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Chapter

Stories of Milk, Honey and Bile: Representing Diasporic African Foreigner's Identities in South African Fiction

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Abstract

This chapter explores representations of diasporic black African foreigners' identities in David Mutasa's novel, *Nyambo Dze Joni* (*Stories from Johannesburg*) (2000), and in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (1999), written by the South African author, Phaswane Mpe. The two novels expose the hypocrisy of the South African officials and masses who scapegoat African black foreigners for crimes ranging from snatching of local jobs, taking local girls and drug peddling. For most African black foreigners and some local black South African citizens, diasporic experience in the new nation is a paradoxical physical space and spiritual experience in which stories of milk, honey and bitter bile might be authorised to capture the fact of being doubled as both potential subject and citizen. Despite experiencing bare lives characterised by nervousness and precarities, most black African foreigners in Johannesburg or Joni command, recall and deploy multiple identities whenever required to confront the ugly underbelly of the physical and verbal violence of xenophobia. Thus, an irony inherent in African diasporic experiences is that most black foreigners appear to retain some semblance of humanity and organise their worlds relatively creatively, and becoming successful by immigrants' standards, in the most hostile circumstances.

Keywords: African, black, foreigners, diasporic experiences, diaspora, xenophobia, Johannesburg

1. Introduction

The ambiguity at the core of the meaning of the term diaspora is captured in the characterisation of the post-apartheid space as one redolent with stories of milk, honey and bile ([2], p. 41). The influx of migrants from different countries of the continent into Johannesburg in particular and South Africa in general are whetted by descriptions of the new South Africa as the rainbow nation whose perception of itself and the promise of an interactive conduct with African foreigners would be based on the dispersed ideology of Ubuntuism. The diasporic journeys enacted at both the physical and spiritual levels imply a crossing of physical and cultural boundaries from one African country towards an imagined South Africa, locally known as Egoli—the city/country of gold. However, when diaspora is understood as dispersal, this conjures images of marginality in the conflicted relationship between

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imagined foreigner and citizen, centre and periphery. Epistemic conditions that spur such migrations involve both push and pull factors from economic collapse of modern African states due to corruption, bad governance and perennial wars.

However, the response of South African black citizens to the influx by African foreigners might not result in a "hyped celebration of multiculturality" ([5], p. 25). Most South white and black South Africans seem to feel that their own experiences have not been a smooth or unproblematic consummation of a dream from slavery to freedom. As a result, African black foreigners have experienced confusing reactive ideologies of exclusionary discourses in which the trope of homelessness is an irony whose butt is the South African masses. Nevertheless, memories of the past that is being escaped and the present that is anticipated as a greener pasture are performed unevenly by individual migrants as well as groups of migrants, showing their capacity to command, recall, assume and deploy multiple identities of one's selves as and when they are required ([13], p. 52). In other words, black African foreign immigrants might be haunted by the ambivalences of occupying their pain in new spaces. However, they often maintain ties with kinship and build strong networks with their families at home through communication and remittances. This provides an added leveraging, although a situation of ambiguous relationship might also exist between migrants and those left at home.

The crux or problematics of diaspora as a form of alienation arise when, sometimes, African foreigners expect South African citizens to understand why immigrants are in South Africa. Black foreigners might view South African citizens as being unreasonable when they show signs of not wanting to share what foreigners feel they are entitled to by virtue of having kept and fed South Africans in their countries during South African people's struggle against apartheid. At the same time, South African citizens might start to consider also as unreasonable the continued influx of African migrants whom they believe have ruined their own countries and thus have come to displace them, hardly before the citizens have enjoyed the fruits of their struggle. The mnemonic topographies of African diasporic immigrants are manifested through senses of perpetual perplexity and positive embarrassment. On one hand the country of origin is connoted as tyrannical for its perceived disregard of its citizens, now viewed as vagabonds and denizens by local citizens who appear to have little if any respect of the visitors ([5], p. 26). On the other hand, diasporic experiences are not lived by African foreigners in a similar way even by migrants from the same country, let alone, by immigrants from different African countries. Thus, the traumas of diaspora as dispersion might manifest on the body of African foreigners as a site of conflicting memories. Trauma may scatter immigrants throughout South Africa and make them appear as vermin. However, displacement triggered by home politics might also mobilise the energies of immigrants to form communities in which new identities, habits and agencies are acquired and presented as success stories. These new stories enable immigrants to keep options open in such ways that can translate economic advantages and social positions gained in one political setting into political, social and economic capital in another context.

In South Africa, foreign African immigrants—whether educated or not, rich or poor, or coming from those who have escaped poverty and those who decided to use their skills voluntary in a new context—all have been described as *Makwerekwere*. This is a derogatory term meant to allude to people without a language, considered as outsiders and whose lives might not be viewed as grievable or worth worrying about. Diaspora, thus, is not a one-size fit all for hosts and guests and among guests. In this culturally volatile context, aspirations are not always fulfilled because host communities and guests foreigners continue to live just in the neighbourhood of their dreams. In this sense, diasporic communities might be understood as strange,

incompatible and impure and thus court the calamity of *Othering*. However, othered black foreign communities might manipulate and harness the experiences of spiritual uprootment, to achieve African identities as both rooted in specific local and transcendental geographies.

2. Xenophobia and blackophobia in *Nyambo Dze Joni*

The ideological ambiguities outlined above are deftly depicted by David Mutasa's *Nyambo Dze Joni* [2] (*Stories from Johannesburg*), published in the Shona language of nearly three and a half million Zimbabwean immigrants within South Africa. In *Nyambo Dze Joni*, Tom is the main narrator who uses an epistolary form to register how Zimbabweans are despised by South African local citizens. Tom knows that he has escaped the tyrannical economic policies of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. However, although he writes out of fear, he also appears to know that writing is a permanent archive of paradoxical memories and that the very act of narrating his stories is a form of cultural resistance that signatures the transgressions of physical and spiritual boundaries. In this sense, the novel demonstrates that the space of diaspora is contested as captured in the metaphorical phrase where one might tell contradictory stories of imagined milk, honey and bile.

As portrayed in the novel, in South African official narratives of the political journey from apartheid to democracy, the role of black foreigners is minimised. What appears to be hidden from public view is the fact of African pain that people of the frontline states suffered from bombardment by agents of apartheid as political punishment for supporting black South African's quest for self-determination. In other words, discourses of reconciliation occurred between black South Africans and white South Africans, and this was not extended to African foreigners many of whom also remember the gratuitous violence performed by the apartheid government on their territories. Many African foreigners also remember sheltering black and white South African freedom fighters who were fighting apartheid from the military bases provided by Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia [16].

To the black foreign immigrants' consternation, in the new South African political dispensation, African people who migrate from their countries for different reasons remain outsiders. The irony is that most white foreigners from Asia and Eastern European countries who also poured into South Africa are viewed as investors, while black Africans who are foreigners are considered as a social burden ([16], p. 68). This differential allocation of opportunities means that the humanity and dignity of black foreigners is subjected to the raw fact of violent invasive behaviour [9]. Under the government of Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma and Cyril Ramaphosa, black foreigners from Somalia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nigeria and other African countries continue to be accused of taking jobs meant for black South Africans. African foreigners are viewed as throwaway people ([6], p. 211). The spirit of Ubuntu does not apply to African foreigners who are also accused of taking South African women. Violence on African foreigners occurs on the watch of South African police.

Furthermore, it appears as if the political leadership from both isles fear losing votes from South African citizens. Official voices against the persecution of African foreigners seem muted. Even the most raucous political leaders in South Africa's opposition parties such as the Economic Freedom Fighters [EFF] and Democratic Alliance [DA] rarely condemn in vociferously terms the mass murder of African foreigners or the looting of Somali-owned shops in the same way the same leaders have condemned the South African police and the ruling African National Congress for ordering the massacre of black South African workers at Marikana. Even most

of the South African women in whose name some foreigners are murdered rarely speak against xenophobia. It appears then that very few black South African people who have committed acts of collective murder of African foreigners in South Africa are not likely to be prosecuted with the same agency as might happen when a black foreigner commits a crime. *Nyambo Dze Joni* appropriates fictional space and weaves alternative narratives that comment on the failure of model of South African democracy to hold aggressors on African foreigners accountable. Fiction authorises narratives that might confer on itself the magnetic power typical of new cultural sites that might provide an early warning system about the possibility of xenophobic attacks sliding into genocide violence on African foreigners. The social prejudice against black African foreigners that fiction questions is so entrenched to a point where discourses have been invented in South Africa in which the unfortunate African foreigners are advised to go home or die here ([2], p. 8).

Put in other words, *Nyambo Dze Joni* or *Stories from Johannesburg* attempts to break from an expected conventional belief of postcolonial South Africa as a convivial rainbow nation. This metaphor is interrogated in the novel's rhetorical language that challenges the characterisation of the socio-economic problems in the new South African nation as mainly, the result of influxes of migrants from "failed" African countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Somalia, Nigeria, Kenya and Zambia. In addition, the pernicious myth which is that if one day, South Africa were to rid itself, of all black foreigners, legal or illegal, South African's problems of massive unemployment, lack of access to quality education and issues of funding the education of South African citizens would vanish.

This differential allocation of blame might explain why in *Nyambo Dze Joni* Tom's letters show how most black foreigners are marked as the pestilent *other*. This nuisant *other* is branded on black foreigners as people who have ruined their own countries and now have come to spoil the South African economy. Tom writes to Phianos that local citizens accuse foreigners of taking land away from citizens ([2], p. 27). South African citizens are depicted as aggressive when they use entitlement to being genuine South Africans to destroy black foreign businesses and rob foreigners of property such as cars. Zimbabweans in South Africa are accused by ordinary and educated South Africans of taking away jobs using what locals believe is a superior education and skills expressed through the proficient command of the English language ([2], p. 47). In addition, Mutasa's novel suggests also that a sense of fear and failure to deal with an inferiority complex seem to move the majority of local South Africans to manifest their anger through murderous acts. This means that the transition from possessing a sense of being entitled to being a South African to experiencing a sense of fear of the black foreigners is managed through visiting violence on black foreigners. First, black foreigners are described as *Makwerekwere,* meaning one who does not belong, has an incoherent language and has entered the country illegally. Secondly, black foreign males are depicted in *Nyambo Dze Joni* as embarrassing South African black males when Zimbabwean males are accused of taking away, sleeping with and even marrying South African women. In this accusation, what it is that is absent among black male South Africans that might make them not appealing to local girls is not clarified. Pinetch, drawing from the experiences of Cameroonian men in South Africa, argues that African foreigners use marriage to local South African girls and single women "as a strategy for permanent residency" ([17], p. 71). It is possible to suggest that what is violated when foreigners are made scapegoats for the certain failures of South African liberal democratic project is the right of freedom of association between foreign black men and local South African women when the charge of stealing "our" wives is invoked. This is so because these marriages are consensual and often occur within the confines of the rule of law as guaranteed in the South African Constitution.

While *Nyambo Dze Joni* depicts Hillbrow as a multicultural space, buzzing with many languages which are spoken there, such as Kiswahili, Portuguese, French, Yoruba, Chi Tonga, Chi Zulu, Chi Sutu and Chi Afrikaans, this linguistic diversity is viewed as a form of cultural impurity by some South African citizens. This fact is despite the existence of the founding national and official myth of the rainbow nation that emphasises unity in diversity and the philosophy of Ubuntu that says "I am, because you are". The rejection of black foreigners by South African citizens as depicted in *Nyambo Dze Joni* is further couched in the language of stereotypes. This language of derision is an epistemic condition for the spread of genocidal thought. The first acts of atrocities on black foreigners are enacted through the objectification of foreigners as thieves. One could suggest that the fear of the foreigner by local South Africans might actually be a perverted form of acknowledgment that the locals have an inferiority complex. The fear of the *other* can also imply that many of the locals may feel ill-equipped to survive in a cutthroat capitalist economy. This then possibly suggests that the skills possessed by some of the foreigners that are the object of demonization targets of news discourses on decolonization are more critical and relevant to the South African economy. As one critic, Phillip suggests, for the local indigenes who proclaim uncontested citizenship:

> *The mere act of killing is not enough; for if a man dies without surrender, if something within him remains unbroken to the end, then the power which destroyed him has not, after all, crushed everything. Something has escaped its reach, and it is precisely this some-thing–let us call it "dignity"–that must die if those in power are to reach the orgasmic peak of their potential domination ([18], p. 51).*

Nyambo Dze Joni reveals the ambiguity and fragility of the local citizens' identities forcing them to be aggressive towards people they view as strangers. Eze argues that the attitudes of compensating failure using the rule of power and not of law is the global basis of an "epistemology of genocide" that might constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for genocide ([4], p. 118). *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* depicts how the use massive distortion of language, that is, the use of words with intent to incite the mass killing of the racial group, is the first tool with which to harm black foreigners. However, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* also portrays how the habit of violating black foreigners can be extended to acts that harm local black women. This slip into violence might have the unintended effect of destabilising the "desired" rainbow nation, which is then turned into what one might call, a "rain blood nation".

3. Xenophobia and blackophobia in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

Welcome to Our Hillbrow complicates notions of diaspora. One can be a local woman and a citizen of South Africa but still subjected to violent death if accused of being a witch. The novel tells the story of Refentse, "child of Tiragalong" ([1], p. 1), a rural village in South Africa, somewhere in the Limpopo province. This rural setting is puffed up with superstitions, and some locals have to leave the rural idiocy in favour of the city ending up travelling to Hillbrow, in Johannesburg. The title of Mpe's novel emphasises the significance of reading linguistic trace, with seam and rhizome as metaphors for anxieties of unfinished *political* transitions. The rhetorical device of trace is not its original identity because its paradox inheres in the sense that past ideologies of authoritarianism can resurface as constitutional democracy in post 1994 South Africa. In addition, a bloody apartheid culture can revive itself like a rhizome and continue to authorise its own phobias, neuroses and anxieties that get entangled into an emergent present spattered with blood of black foreigners and that of some black locals.

Welcome our Hillbrow also dramatises the fact that xenophobia is a political trace. At the same time, blackophobia is an expression of a seam that might suggest a bleeding point of contact articulated to bloody pasts. Xenophobic culture is demonstrative of seam as a metaphor that attempts to perform a wounded detachment from undying pasts, *ala* a rhizome. However, a rhizome refuses to be born anew because its efforts at detaching from its original self might be incestuous because a rhizome carries with it or survives in new contexts on characteristics derived from its originary identity. How much change and transformation a rhizome is prepared to embrace in a new environment may not necessarily change its DNA. In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, it appears xenophobia or afrophobia may not be sufficient terms to capture the hatred of the black foreigners by black South African citizens. Such black on black violence seem to entrench vicious psychological cultures that might appropriately be described as blackophobia. Blackophobia negatively affects black foreigners and local blacks, mostly women and not whites.

In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, the ideologies of blackophobia seem to be openly manufactured, trafficked, distributed by and shared among South Africa's dreaded trio of the political ruling classes, the masses and capital. Blackophobia is also depicted as some kind of arrested decoloniality that ushers forms of double dying. This view is reflect in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* where rehearsals and simulations of physical force are performed in broad daylight, sometimes on some national television channels that justify physical immolation of people named as the *other*. Although the novel suggests that South Africa is not yet a dictatorship or a fascist state, the text reveals that totalitarian views can outlive the fall of authoritarian systems like apartheid. In the South Africa of Mpe's creative imaginary, the organisation of blackophobic violence contains what Arendt calls a "planned shapelessness" ([3], p. 522). The horrible originality of the evil of blackophobia in the South African postcolony is that it reproduces itself through the agency of local black South Africans, reminding one that former victims can change positions and become killers [10]. In such as volatile context, the ordinariness of the everyday experience of xenophobia in a constitutional neoliberal democracy is baffling as it targets black foreigners and black South African local women who are defined as "'throw-away' people'" ([6], p. 211).

3.1 Narrative of loss of political, economic power and moral authority in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

The opening sentence of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* registers a disaster of national aspirations in the form of the defeat of the national soccer team. Some South Africans celebrate the defeat of the national soccer team largely composed of black players in a way that might indicate a fractured national consciousness. As the narrator puts it, "If you were still alive, Refentse, child of Tiragalong, you would be glad that Bafana Bafana lost to France in the 1998 Soccer World Cup Fiasco" ([1], p. 1). Why a native of South Africa should be "glad" about the defeat of national team is a paradox. Underneath is a grudging acknowledgment of a narrative of loss that contradicts the celebration of post 1994 South Africa's view of itself as an expression of black nationalists' political triumphalism. Tiragalong could be South Africa or a little remote village. It is a part that is coterminous with the whole and that symbolically advertises its own fictionality as an imagined community. Tiragalong might symbolise South Africa insofar as some of its local inhabitants share the frustrations of failing to beat France in 1998. At the same time, Tiragalong might not represent the sentiments of all South Africans since Tiragalong residents are embarrassed by the soccer defeat of South Africa by another foreign power. This seeming lack of a national cohesive consciousness might index the fractures in the new nation where there is no one single idea of being South African that the inhabitants of the country might accede to.

Furthermore, Tiragalong is provincial, and people appear to be known as the mother of so and so. The constant refrain of an aspired for national collective vision comes out in the insistence on collective identity that unfortunately is honed on the idea of cultural purity shared by most locals. However, since the language of soccer is not a mere detail of popular culture. This is so because in the novel, the language of ethnic particularity indexes that part of the nation has failed. Bafana Bafana's defeat is the metonymic of a brittle entry into a South Africa freed from some most visible and bizarre remnants of apartheid's ideology of separate development between local whites and local blacks. The irony of South Africa's political transition into a democracy is magnified by some "...people jubilantly singing Amabokobo ayaphumelela...in the streets, because the South African rugby team, the Springboks, [then a deeply racialized sport] had just won the Rugby World Cup" ([1], p. 22). This suggests that success belongs to the white nation in post-apartheid in South Africa. This new situation seems to undermine and incense local blacks who are imaged as voyeurs to a dream that they can only share through the absence of its materialisation.

The moral decay of Hillbrow ([1], p. 17) plays itself out most on black characters and in black communities. Hillbrow evokes a nightmarish image of a dream deferred and a monster that threatens to swallow the newfound pride of local black South Africans. When wealthy white and Indians move out of Hillbrow, local blacks claim authority over this departed cityscape in ways that restages or rehashes separate development between locals and black foreigners ([1], p. 3). The institutionalisation of poverty among black citizens of Hillbrow further reveals that the asymmetrical relations of power and powerlessness inherited from apartheid have not significantly changed. Hillbrow is a paradoxical physical, cultural and economic space in which its local and foreign black inhabitants might speak of as a place where one could create contradictory narratives of "milk and honey and bile, all brewing in the depths of our collective consciousness" ([1], p. 41). The extent to which locals or black foreigners might harness the resources in Hillbrow depends on necessary acquisition of educational and life skills that are not distributed evenly between and among local and foreign blacks. This characterisation of black on black relationships resists, partialises and revises a view shared by most South Africans and some of their political leaders which is that the release of Rolihlahla Mandela from Robben Island is a miracle in which there would be "...no violence – at least not on any large scale – as had been anticipated by cynics" ([1], p. 100).

In Welcome to Our Hillbrow, a romanticised narrative version of the Mandela era is not allowed to stabilise. A mythopoetic representation of Mandela as the African cyborg with all solutions to the social problems faced by local blacks is carnivalised through the narrative's frank acknowledgement that under Mandela's presidency, discriminatory ideas against foreigners and acts of blackophobia violence refused to die. The novel, thus, resists "solitary criticism" ([20], p. 133) of the Mandela era which was meant to create an impression that all "...ambiguity and contradiction [were] completely shut out, and the only permitted [narrative was] that between the old and the new, as if there were only bad in the past and only good in the future" ([20], p. 132). *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* criticises the characterisation of the South African political transition to selective democracy in which the citizens could deride foreign blacks and mimicked the fiction that South Africa is not part of Africa. In this reasoning formed by an irrational sense of superiority commanded by local blacks, black foreigners blacks were tagged with a new identity of "Makwerekwere [who fled] their war-torn countries to seek sanctuary here in our country" ([1], p. 18). The ideology of Blackophobia that names black foreigners as "Makwerekwere" fakes incomprehension of the culture of the immigrants from the other parts of Africa. This narrative by local blacks affects a self-assured stance of

recognisable, distinct and particularised identities whose political unconscious perform for both officials and ordinary natives of South Africa, a script of difference. While this officially sanctioned cultural performance of a unique South African identity and historical exceptionalism emphasised difference, this difference ironically represented continuity. Thus, a black South African nation was borne and projected as the natural leader of African nations. However, at the core of this new nation was also ensconced extremist views and fundamentalist mental imaginaries that resented foreign blacks. Gqola brings home this point when she argues that the new black-governed South African nation deceptively wore the cloak of "affected shock at the outbreak of large-scale violence of any sort" ([6], p. 211) even when this violence was perpetrated by the country's citizens on black foreigners and some local women, children and the old, during spats of xenophobic attacks.

Welcome to Our Hillbrow challenges ideologies of indigeneity because these views encourage black foreigners. For example, the narrative also ruptures and disrupts coercive official narratives of "new democratic rainbowism of African Renaissance" ([1], p. 26). By providing a wide range of characters who respond differently to the narrative of unfilled hopes in post-apartheid South Africa, what is preferred and registered is a commitment to a plurality views. In Hillbrow, lifelong black beggars who have fallen ill are "wheeled away in a wheel-barrow, in the direction of Hillbrow Hospital" ([1], p. 16). In addition, "Dirty children [take] turns at glue" (Mpe, 13). Lerato's mother is a notorious prostitute "who could not say no to any drop of semen found flowing aimlessly in the streets" ([1], p. 82). Gay or homosexual men are accused by some local blacks of introducing AIDS through what the local blacks view as the "bizarre sexual behaviour" of men in dark-lit corners having sex with other man ([1], p. 4). Like black foreigners, homosexuals are violently targeted. Disease is appended to homosexuals and foreign blacks. This symbolical buildup of the negative descriptions of humanity that most local citizens appear to fail to live with is calculated to enable local blacks with extremist views arrogate themselves with power to police the spaces where foreign blacks and homosexuals inhabit. Sometimes when strategies of policing black foreigners are outpaced by some ingenuity of targeted groups, local blacks would compensate their failure to control those named as incorrigible strangers by appealing to the government officials to enforce migrant laws that limited the movement of foreigners. Ordinary South African citizens in turn secure from government authorities the powers to superintend black foreign nationals, detailing where they work and how they make money and "succeed" in a context where locals feel economically outstripped ([8], p. 140). Thus, in a "tragic inversion, therefore, immigrants are held responsible for the failure of free market policies to create adequate choices of employment" ([6], p. 219).

In rural Tiragalong, values and vocabularies that contain perverted blackophobic tendencies circulate freely among locals. The local women who suffer from the heavy-handedness of locally driven patriarchal discourses are some South African female citizens. Some of these women like Refilwe's mother are named as witches merely because the rural patriarchs have the power to do so. Working with quack witchdoctors, the rule of South African rural men prescribes punishment by death to native women so accused. The mobs of Tiragalong are empowered by the silence of government officials, and these hordes feel permitted to carry out gratuitous violence on innocent South African female citizens. The banality of the process of killing local women imitates the brutal originality of apartheid's methods of vanquishing those suspected to be political opponents. A large tyre is put around the neck of Refilwe's mother by mobs under the command of rural patriarchs. Petrol is poured on her onto her, and her whole body becomes a site destruction by fire ([1], p. 3). This death is not of a black foreigner from outside South Africa, but of a native of Tiragalong, a black South African in the evil hands of her own kind.

Gratuitous acts of violence against vulnerable rural women or black foreigners are justified or explained away by intellectuals and authorities as representing the new normal in community policing [8]. In short, the fate of Refilwe's mother shows that one can be a South African citizen but perpetually marginalised, murdered and her body disposed of as if her life is not worth living or mourning. Diasporic identities that create senses of vulnerability in weak women and black foreigners are manufactured in black-controlled local communities and used to impose new forms of governmentality by those locals invested with power that is often arbitrarily used to coerce, when such situations might have benefited from community dialogue.

May [11] draws attention to the fact that physical and spiritual harms to social groups in xenophobic and genocidal situations manifest in how individuals are killed. This view is supported by Ndebele who observed that in South Africa, the ways human life is lived spectacularly after 1994 in black rural areas and urban townships encourage violent acts in which the will to "kill off the man [leaves] us with no knowledge" ([15], p. 26) of how to stop the circulation of genocidal views in the community. Sachs, another South African critic and freedom fighter, comments that discriminatory killings, either from xenophobic attacks or mass murder of black foreigners, affirm the principle that "there is nothing that the [former] apartheid rulers would like more than to convince us that because apartheid [was] ugly, the world is ugly ([20], p. 133).

The narrative of moral degeneration that makes preparation for mass assault of black foreigners possible is community-sanctioned. The idea that murder is planned from below suggests that ordinary black South African people in whose name some progressive revolutions are carried out have not psychologically been decolonized. The murder of Refilwe's mother follows a predictable sequence: exposition that a witch should be killed, justification that Refilwe's mother deserves to die because she caused the suicide death of her daughter and legitimation of murder of local women by the opinion of the "medicine men" ([1], p. 43) and "bone thrower" ([1], p. 45) who are sought to confirm the adoption of a decision to murder the woman. Later, the masses implement their evil schema in which the innocent woman is executed painfully by being locked in her hut, with blazing tyres around her neck. The intent to kill Refilwe's mother is choreographed with careful planning as soon as an ideological warrant ([4], p. 115) is created and accepted that the woman in question is a witch.

Regrettably, the ideological warrants advanced by the community to kill Refilwe's mother are baseless and unfounded because "it was only after the witch had found her punishment by necklacing, that Tiragalong was given cause to realise its mistake...." ([1], p. 45). Perpetrators of xenophobic atrocities are akin to genocidaires who act precisely through omission and commission; they do not need to reason scientifically. Once persuaded by fear rooted in superstitious stereotypes, they authorise spurious narratives that then are taken as truth and which forms the basis of actions. The wilful suspension of the rule of law in a neoliberal constitutional democracy means that South African public life is also characterised by states of exceptions in which mobs become the law, with which they pronounce death penalty on others. Thus, while the street court operated by mob injustice imposes death penalty, the unresolved judicial hiatus is that South African official courts have no provision for death penalty.

The implication to official silence against wilful violation of foreign blacks is that in a South African neoliberal democracy, the official discourse of peace, tolerance and coexistence might function to camouflage the desire to disarm defences and make the killing of foreigners acceptable. Without suggesting that all South African citizens have fascist ideas, xenophobic acts are amplified through a coded language that hints at the final solution on the question of foreign immigrants in

South Africa. When the masses warn foreign blacks to go back to their countries or die here, little or no consequences are visited on these citizens who intimidate black foreigners. The community of Tiragalong in the novel, does not understand, does not wish to understand and does not wish to live with that which they view as strange. This fear of freedom to know is rooted in the unbearableness of individual powerlessness and isolation predicated on the illogical thinking that the individual or the community might escape the feeling of its own powerlessness in comparison with the world outside oneself by destroying it. It becomes duty or work that is considered patriotic to beat with cudgels and kill using machetes any of the Makwerekwere viewed as basking in the sanctuary that Hillbrow temporarily affords ([1], p. 4).

The narrative of loss of conscience, of loss of moral values and of loss of shame in Tiragalong's brutalisation of their own is both a test and an affirmation that this community can commit more hideous crimes of harm on black foreigners with whom they share little else other than the colour, black. Morgan argues that looters and murderers find it is necessary to lose shame in order to commit atrocities. Shame generally might force humanity to reckon that humans have some notion of how it should be or ought to be, the kind of person it ought to be, and the kind of person others ought to expect people to be in terms of which human actions are shown to have failed, to be deficient or to have diminished in status. This means that when one is ashamed, one has lost face because the face one values and hopes to have has been displaced or defaced by another face, which is one that one regrets having or one that disgraces or embarrasses ([14], p. 308). Refusal to feel disgraced or embarrassed in killing another human being is precisely the condition of possibility for sustaining a campaign of verbal and physical terror perceived as indispensable when preparing to launch blackophobic attacks on some local African blacks and foreign black nationals.

3.2 Narrative of HIV, stolen jobs and despoiled South African women by Makwerekwere in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Refilwe's mother's life is imperilled by a masculine ideology that projects "women" as "entitlements of Black South Africa men" ([6], p. 218). Fascist-like ideas are not the preserve of dictators or authoritarian rulers only; ordinary people can also be mass murderers. In South Africa since the intensification of the rhetoric of entitlement among black people, it has been the ordinary people, themselves, too poor who have become enthusiastic killers of foreign blacks [10]. Stone observes that xenophobic leaders can turn people into perpetrators through a process in which the ordinary people are allowed to take advantage of opportunities for unpunished inhumanity opened to them. Ordinary South African citizens are then emboldened to commit atrocities on fellow Africans because the locals are exposed to an entirely unfamiliar feeling of unlimited power and command ([21], p. 284). Admittedly some ordinary local blacks in the South African postcolony are reluctant to kill foreigners when coerced to do so. This reflects some positive agency within some South African citizens. However, when black foreigners continue to be killed during broad day light, on the watch of the police, senior ruling class politicians and officials from opposition political parties, this reveals a "tragic inversion [in which] immigrants are held responsible for the failure of free market policies to create adequate choices of employment" ([6], p. 219).

Thus, in the epistemology of blackophobia in South Africa, homophobic language performs the function of the matchet; it contains ideological warrants which are the cues through which the black foreigner is spoken, thought of and written about as dispensable humanity or the "throw away people" ([6], p. 211). Linguistic

violence presages physical violence and might render thinkable, the rehearsal of genocidal mentality. Homophobes establish a single causal relationship between their actions in the service of their murderous purposes. The actions are then justified using historical insights to produce new narratives that have to be packaged ideologically in terms of us and them to ramp up their potential invasive acts. In addition, the determination of the human will has to be in the mix, along with social and political structures that can implement that determination. When all of those pieces are in place, genocide may well be on its way ([4], pp. 119–122).

In Tiragalong and Hillbrow which might and might not necessarily symbolise South Africa, the popular understanding is that AIDS came from "central and western parts of Africa....[and] media reports [had it that] AIDS' travel into Johannesburg was through Makwerekwere; and Hillbrow was the sanctuary in which Makwerekwere basked" ([1], p. 4). Refentse's death is casually attributed to the fact that he roamed the "whorehouses and dingy pubs of Hillbrow...with Makwerekwere women, hanging onto his arms and dazzling him with sugar-coated kisses that were sure to destroy any man, let alone an impressionable youngster like him" ([1], p. 3). Native South Africans project images of themselves as authentic, clean and pure, thereby invoking a reverse discourse of dirt and impurity that is easily ascribed to black foreigners. The repertoire of linguistic violence not only reveals how ordinary South Africans fear the story of the foreigner. Stereotypes of black foreigners as "filth" serve to prepare grounds upon which the physical violation of the black foreigners must stand justified. The doubling effect of the discourse of purity emanating from ordinary South Africans can also be said to be replicating its own divisions through the construction of myths of purity and authenticity. These myths are then used by the citizens to enable them to continuity entertaining an idea of a stable dominant discourse even at the very moment it appears to recognise the existence of the other.

The trope of South African people as pure beings used to justify policing of black foreigners is denied inherent authenticity which it seeks to monopolise for itself. The "Bizarre sexual behavior of the Hillbrowans" ([1], p. 4) was in fact "no worse than that of Tiragalong" ([1], p. 17). Tiragalongans which both are and may not represent all South Africans attempt to project their rural locality as a place of pastoral quiescence and write a story of it "with a smooth narrative current, stripped of all rough edges, devoid of any gaps" ([1], p. 60). In the novel, Cousin "insisted that people should remain in their own countries and try to sort out the problems of these respective countries, rather than fleeing them; South Africa had too many problems of its own" ([1], p. 20). The concept of bounded citizenship is narrow because it defines natives of black South Africa as the only people entitled to live in it. This view enables the accusation that black foreigners or Makwerekwere are "stretching their legs spreading like pumpkin plants filling every corner of our city and turning each patch of Hillbrow coming to take our jobs in the new democratic rainbowism of African Renaissance...." ([1], p. 26). A mythopoetic narrative of purity of the local natives over black foreigners represented as dirt actually overwrites the actual differences in each of these two groups. Fortunately, a native narrative that emphasises a unitary identity for ordinary South Africans at all times is rejected. This is so because "There would always be another story of love, betrayal, friendship, joy and pain to add to narrative granary. There would always be the need to revise, reinforce, contradict. Every act of listening, seeing, smelling, feeling, tasting is a reconfiguring of the story of our lives" ([1], p. 61).

3.3 Narratives of fear of black foreigners in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

Discourses of entitlement to access to South African resources circulating in black local communities arise out of "unmet basic needs" ([19], p. 98) in the era of

democracy. Particularistic and nativist identitarian assertions enable local blacks to loot foreign-owned black shops ([1], p. 22). Black male South Africans arrogate for themselves the authority of being the guardians of South African women's sexualities against foreign black men and women spoken of as prostitutes and murderers ([1], p. 123). Foreign black men are depicted as human thieves; they are accused of stealing black South African women using monies assumed to have been derived from drug-dealing. In this self-proclaimed role, local South African men silence the voice of local South African women while at the same time unwittingly confirming Makwerekwere as successful lovers and romantic caregivers to South African women ([1], p. 44).

However, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is relentless in deconstructing the notion that South Africa is not part of Africa. Disparate ideologies of historical exceptionalism fuelled in local black communities can be used by locals to discipline and punish African black foreigners. This is why the novel affirms a different kind of narrative of global nomadism only possible in an international context in which the idea of diaspora is asserted as the condition of possibility of migration characteristic of postmodernity. This is so because foreign blacks possess some skills that enable them to become lecturers and students at Wits, Rand Afrikaans University and Technikons in South Africa. This assertion implies that some of the black foreigners contribute positively to the South African economy. What is refuted in this acknowledgment refutes the stereotypes that most ordinary South Africans construct and use to attack black foreigners. However, it is to the credit of Mpe's dialectical imagination that surfaces the fact that in spite of positive agency, some black foreigners do drug trafficking. Some locals also are drawn into the vortex of the whirlwind of drug trafficking ([1], p. 18). A narrative that concedes that there are grey areas in the experiences of local people correctly undermines the discourses of purity insisted upon by white and black South African citizens. White criminals sell drugs, liquor and glue to street children, and white prostitutes sell their bodies to all and sundry ([1], p. 103). To ever name whites or people of Caucasian descent as drug dealers as does *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is not the discourse that the masses and the black leadership would want to hear.

South African postcolony inherited criminal networks and syndicates run by local blacks and indirectly encouraged by some officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs. This public political structure occasionally sends out "uniformed men" who would coerce the black foreigners to give bribes in exchange for staying in the country. Some black foreign women without money bribed the officials and "bought their temporary freedom to roam the Hillbrow streets by dispensing under-waist bliss" ([1], p. 21). The stereotype of black foreign women as loose and dangerous is, thus, constructed by the very authorities who disavow it as morally reprehensible. However, the banality power and aesthetics of vulgarity [12] are further dramatised in the use of inflationary powers that local police command and often use arbitrarily to detain or deport black foreigners known to them as Makwerekwere ([1], p. 23).

Thus, in a new dispensation, the police still possess the very violent DNA that characterised apartheid methods of policing that included, among other things, a principle of divide and rule between black foreigners and native South Africans. The crimes of rape and murder committed by native South Africans are, in the grand narrative of the epistemology of xenophobia, repressed ([1], p. 23). What is rendered visible instead are stereotypical crimes attributed to black foreigners such as Nigerians and Algerians who are accused of being "drug dealers, or arms smugglers, engaged in trading weapons for their civil war-wracked countries" ([1], p. 101). However, this excessive signification of black foreigners is modified by other narratives in the novel that also insist in telling multiple stories of "AIDS and Makwerekwere and the many-sidedness of life and love in our Hillbrow and Tiragalong and everywhere" ([1], p. 95). The "many-sidedness" of lived experiences of the people of Tiragalong, Hillbrow and the rest of country is recalled

through the metaphors of vulnerability of some South Africans who were forced to seek refuge in Zambia, Zaire, Nigeria, etc. during the apartheid era. In the present historical moment of the publication of the novel, new memories of petty murders such as that of Piet by some locals abound. In direct contrast to the destructive streak of some local South Africans, Makwerekwere are portrayed as industrious people who sell vegetables in Hillbrow, thus making their experience of diaspora work to their advantage. National amnesia and forgetfulness is as much at the heart of the project of nation-building just as what is chosen to be remembered of the past. Collective forgetting can serve a narrow and populist nationalism rooted in self-delusion which is that democratic South Africa does not need the rest of Africa.

Perpetrators of xenophobic violence rely on stereotypes to dehumanise their victims. The social figuration of foreign blacks in the collective imaginaries of some local South Africans allows them to depict the social group so defined as an outsider by abstracting the human qualities of targeted groups whose different values are conveniently represented immutable. Language is thus the first tool for killing the diversity of human beings. After the objectification of humanity through stereotyping, homophobes proceed to physically annihilate those that they have marked as victims. When black foreigners are depicted as diseased, drug peddlers and stealers of women and jobs, these descriptions act as ideological warrants that provide justification to violate the black foreigners. In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* the images the people of Tiragalong were not cleaner than everyone else ([1], p. 55).

The instrumentality of language in attempting to constrain the plurality of the newly acquired identities within the communities of foreign blacks reveals that blackophobia is planned. In stage one black foreigners in South Africa are negatively imaged as economic vultures. To facilitate the movement towards mass violence, in stage two the black foreigners are stigmatised, and in stage three, the "vermin metaphor" is used by the perpetrator. In stage four, officials weigh in and further humiliate foreigners through deportations such as that carried out under operation Fiyela, which arbitrarily hold black foreigners in camps and then send black foreigners to their original countries without anything they had worked for. In this fourth stage, those black foreigners without papers are not given time to pick and pack their belongings as they are bundled into *nyala* vehicles and headed for their home countries. In addition in this stage, moral disengagement is facilitated by the natural tendency for individuals to blame the victims. In stage five it is unfortunate but acceptable to kill foreigners since the victims are no longer viewed as human but rather vermin to be exterminated or infected tissue needing to be excised. In stage six, the path towards mass murder and impunity increases the probability of violence. It is in stage seven where the final solution is imagined as a possible way to deal, once and for all, with the menace said to be posed by the existence of black foreigners within the communities of South African citizens. In stage eight, bystanders in the form of officials from the host countries and neighbouring countries provide tacit approval for hatred, discrimination and violence, through inaction by blaming the black foreigner for escaping poverty in their countries and daring to "invade" other people's countries with a host of diseases, crimes and anything negative that can be attached on the blamed. These stages of humiliating black foreigners discussed above might be described as classification, symbolization, dehumanisation, organisation, polarisation, preparation, extermination and denial. These stages do not have to be complete, and in fact rarely are.

In a book entitled *Go Home or Die Here* [7], Thabo Mbeki then president of South Africa during the deadly 2008 xenophobic attacks on foreign blacks resident in South Africa denied that crimes against humanity were not committed by local South Africans. The basis of Mbeki's hard-nosed denial of xenophobic mentality among South Africa is manifested when he wrote that:

> *When I heard some accuse my people of xenophobia, of hatred of foreigners, I wondered what the accusers knew of my people, which I did not know…The dark days of May which have brought us here today were visited on our country by people who acted with criminal intent. What happened during these days was not inspired by a perverse nationalism, or extreme chauvinism, resulting in our communities violently expressing the hitherto unknown sentiment of mass and mindless hatred of foreigners – xenophobia …and this I must also say – none in our society has any right to encourage or incite xenophobia by trying to explain naked criminal activity by cloaking it in the garb of xenophobia ([7], p. 4).*

In the above passage, local South Africans are described as "my people", and the killing of more than 63 foreign blacks and some few South Africans is demoted to a petty criminal act. When such defence of xenophobia come from the holders of power in the country's highest political office, this emboldens and licences ordinary South Africans to kill foreign blacks with impunity. Thus, Mbeki provided sanctioning metaphors of discursive violence that the citizens of South Africa would refine and deploy in the future whenever they justified violating black foreigners. "Criminal intent" is precisely one of the UN's 1948 definitions of genocide, and in all blackophobic attacks after 1994, critical intent and violent expressions of resentment of black foreigners are openly demonstrated by South African masses who police, harass and kill black foreigners on the watch of South African police.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the experience of diaspora as represented in two novels from South Africa. It was argued that in *Nyambo Dze Joni*, the representation of the government of Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma is not flattering because black people from other countries were and continued to be generally regarded as trespassers. And as with trespassers, black foreign life mattered little, and these people could be killed on the watch of the new black South African ruling and educated elites. This phenomenon of blackophobia was also creatively debated in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, a novel that shows that in the constitutional democracy of the South African postcolony; the target of fear of the *other* by ordinary and educated people in South Africa is specific and specified as the black foreigners. The novel highlighted how the language charged with stereotypes is the first war waged against black foreigners. This figurative abuse of black of foreigners through derogatory language forebodes the physical destruction of black foreigners. However, diasporic identities depicted in the two novels refuse to speak to a single identity. Even in the most hostile circumstances, black foreigners in South Africa have forged new social networks, sent their children to schools, remit some money back to their extended families in their countries, bought or build houses and made South Africa their home by working as general labourers and professionals in government and private firms. Thus, the ability to command multiple identities refutes the perceptions that link diaspora with dispossession and marginality, only.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.87245

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