

On ‘The Return of the Repressed’: Re-reading Xenophobic Alienation in the Post- Apartheid Novels

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Abstract- Xenophobia, the fear for the stranger, the foreigner or fear of the unusual, manifests through attitudes of exclusion and acts of violence and intolerance towards other people and their culture. In the post-apartheid South African set-up, emotions of hatred and vilification of ‘blacks’ have played out in recurrent incidents of xenophobia. Natives have found a convenient scapegoat in the black immigrants who are subjected to dehumanizing practices that alienate them as ‘other’, resulting into psychic trauma and acts of self-destruction. That former victims of apartheid subjugation have become perpetrators of similar hatred against humanity exposes xenophobia as a complex psycho-social pervasion that requires a more conscious interrogation. Psychoanalysis explains xenophobia as one of the mechanisms through which perpetrators project their frustration and repressed emotions on people perceived to be different. The study reaffirms the scapegoat thesis and further explores other unconscious drives, uncanny expressions and implications of xenophobic hegemony on the characters as exemplified in the post-apartheid novels: Niq Mhlongo’s *After Tears* (2007) and Phaswane Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001).

Index Terms- xenophobia, post-apartheid, psychoanalysis

I. INTRODUCTION

The fall of apartheid ushered in the much expected democratic freedom in South Africa. However, a myriad challenges have emerged in the period of transition. Among the concerns that have put South Africa on the global picture in the recent times is the xenophobic attacks mostly perpetrated by black South Africans against their fellow blacks, arguably from other African nations, who are derogatorily referred to as *Makwerekwere*. Xenophobia, a term coined from Greek words ‘xeno’ meaning stranger, and ‘phobos’ which implies fear, means fear of the stranger or fear of the unusual (Tella & Ogunnubi, 2014). The anti-immigrant xenophobic sentiments in the post-apartheid set-up are largely portrayed as a socio-economic challenge. However, it emerges that South Africans have objectified not only the immigrants but their fellow black citizens as well. This indicates the presence of other underlying pathological drives behind the xenophobic hegemony. A psychoanalytic reading of the post-apartheid novels yields not only the nature of immigrant scapegoating but delves into other unconscious expressions of xenophobia in acts which transcend the socio-economic veneer. The natives’ disappointment, unmet expectations and frustrations in the post-apartheid environment are some of the repressed feelings made

manifest through xenophobic expression. In the post-apartheid novels- Mhlongo’s *After Tears* and Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, characters are subjected to hostile as well as non-violent xenophobic attacks in form of alienation, extreme hatred, exploitation, defamation through rumours and, in some cases, ultimate deportation. This results in intricate psychological torture not only to the target victims but to the aggressors as well.

II. BACKGROUND

Literary engagements with socio-politics of xenophobia in the post-apartheid transition

Xenophobic hegemony in the present post-apartheid South Africa has its roots deeply entrenched in the apartheid legacy of racial segregation. This is hinged on the argument that xenophobia is an extension of South Africans’ racial vilification and exclusion of blacks (Akinola, 2014; Williams, 2017). During apartheid, Afrikaans disenfranchised blacks and other ‘inferior’ races, subjecting them to dehumanizing experiences, almost akin to what immigrants from other African nations have suffered through xenophobia in the post ’94 period.

The social, cultural and economic tensions presently experienced in South Africa may not be fully blamed on the regime of apartheid (Rafapa & Mahori, 2011), however, it is equally delicate to obliterate the history of apartheid and the lingering effects of its persistent legacies on the people’s present circumstances. As pointed out by Kent (2008, p.15) “To write exclusively about the present, or to judge it in temporal isolation is to imply that the past no longer matters, is finished and can be laid to rest,” an indication that it would be unrealistic to fully ignore the past in an effort to explain the present. Perhaps Nwabashi and Nnaji put it succinctly, that the apartheid policy of divide and rule planted seeds of racial hatred which have now penetrated through tribal and ethnic lines and matured into xenophobia (Nwabashi & Nnaji, 2018, p.210). This study, therefore, interrogated xenophobia from the premise that it is a psycho-social phenomenon whose roots are traceable to apartheid’s history of racial alienation of especially the blacks, who were relegated to the most subaltern of racial status.

At the dawn of democracy and attainment of majority rule in South Africa, it was expected that racial discrimination would be a thing of the past. On the contrary, South Africans have yet to embrace the spirit of brotherhood towards their fellow Africans from neighboring African states. In the view of Neocosmos (2010), democracy has presented the new nation with social challenges, and South Africa has instead recorded increasing

spates of xenophobia in the recent times. This is echoed in Williams' argument that the present xenophobia in South Africa, which is a legacy of apartheid, has jeopardized the people's dream for home and belonging in the post-apartheid dispensation (Williams, 2017, p.198). Under such circumstances, the 'rainbow' nation has remained divided.

The official end of apartheid notably marked a new beginning for South Africa and opened borders to other African nations as well. Legal and illegal immigrants from countries such as Zambia, Mozambique, Namibia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and even Nigeria trooped in the cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town in search of jobs, business and study opportunities. With time, this has exerted pressure on South Africa's already overstretched resources, leading to competition that has arguably pushed some natives to their current state of joblessness and endemic poverty. The result being that the locals have found a scapegoat for all their problems in the immigrants, who have thence been subjected to xenophobic alienation and violence. Tella (2016) notes that the massive inflow of African immigrants into South Africa has indeed bred hostility and hatred towards the foreigners (p.143). The 1996 Constitution of South Africa provides for non-discrimination, and calls for accommodation of all peoples living in the rainbow nation. The spirit of brotherhood has, unfortunately, suffered betrayal through acts of xenophobia.

Additionally, the belief that apartheid never really ended in South Africa is a trajectory that could present a new window into the other faces of xenophobic violence witnessed in the recent times. Mattos (2012) observes that xenophobia is the new racism in South Africa. Closely tied to this is the exceptionality trope which attributes xenophobic hostility to South Africa's positioning in the continent. In this light, South Africa still identifies herself more with the colonizer than the other African nations despite having attained democracy from white rule far back in history. Steenkamp (2009) opines that a majority of South Africans are yet to identify themselves as Africans, making it difficult for them to accommodate their brothers from across the borders. Consequently, South Africa prides in the identity of exceptionality based on economic advancement, sophisticated infrastructure and unique history on the one hand, and the nation's perception of other African nations as war-torn, poor, corrupt and disease-ridden on the other. The nation also remains one of the most culturally diverse in the continent, with eleven official languages and five races occupying its cultural space (Nwabashi & Nnaji, 2018). It therefore passes that although South Africa is geographically located in the African continent, such socio-cultural differences may have contributed to the reluctance in tolerating immigrants from other African nations. Ramphele (2008) equally questions this alienation on the argument that although most post-colonial independent African nations have subjected their citizens to dehumanizing experiences leading to violence, displacement of human populations and cross-border movement, it should not be the justification for South Africa to scapegoat the foreigners for their socio-economic challenges.

That South Africa owes its freedom to the unity accorded by other African countries during the fight against apartheid cannot be gainsaid. Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia and others not only demonstrated solid support for the liberation movements in the fight against apartheid oppression but also provided home for South African exiles in the spirit of brotherhood. Mpe

acknowledges this in a section of the novel, in the narrator's address to the protagonist:

You would want to add that some *Makwerekwere* were fleeing their war-torn countries to seek sanctuary here in our country, in the same way that many South Africans were forced into exile in Zambia, Zaire, Nigeria and other African and non-African countries during the apartheid era.

(Mpe, 2001, pp18-19)

This is a clear indication that some immigrants are compelled by circumstances beyond their control to seek asylum in South Africa. Subjecting them to xenophobia therefore becomes a further violation of their basic human rights. Xenophobic hegemony on black immigrants would be understandable in the apartheid context, its manifestation and recurrence in the post-apartheid regime remains problematic. Tella (2016) asserts that xenophobic hatred in the post-apartheid democracy is a mockery of the calls of 'Africa for all' and 'Ubuntu', made by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the former president Nelson Mandela.

Literary engagement with the theme of xenophobia has been skewed towards its violent manifestations. There is, therefore, need to investigate other possible underlying causes as well as subtle occurrences of the vice. In this perspective, Akinola (2014) points out that there is exhaustive literature on the violent nature of xenophobia, but a dearth of studies on the non-violent expressions of the xenophobic attitude. Psychoanalysis builds on bringing the unconscious to consciousness, thereby revealing the most hidden human feelings, motivation and intentions towards explaining their behavior. The study not only engaged with the environment in the texts that exacerbate xenophobia, but delved into the characters' thought processes, wishes, fears and anxieties for a clearer foregrounding of the drives behind their xenophobic expressions, as exemplified in the novels: Niq Mhlongo's *After Tears* and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Post-apartheid authors rediscover the ordinary

A writer's central commitment involves highlighting issues relevant to his society and the way they impact on the people. This assumption draws from the underpinning that a literary writer has the professional responsibility to make his work relevant to his society and its concerns by treating the burning issues of the day and themes germane to his community's fundamental and long range interest (Chinweizu et al., 1983). Although this assertion was made in the 80s, it remains relevantly applicable in the 21st century literary landscape. The authors under study: Phaswane Mpe and Niq Mhlongo are among post-apartheid South African authors who have come into prominence for highlighting the real situation of South Africa post-1994, and portrayed, in their works of fiction, the manner in which the South African people have coped with emergent issues such as xenophobia.

It is worth noting that post-1994 South African writing is shifting focus from apartheid the system to how its legacy is affecting the now free nation. Although the violence and censorship of apartheid almost compelled writers committed to black liberation to a sort of social journalism and reportage, at the

beginning of democracy, they felt freer to write about themes, places and periods that had not been explored. Bassan (2013) explains that spectacularization of South African life in protest literature could give way to the narration of ordinariness, following Ndebele's philosophy of 'rediscovery of the ordinary'. Among the writers considered to have responded to Ndebele's call include Mhlongo, Mpe and Duiker (Viljoen, 2004). The writers are credited for not merely narrating the horrors of apartheid, but highlighting the manner in which its legacy is affecting the contemporary population in the post-apartheid set-up.

Xenophobia: entrenched by apartheid legacy, perpetuated by post-apartheid betrayal

Apartheid was a policy of formalized racial segregation in which a minority Afrikaaner whites subjected the black majority to oppression. 'Apartheid' which is Afrikaans word for separation or apartness was initiated by the National Party in 1948. The policy perpetrated dehumanizing crimes against blacks for 'eons', until 1994 when it was officially abolished (Mattos, 2012; Sefoto, 2015). However, the question as to whether the constructs of apartheid were eliminated remains a highly emotive issue in the present nation, especially to blacks. 'Black' in this context is drawn from the 1970s' Black Consciousness Movement prism that maps all the South Africans who were disenfranchised by the apartheid regime including black Africans, Coloureds and Indians (Manus, 2011). The study focused on the black Africans as theirs was a unique experience, having been relegated to the most inferior status in the racial hierarchy (Bassan, 2013, p.66). The discrimination entailed denial of the rights to vote, limited access to quality education, restricted freedom of movement and ownership of land and property. Alienation, autocracy, terror and police brutality were the instruments of state control. Such racial hegemony demonstrated the extent to which blacks were denigrated and loathed in South Africa. The present xenophobic expressions on immigrants are therefore a replication of familiar scenes.

Additionally, South Africa's colonial history remains unique since it is the only country in the continent where even after independence, the culture of white supremacy has 'formally' lingered on. On this, Matsinhe (2011) posits that in South Africa, the doctrine of white supremacy was systemized and implemented for the longest period of time (p.300). It is, therefore, strange that the former victims of apartheid have turned against their fellow blacks from other African nations, further suggesting a connectedness between the hatred against black immigrants and South Africa's history of apartheid. It is on this basis that Matsinhe (2011) further argues that South African's exclusive fear and hatred for itself (fellow blacks) expressed through xenophobia is a replacement of apartheid. The irony is that while the black immigrants are referred to as *Makwerekwere*, white foreign immigrants to South Africa are regarded as tourists and accorded preferential treatment.

The official denunciation of apartheid in 1994 ushered in democracy but with it came a new set of social, cultural and political concerns. Specifically, the youth population had high expectations of the new democratic dispensation. In the view of Nyamnjoh (2004), the achievements made in affirming the integrity and humanity of the oppressed black masses through the struggle against apartheid seem to have backtracked under the

present democratic dispensation in South Africa. Additionally, Gouws (2016) avers that the current generation of youth is a reminder of the promises that were not kept, this has bred frustrations. The slow pace at which restitution measures were implemented in South Africa brought about feelings of betrayal and disillusionment. Thus, emotions of disappointment have been expressed through violent protests, but a percentage of it is projected on the immigrant scapegoats through xenophobic attacks and expressions, mostly perpetrated by the frustrated youth. Neocosmos (2008) concurs, asserting that it is such imbalances in the society that have bred hegemony and xenophobia in the public sphere.

The fight against apartheid was heightened through political movements (Davis, 2013; Simbao, 2013) and also largely expressed through the writings of the disenfranchised peoples. Black writing includes pieces of literary works generated by the concerns of those whose life and art were shaped by increased racial oppression and the discriminatory laws that made them feel outcasts in the land of their birth, including writers of the time such as Mphahlele and Brutus, the latter whose poems of resistance literally awakened the oppressed masses to action (Gaylard, 2008). Mhlongo and Mpe are among the post-apartheid authors whose works of fiction portray the subtle manner in which some legacies of the former regime have persistently impacted on the new nation.

The Freedom Charter of the 1996 Constitution of the post-apartheid nation provides for the end to segregation, equal opportunity and redistribution of wealth to all the people living in South Africa (Limb, 2008). However, a majority of black South Africans have remained marginalized, jobless and poor. Part of the problems are traceable to persistent legacies of apartheid policies of land ownership, Bantu education and migrant labour system (Walunywa et. al, 2015). The socio-economic pressure has arguably brought about rise in crime, debauchery, and violent protests (Ramphela, 2012). As will be explored in the discussion of the novels, South Africans have exploited such 'opportunities' to scapegoat black foreigners even when it is clear that some incidents of crime, corruption and drugs dealing are executed by the locals. This implies that xenophobia is a concern that transcends the socio-economic borders within which previous studies have mapped it. An approach that delves into the characters' unconscious would suffice in an attempt to unearth the subtle presentations of xenophobic alienation.

Suppressed xenophobic attitudes find escape through subtle expressions

Xenophobia is a complex and emotive psycho-social matter in the present South African scene. Varvin, (2017) explains xenophobia to mean fear of the stranger or fear of the unusual. He further elaborates that xenophobia is dehumanizing and traumatizing as it marginalizes the victims in intricate ways. Xenophobia is also traditionally defined as an attitude of fear and prejudice against the foreigner (Valji, 2003; Yakushko, 2009; Everatt, 2011). While in the view of Lazaridis and Aldai (2001, p.192), Xenophobia is 'new racism' practiced on the basis of the victim's different nationality or ethnicity. These definitions highlight the nature of the practice as mainly characterized by 'othering' people perceived to be different.

It is important to note that the subject of xenophobic alienation is not limited to the foreigner alone as implied in the

definitions. A reading of the novels under study reveals that xenophobic alienation affects any other 'stranger' or 'unusual' persons including the natives. Perpetrators of xenophobia estrange their victims on pathological excuses and vilify individuals perceived to be a threat, socially and economically. These present yet another complex face of xenophobia. Based on rumours and stigmatized physical body features, some natives have fallen victims of xenophobic discrimination as they are mainly 'identified' by their skin colour, body odour, birthmarks, inoculation scars, dress code and their inability to speak South Africa's local languages in a polished accent. In the eye of the aggressor, the foreigner is 'too dark' in complexion, 'dresses funny' and 'smells bad' (Matsinhe, 2011; Nyamnjoh, 2010; Crush and Ramachandra, 2014). The native, therefore, justifies the difference in order to criminalize the 'foreign' nationals. Everatt, (2011) points out that such biased bio-cultural vilification only led to some South African nationals being mistaken for foreigners. Zimbabwean, Nigerian, Congolese, Malawian, and Zambian immigrants seeking asylum and refuge in South Africa are derogatorily referred to as *Makwerekwere*, signifying them as 'other'. They are treated with suspicion as drug peddlers, grabbers of job opportunities, snatchers of local women, providers of cheap labour and as vectors of HIV/AIDS (Neocosmos, 2010). They are profiled as a people who have only come to take but have nothing to offer. Akinola (2014) concludes that South Africans view immigrants as freeloaders who benefit from South Africa's resources and offer nothing in return.

Such denigration is expressed in salient manifestations other than violence. Akinola (2014) and Varvin (2017) echo the need to focus on non-violent expression of xenophobic hatred. Hence, the study delved into the subtlety of the psychological trauma that xenophobia evinces in both its perpetrators and victims as depicted in the novels of Mhlongo and Mpe.

Post-Apartheid Authors' location of the uncanny

Although critics painted a bleak future to black writing at the official end of apartheid in South Africa, literary production in the recent times has notably brought forth works with varied new social concerns. In this context, Mackenzie and Frenkel (2010) opine that South African literary production over the last decade has made significant contributions to issues that are of interest in the post-apartheid environment. Among the authors credited for highlighting the plight of the people in the post-apartheid environment are Mhlogo and Mpe (Fai, 2014).

Niq Mhlongo has authored a collection of short stories and a number of novels including: *Dog Eat Dog*, *After Tears*, and *Way Back Home* (Warnes, 2011). It is in *After Tears* that acts of xenophobia clearly manifest. On the other hand, Phaswane Mpe is equally credited for bringing to global attention the actual condition of the Rainbow nation after apartheid by focusing on the interiority of the ordinary lives of the people (Fai, 2014; Ibinga, 2006; Rafapa & Mahori, 2011). In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), Mpe brings out evolving problems of the new South African nation such as xenophobia, social relationships and HIV/AIDS (Negash, 2001). According to Dunnenberg (2012), *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is regarded as a first-hand interpretation of life in the city and its happenings, specifically the recurrent xenophobic incidents including the 2007, 2008 and 2015 happenings recorded to have been sparked off in Guateng in the

city of Johannesburg (Matsinhe, 2011). The experiences exemplified in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are, according to Ogden (2013) Mpe's way of depicting the truth about life in South Africa through fiction. Additionally, the xenophobic concept of *Makwerekwere* manifests in the novel *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* in varied contexts including intense hatred, alienation, exploitation and harassment by state officers. In Mhlongo's *After Tears*, foreign nationals are marginalized, profiled, denied job opportunities, and finally 'eliminated' through deportation.

Theoretical Reflections

The discussion is guided by the theory of psychoanalysis. Freud's theory of personality and Erikson's psychosocial concept apply. Psychoanalysis views xenophobia as a result of projected frustrations. Tshitereke (1999) explains that unmet expectations and feelings of exclusion breed discontent. Such emotional discontent is expressed through violence which is either meted out on the perceived scapegoat or turned inward into acts of destruction of self and/or others. In exploring the psychological drives and impact of xenophobia on the characters, the study builds on Freud's theory of personality as well as Erikson's premise that an individual cannot be understood in isolation from his social context (Tyson, 2006; Fish & Syed, 2018). Moreover, Ndebele's (1988) call for an investigation into the characters' interior manifestations of the psychology of oppression also suffices. Erikson and Freud's psychoanalytic approaches therefore enable an objective assessment of the characters' psyche in relation to the different faces of xenophobia portrayed in the novels.

The study adopted analytical research design in collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. According to McMillian & Schumacher (1997), analytical research design allows for a non interactive, descriptive approach in qualitative research based on literary texts. In this study, the design enhanced extensive reading, analysis and interpretation of already existing textual data from the selected novels of Mhlongo's *After Tears* and Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

IV. DISCUSSION

Re-reading xenophobia in the post-apartheid novel: black-on-black segregation in the rainbow nation

Xenophobic alienation, stemming from deep-seated fear and hatred of both foreigners and vilified natives has had indelible effects on the people. In Mhlongo's *After Tears* and Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, African immigrants especially from Nigeria and Zimbabwe are made scapegoats for the challenges the South Africans face. Nigerians are particularly alienated and accused of drug trafficking, limited job opportunities and the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The foreigners are also targets of police brutality and extortion. Of interest is the fact that the indigenes have devised ways of othering their own on grounds of ethnicity, uncertain parentage, witchcraft, superstition and mere suspicion.

In Mhlongo's *After Tears*, Zimbabwean immigrants experience difficulties in obtaining work permits. This makes it almost impossible for them to stay in South Africa. The title of the novel, 'After Tears', alludes to the post-apartheid period, denoting the hopes people had on attainment of democracy. This is ideally

the moment in history when South Africa is expected to embrace 'brotherhood' and 'colour-blindness' as envisioned in the Constitution. Ironically, it is a black-on-black segregation in the rainbow nation.

The novel *After Tears* documents the psychological torture immigrants face as well as the survival tactics they have adapted for their temporary existence in South Africa. One of the characters, Vee, a young Zimbabwean, knows all too well what it means to experience 'otherness' in a host nation. As an immigrant, Vee encounters difficulties in getting a job and living in South Africa. Besides, she is in constant fear of deportation because she does not have the right papers. She emotionally shares her frustrations with Bafana- the protagonist and her friend, "You know that it's difficult to work in this country if you're not a South African?... My problem is my work permit. I have a new one now, but I'm tired of going back home every three months to renew it." (Mhlongo, 2007, pp.186-7). This insecurity and instability elicit anxiety and stress in the immigrant Vee. It is such anxiety that drives her to propose an arrangement for a marriage of convenience with Bafana. With little emotional concern for Vee, Bafana remarks, "But this marriage will just be a sham to get you citizenship, right?... Well, then I'll be happy to be your husband in inverted commas," (Mhlongo, 2007, p.188). The 'marriage' would presumably enable Vee get the papers, give her a sense of belonging (however temporary) and an entitlement to consideration for a job opportunity. Having to be the one to move the proposal compromises Vee's esteem as a lady. Driven by the sole motivation of earning a living through Vee, Bafana gives in to the arrangement. He later confesses, "...I felt scared at the thought of our marriage, but at the same time I knew I needed the money to sustain my business." (Mhlongo, 2007, p.210). That Bafana the native felt scared getting into such a social relationship with the immigrant exposes the socio-cultural barriers that work against the foreigners. The result of Vee's proposal is a symbiotic relationship between the foreigner and the native driven not by love but desperation and the intent to exploit.

That Bafana held Vee in contempt further reveals in the remark he makes concerning her physical appearance:

My eyes were fixed on her lips as she was speaking. I noticed, for the first time, that her small, sharp nose spoilt whatever beauty her face had...

"Marry you?" I asked in a shocked tone of a voice. I scratched my head and looked away briefly in thought. Fifteen grand was a lot of money...Vee's money would help me pay for the office.

I thought for a while, but deep in my heart I knew that I needed the cash.

(Mhlongo,

2007, p.187)

Here, Bafana does not regard Vee as he would any other native woman. His eye is trained to identify the signifiers that mark out a foreigner. In this case, the 'small, sharp nose' can only make a foreign woman ugly. That 'it spoilt whatever beauty her face had' expresses the extent of spite for the immigrant.

The proposed marriage arrangement later fails (Mhlongo, 2007, pp. 213-15) and Vee is deported to Zimbabwe. The narrator reports, "Vee had been deported back to Zimbabwe after failing to secure her work permit, and she was now working on the idea of going to London" (Mhlongo, 2007, p.217). Vee is therefore

neither welcome in South Africa nor settled in Zimbabwe. The psychological torture as a result of homelessness is what makes her work on the idea of going to London. Vee is oblivious of the fact that xenophobia extends its persistent tentacles beyond African borders to the West, as will be related in what Mpe's character experiences while in Oxford.

After Tears also portrays Nigerian immigrants as corrupt. Such identity criminalizes the concerned characters, denting their self esteem. Yomi, Bafana's Nigerian friend is the one who conceives the idea of forgery while aiding Bafana to fake a stopgap certificate with which to establish his short-lived career as a lawyer. Yomi also links Bafana with accomplices for further assistance. As a pastor, Yomi operates a church whose headquarters are in Nigeria and its members allegedly deal in drug trafficking. His 'healing miracles' that have earned him popularity in Yeoville add up to what marks him out as different from the natives (Mhlongo, 2007, pp.154-5). Later in the novel, after Bafana leaves home and severs link with members of his family, he remains in touch with Yomi who gives him connections for safe hiding (Mhlongo, 2007, p.216) That Yomi the Nigerian is the one who sustains Bafana's deceitful life when his mother disowns him for his criminal engagements implies that Mhlongo's South Africans would be morally upright without the infiltration of foreigners into their social and physical space. This profiling also emerges in the novel when Bafana's aunt Zinhle blames Vee for Bafana's double life. She says, "Yes, he was a very nice boy until he began associating with you foreigners," said sis Zinhle, looking at Vee with hatred." (Mhlongo, 2007, p.215).

Such vilification, purely motivated by hatred subjects Vee to psychological torture. Bafana is equally not at peace, he painfully narrates, "This time I kept quiet. Feelings of failure, guilt and exposure battled furiously in my head. I needed to escape it all as quickly as possible..." (Mhlongo, 2007, p.215). Guilt is one of the negative rewards by the Superego for socially unacceptable behavior. Sis Zinhle's regard of the immigrant compares to Mpe's character Cousin who believed that Hillbrow had been just fine until the Nigerians came in (Mpe, 2001, p.17).

Making the immigrants Yomi and Vee to be conduits for Bafana's schemes in *After Tears* is vilification. The Zimbabwean and Nigerian immigrants therefore become a convenient scapegoat for the South African youth who engage in crime. Vee's deportation further illustrates that black immigrants have no room in Mhlongo's post-apartheid South African space. This justifies the argument that South Africa is yet to identify with and accommodate black immigrants in the spirit of pan-Africanism (Tella, 2016). In *After Tears*, the immigrant is mainly objectified. Mhlongo exposes the immigrants' vulnerability, narrates their physical and psychological trauma then leaves them to their wiles. Besides the guilt and self imposed exile Bafana suffers, the author remains non-committal in as far as the plight of the immigrants is concerned.

In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Mpe's critical stance against xenophobia is expressed in the contemptuous tone the perpetrators are condemned. The author's criticism of the locals who denigrate foreigners is revealed through the narrator and the protagonist Refentse's opinions. The native occupants of the city of Hillbrow attribute all the evils to the infiltration of foreigners to their space, conversely, the Tiragalong villagers, motivated by fear and hatred, hold the Hillbrowans in utter spite.

The narrator tells of Refentse's cousin's prejudiced opinion about immigrants' presence in Hillbrow city. Cousin is one of the state officers who derive pleasure in making life unbearable for the foreigners. The narrator relates Refentse's thoughts about Cousin's hypocrisy:

You and he had had many disagreements on the subject of support for foreign teams-especially those from elsewhere in Africa. You often accused him of being a hypocrite, because his vocal support for black non-South African teams, whenever they played against European clubs, contrasted so glaringly with his prejudice towards black foreigners the rest of the time. Cousin would always take the opportunity during these arguments to complain about the crime and grime in Hillbrow, for which he held such foreigners responsible... (Mpe, 2001, p. 17)

Cousin's anti-immigrant sentiments are the perpetrators' while Refentse's opinion echoes the author's perspective, Such xenophobic attitudes as Cousin's were expressed by many natives including a white superintendent, implying that when it comes to the question of alienating black immigrants, the natives would go the extent of teaming up with the whites against their own 'brothers'. It also emerges that in as much as some whites engaged in acts of immorality and crime for which black immigrants were blamed, they (whites) remained unscathed. The narrator states:

Refilwe remained adamant that, yes, there were white prostitutes in our Hillbrow. And white criminals who sold drugs, who were happy to see *Makwerekwere* serving as the butt of the vicious criticism and hostility from those who insisted that *they* were the only legitimate children of the country. There were whites who sold liquor and glue to street children. (Mpe, 2001, p.103)

If what Refilwe shares with her classmates here is anything to go by, then it is clear indication that South Africans' xenophobic alienation of black foreigners was motivated by hatred.

The immigrants equally suffer intolerance in the hands of the locals who view them as a people who have no business seeking refuge in South Africa. Cousin the police officer not only blames the immigrants for the physical and moral decay of Hillbrow (Mpe, 2001, p. 17), he also wonders why the foreigners cannot sort out their problems back in their home countries. Such hatred is aired in the sentiments Cousin shares with Refentse the protagonist, as the narrator reveals:

Cousin would not agree with you, of course. He never agreed with you where black foreigners from African countries, vulgarly referred to as *Makwerekwere*, were concerned. 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 (Mpe, 2001, p.20).

Although Cousin's argument that Africans should sort out their problems sounds plausible, his contemptuous attitude towards the foreigners is criticized. Mpe exonerates the immigrants from full blame on the rising crime rates in Hillbrow. The author gives instances of crime committed by the locals, and states:

...These are examples of many cases of crime not caused by *Makwerekwere*, who were at any rate too much in need of

sanctuary, even if it was sometimes a cold one, to risk attracting the attention of police and security services. *Makwerekwere* knew they had no recourse to legal defence if they were caught. The police could detain or deport them without allowing them any trial at all. Even the Department of Home Affairs was not sympathetic to their cause. No one seemed to care that the treatment of *Makwerekwere* by the police, and the lack of sympathy from the influential Department of Home Affairs, ran contrary to the human rights clauses detailed in the new constitution of the country...

(Mpe, 2001, p. 23)

This exposes the fear and vulnerability of the immigrants in the hands of state officers. They therefore kept a low profile for the fear of brushing against a law which had no recognition for their basic human rights. Their desperation for sanctuary pushes them to occupy a subaltern position of insignificance in the already limiting space. Such denigration worked against the individuals' personality and identity.

The foreign nationals further encountered threats and exploitation; subduing experiences pitting them to live in constant fear and insecurity. The incident of police harassment and exploitation only numbs the victims' conscience, subjecting them to more psychological torture:

Together with his colleagues, he (Cousin) would arrest *Makwerekwere*. Drive them around Hillbrow for infinite periods of time.

See it for the last time, bastards, they would tell the poor souls.

When the poor souls pleaded, the uniformed men would ask if they could make their pleas more visible. They did. Cousin and his colleagues received oceans of rands and cents from these unfortunates, who found very little to motivate them to agree to be sent back home...

(Mpe, 2001, p. 21)

Threats of deportation instill awe in the hapless beings, making them opt to part with their hard earned money to 'buy' temporary freedom rather than go back to their 'war-torn' home countries. The author's reference to the immigrants as 'poor souls' and 'these unfortunates' conveys his empathy with their plight in the hands of the corrupt state police officers.

As in Mhlongo's *After Tears*, perpetrators and victims of xenophobia in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* also forged symbiotic relationships of convenience for existence. The victim immigrants devised some new tactics to survive deportation. The *Makwerekwere* had learned tricks that involved compromising the corrupt police officers or engaging in sham relationships that would aid them get the papers for temporary stay (Mpe, 2001, pp. 21-22). These acts of deception compelled the immigrants to compromise their morals, leading to a guilty conscience and dented personality.

Although incidents of foreigners engaging in unlawful activities such as drug peddling existed, the author indicates that the locals provided a conducive environment and ready market in which such businesses thrived. It is reported thus, "Of course there are some who do drug trafficking. But when the locals are

prepared to lap at them like starved dogs, what do you expect the struggling immigrants to do?" (Mpe, 200, p.18) The 'struggling' immigrants therefore engaged in drug peddling because the locals were willing consumers. In Mpe's view, there is little, if no difference between the natives and some of the foreigners blamed for the crime and grime in South Africa. He likens the xenophobic natives to starved dogs, and then reclaims the objectified image of the immigrant:

Many of the *Makwerekwere* you accuse of this and that are no different to us-sojourners, here in search of green pastures. They are lecturers and students of Wits, Rand Afrikaans University and Technikons around Jo'burg; professionals taking up posts that locals are hardly qualified to fill. (Mpe, 2001, p.18)

In Mpe's view, the foreigners are alumni of South Africa's sophisticated learning institutions, and are therefore only fairly giving back to the society. This is an objective appeal to South Africans with xenophobic attitudes to engage in honest reflection and develop homegrown solutions to the problems that afflict the nation in the post-apartheid set-up.

Xenophobia has dealt psychological scars on characters in more adverse ways. The protagonist Refentse is driven to a state of melancholia, suffers depression and eventually commits suicide. In a stream of consciousness state, acts of xenophobia meted out on immigrants flow in his thoughts just before he dies. His mind revolves around numerous challenges of post-apartheid South Africa, including the plight of *Makwerekwere* in the face of xenophobia:

And when you (Refentse) finally come to this part of your journey that ends in the blank wall of suicide...with the spinning of cars the prostitution drug use and misuse the grime and crime... the Department of Home Affairs moving from downtown Johannesburg into Braamfontein and *Makwerekwere* drifting into and out of Hillbrow...to sort out their refugee affairs and the streets...Overflowing with *Makwerekwere* come to pursue green pastures after hearing that the new president Rolihlala Mandela welcomes guests and visitors unlike his predecessors who erected deadly electric wire fences around the boundaries of South Africa trying to keep out the barbarians from Mozambique Zaire Nigeria Congo Ivory Coast Zimbabwe Angola Zambia from all over Africa fleeing their war-torn countries populated with starvation... (Mpe, 2001: 25-26)

Refentse's mind, in its state of unconsciousness, is preoccupied with the stream of issues that plagued him and his society, including infiltration of foreigners to the country and its attendant effects: violence, immorality, crime and xenophobia in Hillbrow. These post-apartheid socio-cultural issues not only corrode Refentse's subconscious in life but continue to torture his mind even in the afterlife (p.54, p.60).

It is worth noting that xenophobia is not only exacted by a less informed segment of the society. Mpe's novel bears instances where learned individuals play active roles in alienating those perceived as different. Refilwe has attained university education, but driven by hatred and rivalry, she becomes an active participant in the team of villagers united with the sole motive of objectification of Lerato as a 'Hillbrow woman'. According to the villagers, all Hillbrow women were prostitutes. Lerato is Refentse's girlfriend. It is unfortunate that Refilwe's rumours, coupled with Refentse's mother's rejection of Lerato, drive

Refentse to depression that culminates into suicide. Suicide is a result of bottled up emotions of anger and bitterness directed at oneself, leading to self destruction.

Mother and Refilwe's perception of Lerato as a Hillbrow woman with unclear descent and 'impure' identity fuel their hatred. Building on suspicion that Lerato's father was Nigerian, Refentse's mother does not believe her son's explanation, resulting in tension and misunderstanding. Heightened by mother's xenophobic hatred for Hillbrow women, the narrator reveals the psychological impact of such hegemony:

You (Refentse) had quarreled with your mother because you insisted on being in love with Lerato, a Hillbrow woman- as Tiragalong insisted on labeling her. Your efforts to explain that she was from Alexandra, a black township about twelve kilometers north of Johannesburg, did not help to ease your mother's relentless hatred for this Hillbrow woman that she had not even met yet... Your mother knew that all Hillbrow women were prostitutes... She hated the Hillbrow women with unmatched venom- a human venom so fatal it would have put the black mamba's to shame

(Mpe, 2001, p. 39).

That xenophobia is 'an unmatched human venom- so fatal it would put the black mamba's to shame' expresses the author's stand against South Africans who held xenophobic attitudes against their fellow Africans.

Mother's xenophobic prejudice and rejection of Lerato not only results in Refentse's suicide, it gives Tiragalong villagers more ground for venting out their deep-seated vengeance on Refentse's mother. She is necklaced on suspicion that she had bewitched her son: a horrifying experience (pp. 43-4). It is unfortunate that the psychic trauma Lerato suffers eventually drive her to also commit suicide. This confirms that xenophobic hatred generates emotional discontent which is expressed through violence on the scapegoat or turned inward into self destructive acts of suicide.

When it later turns out that Lerato's father was actually a South African but not Nigerian as earlier misconstrued, the effect is shocking to some people but the damage as a result of their xenophobic suspicion is irreversible. The narrator relates, thus:

Nobody in Tiragalong knew then that Lerato's father was not, in fact, the Nigerian, but Piet, who was also Tshepo's father. The story only came out long after your and Lerato's suicides... Tiragalong was shocked to learn that the despised Lerato and the beloved Tshepo were, in fact, sister and brother

(Mpe, 2001, p. 45).

To Mpe that the 'despised Lerato and the beloved Tshepo were, in fact, sister and brother' proves that both the natives and the perceived immigrants all have a sense of belonging in South Africa, hence 'Our Hillbrow'- the shared space.

Immigrants from other African countries are equally blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS in Johannesburg. It is stated:

But strange illnesses courted in Hillbrow, as Tiragalong knew only too well, could only translate into AIDS. This AIDS, according to popular understanding, was caused by foreign germs that travelled down from the central and western parts of Africa...attributed the source of the virus that caused AIDS to a species called the Green Monkey, which some people in west

Africa were said to eat as meat...AIDS's travel route into Johannesburg was through *Makwerekwere*; and Hillbrow was the sanctuary in which *Makwerekwere* basked (Mpe, 2001, p.3-4) Such xenophobic profiling was merely driven by hatred of the vulnerable immigrants. Mpe counters this by posing the candid question, "Who said that the people of Tiragalong were cleaner than everyone else?...Were the people of Tiragalong really better than anyone else...?(p.55). These are followed by a stunning revelation that some Tiragalong villagers who had not been to the city of Hillbrow suffered worse venereal diseases. Mpe concludes that people should not be condemned for diseases that they had not purposefully passed around (Mpe, p55). This point aptly fits in Refilwe's experience; while in Oxford, she discovers that she is HIV positive-. Suspicion points towards the Nigerian boyfriend but it turns out that she had contracted the disease way back at home in South Africa, Tiragalong village.

Mpe reveals that xenophobia is not unique to South Africa but transcends continental borders. His characters' experiences in Oxford, England expose another face of xenophobic alienation where South Africans receive preferential treatment over blacks from other African countries. In Heathrow, Nigerians, Algerians and other Africans are signified others. Theirs is an image of suspected drug peddlers, criminals and agents of HIV/AIDS. They are therefore subjected to humiliating security searches and lengthy medical examinations. In a satirical tone, the narrator indicates:

No, Refilwe did not have to register with the Oxford police, as many Africans, including South Africans during the Apartheid days, had to do. South Africans, black and white, were very fine people these days...

She was of course grateful, but not entirely happy about her privileged South Africa status. Even before she arrived in our Oxford, she could not enjoy the bad treatment that she had witnessed the Nigerians and Algerians, for example, receiving at the hands of the Customs officials at our Heathrow...

Our Heathrow strongly reminded Refilwe of our Hillbrow and the xenophobia it engendered. She learnt there, at our Heathrow, that there was another word for foreigners that was not very different in connotation from *Makwerekwere* or *Mapolantane*. Except that it was a much more widely used term: *Africans*

(Mpe,

2001, pp.100-102)

It is after coming face to face with this kind of nativism in England that Refilwe changes her xenophobic attitude against her fellow Africans. The inhuman treatment that blacks from other African nations are subjected to in Oxford pricks Refilwe's conscience. She feels guilty of having profiled her 'brothers' on unjustifiable grounds. It is also ironical that she is exempted from the rigorous medical examinations yet she has contracted the much dreaded HIV/AIDS.

Refilwe's preferential treatment and the denigration of other Africans in England presents her an opportunity for introspection. She becomes remorseful for expressing xenophobic attitudes on her African citizens whose descent she was not sure of, some of whom turned out to be natives of South Africa. The novel further illustrates:

These Oxfordians who talked so distinctly about Africa and South Africa were themselves a hybrid of native Oxfordians and

those who had acquired the citizenship by other means...It was no different to the way we generalized about Hillbrowans without venturing to clarify what we meant...She was reminded of this every time Oxfordians talked about Africans and South Africans.

(Mpe, 2001, p. 102)

Hybridity here implies that the natives of Oxford could not claim pure descent in matters identity. It was therefore not unimaginable to have South Africans of mixed ancestry. The experience makes Refilwe remorseful, albeit late. She learns that the issues for which she profiled her perceived foreigners were more complex. By exposing Refilwe to this reality in a foreign land, the author seems to indicate that humanity is sacred and must be treated as such irrespective of racial inclination or geographical space occupied. Mpe therefore engenders a South African society in which people embrace a commonly shared social responsibility for an international identity.

V. CONCLUSION

Xenophobic alienation in the rainbow nation has its roots in the apartheid legacy of disenfranchisement of blacks, hence, the 'return of the repressed.' The locals have projected their repressed emotions on the immigrants, consequences of which have impacted even on some natives. In Mhlongo's *After Tears* and Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, immigrants especially from Nigeria and Zimbabwe are scapegoats for the challenges the natives face. As such, they are subjected to alienation, exploitation and other forms of denigration that leave them psychologically scarred. In Mpe's novel, victims' psyche is corroded to the extent of some committing suicide. Mhlongo's non-committal stance, coupled with the act of deportation of immigrants in the novel, to a larger extent, betrays the spirit of 'brotherhood' towards the vision of an all-inclusive South Africa. Mpe on the other hand envisions a trans-national identity through his candid condemnation of xenophobic attitudes and acts, and in exonerating the immigrants from the branded labels of 'the corrupt' 'criminal', 'immoral', 'drug dealer' and the rest. Mpe's call for introspection and moral consciousness among South Africans suggests that the immigrant has little to do with the challenges for which they are victimized in the post-apartheid South Africa. This paper echoes the need for social and economic transformation towards negotiating the prevailing socio-cultural challenges such as xenophobia, which have their roots in the past but whose traumatizing impact remain widespread among its people to date. An end to xenophobic marginalization would ensure a South African society where people are accommodated irrespective of their nationality, race or cultural affiliation.

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