuel available is on a black market and selling ten times the pump price.” (p.28). In “Smoke and Ashes,” Mandishona

employs the first person narrative technique to explore the experiences of ordinary Zimbabweans. The narrator comments that:

in my two bedroom flat on King George Road. No water. No electricity. No power for two full days, now water has been gone for twenty six hours [...]the toilet is flushed once a day[...] We all live in fear of cholera outbreak. (p. 9)

The narrator also chronicles the critical history of Zimbabwe's economic downturn defined by accelerated hyperinflation against the backdrop of high unemployment in the corporate sphere. Muzondidya (2009:189) therefore argues that during the economic downturn "prices skyrocketed and the workers' real wages declined." The narrator suggests that "In the country you can have all the money in the world but not find the things you need in the shops." (p.27). This is a direct reference to the multiplication of zeroes on Zimbabwean currency against the background of high prices charged on commodities. The more zeroes added to the Zimbabwean currency the more valueless it became. Tibaijuka's (2005: 38) therefore observes that:

The displacement of people has reduced access to food, owing to loss of income as well as loss of supply from the informal sector, the latter having been largely dismantled. Furthermore, commodities such as bread, oil and sugar are in short supply and prices have been rising. In the month prior to the Operation, prices of sugar and cooking oil went up by 61% and 53%, respectively.

In "Smoke and Ashes" the narrator, commenting on the devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar, notes that:

and the currency [...] The more zeroes it acquires, the less it buys." And, "now the million dollars cannot buy anything because even a single cigarette costs five billion

dollars. Your largest note is fifty billion dollars, you scoffed and it cannot buy a decent lunch. It cannot even buy a soda [...] yes I humbly agree this is the country of poor millionaires and destitute billionaires (p.6- 7).

This scenario led to the exacerbation of poverty on ordinary Zimbabweans. During this time Zimbabwe incurred brain drain as most professionals migrated beyond the borders of the country in search of better opportunities.

In the story “Cities of Dust,” an elderly man in the bus courageously speaks out that “At the next vote we must vote to change things.” (p. 27). The elderly man is emblematic of ordinary Zimbabweans who felt betrayed by the government and are therefore prepared to vote it out of power. The story “Smoke and Ashes,” explores the experiences of Venus who temporarily returns to Zimbabwe to vote.

Venus returns from America to protest against political repression through participating in the electoral processes. Her homecoming from America to Zimbabwe to cast a vote is symbolic of the needs of most Zimbabweans in the diaspora to participate in transforming Zimbabwe.

As has already been alluded to in “Cities of Dust,” Yolanda finally migrates to England where her husband lives as a result of Operation Murambatsvina which destroyed her cottage. Yolanda also tells the narrator that she had a step sister who died in a train accident in South Africa and for whom the family did a symbolic funeral since there was nothing to bury, “That’s why I wear black I am still mourning.”(p.30). This highlights the vulnerability that most Zimbabweans face in the diaspora.

Migration is part of Zimbabwean history and Muzondidya (2009:189) argues that as a consequence of the Zimbabwean crises:

more people left the country. Zimbabwe has a long history of migration [...] after 2000 [...] large numbers left as a result of political violence, forced removals and general economic meltdown.

Potter (2007:88) also concedes that post 2000 migration was “driven by the country’s economic decline and negative political factors. Zimbabwe has become a country of net outmigration.”

In the short story “A Wasted Land,” before his death, Uncle Nicholas was in England where he married an English wife with whom he had three children. This is reflective of Zimbabwean migration in which most of its citizens are lost in the diaspora. Mandishona clearly illustrates that migration can affect one’s identity. The fact that Uncle Nicholas marries an English wife highlights the concept of alienation. Uncle thus becomes a social renegade as he never communicated with his relatives back in Zimbabwe during his time in England. His marriage to an English woman is symbolic of his cultural assimilation and connection to European cultures as he has been estranged from his Shona African culture. Muponde (2004:191) thus notes that “some citizens have continued to be spiritually dissociated from the land that gave birth to them”

However, Uncle Nicholas at one point was incarcerated in Britain which is symbolic of his assimilation as he was incarcerated from his own culture. The fact that during his sickness, the narrator’s father takes him to the traditional healer shows the need on the part of the *assimilees* to retrace their traditional cultural roots which they are identified with. At the moment of his death there was a bottle of rat poison by him, unpaid invoices and court summons. He leaves his relatives heavily indebted since they have to pay whatever he owed his debtors. The narrator’s uncle is a tragic hero with a fatal flaw and he has been doomed to die at independence. He is a

prisoner criminalised for his extreme deviance and uprootment from his original culture. When he was out in England he had refrained from communicating with his relatives back home including his wife, Emily and this shows how diasporic influence can distance migrants from their original homes. The fact that his diasporan children were mulattos is symbolic of the cultural fusion between the African and Western cultures as a result of migration and which seem inevitably inescapable.

Zimbabwean migration is also further highlighted in the short story, “A Secret Sin,” in which the character Jerry Machingauta has been for “thirty years lost in the diaspora [when] your father was on his death bed when you came back from England.” (p. 62). Pasura (2011:6) notes that the diaspora is “a place of suffering and hardships, the biblical equivalent of Babylon and Egypt.” The danger of foreign lands is also witnessed in the short story “Blunt Force Trauma” in which Eldridge Gunguwo who has been in South Africa for ten years and has all his vehicle premises burnt down by unknown arsonists. They also beat up one of Eldridge’s drivers leaving him fatally wounded.

The fact that South Africans “hate your success because you are a kwerekwere [...] they don’t like successful foreigners here,” shows the effects of xenophobia upon Zimbabwean immigrants in countries such as South Africa. In “Smoke and Ashes” the writer shows that sometimes racial stereotypes is engendered by superiority and inferiority complexes. The title of the text *White Gods Black Demons* underscores how the politics of representation work. Said (1978) argues that the Occidental West always views the countries in the Eastern world as fundamentally dissimilar to Europe. In this light Africa is seen as the antithesis of Europe and everything associated with it is seen as negative.



The title of the text *White Gods Black Demons* underscores the superiority and inferiority complexes which governs the relations between Africa and Europe. In “Smoke and Ashes” the narrator highlights this concept when he suggests that “Why Africa is the poorest continent when it is the richest in natural resources? [...] yes Venus, the gods will always be white and the demons will always be black” (p. 14).

Pasura (2011:6) argues that “Zimbabwean migrants experience social exclusion in the hostlands” and this is true of Eldridge in “A Secret Sin” as he returns home from South Africa empty handed. Eldridge’s return is prompted by the desire to escape social exclusion in the form of xenophobia. Mandishona shows that Zimbabwean migrants can forge new identities to cope with life in the hostlands. In South Africa in order to secure a living Eldridge counterfeited a working permit as an auto electrician for a minicab industry and in “Smoke and Ashes,” when Venus wins a lottery she emigrates to America “the land of your dreams without the necessary immigration papers.”(p. 4) and “one by one all your siblings have followed you to America visiting on holidays and never coming back.” (p. 5). Zimbabwean immigrants are therefore depicted as forging and assuming false identities especially to their relatives back home.

Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) argue that most African migrants are in the habit of forging and hiding their true identities before their relatives in their homelands. Adeyanju and Oriola (2011) uses an analogy of an actor in the cinema who chooses what he wants his audience to see and what he doesn’t prefer them seeing by foregrounding or hiding certain traits in the background. They, therefore, argue that African immigrants and by extension Zimbabwean immigrants desire to ‘garnish’ a positive image before relatives in their ancestral home as well as being very conscious to ‘conceal’ certain aspects which are sensitive in their day to day lives in the diaspora. Goffman (1959) also concedes that the presentation of the self in the social world

require "... social actors just like artists act[ing] out their scripts on the theatre stage and convey certain impressions of themselves to others."

Mandishona's text also reflects on the historic electoral violence in Zimbabwe in March and June 2008 elections. The narrator in "Smoke and Ashes" notes that:

A losing cabinet minister has been taken into custody for shooting dead a presiding officer mocking him after his humiliating defeat [...] Another minister has been caught [...] stuffing ballots into boxes to avoid certain defeat. (p. 14)

The narrator also comments on the June 2008 run-off as entailing violence. The narrator notes that, 'The Run-Off was an anti-climax [...] Maria still traumatized, didn't vote and stayed indoors with Robin the whole day.' (p.22). This violence is also reported by the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) on Zimbabwe's 29 March 2008 harmonized elections and the 27 June Presidential Run-Off:

In Mashonaland East, a reign of terror was allegedly leashed on MDC supporters... This development reportedly saw some victims who had sought the refuge in nearby mountains painfully watch as their homesteads were burnt to the ground and property looted while those badly injured and in need of medical care were reportedly denied access to hospitals as nurses were allegedly under instructions not to admit them. (2008:54)

In "A Secret Sin," Mandishona exposes the bloody politics in post independence Zimbabwe, in which Eldridge after returning from South Africa is murdered and dumped on the day he attended an opposition meeting. The narrator testifies that "there has been a lot of violence since March 29 elections." (p. 24). After a post mortem was taken the doctor's reports shows that

Eldridge did not die a natural death but was murdered by the police since “there is approximately two liters of blood in the thoracic cavity, two left side ribs are fractured, left lung is severely lacerated and there are multiple bruises on upper parts of the body, signs of shock in abdominal organs [...]” (p. 24.)

Mandishona also reveals the ugly scenario in the Zimbabwean economic meltdown in which the country’s currency was severely devalued and in which prices on commodities skyrocketed. In “Cities of Dust” the narrator remarks that “In the country you can have all the money in the world but not find the thing which you need in the shops.” (p. 27). This suggestion is a reflection of the country’s hyperinflation in which the economy of Zimbabwe was severely devalued. The story, “Kaffir Corn” foregrounds the epoch making fast track land invasion which culminated in the expropriation of vast farms owned by white commercial farmers. Potts (2011:11) argues that “since 2000 [...] the state embarked on a programme of the so called fast track land reform. This led to an almost immediate expropriation of the majority of the country’s large scale commercial farms.”

The narrator’s father has been allocated a farm and the narrative reflects that the farm invasion was a violent process since the narrator’s father organized a group of people to drive out the commercial white farmer, Allan Bradford from the farm. The narrative clearly highlights that the land reform programme was done in a corrupt and haphazard manner.

In “Kafir Corn,” the fact that one war veteran is given alternatives to choose the farm he wants while the rest are not even prioritized in the distribution of farms already shows the concept of exclusion and corruption. Whilst touring the farm, the narrator’s father, Mr Gwanhure confronted a team from the Haka Farm Resettlement Committee, led by Mr Mafuta who claims the land to

be 'theirs' by heritage. Despite Mr Gwanhure's claims that he is the one who chased Allan Bradford and has a letter from the Ministry he is chased away. In "Kaffir Corn" Mr Mafuta reprimands the narrator's father, Mr Gwanhure that "we are fed up with you people from the towns coming to reap where you did not sow" (p. 44). This censure highlights the corruption that governed the land reform exercise. Raftopoulos (2004) argues that only high ranking officials within the ruling party benefitted while the truly landless were denied the right to owning land. The narrator's father is accused of being a "Muchekadzafa [...] a lazy person who benefits from somebody else's hard work" (p. 45). This highlights the corruption and greed characterizing post independence Zimbabwe in which the elite benefit at the expense of the ordinary masses. This chapter examined Mandishona's *White Gods Black Demons*. The text is a collection of short stories and I focused on six stories namely "Blunt Force Trauma," "A Secret Sin," "A Wasted Land," "Cities of Dust," "Smoke and Ashes" and "Kaffir Corn." Migrancy whether internal or external is highly pronounced in the stories and attributed to the Zimbabwean crisis.

## Chapter 4

## **Re-fashioning politics, migration and identities in *We Need New Names*.**

The previous chapter considered the political injustices inherent in post independence Zimbabwe as reflected in Mandishona's (2009) text. The inherent political injustices and economic imbalances have triggered migration whether internal or external. However, this chapter considers NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013).

*We Need New Names* focuses on the experiences of Darling, a teenage protagonist who initially stays in the slums of Bulawayo together with other young and adult evictees as a result of Operation Murambatsvina. The slums where Darling stays are ironically named Paradise squatter settlement. The development of Paradise ghetto settlement as a result of Operation Murambatsvina calls to memory the government's decision to destroy all the informal housing constituting the informal business sector and all the shanty towns. The protagonist, Darling therefore notes that:

then the lorries come carrying the police with those guns and button sticks ...the bulldozers start bulldozing, bulldozing and bulldozing and we are swearing and screaming...the bulldozers finally leave everything [...] broken, everything...smashed, everythin [...] wrecked [...] Broken walls and bricks everywhere, chocking dust everywhere, tears of people's faces everywhere. (p 65-66)

The repetitive use of the word 'bulldozing' is very deliberate as it highlights the insensitivity of a government that destroys the property of its citizens which it should protect. The operation had traumatic consequences. Mai Tari throws herself onto the moving bulldozer vowing better to die than to have her house demolished. Gayisuku is also angry at the government as he shouts that "we fought for this facknglizwemani, we put them in power and they turn on us like a snake

[ ...]” (p. 67).Nomviyo is also traumatized by the operation as she arrives home from town only to find her kid, Freedom, trampled down under the bricks of her ruined house.

Bulawayo shows that the impact of the Operation was not only physical but also psychological. She shows this through Darling’s recurrent nightmares caused by the past traumatic experiences of Murambatsvina. Darling notes that:

Even if I want to sleep I cannot because if I sleep the dream will come, and I don’t want it to come. I am afraid of the bulldozers and those man and the police [...] I dream about what happened back at our house before we come to Paradise. I try to push it away and push it away but the dream keeps coming like bees, like rain, like the graves at Heavenway (p. 64-65)

Darling’s dreams foreshadow real events and this metaphorically refers to victims’ troubled history which amounted to human rights violations. Freud’s (1899) concept of free association in dream interpretation is instructive here as Darling’s manifest dream content disguises the latent dream thoughts which are based on the trauma of Operation Murambatsvina. The principal character’s story is everyone’s story. She is representative of all the evictees of Operation Murambatsvina and this therefore shows that the history of eviction cannot be deleted in the minds of the victims even if they ‘try to push it away...the dream keeps coming!’(p.65)

Tibajuka (2005: 31) commenting on the trauma of Operation Murambatsvina notes that:

The effects [of the Operation] will be felt for many years to come, across all four dimensions. In social terms, the Operation has rendered people homeless and destitute, and created humanitarian and developmental needs that will require significant investment and assistance over several years. Economically, substantial housing stock has

been destroyed, and the informal sector has virtually been wiped out, rendering individuals and households destitute. Local municipalities that used to collect taxes from informal traders have now lost this source of income.

Vambe (1987) attributes the cause of the operation to the anger of the ruling party against the urbanites who had voted for the opposition party, early in the 2002 presidential harmonized elections.

Of importance in the text is Bulawayo's use of colorful and communicative or symbolic names. Her country is one which communicates meaning through names. One of the characters in the text is named Bastard and this evokes feelings of illegitimacy or bastardry. This means that these destitute and street children have been denied by the society which gave birth to them and therefore are treated as social renegades. They are 'totemless' children who have no belonging as Hammar (2002:214) argues that "The stranger 'other' is defined as a misfit in the social and symbolic conditions that the practice of the real belongingness of the belongsers creates." Similarly, Muponde (2004:177) argues that "Totemless people have not only included city dwellers( who allegedly support the opposition party (MDC), but white commercial farmers, foreign journalists (black and white) and the troubled farm laborers ( who are deemed to be permanent migrants." Muponde (2004) further argues that the totemless is connotative of a non-citizen.

The name of Nomviyo's child, Freedom is also an indictment of post independence Zimbabwe which denies its citizens freedom as the child, Freedom is found dead, crushed under the ruined house during the operation. Therefore, definition of freedom in post independence Zimbabwe is very political. Independence is a form of gift ( 'Chipo' as in Shona), but its significance is only

abstract not practical love (Darling, Mother Love). Nobody can understand it, but only 'Godknows.'

In the text, the children are not allowed to roam the streets of Budapest which is often guarded. The populace of Budapest is not sympathetic as epitomized by the camera lady who instead of giving the hungry urchins food, throws it into the bin and proceeds to snap their pictures laughing. Therefore, they are seen as a form of dirt to be excluded like their parents who have been ousted for supporting the opposition party and have been dumped in Paradise. After the votes and after the home party at Mother Love's shack, a twenty five year old BonfaceLizweTaperera is reported to have been murdered for supporting the opposition party which again amounts to an act of exclusion. Raftopoulos (2003:28) therefore notes that "anyone seen as opposing the regime becomes a non-citizen, an enemy, subject to violent attack"

Bulawayo foreshadows the phenomenon of transmigration and the relations between the sending African homelands and the receiving western hostlands by the deliberate contrastive juxtaposition of Paradise squatter settlement and Budapest residential stands as well as the criss-crossing of the kids across the two geographies. The fact that the children cross the street to Budapest neighbouring community to steal guavas in the neighborhood is symbolic of the transition from one geography to another. It foreshadows the eventual transnational migration of Darling to America. Bulawayo deliberately juxtaposes Paradise squatter settlement with Budapest residential stands whose guavas are tempting in the sight of the hungry and destitute kids. This contrast is very important as the protagonist says that:



This place is not like Paradise, it's like being in a different country, altogether. A nice country where people who are not like us live [...] Budapest is big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs and neat graveled yards or trimmed lawns. (p.4)

Contrastively, "Paradise is all tin and stretches out like a wet sheep skin nailed on the ground to dry, the shacks are the muddy color of dirty puddles after the rains." (p.34). Bulawayo foreshadows the politics between the sending homelands and the receiving hostlands in Zimbabwean transnational migration. Darling's yearning for Budapest runs parallel to her yearning for 'my America.'

The two communities are separated by the sprawling Mzilikazi Road, the road which Darling and her friends are forbidden to cross. Budapest symbolizes the hostland diasporan geography with all its enticing imaginations while Paradise typifies migrant homelands. Budapest's tempting guavas epitomizes all the yearnings for the diaspora that any immigrant may have. In the text the narrator remarks that they are not allowed to traverse across Mzilikazi Road to 'steal' guavas and this might be an extended metaphor which connotes restrictive legislative acts imposed by hostlands. Kushner (2003:257) thus argues British exclusionary laws against asylum seekers is driven by the need to protect the British people and culture against the diseased and dangerous migrants. However, Darling and her friends transgress borders to 'steal' guavas. This is metaphoric of Zimbabwean migrant who are undocumented immigrants and depend for their livelihood on 'cheating' and 'stealing' from the system.

The immigration of Darling to America marks another transition and it introduces an important discourse of migration in the study. Pasura (2008) notes that the geographical dispersal of Zimbabwean migrants covers a measureless terrain. Since Darling's immigration to America is

as a result of the effects of Operation Murambatsvina which constitutes an act of forced migration, it should be noted that the existence of most Zimbabwean diasporic communities constitutes forced migration. Darling is forced to quit the almost inhabitable Paradise and makes for America, the place of her dreams. However, upon landing in America, Darling is seized by cultural shock, alienation, and hunger for home. She finds herself cornered in the western world as her migrant fantasies of America turn into nightmarish experience.

In America Darling becomes extremely anxious for her motherland and keeps pestering Aunt Fostalina if she could gather funds so she can go back home. Her fate almost equals that of Chikwava's anti-hero who fails to return home due to the economic disparities among the Zimbabwean immigrants. Her anxiety is every asylum seeker's anxiety. Odier (1947:122) observes that "All anxiety is derived from a certain subjective insecurity linked to the absence of the mother." (Odier (1947:122 in Fanon (1967: 133). In this case the mother in its symbolic sense represents the migrants' ancestral home or motherland which they constantly yearn for. Safran (1991" 83-84) argues that migrants "regard their ancestral homelands as their true, ideal home and as a place to which they [...] would (should) eventually return [...] when conditions are appropriate." Pasura (2011:148) also notes that "the idea of return or 'myth' of return to the country of origin is one of the common features of diaspora."

Darling feels spiritually and physically detached from Zimbabwe and almost feels that Paradise was better than America's Destroyedmichigan. Darling finds America trapping with its notorious snowy weather and this is a metaphor associated with harsh life experiences of migrants. Darling feels numbed by the American circumstances, feels hungry amid mountainous food and struggles to come to terms with the culture and language of America. However, Darling is forced to forge a new identity to be accepted in America.

In the narrative, Darling speaks out that she is forced to change into the European system because:

when I first arrived at Washington [Academy]the other kids teased me about my name, my accent, my hair [...] the way I dressed [...] When you are being teased about something, at first you try to fix it so the teasing can stop. (p.165)

She also confesses that:

I did write [letters to other kids back home]. In those letters I told them about America, the kinds of things I was eating, the clothes I wore, the music I was listening to, the celebrities and stuff. But I was careful to leave out some things as well, like how the weather was the worst because there was almost always something wrong with it, either too hot or too cold, the hurricanes and stuff. That the house we lived in wasn't even like the one we had seen on TV, how it wasn't made of bricks but planks and how it rained those planks got mold and smelled. (p. 187)

Darling also mentions that in America there are street kids like they have in Paradise. She clearly speaks out in her letters back home that she deliberately "left out these things and a lot more, because they embarrassed me, because they made America not feel like my America, the one I always dreamed of back in Paradise."(p. 188). Darling's stay in America is not documented, that is she stays illegally without the necessary documents. She sometimes stays indoors as she fears the booming guns outside. This behavior is reflective of most Zimbabwean asylum seekers who always constantly evade the police.

This Chapter examined NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. I argued that NoViolet's presentation of her characters especially Darling is reflective of her perception of migration as largely constricting.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

This chapter is a summative analysis of the key issues raised in the preceding chapters. In chapter 1 I focused on the causes of the post independence Zimbabwean crises from the 1980s. The chapter I also gave the background to all the crises that triggered migration which are either internal or external. In chapter 2, I examined the nature of the Zimbabwean crisis and its impact on migrants especially those in the UK. I analysed Brian Chikwava's (2009) *Harare North* which explores the experiences of Zimbabwean transnational migrants in the United Kingdom. Chikwava's depiction of migration is largely negative as emblematised by his anonymous narrator who ultimately succumbs to madness in London. Chikwava's Zimbabwean migrants are largely depicted as asylum seekers and are employed in poor paying jobs where they are exploited and abused. The chapter also focused on the importance of home in the construction of migrant identities. This is typified by the narrator who constantly refers to Zimbabwe and wants to return to his country. However, his insanity makes this return impossible.

In chapter 3, I considered impact of the Zimbabwean crisis on migration and identity. I analysed Daniel Mandishona's (2009) *White Gods Black Demons*. The text is a collection of short stories that explore the experiences of ordinary Zimbabweans attempting to survive the crisis. In this chapter I analysed six stories namely 'Blunt force trauma', 'A secret sin', 'A wasted land', 'Kaffir corn', 'Smoke and Ashes' and 'Cities of dust'. 'Blunt force trauma' explores the experiences of Eldridge who returns to Zimbabwe from South Africa after his business is attacked in South Africa's xenophobic attacks. Eldridge later becomes a victim of political violence.

In Chapter 4 I examined NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). The text explores the experiences of ordinary Zimbabweans and the impact of the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina. The central character, Darling, challenges our conventional understanding of citizenship and identity. Darling later migrates to America where her migrant expectations turn into nightmarish realities as she is confronted with an America polarised along racial and class lines.

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