

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**“Name Rhymes with Shame”:
Representations of Migrant Women
Protagonists in Selected African
Texts**

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, in the Graduate Programme in English Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Kimméra Sherrilyn Naidoo, declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
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5. This dissertation does not contain texts, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation and in the References sections.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores representations of African migrant women through the medium of three African literary texts. The literary texts that are examined are Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) and Meg Vandermerwe's *Zebra Crossing* (2013). African migrant women may be deemed the subaltern as they suffer marginalisation, subjugation and oppression in diasporic locations as a result of their identities. At home in post-colonial African nations, the protagonists are subject to adverse socio-economic and political conditions which prompt migration; however, in their host country, they are also subject to discrimination, xenophobia and displacement, which lead to a yearning for their home country.

This project focuses on a transcultural study within the framework of English Studies, post-colonial literature and migration. The novels reveal the breaking down of cultural boundaries. The migrant characters in the novel represent a transcultural identity as their identity is transformed in their host countries through the hybridisation and syncretisation of cultures.

The primary objective of this dissertation is to explore diasporic African identities through a textual analysis of the plot, characterisation and dominant themes in the selected primary texts. The individual novels are linked by the theme of diaspora, recurring diasporic contexts and circumstances, characters' traits, and motifs. This paper uses Gayatri Spivak's notion of the subaltern to explore the representation of the lives of African migrant women protagonists. The selected texts capture the painful emotions and experiences of female migrants who are subject to double prejudice. Women migrants are regarded as vulnerable, subordinate and subject to male dominance as well as national discrimination because of their outsider status. An analysis of the contexts, circumstances, emotions and actions of the protagonists will be undertaken. This dissertation also focuses on Rosemary Marangoly George's notion of home. Home is not only a place of nurture, comfort and protection but it is also a place of catastrophe and danger. The selected texts highlight the dislocations of life in African countries like Zimbabwe and Nigeria and the relocation and double displacement of the Zimbabwean and Nigerian diasporic community in the United States of America and South Africa. I analyse various coping mechanisms the protagonists employ as strategies for survival. I also explore the protagonists' relationship with other migrants in their host countries.

INTRODUCTION

Butterflies have always had wings; people have always had legs. While history is marked by the hybridity of human societies and the desire for movement, the reality of most of migration today reveals the unequal relations between rich and poor, between North and South, between whiteness and its others.

(Walia 2013:38)

The above quotation by Harsha Walia resonates with the subject matter of this dissertation. This quotation emphasises the mobility and migration of individuals between societies as well as the hybridity that characterises individual subjects. However, it also highlights the hegemony present in society which results in inequality, and distinctions between self and Other. This dissertation focuses on the literary representations of African migrant women protagonists. The literary texts that are analysed are Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) and Meg Vandermerwe's *Zebra Crossing* (2013). African migrant women may be regarded as the subaltern as they suffer marginalisation, subjugation and oppression both in their home countries and in their host countries because of their identities. At home in post-colonial African nations, they are subject to pervasive socio-economic and political conditions which encourage migration; however, in their host country, they are also subject to discrimination, xenophobia and displacement, which lead to a longing for their home country.

Diasporas have proliferated globally. We live in a world that is interconnected and culturally diverse. Petra Rüdiger and Konrad Gross (2009:ix) aptly note that "Perhaps more than in any other period in modern history, our globalized present is characterized by a constant interaction of, and exposure to, different peoples, regions, ways of life, traditions, languages and cultures". African migrants are viewed as transnational and transcultural figures as they cross various national borders, and they represent cultural diversity. Transculturalism is omnipresent in society today and it is used as an umbrella term for the cross-cultural encounters between different groups of people, in particular diasporic subjects. In the selected texts, African migrant diasporic subjects undergo a cultural exchange, and the texts portray the formation of their personal identities. This dissertation focuses on the investigation of African migrants' circumstances, backgrounds, and cultural identities as represented in selected African texts.

In this chapter of my dissertation I will introduce the key theories and concepts that are pertinent for my analysis of the three selected novels. I explore the relationship between literature and society and explain how the authors' diasporic background influences their literary texts. This chapter also analyses post-colonial African identities, focusing particularly on identity in relation to transculturalism and transnationalism. African migrant women's identities have transformed as a result of the increase in migration, crossing of borders and the blurring of the concept of home. This chapter also discusses the role of intersectionality in the lives of the African migrant women protagonists, focusing on how the factors of race, gender and class affect their identity and personal experiences. Race, gender and class intersect in their lives and limit their mobility and personal freedom. I explore the concepts of the subaltern, abject and Other in relation to the fictional depiction of main characters in the novels. In the host countries, the United States of America and South Africa, segregation and social division still exist. The protagonists encounter prejudice, disdain and oppression. The three protagonists that I will be focusing on are Ifemelunamma, Darling Nonkululeko Nkala and Chipo Nyamubaya.

A black, female, African migrant feels wrong in her skin, hair and accent. The protagonist, Chipo, in *Zebra Crossing* declares that "Name rhymes with shame" (Vandermerwe 2013:10). Chipo is an African, female, albino migrant, therefore she is subject to various types of discrimination and stereotypes. She is labelled as a "peeled potato" (10), "monkey" (10), "sope" (10), "biri" (10), "animal" (10), "ghost" (10), "wit kaffir (10) and "makwerekwere" (80). Wherever she goes she is identified by prejudicial names which lead to her suffering throughout her life. She is eventually shamefully killed because of the belief that albino body parts can be used for medicinal purposes. The protagonists in the other two selected texts are also subject to similar discrimination because of their identities.

LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Language can be regarded as discourse because language communicates meaning and meaning gives information. Mwihia Njoki and Collins Ogogo (2014:70) highlight that there is a connection between literature and society. Literature is deemed as a product of society as the language depicts events and situations that have occurred in society. Literary texts are representations of reality and society. In addition, the selected authors' experiences influence

the subject matter in their novels as they have all experienced migration. Literature is a form of art that depicts the complexity of culture in a world characterised by transnationalism, globalisation and migration.

In this contemporary era of globalisation and migration, African migrant populations have proliferated across the globe. Migration is a widespread phenomenon. According to the Migration Policy Institute's statistics in 2005, there are approximately 244 million international migrants nationwide, which is about 3.3% of the world's population. Migration is "transforming national borders, cultures, identities of migrants and those of their host nations" (Uwakweh, Rotich & Okpala 2014:2). Various individuals are migrating to establish a better life in a different part of the world. The Migration Policy Institute (2015) statistics indicate that there are approximately 475 000 Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa. In addition, the above-mentioned statistics reveal that there are approximately 50 000 Zimbabweans and 237 000 Nigerians residing in the United States of America. There has also been an increase in the female migrant population. A prominent feature of the contemporary migration trend is escalating feminisation (Uwakweh, Rotich & Okpala 2014:3). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Organisation for Economic and Co-operation Development (UNDESA-OECD) (2013) states that women comprise approximately 48% of the international migrant population. Jim Whitman (2000:5) cogently comments that "women are directly affected by migration, either because they are so often left behind to cope with the poverty which has compelled men to migrate or because they themselves migrate".

Discourse on cross-cultural issues has increased as a result of migration. Whitman further explains that migration is

Broadly understood as a change in the location of the home, and often involving entire communities, migration is a complex phenomenon that reflects individual and collective decisions, interdependence through trade, communication, social mobility and culture as well as North/South divides and deeper structural fractures in the social fabric of societies. (11)

African authors have used literature to reflect the experiences of African diasporic subjects. Meg Vandermerwe, NoViolet Bulawayo and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are all African authors who have directly experienced migration. The selected texts are personally connected

to the authors' experiences and the societies in which they have lived. The literature is shaped by their experiences growing up in post-colonial African countries and their experiences of migration to the host countries.

African diasporic authors' literature represents migrants from diverse backgrounds, classes, cultures and traditions. The selected fiction highlights the issues that African women protagonists are subject to during their quest for greener pastures. The texts portray the experiences the protagonists encounter in the United States of America and South Africa. Even though countries are culturally diverse, native citizens are not welcoming towards African migrants. The authors interrogate the limitations of African and American societies' being inclusive. The protagonists' experiences are characterised by alienation, isolation, nostalgia and discrimination. The authors also emphasise the intersectionality of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity and social class in the diaspora experience. Intersectionality dictates African women's choices in their home and host countries.

Migrant literature provides narratives of the struggles and plights of migrants. It also challenges the oppressive and stereotypical discourses about migrants. The selected literature provides voices for the unheard migrants who suffer displacement and subordination. Nonetheless, the three authors reveal a shared optimism about the resiliency of African migrant women's survival strategies in the selected texts. In each novel, the protagonists are depicted as strong, black, African females who, at some point in the text, are forced to deal with the prejudices against their gender or race. The protagonists display agency and transcend the limitations of patriarchy, sexism and racism.

DIASPORIC BACKGROUND OF AUTHORS

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, NoViolet Bulawayo and Meg Vandermerwe are contemporary African writers¹.

¹ Meg Vandermerwe is regarded as an African in terms of Chielozone Eze's ideology that "being African is not reductive to colour, heritage or autochthony; rather being African is expansive. Whoever has lived on this continent long enough to identify with it is African" (2016:118). The above ideology emphasises that identity should not be constructed based on what society dictates as race and colour have been used to dictate nationality and belonging. The question of "Who exactly is an African?" is further explored in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born on the 15th of September 1977. The Nigerian author is a novelist and non-fiction writer. She has a personal experience of migration. From the age of nineteen to the present, she has lived both in America and Nigeria. She was raised in Nigeria but studied in the United States of America. Adichie explores the theme of diaspora in various literary works, including *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and *Americanah* (2013). She focuses primarily on African migrant women. Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* "captures the burden of African migration" as the text introduces the "burdens and challenges" migrants are subject to when "residing in a new cultural space" (Uwakweh, Rotich & Okpala 2014:4).

Adichie is well known for her literary techniques and her exploration of social issues. André Kaboré (2016) explains that

Adichie resorts to many literary aesthetics, mainly comparison and contrast, to present many reasons for migration in her literary works. From one novel to another, she explores various factors which lead people to the road of migration, namely poverty, war, education, personal agenda and choicelessness. (8)

We Need New Names is authored by Zimbabwean émigrée Elizabeth Zandile Tshele, who is also identified by her pen name, NoViolet Bulawayo. She was born on the 12th October 1981. She moved to Michigan at the age of 18 but she has homes in both the United States of America and Zimbabwe and frequently travels between them. Bulawayo completed her university education in the United States of America. *We Need New Names* is Bulawayo's debut novel. She is the first black African woman and the first Zimbabwean to be shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

Meg Vandermerwe was born in South Africa and raised in Europe. She graduated with an English literature degree from Oxford University and completed her Master of Arts at the University of East Anglia. She published a collection of short stories entitled *This Place I Call Home* in 2010. *Zebra Crossing* is Vandermerwe's debut novel. Vandermerwe reveals the repercussions of prejudice, discrimination and violence resulting from the delineation of national borders, national security and fear of otherness. She focuses on migrant diasporic experiences in African fiction, xenophobia and albinism. These issues are regarded as taboo and problematic areas so they are usually ignored in society.

Vandermerwe is a white South African citizen who explores the experiences of a diverse range of migrants from several African countries in *Zebra Crossing*. In an interview with Scalabrini Centre (2013), Vandermerwe states that “a number of Zimbabweans shared their stories with me about what compelled them to leave home and come here, their experiences at the border and the various trials and tribulations they have faced since coming here”. These stories have been fictionally represented in the primary text.

The selected primary texts illustrate Afropolitanism. Miriam Pahl (2016:74) explains that Afropolitanism is a concept that describes one’s “position *in* the world” but also expresses a specific “disposition *towards* the world”. African, female diasporic authors express their position in the world as they are able to travel freely and are open to new possibilities globally because they have enhanced resources. However, they are also subject to discrimination because of their identity. Globalisation has facilitated mobility; however, it has also resulted in hegemony, discrimination and injustices. The selected authors present an Afrocentric perspective of migration, mobility and globalisation. In the texts, they depict the protagonists’ ability to navigate through countries from Africa to the West as Ifemelu and Darling migrate from African nations to America. However, the authors also highlight the ability to navigate within Africa as Chipu migrates from Zimbabwe to South Africa.

African diasporic authors who “have an enhanced position in terms of mobility and resources” are provided with an opportunity to “conceptually deconstruct impermeable social boundaries, hierarchies and power differences” (74). Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe are all globally oriented writers who navigate a transnational and transcultural space in their literature. Their literary works focus on universal issues that are relevant in contemporary society. Their narratives represent diverse ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds. The selected texts also depict the diversity of African diasporic experience.

Authors, through their personal careers and individual lived diasporic experiences, reflect on the African diasporic identity within the global context. Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe are diasporic subjects as they move around the world and they encounter people from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds which define who they are. In addition, they are Afropolitans in the sense that they embody a transcultural identity as their culture is composed from various strands of societies and cultures.

POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE AND THEMES

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2007:vii) comment on the role of post-colonial discourse in relation to the problems of global culture and the relationships between cultures and global forces. Epifanio San Juan (1998:1) states that post-colonial discourse centres on the questions of identity, difference, individuality and the field of cultural studies. Dominant themes in post-colonial literature are: oppression, racial discrimination and black culture in diasporas globally. In the selected post-colonial migrant literature, the negative experiences in Africa which cause migrants to flee from poverty, unrest or war are highlighted. The texts also expose the dislocation African migrants are subject to. Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe expose the challenges of migration and diasporic subjects in a post-colonial world. Themes in post-colonial literature are place and displacement, identity crises and diaspora. African post-colonial writers focus on issues of migration, the conflicts of living in the diaspora and the construction of transcultural diasporic identities. All three selected novels are linked by the diasporic theme as the authors investigate immigrant and diasporic experience through the representation of their protagonists. The characters cross borders to establish a better life in a different part of the world, other than their home country. The authors also interrogate the notion of home and belonging, identity and hegemony. In the selected texts, various groups of people have power over the African migrant protagonists, which leads to the protagonists confronting several challenges in their host country.

Christine Vogt-William (2005) maintains that

One of the most common situations depicted in postcolonial literature is that of the migrant in Western societies, who finds herself, more often than not, in conflict with her “home” culture as well as that of the “new” country. The present migrant experience is typified by rootlessness, displacement and intercultural uneasiness. While dealing with these external maladies, the migrant also has to confront the conflicts generated within herself by the influences and demands of both the cultures she is part of. Hybridity, a term introduced into postcolonial discourse by Homi Bhabha, is the label given this phenomenon. (387-388)

African diasporic authors are regarded as transcultural and transnational individuals who continuously travel across various continents. Stephen Clingman (2009:8) describes

transnational fiction as literature “written by, and directed towards, migrant and multi-lingual communities, who exist in multiple and in-between spaces”. The selected authors celebrate hybridity through the characterisation of the multicultural protagonists, and the authors also represent a new hybrid identity and literary style. Nicholas Van Hear (2010:1533) notes that “migration is part of the process of transformation of social structures and institutions: migration both shapes social transformation and is shaped by such fundamental change”. Post-colonial literature has raised consciousness on post-colonial diasporic identities. Peter Barry (1995:195) further explains that the “emphasis on identity as doubled, or hybrid, or unstable” is a characteristic of post-colonial literature.

Dalene Swanson (2007:53) argues that post-colonial discourses have provided innovative perceptions and acknowledged the interrelatedness of the concepts of “identity, ideology, knowledge and context”. Post-colonial discourse aims at disrupting established doctrines and provides possibilities of resistance to hegemony and oppression for marginalised individuals in society (54). The selected authors’ novels highlight the plight of various protagonists who are African diasporic women. Women are subject to discourses of patriarchy, racism and sexism. Despite discrimination, stigmatisation and other negative challenges, African migrant women are portrayed as powerful, resourceful and resilient in my selected texts. African feminist authors’ texts raise awareness of the oppression, subjugation and exploitation that women and migrants face in society today. Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe take on a political role as they highlight the injustices that occur in their home country (Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa) by creating realist fiction. This fiction makes readers aware of the harsh conditions in post-colonial African countries. The above-mentioned authors question the presence of peace, reconciliation, and inclusivity in African countries. They present counter-discursive voices for African migrant women. The authors interrogate, deconstruct and demystify the stereotypes that are constructed by society regarding African migrants. However, through representations of migration, the reader becomes more aware that migrants also face the same plight in richer and more advanced countries like South Africa or the United States of America. Apartheid and segregation are legally over. Nonetheless, racism is still a perturbing problem universally.

HOME

Discourses on migration are closely linked to discourses of home. The notion of home is generally associated with family, belonging and childhood. Home has a very deep and complex emotional meaning and it is metaphorically used in discourses in diaspora literature. Literary texts highlight how the notion of home is translated through memories, traditions and cultures. One defines one's home; however, home also defines the individual. One's identity is strongly connected to one's home as it is a key factor in the development of an individual's identity. In addition, home is used as an indicator to define those who belong and those who are foreign. Home is also a way of establishing and understanding the space within ourselves and the way the world is constructed around us. The selected primary texts represent the ideologies of home which lead to re-assessments of the notion of belonging. In migrant literature, home can be recreated through the assimilation of culture and feeling at home in a new diasporic location.

Rosemary Marangoly George (1999:6) emphasises the ambiguous nature of the notion of home. Home is regarded as a place of comfort but also of horror. The concept of home establishes difference because it is centred on the ideas of inclusion and exclusion. George's explanation is as follows:

The inclusions are grounded in a learned (or taught) sense of a kinship that is extended to those who are perceived as sharing the same blood, race, class, gender, or religion [...] Homes are manifest on geographical, psychological and material levels. They are places that are recognised as such by those within and those without. (9)

George's notion of home is that home is a place where one escapes to; however, it is also a place one escape from. This emphasises the ambivalence of home. In the texts, the protagonists undergo cultural alienation and personal isolation in their home and host countries. The notion of home also guides who belongs there and who does not. It directs the "existence of subjects: the notion of belonging, of having a home, and a place of one's own". And yet, in the very reference to a "home-country" lies the indication that the speaker is away from home (2). This leads to individuals being exiled in diasporic locations as a result of their foreign identity.

The selected texts present home as a place of comfort, ambiguity, alienation and distress. The authors emphasise that travel is challenging, and national, cultural and ethnic boundaries are confining. The novels centre on the narrative viewpoint of the protagonist who suffers displacement in her home country as well as in her host country. The dysfunctional nature of post-colonial African politics leads to citizens of the country suffering and encountering daily struggles, hence this motivates migration. It is a longing for development and a sense of disillusionment that persuades one to leave home. Consequently, home is regarded as a place where one escapes from.

Countries like the United States of America and South Africa are a symbol of freedom and opportunity. However, the protagonists each face a great disappointment when they encounter many challenges including an identity crisis, nostalgia, discrimination, racism, sexism and xenophobia. Through mobility, migrants are still labelled by the failures in their home country and are regarded as rejects of a failed state. Each protagonist has an increasingly unfulfillable desire for her motherland. Hence, home is identified as a place where one escapes to.

The selected authors capture the restlessness the characters encounter as they move from one place to another. The protagonists are caught between nostalgia, rupture, loss, freedom and personal progress while trying to create an identity in the place in which they strive to belong. In America, the protagonist Darling discovers an acrimonious coldness from the extreme winters as well as the cold-hearted, prejudiced individuals she encounters. In addition, Ifemelu discovers sweltering heat in America which she refers to as an “enveloping, uncompassionate heat” (Adichie 2013:104). All three protagonists experience hunger, despair and discrimination. They discover a lack of hospitality which leads to their feelings of alienation and disillusionment.

Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe provide social commentary and profound insight into the undesirable, segregated and discriminatory nature of African and American society. The novels emphasise the incapacity of South African and American society to consider African migrants as part of the national community. The rainbow nation is just a name and “the land of the free” is only a myth.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This section provides a detail discussion of migration, diaspora and transnationalism. It also centres on an analysis of transculturalism, the subaltern and the notion of identity. This project focuses on a transcultural study within the framework of English Studies, post-colonial literature and migration studies. Transculturalism is a concept that is used across various fields with different perspectives. According to Frank Schulze-Engler, a key theorist in the field, transcultural studies relates to:

theories of culture and literature that have sought to account for the complexity of culture in a world characterised by globalisation, transnationalisation, and interdependence; realities of individual and collective lifeworlds shaped by the ubiquity of phenomena and experiences relating to transnational connections and the blurring of cultural boundaries. (2009:ix)

Transcultural English Studies is a comprehensive notion used to define transnational and transcultural literary writers who can no longer be related to one national literary space. The selected authors are transcultural and transnational authors who write across various cultures. This project is a transcultural study as it explores the literature of African writers from a diverse array of social and cultural contexts.

Migration, Diaspora and Transnationalism

Migrant literary studies are a field that can be categorised under transcultural literary studies. Migration studies developed as a contemporary subject of exploration as a result of globalisation. Ulrich Beck (2015:17) defines globalisation as “processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientation, identities and networks”. The current phase of globalisation characterised by the mobility of individuals has led to the exploration of transnational subjects’ lives and experiences. Transnationalism is an umbrella term used to refer to migrant, diasporic and refugee communities in post-colonial theory who cross national borders. However, transnationals actively contribute to both their home and host countries. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014:112) defines migration as a “multifaceted, multidimensional social process”. Furthermore, Thomas Faist (2000:200) defines international migration as a “multi-dimensional

economic, political, cultural and demographic process that encapsulates various links between two or more settings and manifold ties of movers and stayers between them”. The flow of migration is usually from developing to developed countries. However, there has also been an increase in South-South migration.

Rubin Patterson (2006:1891) defines transnationalism as “an emergent field of study with a focus on citizens who, though migrating from poor to rich countries, manage to construct and nurture social fields that intimately link their respective homelands and their new diasporic locations”. Transnationalism is a concept used to refer to the social process whereby migrants transgress national, political and cultural borders. In addition, Cristina Blanc, Linda Basch and Nina Schiller (1995:686) explain that research on transnationalism draws attention to “culture, legal and cultural citizenship, and constructions of race, ethnicity, and national identity in the countries and regions from which migrants originate and in the nation-states in which they settle”.

In the three selected African texts, the protagonists are viewed as transnational or diasporic subjects as they migrate from their home countries to their host countries. In *Americanah* and *We Need New Names*, the protagonists are exposed to international migration. The protagonists migrate from Nigeria and Zimbabwe to the United States of America. They cross international borders, moving from their developing home countries to a developed country. In *Zebra Crossing*, the experiences of migration in and around Africa are brought to light. The protagonist migrates from Zimbabwe to South Africa, which is regarded as South-South migration. This dissertation, through a literary analysis, investigates the experiences and positions of the African migrant women protagonists in multiple sites and stages in the process of migration.

The term “diaspora” has proliferated in the world as a result of migration. “Diaspora” comes from the Greek word meaning “to disperse” and it indicates the “voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin: 2007:61). In the selected literary texts, the three protagonists migrate voluntarily in search of a better life. The term “diaspora” is used to include immigrants, refugees, exiles, expatriates and foreign workers. Rogers Brubaker (2005:3) argues that the term “diaspora” is inclusive enough to include “any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space”. The protagonists are from Nigeria and Zimbabwe; however, there are many more

diasporic subjects alluded to in all three texts. In *We Need New Names*, the protagonist, Darling, describes the diversity of individuals living in the United States of America, stating that there are many others, “others with names like myths, names like puzzles, names we had never heard before: Virgilio, Balamugunthun, Faheem, Abdulrahman, Aziz, Baako, Dae-Hyun, Ousmane, Kimatsu. When it was hard to say the many strange names, we called them by their countries” (Bulawayo 2013:243). Darling further cites their countries, for example, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Sudan, Ethiopia, Israel, Kazakhstan and Niger.

Mary Osirim (2008:369) notes that “Migration Studies provide us with the tools to comprehend how the current phase of globalisation presents new ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors for migrants linked to economic crisis/ insecurity, wars and political instability in their home countries”. Migrant displacement in Africa has increased precipitously as a result of the political and socio-economic conditions in post-colonial Africa. Osirim (368) points out some of the issues in Africa that motivate migration; these factors include: “the current phase of globalisation (and the related consequences of economic crisis and adjustment), political instability and corruption, wars, civil unrest and natural disasters”. In Nigeria, people migrate for social reasons, for example unemployment, civil unrest, poverty, poor governance, religious or political autonomy and education (Maxwell 2014:251).

Osirim (2008:367) argues that the United States of America is an increasingly appealing option for Africans who desire to escape from their own continent to improve their life and enjoy “enhanced socio-economic mobility”. The characters in the novels give up their life in Zimbabwe and Nigeria respectively in search of the achievement of a better life. They migrate to improve their lives as their mobility is an escape from poverty and political unrest. Ifemelu, in *Americanah*, migrates to the United States of America for higher education.

Faist explains that the term “diaspora” points toward those individuals who have

suffered some kind of traumatic event which leads to the dispersal of its members, and there is a vision and memory of a lost or an imagined homeland still to be established, often accompanied by a refusal of the receiving society to recognise in full the cultural distinctiveness of the immigrants. (2000:197)

The protagonists are transnational subjects as they are living in a new nation; however, they have a strong connection to their homeland and families. They also maintain relationships with individuals in their former homeland. The protagonists have a yearning to return to their homeland as they struggle to adapt to American and South African culture. Professional African citizens in the selected texts relinquish their lucrative jobs to work in the United States of America, England or South Africa. However, in their host country they do menial, dehumanising and degrading jobs for low pay.

Brubaker (2005:5) explains that there are three central constituents of diaspora which are: dispersion, homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance. The first component entails any forced or traumatic dispersion where the individual crosses state borders (5). Secondly, homeland orientation signifies that the individual has a compelling connection with his or her homeland which is evident in their character and also shapes their identity (5). The last constituent involves the preservation of one's identity in the host country over an extended period of time (6).

In the primary novels, the protagonists' dispersion is caused by the traumatic social, economic and political conditions in the home country. The protagonists all have a strong connection to their homeland. There are continuous recollections of their home and family. The protagonists also have a nostalgia as they desire to return home. The protagonists identify home as a place of safety, comfort and belonging. In addition, their homeland is the place that shapes their identity. The protagonists preserve their traditional culture while assimilating the cultures in the host country. The protagonists represent a distinct transnational community.

Transculturalism

Transcultural literary studies are significant to cultural, literary, immigrant and postcolonial studies. Schulze-Engler explains the importance of the concept of transculturality:

Understanding culture and literature in terms of a transcultural framework shifts the focus of attention away from the quasi-diplomatic "international" relations between cultures and towards the productive communicative processes by which individuals and social groups make sense of culture in the contemporary world. (2009:93)

Arianna Dagnino (2013:3) defines transcultural literary studies as investigations that “engage with and express the confluential nature of cultures overcoming the different dichotomies between North and South, the West and the Rest, the coloniser and the colonised, the dominator and the dominated, the native and the (im)migrant, the national and the ethnic”. Transcultural literary studies highlight the transformative nature of cultures through hybridity, syncretism and creolisation. Transcultural studies concentrate on the lives of individuals instead of the concept of culture, and they also explore how individuals and social groups achieve or reject multiculturalism in an increasingly globalised world.

Lucia-Mihaela Grosu (2012:104) points out that transculturalism, which is also known as cosmopolitanism, offers a breaking down of cultural boundaries and encourages the interweaving of cultural identities. Youna (2011:119) further notes that the cosmopolitan vision focuses on “celebrating cultural differences and human diversity, uncritically assuming an inclusiveness and engagement with difference, and also assuming an unconditionally motivating attitude towards all human beings across national borders and cultural boundaries”. Afropolitanism is a term used to refer to cosmopolitan individuals with African roots. Eze (2016:115) defines an Afropolitan as “one, who, on the strength of birth or affinity, can call any place in Africa his or her place, while at the same time being open to the world”. Afropolitan is a term used to describe African diasporic individuals’ identity in post-colonial society. Various African authors, writers and poets have used this term to describe their identity.

The concept of Afropolitanism was introduced and popularised by Taiye Selasi in 2005, who describes:

Afropolitans – [as] the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem. lab/jazz lounge near you. You’ll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars [...]. There is at least one place on the African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie’s kitchen. Then

there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands. We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world. (1)

Selasi is a writer, photographer and fashion icon. She is of African descent as she is rooted in Nigeria and Ghana. She was born in London to Ghanaian-Nigerian parents. In addition, she has strong connections to Accra, Berlin, New York and Rome as a result of her mobility. Selasi uses this term to describe her identity because of her transcultural identity that is characterised by mixing, assimilating and blending of cultures. Furthermore, Selasi identifies herself as an African of the world as she feels at home in many different cities and countries. Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013) and Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) are characterised as Afropolitan texts.

Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe are Afropolitan authors who write about the tropes of mobility and the narratives of the complexity of home and belonging. The selected texts feature complex Afropolitan characters as the protagonists are all of African descent but they are diasporic subjects. The novels also reveal the complexity of Afropolitan protagonists' identities.

Transculturalism offers migrants the ability to embrace various cultures and ethnicities in their host country. Susanne Gehrman (2012: 61) claims that "mobility in a cosmopolitan tradition is the ability to move between and to inhabit different places and cultures". In the selected texts, various cultures are in dialogue. There is an embracing of the cultures in the host country while the protagonists hold on to their traditional African customs, norms and values. Homi Bhabha (1994:224) states that "liminality of migrant experiences is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of migrant life".

Individuals are born into a specific place, culture and family. However, through globalisation, the world is connected and individuals have the opportunity to move to new places. Through migration, individuals expand their vision and perception of their identity because of hybridity, mixing, and blending. There is an embracing of ethnicity, race, religion, culture and tradition. However, individuals still hold on to their heritage. New notions of belonging, identity and selfhood are represented in transcultural literature from a diverse range of social, political, economic and cultural contexts.

Eze (2014:235) notes that “identity is no longer shaped exclusively by geography or blood, or culture understood in oppositional terms. On the contrary, identity is now relational”. Migration, mobility and displacement have led to a shift in self-perception and highlighted the fluidity of identity. Individuals are connected to a nation, culture, history and heritage. However, they also have the ability to transcend boundaries. Eze (235) explains that in society today African families are “multi-ethnic, multi-racial, transcultural; they are polychromatic”. Individuals have the capacity to occupy several cultures. Cultural identities are not fixed or complete, as while they are rooted in specific places and histories, they are constantly transforming (Hall 1990:225). Identities are socially constructed and influenced by many factors, including nationality, ethnicity, race, skin colour, hair and language. The dominant tools the protagonists use to construct their identities are culture, language and physical appearance.

The novels present the intertwining of relationships across racial, ethnic and social lines as there is a blurring of boundaries. The various societies in the texts are multicultural as they embrace diverse ways of life, lifestyles, cultures and being. The cultures in the text are interconnected as the protagonists do not only represent their national culture. However, their lives are characterised by hybridisation. Faist (2000:204) explains that immigrants undergo processes of acculturation and assimilation where they gradually adjust socio-economically, culturally and behaviourally. The characters in the three primary literary texts draw from various cultural elements. The protagonists undergo a process of assimilation which shapes their lives, actions, dreams and future.

Wolfgang Welsch (1999:200) states that “the concept of transculturality aims for a multi-meshed and inclusive, not separatist and exclusive understanding of culture. It intends a culture and society whose pragmatic feats exist not in delimitation, but in the ability to link and undergo transition.”

Cultural dynamics shape the experiences of the protagonists. In all three selected texts, the protagonists try to adapt to the culture in their host country by altering their behaviour, language and outward appearance, such as hair. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu’s Nigerian cultural identity influences her behaviour and judgements. Language is a theme in all three novels as there is a focus on dialect and accent adaptation. All three protagonists’ home language is English. However, the protagonists still try to lose their Nigerian and Zimbabwean accents in the United

States of America and South Africa. In *We Need New Names*, to be able to fit into American culture, Darling has to change her accent and sound American.

Subaltern and Identity

In this age of globalisation and migration, personal identity and cultural identity are perturbing problems. Bhabha (1994:1) asserts that “space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion”. The process of migration has consequences for the identity of individuals in society, which is evident in the three selected texts. The protagonists adapt to new locales, cultures and circumstances.

The identity of an individual determines one’s social standing as well as places limitations on an individual. Beverly Tatum (2000:9) astutely notes that “the concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts”. People are defined as Other or as the subaltern on the basis of different social identities which result in different forms of oppression. San Juan (1998) explains that

The Other is often acknowledged as the woman, people of color, whatever is deemed monstrous and enigmatic: all are excluded from humanity (to which, it goes without saying, the definer belongs) by being so categorized. The Other is outside or marginal to the regnant system of beliefs, an amorphous and deviant figure against the backdrop of conventional standards. (83-84)

Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1991:1241) concept of intersectionality makes one aware that different social categorisations intersect to form the identity of an individual, and each individual’s life experiences (such as discrimination, oppression and xenophobia) vary based on this identity. Race, gender, nationality and class intersect in the lives of African women and limit their mobility and personal freedom. African migrant women are subject to sexism, oppression and xenophobia as a result of their gender and race. Sexism and xenophobia are forms of discrimination based on gender or national status as well as the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination.

This dissertation puts into conversation Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of the subaltern to explore diasporic identities. Spivak focuses on the marginal and oppressed subjects, in particular women, who may be identified as the subaltern. The subaltern is the social group who are socially, politically and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure. African migrant women may be regarded as being part of the subaltern group as they are oppressed and marginalised in society. They are silenced as they are told what to do and how to do it. Chandra Mohanty (2003:335) notes that texts collectively associate all African women as being the same or as the Other. This is done through monolithic terms and classifications. African women are given collective labels of being religious (read "not progressive"), family-oriented (read "traditional"), legal minors (read "they are still not conscious of their rights"), illiterate (read "ignorant"), domestic (read "backward") and sometimes revolutionary (read "their country is in a state of war they must fight").

Several black migrants and diaspora populations feel alienated, estranged and lacking in agency in the United States of America, Europe and South Africa (Ede 2016:92). Black or mixed-race individuals, migrants, exiles and those who are categorised as working or lower-middle class are not included in the metropolitan public (93). The migrants in the selected texts are marginalised and oppressed. They are conceptualised as sources of corruption, disease and unsolicited competition. They are also viewed antagonistically by citizens in the country and are regarded as threats to the social and economic rights of the native individuals. The selected authors implicitly appeal for a re-examination of the notion of African identity.

Spivak also focuses on the struggle and oppression of Third World women. Women in Third World countries are under patriarchal rule and represented as all the same. Spivak (1994:104) explains that "the subaltern cannot speak" because "the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read". Feminist migration emerged as a result of questions surrounding subjectivity, identity and mobility of female subjects. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014:113) claims that research focused on feminist migration is marginalised. Previously women were excluded from immigration research as it was based on the assumption that they are too traditional and that women migrate only as family followers (113). However, feminist migration is now emerging as scholars are exploring the role of gender as a constitutive component of migration (117).

As Spivak observes, "The ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern

as female is even more deeply in shadow” (1994:83). Hondagneu-Sotelo explains that families and communities are gendered. For example, in some families, it is easier for sons and fathers to migrate because they are bestowed power and social network resources, while daughters and wives are denied permission or family resources (115). Nonetheless, women acquire ways to elude patriarchal constraints. Women also develop their own social networks that allow them to contest domestic patriarchal authority and achieve personal freedom through the process of migration (115). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014:116) further adds that programmatic labour recruitment and labour demands are also gendered as the labour force is populated mainly by men.

Afropolitanism has been instrumental in the representation of transnational African culture and identity. However, Emma Dabiri (2016:105) explains that the plight and experiences of Africans who are not privileged are unheard. Afropolitans have the opportunity to travel and experience life beyond the African continent. However, the majority of Africans are denied access to the Western world (105). Both Afropolitans and African migrants cross continents; however, “Africans are drowning”, while Afropolitans are at leisure (106). Despite the selected authors’ enhanced position in terms of mobility and resources, they critique globalisation, mobility and African diasporic experiences. Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe lend a voice to the subaltern migrants who are not privileged. They focus on marginalised African migrant women and highlight the social realities that they are subject to in society. However, Adichie and Bulawayo’s protagonists can also be identified as Afropolitans as they are able to find some pleasure in the diaspora. Dabiri (106) claims that “the Afropolitan comes and goes, continent hopping at leisure”. However, Bulawayo, in *We Need New Names*, highlights the protagonist’s inability to return to her homeland.

The present literary analysis will prove valuable as it will explore immigrant and diaspora experience in the lives of African migrant women who are usually subject to abjection and othering. Previously women were represented in literature as unable to act in economic, political and structural contexts. Womanist and feminist discourses pronounce that women are at the margins and periphery of existence in society, and this stance is universally accepted (128). Spivak argues that interlocutors have silenced subordinated subalterns (where the latter are distinguished by their class, gender and caste). However, African feminist writers lend a voice to the subaltern by creating characters who represent the subaltern. Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe have directly experienced migration and diasporic experience. As a result,

these above-mentioned African, feminist writers have proficiently represented the subaltern by creating realist fiction in the three selected literary works. Consequently, their thoughts, feelings and social experiences are communicated to the reader. Hence, literary analysis is needed to explore what the subaltern voices have to say. This will result in readers becoming more aware of the lives, experiences and struggles of African migrant women. Readers may learn to accept and appreciate the differences of individuals despite their nationality, sex, ethnicity or appearance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review centres on a discussion on the abject mobility theme, marginalisation, and othering, the notion of Ubuntu, counter-hegemonic narratives, and finally borders and boundaries.

Abject Mobility Theme

Migrants are perceived as the abject in terms of Julia Kristeva's (1982) notion of abjection. Kristeva is a leading literary critic and psychoanalyst and has an interest in exiles, foreigners and cosmopolitans, which are areas pertinent to this dissertation. John Lechte (1990:79) explores Kristeva's work and explains that "the exile is often a foreigner in a new land". Lechte (80) further notes that "exile produces the foreigner who must make a new beginning in a decidedly non-maternal environment. Being an outsider and suffering the psychological and social trauma that this often entails, leads to the call for a cosmopolitanism that would recognize everyone as having universal rights *qua* human being".

Kristeva employs the notion of abjection as the psychoanalytical explanation of universal horror. Abjection is regarded as a frontier that establishes difference between subject and object or self and other. According to Lechte (160) the abject is "the ambiguous, the in-between, what defies boundaries, a composite resistant to unity". In addition, Noëlle McAfee (2004:45) explains that abjection is the "state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself – and thereby creating borders of an always tenuous 'I'". Migrants are regarded as the abject Other as they are excluded from national boundaries. Borders metaphorically define migrants as foreigners and separate them from the citizens in the country. This results in the distinction between us and them, citizen and migrant. Poor black migrants are excluded and rejected from

social and topographical structures of society as they are regarded as being repulsive, abominable and barbaric. Citizens respond to migrants with hatred, disgust and malice as a result of the migrant's origin, class and area he or she resides. Furthermore, phobia is associated with abjection. Hence, the notion of abjection can be employed to fathom the unconscious fears that individuals have of migrants. The principle of xenophobia is based on fear of the unknown Other.

The abject mobility theme features in *We Need New Names* as Bulawayo highlights the abjection of African diasporic subjects through the representation of the protagonist. Furthermore, Anna-Leena Toivanen (2015:2-3) explains that "Bulawayo's ways of dealing with the abject mobility theme unmask the processes that produce discomforting mobile African subjectivities in a post-colonial era that is marked by the failures of decolonization as well as insufficient coming to terms with the colonial legacy and racialization".

This abject mobility theme is also evident in the other selected texts. Abjection implies being cast off or the "processes of inclusion and exclusion" (2). In addition, "abjection is an element of the failed postcolonial nation-state imposed on its national subjects" (2). The protagonists in the selected texts encounter various struggles in their home country which prompts mobility. However, the negative social, political and economic problems in African countries impact on the citizens of the country. "Mobility enables encounters whereby certain travelling positions become defined as abject" (2). Through mobility, African diasporic subjects are still labelled by the failures in their home country as they are continuously reminded about the poverty, war and political unrest in Africa. Furthermore, they are regarded as rejects of a failed state as Africa is regarded as one country. Mobility features in all three selected texts. Migrant displacement in Africa under the various social, political and economic texts is emphasised in the novels. The texts also highlight the proclivity of African individuals to leave their home country.

Adichie portrays a critical Afrocentric view of mobility, capitalism, globalisation, cultural hierarchies and cosmopolitanism in her novel (Pahl 2016:75, 84). Gehrman (2016:66) states that Adichie's *Americanah* focuses on mobility, narrates the protagonist's "un/belonging" and highlights the complex nature of Afropolitans' identity. Furthermore, Gehrman (68) states that mobility becomes "a sign of a struggle of identity and not glamorous cosmopolitanism". In *Americanah*, Ifemelu has difficulties adapting to American life and culture. She descends

into a state of depression after a traumatic sexual encounter with a stranger. In *We Need New Names*, Darling is teased about her name, accent, hair, the way she talks, dresses and laughs. Hence, she feels wrong in her skin, body, clothes and language.

Marginalisation and Othering

Purnima Kajal argues that

despite the given amount of diversity that a society already holds, whenever there is a surge of immigration, they tend to become the ‘other’ against the already existing population that seems to establish a sentiment of belonging and authority over the nation. (2016:2)

Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014:111) explains that although migrants are diverse, they are “commonly portrayed as poor, illegal, ignorant trespassers of national soil and transgressors of national sovereignty. Immigrants have no voice”. Grace Musila (2016) argues that “we know that the world is far from warm, fuzzy and welcoming to people of African descent” (116). Musila (110) further states that Blackness is negatively associated with “multiple marginalities and heavily discounted futures” for black people across the world. Through diaspora, Africans are identified as belonging to the categories of “marginal, the underdeveloped, the periphery [and] the Other” (Hall 1990:227). Migrants are constructed within the vocabulary of otherness. Migrants fall outside of the normative archetype representing the status quo; hence they are regarded as Other. Jonathan Crush and Sujata Ramachandran (2010:216) assert that “All migrants are generally homogenised as ‘aliens, foreigners’ and ‘illegals’. They are called derogatory names, denigrated in insulting language and are repeatedly told to ‘go home’”. The protagonists in the selected texts are marginalised and subject to various forms of discrimination, oppression and stereotyping.

Sarah Pugh (2014:234) states that “many migrants in South Africa are economically marginalised and represent a heterogeneous group, with no citizenship rights or voting privileges, and little political representation”. Vandermerwe’s *Zebra Crossing* highlights South African’s lack of will to include African migrants as part of the country. Crush and Ramachandran (2010:211) further explain that the actual population of migrants in South Africa is “unknown and unknowable”. Hence, the recommended outbreak of xenophobic

attacks since 2008 in Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg is of paramount concern. The 2008 xenophobic attacks prompted Vandermerwe to write a narrative exposing the vulnerable status of African migrants within South Africa. Zimbabweans, Nigerians, Somalis, Malawians and Mozambicans are subject to xenophobic violence in South Africa. This violence led to massacres, looting, arson attack on homes and shops, and the escape of thousands of foreign Africans into refugee camps.

Xenophobia affects individuals throughout the world. Xenophobia, intolerance and hostility towards foreign migrants is not new. It is a recurring social and political phenomenon that encourages violence against foreigners. It encourages the marginalisation and exclusion of minority groups in society. Xenophobic discourse in South Africa constructs migrants as a threat to the economic, social and cultural rights of the citizens in the country. This stereotypical discourse has led to discriminatory practices and hostile treatment towards foreigners. It challenges the principles of Ubuntu, equality, fairness, and social justice.

Recent xenophobic attacks in South Africa are of prime concern, as many individuals are being killed, injured and left destitute. The selected literature reveals the discriminatory nature of some South Africans who construct African migrants within a vocabulary of otherness. South Africa is alleged to be an inclusive and hospitable country as it is described as a rainbow nation. However, in *Zebra Crossing* black South Africans are represented as turning upon the poor black African migrants who have come to seek work and shelter in the country. Vandermerwe situates the novel in Long Street which is a major street in Cape Town. Long Street also exhibits diversified culture and is home to many African migrants. In the text, African migrants are subject to acts of violence, aggression and brutality in South Africa by other black African individuals. However, Chipó's chief exploiter is not a South African but an African migrant who has also come to seek refuge in Cape Town.

Eze (2016:116) explains that the Garveyean slogan, "Africa for Africans", has promoted systematic violence in Africa after colonialism and imperialism as it is based on the ideology that black Africans must exclude all others. In *We Need New Names*, the black Zimbabwean police exploit this slogan to forcefully remove white Zimbabwean citizens from their homes. The police base their actions on the ideology that all white people are the colonialists, and they believe that white people do not fit in Zimbabwe as "Africa is for Africans only" (Bulawayo 2013:111).

Recent South African authors focus on African immigrant characters and the failure of South Africans to be hospitable and practise Ubuntu (Fasselt 2010:1). Robyn Wilkinson (2016:34) states that Meg Vandermerwe in *Zebra Crossing* highlights that even though apartheid is legally over in South Africa, social division and inter-group conflict still exists. *Zebra Crossing* is set against the backdrop of the FIFA 2010 World Cup, and Vandermerwe interrogates the notion of Ubuntu as these ideals are a theory that is championed but not practised in society (35). Crush and Ramachandran (2010:214) highlight that after 1994, South Africans regarded all African migrants as “illegal aliens” and they were “typecast and vilified in increasingly strident and insulting language”.

According to Wilkinson, in *Zebra Crossing*:

Vandermerwe’s portrayal of the attitude of South Africans towards immigrants and the repeated tendency to frame those inter-group relations with subtle yet clear connections to conditions during apartheid, provide a poignant critique of both overtly violent instances of xenophobia and more subtle *de facto* instances of segregation and prejudice that occur in the country. (2016:39)

South Africa, the ‘rainbow nation’, is declared to be an inclusive and hospitable country. Therefore, literary studies on migrants and transculturalism can be used to raise awareness and promote Ubuntu, integration and social cohesion by highlighting the common bond that South African citizens share with African migrants, which will help challenge xenophobic sentiments in the country.

Ubuntu

Desmond Tutu explains the concept of Ubuntu² in the following terms:

Ubuntu is very difficult to render into a western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say, “Yu, u nobuntu”; “Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu”. Then you are generous, you are

² According to Leonhard Praeg (2014: 20, 52) ubuntu describes “a cultural praxis” and Ubuntu refers to contemporary “philosophical practice”. This dissertation employs Praeg’s interpretational spelling of the philosophical concept of Ubuntu.

hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours.” We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “A person is a person through other persons.” It is not, “I think therefore I am.” It says rather: “I am human because I belong. I participate, I share.” A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are. (1999:31)

An explanation of the origin of the word is provided by Swanson (2007). She explains that “Ubuntu is short for an isiXhosa proverb in Southern Africa. It comes from Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu; a person is a person through their relationship to others” (55). Ubuntu is a traditional African philosophy of humanism that offers individuals an understanding of themselves in relation to the world. The philosophy emphasises that there is a common bond that exists between all individuals which leads to wholeness, interconnectedness and compassion. It connects the individual with the collective, focusing in particular on African unity.

South Africa professed to “ensuring peace, democracy and respect for human rights” during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, and these principles were the foundation in the “formulation and implementation of South Africa’s foreign policy in Africa” (Ndlovu 2010:146). Government nationalists used the World Cup to augment nation building, Pan-Africanism and Ubuntu. Values of freedom, equality, unity and forbearance guided the country’s cultural diplomacy (146). Furthermore, South Africa described itself as a rainbow nation and the home of Ubuntu during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the backdrop of Vandermerwe’s *Zebra Crossing*. Hence, Vandermerwe “explores the disconnect between the ideals of ubuntu that appeared, superficially, to be at play during the World Cup and the lived realities of foreigners” (Wilkinson 2016:36). Chipso and other foreign migrants are subject to discursive practices which result in violence and xenophobic attacks. There are various divisions in the text between individuals of different nationalities, races, gender and classes.

Counter-hegemonic Narratives

Hegemonic discourses establish the subaltern as the Other in society. Thiven Reddy (2000:169) states that the “three forms of ‘Otherness’ correspond to the categories color, ethnicity, and class; each describing the subaltern in a different social relation and thereby characterizing a different subject identity”. This results in the subaltern being subject to racism, sexism, and social and economic inequalities. For the purposes of this dissertation, hegemony means all the ideas, practices and institutions that function to keep Africans, migrants and women at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Devarakshanam Govinden (2008:33) notes that in hegemonic contexts, identity “is usually associated with the dominant, with sameness and difference from the ‘Other’”. Rüdiger (2009:35) states that literature is used to support dominant ideologies; however, it is also used to challenge these ideologies. Literature is used to subvert hegemonic representations of history, culture and subalterns.

Counter-hegemonic narratives provide alternative discourses to the hegemonic discourses. According to Youna (2005:3), migration and research on migration are both gendered processes, and therefore these topics have been under-researched. However, counter-hegemonic narratives provide representations of migrant women’s experiences. Youna (3) notes that contemporary literature departs “from the often naturalized images of women as bearers of tradition who are confined to the realm of home, domesticity and limited spatial freedom”. Reddy (2000:1) further explains that subalterns refused to be represented as passive objects, therefore counter-discourses construct representations of the subalterns being active and resistant. Counter-discourse “represents a history of subjects resisting; a narrative of the courage and bravery of the poor against an ‘amoral’ and ‘rapacious oppressor’” (170). Furthermore, counter-hegemonic narratives are a form of resistance and defiance. Literature focusing on counter-hegemony represents the voices and narratives of those silenced by hegemonic discourses. Barry (1995:198) explains that in counter-hegemonic discourses, post-colonial critics “develop a perspective, not just applicable to postcolonial literatures, whereby states of marginality, plurality and perceived ‘Otherness’ are seen as sources of energy and potential change”. Govinden (2008:33) adds that “identity is used to denote a sense of self, difference is also used to assert and celebrate a sense of self different from, or resistant to, the hegemonic norm”.

The selected texts disrupt the stereotypical discourses of African migrant women. Shane McCoy (2015:57) asserts that *Americanah* is a counter-narrative as it disrupts hegemonic views about African women, challenges stereotypical images about foreign nationals and interrupts racialised discourse. African feminist writers provide alternative representations of women, to prevailing discriminatory hegemonic views of women. In the selected texts women protagonists are represented as capable of being free, innovative and intelligent individuals, even though they are raised in patriarchal contexts. Feminist writers also highlight that positive change can take place in society. African women do have the power to show resistance and overcome the oppression they face. Women can be self-reliant and they do have many options available to them.

Khatija Khan (2016:2) explains that African women must be viewed “as cultural and political actors who write in their individual capacities to challenge forces that conspire against the development of African women”. The challenges the protagonists encounter in the host countries affect their ability to migrate effortlessly. However, they explore new avenues to achieve personal freedom through reclaiming their identity. The African female migrant protagonists are portrayed as active, powerful individuals in the diasporic communities. Chipso, Darling and Ifemelu create a subjective identity for themselves. They learn to reconstruct their identities by negotiating and overcoming the challenges created by the intersectionality of race, gender and class in the host countries.

Borders and Boundaries

Stephen Clingman (2009), a key theorist in transnational fiction, aptly describes a boundary as follows:

We have seen the boundary as a place; we have seen the boundary as a concept. Sometimes it is hard and ‘real’; sometimes receding, absent, a space. We have seen it as a fortress, the walls of a hut, the outline of a village, the waterways of the earth. The boundary can surround us; it can also be very deeply inside. The boundary exists between countries and nations; it exists between one self and another; it can and does exist within the self. What matters is not whether the boundary exists but how we construct and conceive it. To conceive it is also to

navigate it; to navigate it alters the nature of the boundary. Topology affects our navigations; our navigations affect our topologies. (140)

Clingman's decription of a boundary resonates with the subject matter of this dissertation as the boundary represents various aspects in literary texts. Boundaries between nations separate and create distinctions between individuals of different nationalities. Boundaries exist within the public and domestic sphere. Hence, distinctions are created between citizens and foreigners, males and females, adults and children. Clingman also notes that the boundary is connected with the self, location, transitive and transnational which are issues pertinent to the creation of identities (140). Identity is constructed through difference, distance, time and space, within and beyond the self (141). Boundaries are places where individuals of different races, genders, classes and nationalities have the opportunity to meet. This results in renegotiation, fusion and assimilation of cultures which leads to cross-cultural identities.

Borders are man-made, and they dictate the mobility of individuals in society. Pier Frassinelli (2015:715) states that borders tear apart imagined worlds but also connect and make individuals see that fragmented realms are also part of a whole. A border signifies processes responsible for segmenting, shaping, and recombining space and time. Furthermore, the border is a marker for social, linguistic and cultural difference (715). *We Need New Names* is "a novel that problematises constructions of identity defined in geographically bounded terms by exploring the heterogeneity, porosity and mobility of the many borders that criss-cross our globalised world" (714).

Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe highlight the plight of African migrant women protagonists crossing borders. In the selected texts, crossing national borders compels migrants to feel trapped, isolated and like prisoners in their host countries. In *Zebra Crossing*, "South Africans are repeatedly shown to maintain the figurative borders between themselves and immigrants, and to treat immigrants as inferior and unworthy of a place in this country" (Wilkinson 2016:38). However, Whitman (2000:69) explains that migrants "embody a fundamental empirical, normative and conceptual challenge to the exclusive notions of territorially bounded state sovereignty and citizenship. By definition, they cross borders and break conceptual barriers". As transnational subjects, migrants reveal the ability to transcend borders and boundaries.

METHODOLOGY

Amatoritsero Ede (2016:88) claims that a considerable number of members of the black migrant and diaspora population are still marginalised. Dabiri (2016:105) supports this idea as she states that the plight and experiences of African migrants who are not privileged are unheard. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014:112) reinforces the importance of the representation of migrant women, as he says that research focused on feminine migration is marginalised as it “remains a relatively ghettoized subfield”.

To date little critical work has been performed on African migrant literature in South Africa as well as comparative research on South African, Nigerian and Zimbabwean authors. There is only one scholarly article on *Zebra Crossing*, titled “Dangerous Othering in Meg Vandermerwe’s *Zebra Crossing*: Ubuntu – Ideals and Realities of the 2010 FIFA World Cup”, by Robyn Wilkinson (2016). Research from a feminist perspective focusing particularly on the plight and experiences of the female protagonists in the selected texts is also relatively lacking. Therefore, the proposed analysis will fill the knowledge gap on the particular subject and it will also build on a body of knowledge that already exists. This is also the first literary analysis that focuses on all three selected texts collectively.

The best method for my proposed study is a qualitative research focusing particularly on a textual analysis. Catherine Belsey (2013: 160) astutely notes that “textual analysis is indispensable to research in cultural criticism”. In this textual analysis, I focus on a discourse analysis, content analysis and narrative research.

Textual analysis as a research method encompasses a direct encounter with the primary work itself (160). In this dissertation, a textual analysis of *Americanah*, *We Need New Names* and *Zebra Crossing* is performed. Literary texts are made up of themes; hence I am exploring one avenue focusing on the diasporic theme. An analysis of the representations of migrant women protagonists’ lives as they journey from their home country to the host country, in the selected primary texts, is explored.

I engage with the dialogue in the selected texts to unearth information. The selected primary texts are explored carefully and closely, focusing on the structure, plot and patterns in the text.

This involves identifying recurring images, repeated phrases and actions. In addition, I ascertain the dominant themes, metaphors and symbols that run through the text.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this dissertation through the medium of a literary analysis is to explore immigrant and diaspora experience in the lives of female protagonists in African literary texts, namely *Americanah*, *We Need New Names* and *Zebra Crossing*.

This dissertation explores the significance of the three selected literary titles and the major motifs, themes and symbols in the primary texts. Secondly, this study focuses on the representation of the African migrant women protagonists (Chipo, Darling and Ifemelu) and their diasporic identities in the novels. Thirdly, this dissertation is an exploration of the significance of George's notion of home in relation to the three texts and how the protagonists face displacement at home in their home countries and host countries. Fourthly, this dissertation examines the stereotypes or challenges that are associated with the principal characters because of their subject positions. Another aim of this research is to explore the issues that motivate migration and the major events in the texts that lead to the protagonists feeling nostalgia in their host countries. Sixthly, this study examines the representations of other migrant characters in the novels. In addition, this research explores the strategies adopted by the protagonists to cope with negativity, racism, oppression and xenophobia. Lastly, this dissertation identifies the forms of cultural hybridity that are revealed in the selected primary literary texts.

STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS

There are three main sections that constitute this dissertation, each focusing on one of the three selected primary texts. The three chapters in this dissertation present different representations on the African diasporic experiences the protagonists, Chipo, Darling and Ifemelu, encounter in the United States of America and South Africa. This dissertation also explores the ways in which female migrant protagonists construct and deconstruct their personal African diasporic identities.

Chapter One of this dissertation focuses on an analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, *Americanah*. This chapter explores the representation of the protagonist, Ifemelunamma.

Firstly, I examine the nature of life in her home country, Nigeria, before migration, focusing in particular on the military dictatorship, government corruption, poverty and poor education system. These social, economic and political issues lead to Ifemelu's escape from home. Subsequently, I explore the protagonist's journey to the United States of America. I highlight the challenges Ifemelu encounters in American society, for example racism, identity crises, segregation and inability to fit in. Hence, Ifemelu returns to her home country. I analyse her African diasporic identity as she represents a cultural hybridity and is deemed as a transnational and transcultural figure. This chapter also focuses on the representation of the lives of other migrant characters in the text including Obinze, Uju, Dike and Emenike. Chapter One deals with the themes of identity, race, diaspora and transculturalism. I also focus on the significance of the title and the protagonist's blog in the text. Finally, an analysis of the patriarchy that exists in Nigerian and American society is explored.

Chapter Two centres on NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. In this chapter of my dissertation, I explore the protagonist Darling's narrative viewpoint, first as a child and later as an adolescent. This chapter focuses on an examination of Darling's journey as she migrates from Zimbabwe to the United States of America. I examine the dysfunctional nature of African politics which prompts migration. Zimbabwe is represented as a failed post-colonial state where the characters are subject to struggle, betrayal, poverty and instability. The characters in the primary text feel a sense of dislocation and displacement as a result of the social, economic and political conditions in their home country. The five children in the text display a profound awareness of the social problems and inequalities in society. In the dissertation, I focus on a detailed analysis of the children's characterisation. The themes of place and displacement in terms of the ambivalence of home are analysed. This chapter highlights the inequalities in Zimbabwe and the United States of America as Darling is marginalised and regarded as an abject individual in society. Darling tries to escape poverty in Zimbabwe; however, in her host country she is subject to various forms of discrimination because of her African identity in American society. Consequently, I focus on an exploration of life in the United States of America. As a result of migration, Darling encounters many challenges including an identity crisis and nostalgia. This chapter also concentrates on an investigation of the representations of the subject positions of other migrants living in Detroit as they are subject to prejudice, stereotypes and challenges, and are therefore unable to fit into American society. Lastly, this chapter explores patriarchy in the text as various characters are subject to abuse and various gender stereotypes are highlighted in the novel.

Chapter Three of this dissertation concentrates on the investigation of Meg Vandermerwe's novel, *Zebra Crossing*. I examine the representation of the protagonist, Chipo, a Zimbabwean albino girl who is subject to various types of discrimination as a result of her identity. Chipo and her brother flee from Zimbabwe in search of greener pastures in South Africa. Consequently, I explore the harsh social, economic and political conditions that plague Zimbabwe and facilitate the mobility of the protagonist out of her home country. Furthermore, I examine the predicaments that Chipo encounters whilst in South Africa. Chipo is subject to triple prejudice because her daily existence is shaped by the African myths and prejudices surrounding her albino and migrant identity. Additionally, as a woman, she is subject to discriminatory patriarchy from her brother who regards her as subordinate and subservient. The themes of African migration and albinism are explored in relation to the significance of the title. This chapter also focuses on the representation of South African citizens being oppressive and abusive towards African migrants in the country. I explore the nature of post-apartheid South African society, and the failure of South African citizens to be hospitable and practise Ubuntu in the primary text. In addition, I explore the significance of borders and the abject mobility theme in relation to the text. This chapter also identifies the various stereotypes of African migrants in the text. The themes of identity, African diaspora and marginalisation are explored.

The final chapter of this dissertation is the Conclusion, which offers a summary of the main arguments throughout this study. In addition, this chapter outlines the common features as well as substantial differences between the selected primary texts. Finally, I highlight the importance of discourse on cross-cultural issues, transculturalism and diaspora.

“Home” as the Creation of Self and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*

INTRODUCTION

*Our planet seems at one and the same time to be unbounded,
globalized and accessible – and yet massively divided.*

(Clingman 2009:4)

Chapter One of the dissertation concentrates on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s representation of the protagonist, Ifemelu, in the selected novel, *Americanah*. Adichie is a Nigerian female writer who has directly experienced migration. Patrycja Koziel (2015:97) describes Adichie as an “award-winning novelist and social commentator, representative of the black literary writers with African roots and young female cosmopolitan”. Adichie focuses on contemporary Nigerian experiences from a diasporic, intersectional feminist lens³. Her literary work centres on the lives of African women in diverse national, social, economic, ethnic and religious spaces. In *Americanah*, Adichie explores the positionality, identity and experiences of the African, migrant woman protagonist in her home and host country.

Using the method of textual analysis, I explore how Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality is used to shape the identity, life and personal experiences of the main character, Ifemelu. In this chapter, I examine the diasporic displacement Ifemelu is subject to. I also explore the challenges she encounters in her home country as a result of the military dictatorship, government corruption, poverty and poor education system which motivate her migration. Additionally, I analyse her diasporic journey to the United States of America. In the host country, Ifemelu is subject to marginalisation, alienation, discrimination and displacement, which lead to nostalgia and an identity crisis. She has a longing for her homeland, therefore Nigeria is considered as a place she yearns to escape to, while in her host country. This chapter explores the racism, sexism and segregation in American society. This chapter also examines

³ In *We Should all be Feminists* (2015) [2014], Adichie endorses her feminist identity. Adichie (2015:48) defines a feminist as “a man or a woman who says, yes, there’s a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better. All of us, women and men, must do better”.

the representation of Ifemelu's identity as a transcultural and transnational subject as well as the representations of other migrant characters in *Americanah*. Finally, this chapter explores patriarchy in Nigerian and American society. The themes of race, identity, displacement, belonging, otherness, culture, hybridity and return migration are analysed in this chapter.

Soheila Arabian and Vida Rahiminezhad (2015:536) assert that "Diaspora studies construct a new form of knowledge and ways of perceiving the world through the involvement with migrancy". A textual analysis of *Americanah* is performed through the theoretical lens of diaspora studies. Adichie reveals the complexities of race, ethnicity, culture and nationality in a globalised world where intersectionality, hegemony and hierarchies proliferate. Adichie's text is informed by the post-colonial context as the characters in the novel live in a globalised world where they have the opportunity to cross borders. Adichie emphasises that our world is interconnected and culturally diverse. *Americanah* belongs to the specific category of migrant literature. The text moves across three continents, namely Africa, Europe and North America. Adichie's text goes beyond borders and boundaries, both literally and figuratively.

According to Keisha Blain (2015:4), Adichie's *Americanah* draws attention to the "varied meanings, constructions, and uses of hegemonic categories such as race, nation, and ethnicity, and exemplifies how individuals struggle to make sense of these categories in their day-to-day lives". In the novel, Ifemelu struggles for social, economic, political and cultural freedom as a result of her marginality as she falls outside of the hegemonic power structure. In addition, Adichie explores the notion of race as a socio-cultural construct in Western countries. Aretha Phiri (2016:6) explains that "*Americanah*'s Afrodiasporic inflection takes into account and makes allowances for culturally specific and context-responsive configurations of black subjectivity that problematize universalized, even hegemonic, African-American cartographies of blackness". In the text, Adichie highlights the social marginalisation and oppression Ifemelu is subject to in her host country as a result of her black, African identity. In America, race is a key factor as it governs African migrant characters' experiences in diasporic locations and it also plays a role in (re)shaping their identity.

There is a relationship between literature and society as many authors' backgrounds influence their literary texts. Adichie's narratives are shaped by her diasporic experiences as she straddles two worlds. Christopher Fan (2017:69) explains that Adichie is an example of an Afropolitan writer who focuses on the "historical circumstances of Afropolitan identity". Adichie draws

attention to the complexity of diasporic subjects' cultural identities at home and in their host countries. *Americanah* is a migration novel which represents this new kind of responsible cosmopolitanism (Austin 2015:9). The selected text can be classified as a cosmopolitan text as it presents cultural differences in a diverse context while highlighting the importance of cultural diversity, and appreciation and respect for difference. Lechte (1990:80) points out that cosmopolitanism acknowledges everyone as equal and "having human rights *qua* human being". Adichie depicts characters who are nationally, racially and culturally different. The diasporic characters undergo a cultural exchange as they assimilate and reject various cultural elements.

Adichie presents the intertwining of diverse cultures and locations through her representation of Ifemelu. The term "Americanah" is given to those Nigerian migrants in America who have returned to their homeland. The designation of the term "Americanah" to migrants emphasises their cultural hybridity; however, it also signifies foreignness, uniqueness and newness. Moreover, there is also a shift in identity to a liminal and transcultural space. Ifemelu has a fluid identity as she has undergone a process of metamorphosis through her diasporic experiences. She can no longer identify with one national identity, culture or location. Hence, she is detached from her former acquaintances who have never left their home country. She is also deemed as an outsider and an individual who can no longer relate to her Nigerian homeland. Furthermore, this name indicates that the individual's identity has been altered based on their life experiences in American society. For return migrants, the notion of home is very equivocal as they have mixed feelings about where home actually is. Home is connected to one's identity and sense of self. However, Ifemelu's identity has been created and influenced by both Nigerian and American cultural experiences. The title also signifies the assimilation and hybridisation of the African protagonist who has "Americanised". Ifemelu is both Nigerian and American. She creates an identity for herself through combining the two cultures into a hybrid one. This emphasises that Ifemelu does not belong to one identity category. *Americanah* may be classified as a transcultural text as Ifemelu embodies a hybrid identity. Her identity is transformed because of her diasporic experiences, crossing of borders and the blurring of the concept of home. Ifemelu returns to her homeland, Nigeria, with added insight and wisdom as a result of her migration. Ifemelu is rooted in her traditional African background. However, she is open to different cultures, values and beliefs. She is open-minded about the world and individuals in general. Ifemelu feels comfortable in both the United States of America and

Nigeria; however, there are times when she feels uncomfortable in both countries as a result of her cultural differences.

Ifemelu's marginality develops from the intersection of nationality, gender, class, race, and colour. Intersectionality dictates her life as it determines how she views herself, how she views others and how others view her. Ifemelu is subject to marginalisation, racism and sexism. However, she shows resistance to domination. In addition, various African women characters in the text are subject to patriarchal rule. Nonetheless, Ifemelu is represented as an independent, strong and resilient woman who challenges hegemonic views. This text is a counter-hegemonic narrative as it subverts hegemonic and stereotypical views about the continent Africa, African migrants and African women in general.

SYNOPSIS

Americanah centres on the life of Ifemelunamma who is a young Nigerian woman. She grows up in the city of Lagos, where she befriends and falls in love with Obinze Maduewesi. Ifemelu then migrates to the United States of America on a student visa to study further. She receives a scholarship for university education in Philadelphia and begins writing a very successful blog about race and being a black citizen in American society. She migrates to establish a better life in the West. However, in American society, she encounters racism for the first time. In addition, she faces a myriad of problems including financial difficulties and an identity crisis. She also experiences a distressing sexual episode which results in her falling into depression. Nonetheless, she learns to navigate the intersectional identity of being black, migrant and a woman.

Obinze⁴ also wishes to migrate to America; however, post 9/11 there are stringent laws that prevent him gaining access into the country. After graduation, he migrates to England in hope that it will be easier for him to get access into America. In his host country, he struggles to find a job which leads to him encountering economic challenges. His visa also expires so he attempts to get permanent residence in the UK through marriage; however, he is arrested and

⁴ Obinze Maduewesi is also a main character in the novel; however, for the purposes of this dissertation, I am only exploring the representation of the female protagonist.

deported to Nigeria. With the assistance of the chief, he becomes rich selling real estates in Nigeria. He marries Kosi and has a child, but never falls out of love with Ifemelu.

Ifemelu lives in the USA for thirteen years. However, she has a longing for her homeland so she decides to give up her blog and successful life in America. Ifemelu returns to Nigeria where she feels a sense of belonging but she also learns to readapt to the Nigerian way of life as her diasporic experiences alter her identity.

Ifemelu desires an escape from her Nigerian home country because of the lack of jobs, university opportunities, “choicelessness” and gender inequality. However, in the host country, Ifemelu wants to escape to her homeland because Nigeria offers her security, familiarity, comfort and the ability to face adversities successfully. *Americanah* begins when the protagonist is about to return to her homeland. The structure of the novel moves back and forth chronologically as it narrates the story of Ifemelu and briefly, Obinze. *Americanah* uses a multi-layered narrative to describe Ifemelu’s childhood in Nigeria, her journey to the USA as an adolescent and finally her return to her homeland as an assimilated adult. “In the non-linear narrative, we learn about her life in Nigeria and the ups and downs of her American adventure” (Austin 2015:9).

HOME IS AN ESCAPE FROM NIGERIA TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In this first analytical section of this chapter, I explore the social, economic and political conditions in Nigeria. Furthermore, I highlight how the text provides representations of social realities. I also provide a description of Ifemelu’s life in her home country and identify the factors which lead to Ifemelu’s and other characters’ migration out of Nigeria. Finally, I analyse the political issues in post-colonial Nigerian society as a result of corruption and abuse of power.

In *Americanah*, Adichie explores the experiences of individuals in post-colonial Nigerian society in light of the social, economic and political conditions. The selected text highlights the negative experiences in Africa which cause African migrants to flee from privation and unrest. In addition to the poverty and conflict in Nigerian society, Adichie also presents another cause of migration, which is “choicelessness or unavailability of choice” (Kaboré 2016:6). Adichie reveals African citizens’ attitudes, values and fears of the post-colonial experience. The crises

of national economic development in post-colonial African nations prompt mobility to the West.

Nora Berning (2015:4) explains that Adichie's novels (*Americanah*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*) are representations of the national imagery in Nigeria. In addition, *Americanah* offers representations of real historical events globally, for example, the military dictatorship in Nigeria which came to an end in 1999, and the 9/11 attacks in 2001 which occurred in the USA, and she also highlights existing social problems, for example racism, economic crises and dislocation which are linked to the global events (4). There is a relationship between literature and the author's context. "The events enable the reader to situate the novel and its value system in an actual historical and cultural context" (4). Adichie uses her literary work to reflect the realities in Nigeria. In *Americanah*, Adichie focuses on Nigeria's corrupt political system, the poor civilian administration and the military regimes. Daria Tunca and Bénédicte Ledent (2015:4) assert that through Adichie's typical anecdotal style, she critiques Nigerian society in the text, highlighting the "power cuts, institutionalised corruption, unemployment issues [and] Christian fundamentalism". In the text, Nigeria is characterised by poverty, violence, intimidation and bribery. Furthermore, Adichie brings to light the challenges African migrants encounter as there are various American immigration regulations that prevent them gaining access to the country. Migrants are viewed as a threat to the economic stability of the country. In addition, after the tragedy of 9/11, migrants are perceived as criminals and terrorists who need to be expelled.

Ifemelu and her family belong to an average socio-economic class in Nigeria. She attends a prestigious secondary school in Lagos only because she achieves good results in the entrance examination. After twelve years of labour, Ifemelu's father loses his job at the federal agency for refusing to call his new boss "Mummy". Ifemelu migrates in search of better educational and social prospects after a series of strikes at the universities in Nigeria. Adichie describes Nigeria as an unstable country where the poor citizens encounter the worst challenges. Rocío Piñero (2016) describes Nigeria as follows:

An independent federation since 1960, Nigeria still endures the legacies of colonization that left behind elites of corrupted politicians and underpaid university professors, whose protests for better salaries paralyzed higher education and triggered waves of young migrants to Britain and the US. (86)

Ifemelu and Obinze both aspire to go to the USA. However, when they are searching for universities to attend, they only contemplate those in Nigeria. The failure of the educational system catalyses their mobility. The characters in the text strike for lights and water at the vice-chancellor's house. However, the students are unsuccessful because according to the characters in the text, the problem is not with the professors or administration, but it is the military that is the "enemy". Obinze's mother explains that "they have not paid our salary in months. How can we teach if we cannot eat?" (Adichie 2013:91). Following the student protests, the lecturers also threaten to go on strike, which results in the student hostel and university closing. The university is re-opened but strikes are common. Government officials pay no attention to the lecturers' complaints as they send their children to international schools. The Nigerian government invests poorly in the education system and the Nigerian curriculum is not valued by the citizens in the country.

Ifemelu is lured into American society as a result of the educational opportunities as she will receive financial assistance and have a variety of options to choose to study. Obinze's mother states that "Nigeria is chasing away its best resources" (100). The characters in the text complain that Nigerian society is subject to a "brain drain" as the qualified and skilled individuals are migrating to the West (123). Most of the young characters in the text aspire to migrate to developed countries because of the enhanced resources and miscellaneous opportunities. The USA is regarded as the "land of milk and honey", a place of abundance and an idealised country. Families who migrate to America are regarded as blessed, and having an American passport is deemed the "coolest thing" (14). The students all watch American films and read American magazines in hope that they will live there in the future. The characters do not have any hope in their home country as they feel a sense of dislocation.

Ifemelu's aunty, Uju, migrates from Nigeria. She had not previously imagined leaving Nigeria as she always dreamed of owning a private clinic and she always worked to fulfil her dream. She was hopeful and optimistic, believing that "Nigeria will not be like this forever" (46). Her migration to America is spurred by the social pressures. Uju is the General's mistress and she also has a son from him. When the General is killed in a military plane crash, which, it is speculated, resulted from a conspiracy by the Head of State who wanted to remove those officers who he feared were planning a coup, Uju is chased out of the General's house by his relatives. Uju says, "I have nothing. Everything is in his name. Where will I take my son now?" (87). These events prompt Uju to leave her homeland.

In the primary text, Ginika, Ifemelu's friend, is the first character who migrates to the USA. Ginika's father explains that:

We are not sheep. This regime is treating us like sheep and we are starting to behave as if we are sheep. I have not been able to do any real research in years, because every day I am organizing strikes and talking about unpaid salary and there is no chalk in the classrooms. (64)

All the medical graduates plan to go abroad because the only other choice was to stay in Nigeria and "tumble into a parched wasteland of joblessness" (55). Furthermore, Nigeria is represented as a "country [that] is starved of hope, cars stuck for days in long sweaty petrol lines, pensioners raising wilting placards demanding their pay, lecturers gathering to announce yet one more strike" (46). In the text, the Nigerian market is represented as weak and corrupt. Qualified citizens in the country are forced to go abroad as there are no jobs available for them. There is also corruption in employment as the General creates a job for Uju even when no vacancy is available. Moreover, in Nigeria, there are very few upright public officials because "everything is set up for you to steal" (468). This highlights the corruption and abuse of power in Nigeria. In addition, friends and relatives encourage the embezzlement. "Everybody is hungry in this country, even the rich men are hungry but nobody is honest" (26).

Adichie also focuses on the political issues in her home country. Uju explains that Nigeria is filled with corruption and the abuse of power. Many qualified citizens are unemployed as they refuse to be involved in corruption or they do not know whom to bribe to get a job. Furthermore, if one requires anything or wants to become someone in society, one has to join forces with those in power. Nigeria is based on the principle that "No one knows tomorrow" as those that own the country end up in jail, and paupers end up owning oil wells and private jets (24).

Eunice Ngongkum (2014:78) argues that the African continent "has very little to offer in terms of economic, social and intellectual benefits and so many of its citizens increasingly migrate to seek better livelihoods in Europe and the United States of America". Many migrants flee from war or poverty in Africa. However, Adichie also highlights that African migrants leave the continent as a result of "choicelessness". In the text, Nigeria is represented as a corrupt country that does not care about the citizens' well-being. The individuals do not have the opportunity

to work, study or improve their lives. Hence, they migrate in search of happiness and greener pastures in the West.

HOME IS AN ESCAPE FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO NIGERIA

This section provides a detailed description of the American landscape for migrant characters. I also discuss how race, gender and nationality are used as factors to determine one's identity. In addition, I explore Ifemelu's relationships, blogging and experiences in America. I also focus on the symbolism and representation of home and hair in the novel.

The USA is deemed as an idealised destination for migrants out of Africa. African citizens leave their home countries in search of opportunities, freedom and independence. However, in *Americanah*, Adichie reveals the oppression, sexism, racism and marginality that exist in American society. Adichie highlights the discrimination and injustices African migrants are subject to as a result of the prejudices and stereotypes surrounding their personal identities. Ifemelu, Obinze, Auntie Uju, Dike and various other migrant characters in the selected text suffer social, economic, cultural and psychological challenges as a result of their African identity. However, the female characters are subject to additional challenges because of gender differences. The African migrant characters are regarded as Other because of their national, ethnic, cultural and racial differences. The intersectional categories of race, gender and nationality lead to them encountering discrimination and marginalisation in their host countries.

Ifemelu migrates in search of better social and education opportunities in the West. She crosses a physical border from her homeland to a new destination. However, when Ifemelu migrates to the USA, she encounters an inhospitable and unfriendly space. Furthermore, she discovers a "morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness. [...] Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil (Adichie 2013:6). In the host country, Ifemelu's experiences are characterised by alienation, amorphousness and nostalgia. She has musings about home, and yearns for objects that are reminiscent of Nigeria so that she can feel a sense of belonging and security. Katherine Hallemeier (2015:238) describes the USA as a place that "thwarts more than it abets the aspirations of women of color who are either or both undocumented and living in poverty". In America, Ifemelu discovers a discrepancy between what she imagined America

to be and what she finds on her arrival there. She finds that her host country is in fact not an ideal country. The first thing she experiences is a surprisingly unbearable heat wave. In addition, all the buildings, cars and signboards are disappointingly matt. This signifies Ifemelu's dissatisfaction when she ascertains that America is not the idealised country she expected it to be. It is insipid, dismal and filled with crime, poverty and inequality. She discovers "men being hauled off in handcuffs, distraught families in front of charred, smouldering houses, the wreckage of cars crashed in police chases [and] blurred videos of armed robberies in shops" (114).

In the selected text, discrimination affects Ifemelu's sense of belonging. Alves (n.d. 9) clearly explains that "*Americanah* is also about America's fixed categories of race, about a discourse in which blackness becomes an undesirable and unhomey trait in the pursuit of the American dream". Ifemelu encounters racism in the USA which becomes a form of oppression she is exposed to as a black African migrant. Ifemelu is subject to institutional and cultural racism. In Nigeria, Ifemelu was oblivious to her race and skin colour. However, in America, she ponders over her blackness, saying "I came from a country where race was not an issue. I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America" (Adichie 2013:290). In the USA, race is one of the primary factors of differentiation between individuals in society. It is a distinguishing category that determines one's experiences. Ifemelu is subject to physical and physiological conflicts as a result of her outsider status in her host country. Other African characters in the text also have to cope with discrimination as a result of the colour of their skin.

In the novel, American society is characterised by hegemony and discrimination. Even though slavery and colonialism have terminated, the aftermath is evident in different American cities. Ifemelu explains that the "other American cities she knew well had all smelled distinctly. Philadelphia had the musty scent of history. New Haven smelled of neglect. Baltimore smelled of brine, and Brooklyn of sun-warmed garbage" (3). Adichie makes reference to America's history of slavery, colonialism and racism. However, through the course of the novel, Adichie highlights that the scourge of racism still exists, but the perpetrators are all in denial. Various forms of discrimination exist through new enforced ideologies.

George (1996:2) argues that home, gender, race and class act as ideological determinants of individuals. In America, migrants are subject to subordination and exclusion on the basis that

the country is not their real home. Ifemelu is subject to marginalisation which results in her yearning for her homeland. She continuously reminisces about her homeland and longs to return to Obinze, her family and home country. Femke Stock (2010:25) states that “Memories, both personal and collective, form the frame of reference we all use to meaningfully interpret our past and present experiences and orient ourselves towards the future”. Ifemelu constantly reconstructs and reimagines her Nigerian homeland in her mind while living in America. She discovers something is wrong with her – “a hunger, a restlessness. An incomplete knowledge of herself. The sense of something farther away, beyond her reach” (Adichie 2013:290). Adichie depicts Ifemelu’s sense of diasporic unbelonging as she has a suppressed longing for home. She represents those dislocated and alienated migrant subjects who struggle to feel at home in their host countries.

In America, Ifemelu’s relationships also remain incomplete and unfulfilled. She describes her relationship with Blaine as “like being content in a house but always sitting by the window and looking out” (7). Furthermore, her relationship with Curt, a white man, is dictated by race and viewed stereotypically by those in society. Everyone looks at them in surprise with the expression “why her?” when they are together in public (292). Black migrants are also subject to denigration in American society as a result of their skin colour. Ifemelu and Curt walk into a restaurant together and the host looks at them. However, the host still asks Curt whether he wants a “table for one” (294). This refers in passing to the social hierarchy and economic class in American society. The restaurant represents those gendered and racialised spaces in America. Furthermore, Ifemelu is unacknowledged by white citizens in the country. Individuals pay attention to Curt and ignore her as if she is not present in the room. This highlights how African individuals are looked down upon by white individuals in society. In addition, she explains that she broke up with Curt because “there was a feeling I wanted to feel that I did not feel” (287). Ifemelu feels alienated from her self and is never truly satisfied with her relationships in America. She can only be her true self with Obinze with whom she feels a sense of belonging as their beliefs are not in contrast. Obinze and Ifemelu share the same perspectives on life and the world.

Kristeva notes that one can be an exile as a woman and also as a foreigner as both are “excluded from the hegemonic rationalism of modern society” (Lechte 1990:79). Identity determines one’s social standing. In America, certain Nigerians and migrants from other nationalities assume new identities. Ifemelu also becomes someone else as she uses Ngozi Okonkwo’s

Social Security card to get a job. Even though she adopts a new identity, she struggles to get a job as a result of her black, African migrant identity. Recruiters are indifferent towards her because she is a foreigner and therefore there is more paperwork to be completed. She is also advised to remove the three years of study at the University in Nigeria from her resumé because American employers do not like lower-level employees to be too educated. Nevertheless, when she applies for a job at a restaurant she is unsuccessful because someone more qualified is chosen. Out of desperation, she goes to a man who offers her a job to “relax” with him for a hundred dollars a day. Ifemelu never imagines leaving her homeland to come to her dream country and offer sexual services. However, she is forced to by her social and economic circumstances in the foreign land. Ifemelu is powerless during this encounter as she explains that the “power balance was tilted in his favour” (Adichie 2013:153). As both migrant and woman, Ifemelu is subject to double hegemony and multiple subordination. This power structure signifies the broader power structure in American society between black and white, rich and poor, males and females, nationals and migrants. During this sexual encounter, Ifemelu is reminded about her identity which leads to her feeling insignificant and abject. This incident changes her life as she is filled with regret, humiliation, fear, sadness and hopelessness.

Stephen Castles (2010:1567) explains that “migration as a process is based on inequality and discrimination, and controlled and limited by states”. African migrants in American society are deemed powerless due to their race, colour and nationality. Individuals with Masters’ degrees become taxi drivers and they nurse humiliation as people look down upon them. In order to be taken seriously by other migrants in America, Ifemelu has to lie and say that she has been living in the country longer than she actually has. Aisha cannot go back home to attend her father’s funeral because she does not have her immigration papers.

Adichie reveals the discrimination the protagonist endures and the challenges she encounters due to prejudices and stereotypes. Ifemelu is discriminated against because of her traditional African background. She speaks fluent English but because of her foreign accent she is looked down upon when white Americans speak to her. Cristina pauses after every word spoken to Ifemelu because of the stereotype that African individuals do not understand English.

Ifemelu is a blogger and the novel includes blog posts in its prose. Her blog is entitled “*Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*” (Adichie 2013:4). Phiri (2016:13) astutely explains that

“The blog’s ironic titular reference to the nineteenth-century African-American slave narrative invokes both the genre’s historical significance and limitations as a self-authenticating literary mode”. The title indicates the USA’s racial history and the reality of American society where American Blacks (African Americans) and Non-American Blacks (American Africans) are differentiated. This emphasises that race is a socio-historical and cultural construct used to distinguish individuals of different racial and ethnic groups. In addition, Ifemelu writes about her personal experiences and the racial and gender encounters she is subject to as an African, migrant woman. She provides individuals with a thought-provoking voice on multifaceted, taboo issues in society. This career as a writer provides her with the opportunity to acquire a fellowship at Princeton.

Through her blog, Ifemelu provides a critical voice on the nature of American society. She declares that in America, tribalism exists as American society is based on class, ideology, region and race. In addition, Ifemelu’s lifestyle blog offers a reflective lens on cultural elements as she focuses particularly on the identity of Non-American Black individuals. Phiri (2016:13) reveals that Ifemelu’s blog “underwrites alter-native, protean black positionalities and imaginations”. She uses her blog as an act of resistance as she challenges the racial discrimination and stereotypes of Africans. It also acts as a platform for forming alliances that allow blacks to share their experiences, which provides them with a sense of belonging and solidarity. Vogt-William (2005:396) notes that “the migrant writer writes herself into the centre in order to create an effective agency for herself, to articulate her need to claim and carve out a space for herself which will facilitate her identity formation”.

Adichie highlights how African migrants must mimic American ways of being to fit into American society. Ifemelu explains that one must become more American to gain acceptance into American society. Ifemelu learns to adjust to racial expectations in America. She learns what it means to be black and how to behave as a black person in American society. Throughout her blogs, Ifemelu highlights the stereotypes associated with blackness in American society. Ifemelu declares that race is a socio-historical construct that cannot be escaped, and it has serious social, economic and cultural corollaries. Black individuals are at the bottom of the social hierarchy; hence they do not have equal opportunities for education, health care and employment. In addition, race is a social reality that determines how the African migrant characters are viewed in Western countries. Race is a primary factor that establishes one’s

identity in American society. Berning (2015:5) argues that Ifemelu's marginality is connected to her colour and race.

Dike struggles to fit into American society as he is the only black student at his school and he is subject to various challenges. Dike may be regarded as the Other in society as he is marginalised and subject to discrimination. In school, he is always the first suspect when anything goes wrong, for example he is accused of hacking into the school's computer network even though he is not good with computers. Dike explains the reason for this experience as "you have to blame the black kid first" (Adichie 2013:349). He is accused of the crime even though there is no evidence against him. However, the colour of his skin makes him subject to stereotypical allegations. Everyone in his school receives sunscreen except him because of the stereotype that black people do not need sunscreen. Dike is blatantly disadvantaged and subject to unsubstantiated accusations because he is an African. Ifemelu is aware that Dike's depression results from his personal experiences. Dike wishes to be treated as a regular student. However, he gradually succumbs to the stereotyping and discrimination in American society. This othering leads to Dike attempting suicide by taking an overdose. Other black students in American schools also suffer discrimination; for example, Halima's son is beaten because of his African accent. Lechte (1990:81) explains that language is a marker of foreignness. Moreover, foreignness is synonymous with otherness and difference, therefore migrants are categorised as outsiders. Castles (2010:1567) further adds that migrants are associated with invasion and displacement.

In Princeton, "Ifemelu liked the tranquil greenness of the many trees, the clean streets and stately homes, the delicately overpriced shops and the quiet, abiding air of earned grace" (Adichie 2013:3). In this area, Ifemelu likes being able to pretend to be someone else. The word "pretend" emphasises that Ifemelu adopts a new identity in Princeton. However, her black identity prevents her from living a complete life as she travels to Trenton because of her African hair. This emphasises that she is not completely at home in Princeton. Additionally, in Trenton, she also adopts a new identity as she is not pleased that the African braiders see her as their "African sister". Ifemelu cannot completely relate to them, therefore she refuses to agree with everything they say. Ifemelu has to switch between different identities in order to adapt to the situation. In addition, she explains how complex and conflicted her identity in America is as she says, "the more she wrote, the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false" (5).

Hair is a central metaphor for race and difference in American society. Adichie focuses on hair as it plays a significant role in black culture because it signifies how women are forced to conform to society's rules and standards. Alice Walker (1989:106) explains that black women are not "given the opportunity to appreciate hair for its true self" as they are expected to maintain a distinctive image. This image is supported through media and dominant hegemonic views. bell hooks (1992:1-2) explains that images in media "reinforce and reiterate white supremacy [...] and support and maintain the oppression, exploitation and overall domination of all black people". Ifemelu complains that magazines do not feature or cater for black individuals in society. Walker (1989:106) further explains that hair is meant to be natural and free; however, it is continuously "dominated, suppressed and controlled". Walker personifies hair in the lives of African women who as the subaltern are controlled by hegemonic views and practices in society. Tunca and Ledent (2015:3) explain that the black hairstyles in *Americanah* possess political resonances as the "weaves, cornrows, Afros, all carry ideological implications". In the novel, Ifemelu's acceptance of her natural hair symbolises the acceptance of her true identity. She is no longer suppressed and controlled by American hegemony.

When Ifemelu relaxes her hair for the first time, she cannot recognise herself and she is mournful. She describes the experience as a process of burning and of "something organic dying which should not have died, [which] made her feel a sense of loss" (Adichie 2013:203). Consequently, as the novel progresses, she resents this process and decides to wear her hair natural. She asserts, "I like my hair the way God made it" (12). In addition, Wambui argues that relaxing one's hair "is like being in prison" (208). This emphasises that hair is a metaphor for identity. Those individuals in society who relax their hair are forced to give up their true identity and they have to become someone they are not. When Ifemelu decides to wear her hair natural it is out of pride and integrity. It is also regarded as a political statement. hooks (1992:20) aptly states that "loving blackness as political resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, and this creates the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life".

Hair is used as a form of discrimination in the text. African women are denied opportunities because of the colour or texture of their hair. Braids are regarded as unprofessional. Aunty Uju and Ifemelu have to remove their braids when attending job interviews because they have been told that they will be regarded as unprofessional if they wear braids. Ifemelu changes herself in order to fit into the expectations of American society. She explains:

My full and cool hair would work if I were interviewing to be a backup singer in a jazz band, but I need to look professional for this interview, and professional means straight is best but if it's going to be curly then it has to be the white kind of curly, loose curls or, at worst, spiral curls but never kinky. (Adichie 2013:204)

Kinky is a term used to describe natural African hair. Hence, Africans are advised to straighten their hair as their natural hair is unacceptable. This is in comparison to Nigerian society where natural hair is admired. Ifemelu's mother's hair was regarded as a "a crown of glory" for her father, while others questioned if she was from Jamaica because they thought "only foreign blood can explain such bounteous hair" (41). hooks (1992:3) further explains that from a preadolescent life, girls internalise white hegemonic values and aesthetics. They believe that straightened hair is more beautiful than natural hair and that "lighter skin makes one more worthy, more valuable in the eyes of others" (3).

Ifemelu is also discriminated against because of her "curly" eyebrows. When she goes to a spa, they refuse to do her eyebrows because they do not do curly eyebrows. This outrages Curt and he threatens to shut them down. The salon's refusal is based on racism as Ifemelu is denied beauty treatment service as a result of her skin colour. However, she explains that "maybe they've never done a black woman's eyebrows and so they think it's different, after all, but I guess now she knows their eyebrows are not that different" (Adichie 2013:292).

American society dictates that individuals should adapt to whiteness because white is right and best. Ifemelu explains that magazines offer a very limited representation of black women. She complains that "women's magazines forced images of small-boned, small-breasted white women on the rest of the multi-boned, multi-ethnic world of women to emulate" (78). In addition, she browses through different fashion and beauty magazines and finds "three black women in maybe two thousand pages of women's magazines, and all of them are biracial or racially ambiguous, so they could also be Indian or Puerto Rican or something. Not one of them is dark" (295).

According to George (2013:4), "Home and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered 'not-home', with the foreign, with distance". In America, "you are in a country that is not your own. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed" (Adichie 2013:119). The migrants in the primary text are silenced as they are told what to do and how

to do it. Ede (2016:92) explains that black migrant populations feel alienated in the USA. In America, “nobody wants black babies”; when a white couple adopts a black child, “their neighbours looked at them as though they had chosen to become martyrs for a dubious cause” (Adichie 2013:5).

American culture contrasts with African culture especially when it comes to fostering children. In the novel, Adichie brings to light the challenges African parents face when raising their children away from their homeland. Jane explains that raising her children in America is the hardest thing because “if you are not careful in this country, your children become what you don’t know” (112). African parents confront several challenges while attempting to control their Americanised children as a result of the distinctive American values and ideals. Certain behaviours in African countries are acceptable, for example, hitting your child. However, in America, children are more defiant and regard it as abuse. Furthermore, the text displays how African parents in American society encounter more trials as they are not aware of the American environment as they grew up in a completely different continent. In Africa, drug abuse, alcohol and pornography exist but they are not common issues that children encounter, therefore African parents do not know how to control these situations.

The idea of control is also underlined through the abuse of government’s power in society. Adichie describes an episode where governments officials are demolishing hawkers’ shacks. The scene is described as follows:

It is morning. A truck, a government truck, stops near the tall office building, beside the hawkers’ shacks, and men spill out, men hitting and destroying and levelling and trampling. They destroy the shacks, reduce them to flat pieces of wood. They are doing their job, wearing “demolish” like crisp business suits. They themselves eat in shacks like these, and if all the shacks like these disappeared in Lagos, they will go lunchless, unable to afford anything else. But they are smashing, trampling, hitting. One of them slaps a woman, because she does not grab her pot and her wares and run. She stands there and tries to talk to them, later, her face is burning from the slap as she watches her biscuits buried in dust. Her eyes trace a line towards the bleak sky. She does not know yet what she will do but she will do something, she will regroup and recoup and go somewhere else and sell her beans and rice and spaghetti cooked to a near mush, her Coke and sweets and biscuits.

It is evening. Outside the tall office building, daylight is fading and the staff buses are waiting. Women walk up to them, wearing flat slippers and telling slow stories of no consequence. Their high-heeled shoes are in their bags. From one woman's unzipped bag, a heel sticks out like a dull dagger. The men walk more quickly to the buses. They walk under a cluster of trees which, only hours ago, housed the livelihoods of food hawkers. There, drivers and messengers bought their lunch. But now the shacks are gone. They are erased, and nothing is left, not a stray biscuit wrapper, not a bottle that once held water, nothing to suggest that they were once there. (474)

In the above extract, the government officials are represented as violent, brutal and ruthless as they hit, destroy, level and trample. In addition, they show no remorse to the hawkers, as a man slaps a woman for not moving. The woman is represented as helpless and docile. Food hawkers' livelihoods depend on this income, hence they plead with the workers. However, the workers pay no attention to the hawkers. This highlights the unequal power relations between individuals in society and government workers. However, the workers are also powerless as they are only following government instructions. The workers will go hungry as they cannot afford to eat anywhere else; however, they have to do their job and destroy the businesses that they are dependent on. The poor individuals in American society are subject to displacement and repression. The hawkers are erased and government does not take into consideration their needs or well-being. They are dehumanised and their individuality is taken from them. In the same way that the shacks are reduced to wood, the individuals are reduced to objects in society. They are regarded as object beings that need to be discarded from society. Kristeva and Lechte (1982:130) note that "the one through whom the abject exists is thus an outcast who places (is placed), separates (is separated), situates (is situated) and therefore wanders, instead of recognising himself, desiring, belonging or refusing".

In the above section on Home is an Escape from Nigeria to the United States of America, I focused on the negative social, economic and political conditions in Nigerian society. However, the above extract highlights that individuals in American society are subject to similar repercussions. Usually in literary works, only African countries are associated with demolition and destroying. However, Adichie draws parallels between African and American society. Displacement occurs across the globe, in rich and poor countries, developed and developing countries. Poverty and inequality are universal issues.

In the selected novel, Ifemelu leaves the African continent in search of greener pastures in the USA. However, the text displays the alienation, displacement and marginalisation she is subject to in various settings and situations in her host country. In America, Ifemelu explains that “home was now a blurred place between here and there” (117). She struggles to acculturate to American norms, culture and behaviour. As a diasporic subject, Ifemelu engages with a new landscape and environment in America where she discovers poverty, racism and discrimination. She is subject to exclusion, yearning and nostalgia. In her host country, Ifemelu desires an escape to her homeland, Nigeria, as she struggles with the negative stereotypes surrounding her personal identity. She tries to adapt to American culture so that she can fit in. However, Ifemelu is a character who is always seen as an outsider and she never really feels at home anywhere. Her outsider status provides her with the opportunity to give an objective point of view of the world around her. Ifemelu is a self-reflective and critical protagonist who challenges stereotypical views.

TRANSCULTURALISM

This section of the dissertation identifies the transnationalism, transculturalism and hybridity in the novel through a discussion of Ifemelu’s and Dike’s identities. I also analyse the significance of cultural and language hybridity, and transnational blogging in relation to the theoretical perspective of this dissertation. Furthermore, I explore the symbolism of boundaries and border-crossing in the text. I also explain why *Americanah* may be deemed a hybrid novel.

Ifemelu represents the transnational and transcultural individuals within Africa. The protagonist in the narrative originates from a post-colonial Nigerian setting, and she becomes a transnational and transcultural subject through her connection to Nigeria and the USA and her hybrid identity. Stéphanie Ravillon (2005:364) defines hybridity as “the coming together of unrelated and often contradictory elements and carries within itself the seeds of an art [...]. It designates the transformation that comes of a new and unexpected combinations (of cultures, languages, ideas, etc)”. The primary text offers a blurring of boundaries. Adichie’s novel is characterised by cultural and linguistic hybridity.

Ifemelu returns to her homeland, roots and first lover, Obinze. She is “irrevocably altered by America, had grown thorns on her skin” (17). Throughout the novel, Ifemelu undergoes various

processes of change. When she returns home, she acknowledges how the city of Lagos has changed dramatically during the thirteen years she was gone. Ifemelu's new self makes her perceive Lagos as a different place. "She was no longer sure what was new in Lagos, and what was new in herself" (387). However, Ifemelu learns to identify with the various aspects of culture in Nigeria and she accepts her hybrid identity.

Clingman (2009:22) points out that "the boundary of meaning [...] is a transitive boundary; the transitive is intrinsically connected with meaning; navigation depends on, and creates, the transitive boundary which itself may undergo change. In all these ways the boundary is not a limit but a space of transition". Clingman's quotation emphasises the transformation migrant subjects' identities undergo through their diasporic experiences. Hence, the boundary becomes a symbol of exploration, navigation and transition. Furthermore, boundaries help formulate transnational's sense of location and identity (23). Ifemelu represents transnational subjects as she crosses national borders during her diasporic experiences. However, she also becomes aware that cultural borders exist between different nationalities, races, ethnicities and genders as well as between individuals of different social standings and educational backgrounds. In America, as Berning (2015:5) cogently comments, Ifemelu "feels alienated from her own self when she notices that the borders of her life in the exilic margins are being determined for her. Through the interaction with others, Ifemelu learns to question not only the lives of other people, but also her own life, values, and world-views". Ifemelu gains a wider perspective about the world which is evident in her blog as she challenges racism and hegemony in society. Furthermore, she learns to appreciate cultural diversity and the respect for traditional roots. She speaks in Igbo proverbs while she is also confident in speaking the English language, which indicates her hybrid identity. Barry (1995:198) points out that post-colonial writers "celebrate hybridity and 'cultural polyvalency', that is the situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture". Adichie's use of Igbo proverbs is an example of a hybridising strategy.

Americanah is regarded as a hybrid novel. Hallemeier (2015:236) explains that "Ifemelu's decision to become an Americanah – a Nigerian in America who returns to Nigeria – after living for thirteen years in the US hinges upon an ineffable sense of potential rootedness and a lingering love". Ifemelu is regarded as an Americanised woman. Nonetheless, in Nigeria, "she was at peace to be home, to be writing her blog, to have discovered Lagos again. She had, finally, spun herself fully into being" (Adichie 2013:475). Obinze's mother explains that

translating Ifemelu's name from Igbo to English would mean "Made-in-Good-Times or Beautifully Made" (69). Ifemelu's identity is created through her diasporic experiences and she represents cultural diversity which is relevant in contemporary society. Diasporas have proliferated globally and individuals' identities are created, not fixed.

Ifemelu's blogging is transnational. In America, she shares her experiences of American society, focusing particularly on blackness and race. However, when she returns to Nigeria, she starts a blog, titled "The Small Redemption of Lagos" (418). Ifemelu's blog plays a significant role in her self-discovery and reshaping of her identity. Ifemelu's blogging is regarded as a "hybrid form that brings together storytelling, reportage, and emotional value" (Guarracino 2014:14). Ifemelu exposes her thoughts, feelings, experiences and beliefs in her blog. In addition, she creates a blog that focuses on race, cultural differences and identity. She persuades individuals to overcome cultural differences and racial prejudices. Ifemelu's blogging is considered as a political action that is geared towards positive social change (Berning 2015:6).

In *Americanah*, aspects of the multifaceted Nigerian and American cultures are in dialogue. Ifemelu learns to navigate through diverse social norms, cultures and traditions. Ifemelu retains and rejects certain elements of her traditional language and culture. Culture is a significant theme in the novel. Ifemelu's blog focuses on cultural differences as she describes these differences as socially constructed and a way of acting towards individuals in society. She creates an identity for herself that transcends boundaries and borders. Kim Youna (2011:8) notes that "Transnational mobility is assumed as a journey that already destabilizes borders, transgresses all forms of boundary-making, and breaks barriers of thought and experience". Ifemelu acculturates elements from American society by adopting cultural practices and ideas. She is proud of her African identity, her Nigerian homeland, her natural hair, Igbo language, traditional food and her values. Ifemelu is a diasporic, hybrid individual who creates a transcultural identity as a survival strategy amid cultural differences. She is a cultural hybrid in the sense that she remains true to her African identity while living in her host country. She undergoes a process of assimilation as she adjusts socio-economically, behaviourally and culturally.

Patterson (2006:1896) explains that personal identities are "socially constructed and socially reinforced". Ifemelu's identity is represented as relational and fluid. Her identity is socially

constructed through her relationship with other characters. She acquires knowledge from those around her and uses this to build and strengthen her character. Throughout the novel, Adichie depicts the identity formation process Ifemelu undergoes. She undergoes a process of assimilation which shapes her life, actions, beliefs and future. Ifemelu experiences a journey of self-discovery. By contrast, Aisha represents those African migrants in America who have completely assimilated into American culture and behaviour. Aisha does not see the merits of natural black hair. "Aisha was simply a true market woman, immune to the cosmetic niceties of American customer service" (Adichie:13). Aisha has completely Americanised and promotes all American products to enhance the beauty of African customers. She believes that natural black hair is a sign of unattractiveness and that it needs to be remodelled through American products and styles. Furthermore, she speaks about Africa as if it were a country because that is how Americans refer to Africa. She also stereotypically believes that all Nigerians know the Nigerian actors from Nollywood films.

Ifemelu's hybrid identity is questioned in Nigeria. Ranyinudo tells Ifemelu, "You are looking at things with American eyes. But the problem is that you are not even a real Americanah. At least if you had an American accent we would tolerate your complaining!" (385). Ifemelu is regarded as an Americanah as she appropriates American culture. However, she is not completely assimilated. Her identity has been influenced and altered by her experiences in her host country, the USA. She perceives things differently in Nigeria when she returns home. She is more self-aware and guarded. America gives her the opportunity to learn and conquer. She explains, "I can't believe how much I find ugly now. I can't stand most of the houses in this city. I'm now a person who has learned to admire exposed wooden rafters" (433). In addition, while all the members in the "Nigerpolitan club" say that Nollywood films are bad and misogynistic, Ifemelu opposes their views so that she can distance herself from them. She explains that the "urge to be contrarian was strong. If she set herself apart, perhaps she would be less of the person she feared she had become" (409).

When Ifemelu returns home, she is happy to eat all the Nigerian food she missed out on for all the years in America. However, she also longs for the things she had become used to eating in America. When she goes to an American-style restaurant she feels a strong connection; she explains that "she was comfortable here, and she wished she were not. She wished too, that she was not interested in this new restaurant" (409). However, Ifemelu also has a yearning for the traditional in Nigeria. She goes to several restaurants with Obinze, all with foreign, expensive

food, but she is not satisfied with what they have on the menu. Ifemelu challenges snobbery as she learns to appreciate and respect individuals from a lower class who struggle to earn a living. She admires artisans who focus on traditional food, therefore she buys “akara”, which she does not like, from a street hawker. Ifemelu reminisces about the street hawkers in America who are prevented from earning a living by the government as American society focuses on commercialism. Hence, she promotes the street hawker’s business so that her livelihood (and others’) will also not be destroyed. Ifemelu explains that the akara from the street hawker is “real enterprise. She’s selling what she makes. She’s not selling the location or the source of her oil or the name of the person that grounds the beans” (413). This scene emphasises the change in Ifemelu’s perception. She looks at the culture of her homeland with new eyes and learns to appreciate the traditional aspects of Nigeria more after her diasporic experiences. She empathises with poor individuals in Nigeria and she aspires to improve their circumstances. She also understands the importance of hawkers in strengthening the Nigerian economy instead of encouraging the import of Western food. As a transcultural figure, she appreciates the traditional and exotic.

Dike also represents a hybrid character in the text. He has multiple identities as a result of migration. He encounters an identity crisis as he is conflicted and does not know who he is. The Igbo language is regarded as insignificant in American society, therefore Aunty Uju prohibits Dike from learning his native language. She believes that two languages will confuse him and that the Igbo language does not have any significance for his cultural heritage. However, at the end of the novel, he appreciates the Igbo culture and language, and learns to speak it with confidence and pride. He acquires a sense of belonging in both Africa and America. Stock (2010:25) aptly comments that “Notions of home are fluid and bound to change as one moves in time and space”.

Transculturalism is evident in the text, especially with respect to language and behaviour. Many of the characters in the novel pretend to have an American accent. Ifemelu learns to speak in a perfect American accent. However, she soon discovers that she is becoming something she never wanted to be. She gives up her American accent and holds on to her traditional African accent. Ifemelu explains that her American accent always felt forced and made her sound not truly herself. She can code-switch⁵ between an American and African accent, therefore Ifemelu

⁵ Code-switching is a concept used in linguistics to refer to a speaker’s alternating between two or more languages during dialogues.

no longer feels like a victim of discrimination as a result of language barriers. Furthermore, her traditional African accent makes her feel proud of her roots and also makes her feel connected to her home country.

The characters (Ifemelu, Obinze, Aunt Uju and Dike) in this text may be distinguished as Afropolitans as they belong to a generation of African migrants who are middle-class and have been educated in both African and Western countries respectively. The above-mentioned characters adopt Western ways of life during their migration. They speak in British and American accents. Furthermore, their identity formation is based on hybridity and assimilation.

PATRIARCHY

This section focuses on patriarchy in Nigerian and American society as depicted in the novel. I explore the representation of patriarchal characters in the text and how patriarchy has been indoctrinated into the lives of the characters. I identify how patriarchal attitudes and behaviour are used to control and suppress women. However, I also explore the representations of Ifemelu and Obinze as counter-hegemonic characters through their disruption of stereotypes.

African women are subject to patriarchy, subjugation and marginalisation in society. Intersectionality dictates women's experiences and determines their position and oppression in society. Women are denied personal freedom and dignity as a result of patriarchy. Alves (n.d. 4) points out that "in [Adichie's] narratives, women are wives, mothers, daughters or mistresses and these positions allow them to use the domestic space and the prescribed female identity to contest male power". In *Americanah*, Adichie brings to light the patriarchal dominance that exists in traditional Nigerian society as well as American society. Most of the Nigerian relationships represented in the text are traditional, patriarchal and unequal.

Adichie highlights that many women in Nigeria are regarded as subservient and that they are controlled by men through their financial dependence. Aunt Uju does not have any money of her own because The General pays all her bills and he expects her to ask him for money whenever she needs it. Her explanation for his behaviour is that "some men are like that" (76). Men are represented as dominant and the sources of wealth. Women cannot be independent as they are reliant on men. Furthermore, in a patriarchal system, men like being in control of women.

Ranyinudo represents those women in Nigeria who are dependent on men for everything. She believes “that men existed only as sources of things” (387). Furthermore, Ifemelu’s friend, who works as a wedding planner, refuses to plan a marriage because a girl is marrying the man she loves. She explains that the first rule of life in Lagos is “you marry the man who can best maintain you” (399). In addition, women who are married are looked upon with pride and envy. Ifemelu explains that when talking to her friends there is “a waspish tone in the voices of the unmarried, a smugness in those of the married” (398). Marriage is seen as a success, as married women have their husbands to look after them.

In Nigeria, women look for men who are rich and powerful while men look for women who are submissive and easy to control. Don refers to Ranyinudo as a “sweet girl”, which means that “for a long time, Don had moulded Ranyinduo into a malleable shape” (416). Patriarchal systems dictate that women must be submissive and obedient. Obinze’s wife exemplifies the typical traditional wife who is passive, compliant, respectful and dutiful. She addresses all Obinze’s uncles as “sir”. Furthermore, when they have their first child together, the first thing she says is “darling, we’ll have a boy next time” (458). Male children are regarded as gifts and the sign of a successful pregnancy, while girl children are looked upon with regret.

In the selected text, most men are depicted as powerful, domineering, oppressive and violent. The chief “has a serious problem with women, and he can give somebody AIDS” (24). This emphasises his abuse of power. The chief uses his position and power to attain women to satisfy his personal desires, even though it makes those women vulnerable to AIDS. Furthermore, the chief offers a man a plot of land in exchange for the man’s girlfriend. Women are represented as objects that men can own when they want. In addition, Marie, Obinze’s house help, carries condoms in her bag as she was raped by her previous employer. Women become sexual objects who have to submit themselves to abusive men.

In a patriarchal system, women are subject to marginalisation and prevented from various roles in society. Sister Ibinabo is prevented from becoming a pastor because she is a woman. This emphasises that men and women are treated differently and women are denied certain positions as a result of their gender. In addition, when Obinze’s mother stands up against a professor for exploiting university funds he slaps her because “he said he could not take a woman talking to him like that” (59). Women are expected to be silent and to show no disrespect to men.

Ifemelu is represented as a strong, confident and assertive character. She voices her opinions, therefore she is described as “too much of trouble. She can argue. She can talk. She never agrees” (60). In a patriarchal society, women are not encouraged to speak their minds. Ifemelu is punished for calling Chief Omenka a thief. She refuses to follow the behaviour of those around her. Her mother declares, “Why must this girl be a troublemaker? I have been saying it since, that it would be better if she was a boy, behaving like this” (52). Men are conditioned to be outspoken while women are encouraged to be submissive.

Violence in patriarchal societies is highlighted in *Americanah*. Charlie Bombay (a friend of Obinze) is described as a swaggering, powerful man and a “godfather who paid for his state governor’s campaign and now had a monopoly on almost every business in that state” (470). He is also full of violence and Obinze imagines him regularly beating his wife with a thick leather belt. Furthermore, Auntie Uju feels sympathy for the salon worker, policeman and security guards as they do not get paid enough to afford the school fees of even one child. She gives them money in hopes that one “will be in a better mood and he won’t beat his wife this night” (78). This quotation highlights the violence men inflict on their wives when they are in a bad mood.

The following extract further highlights the violence in Nigerian society where women are portrayed as weak and unable to defend themselves.

Ifemelu thought Mills and Boon romances were silly, she and her friends sometimes enacted the stories. Ifemelu and Ranyinudo would play the man and Ginika or Priye would play the woman – the man would grab the woman, the woman would fight weakly, then collapse against him with shrill moans. (58)

The above extract indicates how Western fiction has been used to support patriarchy. Women are depicted as vulnerable and defenceless as they “fight weakly, then collapse”. Furthermore, violence against women is explicitly promoted and women are encouraged to be sexually submissive. In the stories, women are passive and portrayed as the subaltern because they are silenced by the dominant male. The children are critical of Mills and Boons as they regarded them as silly. However, they still re-enact the stories as it becomes a norm in patriarchal societies. Women are expected to be compliant, suppressed and accountable to men.

Olu, a corrupt public official, was married to Morenike, who is slightly overweight. He continuously badgers her about losing weight and keeping him interested by keeping herself fit. However, during their divorce she discovers pornographic pictures of obese women on his computer. Women are regarded as objects created to entertain men and keep them satisfied. If they fail in this duty, men are allowed to leave their wives or cheat on them.

Patriarchy in American society is also evident. Bartholomew (who is Uju's boyfriend) is represented as an egocentric, domineering and hostile character. He displays traditional patriarchal domination. When Bartholomew visits Uju's house for the first time, he tastes her food to determine if she is a good cook and therefore a good wife. In addition, he demands that she hand over her salary to him because according to him that is how marriages work.

In the selected text, women are represented as the subaltern as they are silenced through the prescription of roles. Furthermore, they are conditioned to be submissive and subservient. Patriarchy denies them specific positions and the ability to reach their full potential. However, Ifemelu is a female character who defies patriarchal norms and is represented as strong, independent, opinionated and feisty. In addition, Adichie presents supportive and enlightened male characters, for example Obinze. He chooses an alternative lifestyle to the other male characters in the novel as he is respectful and compassionate towards women. He also challenges patriarchy and the status quo. He shuns the patriarchal identity by treating Ifemelu and Kosi as equals. It is important to note that Adichie suggests that both males and females should challenge and subvert patriarchal norms.

CONCLUSION

In the selected primary text, the ambiguous nature of home is highlighted. The protagonist's homeland, Nigeria, is represented as a place of comfort but also a place of horror. Nigeria is represented as a country with corruption, poverty and restrictions on choice or as mentioned in the text, "choicelessness". Hence, Ifemelu has no choice but to leave her homeland, family and lover. The concept of home establishes difference as it focuses on inclusion and exclusion. In the text, Ifemelu is excluded from American society because of her African migrant identity. In the host country, migrants are subject to alienation, distress and discrimination. African migrants are labelled by the failures in their home country, as those in the West regard Africa

as a place of war and poverty. At the end of the novel, Ifemelu desires to escape to her homeland because she feels a sense of belonging in Nigeria.

In the selected literary text, *Americanah*, Adichie provides social commentary on the social, economic, political and cultural issues in Nigeria and the USA. *Americanah* also offers representations of how nationality, race, gender and culture affect the lives of African migrants. Ifemelu and other migrant characters in the novel are subject to racist and sexist stereotypes and discrimination. Women are represented as the subaltern as they are subject to patriarchy, marginalisation and subservience in Nigerian and American society. In addition, migrants living in the diaspora suffer displacement and alienation as they are regarded as abject, the subaltern or Other.

Ifemelu represents subaltern African women in society. Adichie lends a voice to the subaltern by creating realist fiction. *Americanah* is a counter-hegemonic text as it subverts and challenges hegemonic, patriarchal and stereotypical views on African women.

Alves (n.d.) explains that

Women's writing is taken and understood as a process of challenging the dominating powers and creating oppositional discourse so as to engender change. Speaking to traditions and cultures that are suppressive, strong female characters, education for women and female bonding are identified as the strategies that women and female writers employ to fight oppression and exclusion. (6)

Adichie presents Ifemelu as an empowered, successful and resilient African migrant woman protagonist. Ifemelu heals from her sexual encounter and learns to navigate between the intersectional categories of race, gender and class. In Nigeria and the USA, she is subject to perils and struggles. However, she overcomes various challenges including racism, sexism, an identity crisis and economic difficulties. She breaks through cultural barriers. She achieves personal fulfilment, freedom and independence. She creates an identity for herself that is relational, fluid and hybrid. She represents those transcultural individuals who are rooted in their traditional African background while maintaining respect for diverse cultures and unique individuals in society. She undergoes various processes of deculturation and acculturation. She is attached to her Nigerian homeland, but has a wider perspective on life and the universality

of social, economic and political issues. She embraces both the African and American sides of her identity.

Abject Identities in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

INTRODUCTION

One's identity can be based on both how different one may be from everyone else, and, at the same time how much humanity one shares from everyone else. Identity stems as much from commonality as difference.

(Foster and Froman 2002:218)

This second analytical chapter of the dissertation investigates the fictional representation of the Zimbabwean diaspora in the United States of America through a discussion of the novel, *We Need New Names*. The novel is authored by Zimbabwean émigrée Elizabeth Zandile Tshele who is also identified as NoViolet Bulawayo. Isaac Ndlovu (2016:133) cogently asserts that “Bulawayo’s novel engages with issues of national crises, migration, identity re-evaluation engendered by a deracinating migrant status, problematic desire for home and elusive rootedness”. Bulawayo explores contemporary Zimbabwean experiences from a diasporic, intersectional feminist lens. She explores the positionality and identity of the diasporic characters in the text. Moreover, she focuses on the journey and experiences of the migrant woman protagonist as she suffers displacement and dislocation in her African home country and relocates to an American country where she encounters double displacement.

Bulawayo’s fictional work may be categorised under the category of Zimbabwean diaspora literature. Ivan Bachisi and Barbara Manyarara explain that this body of texts

speaks of and delves into the experiences that the diaspora undergoes resulting from geographical displacement, alien customs, the problems of adjustment and adaptation, longing for the homeland, the burden of rejection and xenophobia, myths and heritage. (14)

Anna Chitando (2016:114) further explains that Bulawayo portrays the resilience and agency of Zimbabwean children as they navigate through challenging experiences. The five children

characters in the selected literary text display a profound awareness about life on the global margins and of the social inequalities that are present in society. Robyn Wilkinson (2016:124) asserts that “the voice of a child, though limited in terms of knowledge, experience and understanding, can offer an effective mode for the critique of social and political issues, because of its straight-forward and unselfconscious nature”. In the novel, *Bulawayo* investigates migrant and diasporic experiences in the life of the girl child protagonist as she migrates from Zimbabwe to the USA. In addition, she explores the challenging experiences in the lives of the characters before migration in African home countries. In the text, Zimbabwe is depicted as a country characterised by urban poverty, social decay, political oppression, soaring inflation and oppressive religious practices. *Bulawayo* exposes the failure of post-colonial African nations as the citizens are subject to dislocation and displacement. The above-mentioned literary genre overtly addresses various themes including political issues, social injustices and inequality. *Bulawayo* uses humour and jokes as a form of resistance to critique African and American society. Humour is a powerful tool used to resist and transgress hegemonic forces. She satirises the failures of the Zimbabwean post-colonial government and leadership. Thamsanqa Moyo, Theresia Mdlongwa and James Hlongwane (2014) highlight the significance of child narration in the text, as follows:

the story by NoViolet Bulawayo uses the technique of child narration to foreground the absurdities and the barren policies of the ruling elite who represent the national father figures. Child narration is a technique that uses the voice of innocence that captures, though it cannot change, the realities of the adult world in Zimbabwe.
(10)

This chapter explores the concepts of place and displacement, and inclusion and exclusion in terms of the ambivalence of home. In the selected novel, the migration of the protagonist, Darling Nonkululeko Nkala, out of her Zimbabwean homeland is facilitated by a geographical displacement. This chapter explores the dysfunctional nature of African politics in Zimbabwean society which necessitates migration. This chapter also analyses the religious exploitation, patriarchy and abuse women are subject to as the subaltern in society. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on hegemony and oppression in American society. As a result of migration, Darling is subject to feelings of loneliness, alienation, depression, nostalgia and estrangement. Additionally, Darling encounters an identity crisis as she does not recognise herself in her new image. She is discriminated against because of her African identity which

results in her othering. This chapter brings to light the challenges Darling and other African migrants encounter in the USA, as the “land of the free” is only a myth as American society is based on hegemony and exclusion.

Epifanio San Juan (1998:85) notes that the subaltern “encompasses all subordinated populations oppressed by colonial/postcolonial regimes in various ways (economic, racial, sexist) to which the ‘supplement’ of resistance acts as a contrapuntal chord”. As the subaltern in Zimbabwe, Darling is rendered powerless as a result of the socio-economic and political crisis. The Zimbabwean crisis has impelled Zimbabweans of African origin to migrate to new destinations globally. In the selected text, Bulawayo reveals the challenges African migrant women confront in a post-colonial world. Bulawayo highlights that migration is a challenging process as borders create division and exclusion. Clingman (2009:4) notes that “the nature of the boundary, even the imagined boundary, becomes something much less than solid or impermeable, but equally it becomes intriguingly problematic”. *We Need New Names* is a post-colonial literary text that examines the diasporic experiences of African subjects as they cross borders and come into contact with new locations in the world as a result of globalisation and migration. In addition, as a post-colonial literary text, it focuses on the complexities of global cultures and diasporic identities. Intersectionality directs Darling’s life and identity and it also limits her mobility and personal experiences in her home and host country. The themes of diaspora, identity, displacement, dislocation, belonging, otherness, culture and hybridity are explored in the selected literary work.

We Need New Names is regarded as a hybrid text as it celebrates transnationalism and transculturalism. Bachisi and Manyarara (2014) maintain that the dual sensibility in the text is as follows:

dual sensibility often arises as a result of the transnational circumstances in which the characters find themselves; they are torn between the connectedness of the motherland and the luring, trappings and attractions of the host land (in-betweenness, nowhere-ness and rootlessness). In Zimbabwean Diaspora literature this dual sensibility is often portrayed in the contradictory circumstances the migrant characters always find themselves in and the linkages formed between the home and host country through the flow of remittances. And a typical case in point is that of a character who suffers from this divided loyalty between homeland and

the trappings of the diaspora, namely, young Darling in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013). (14)

Bulawayo is an Afropolitan author who writes across various cultures. This chapter explores the transnationalism and transculturalism in the selected text. Darling crosses physical borders as she migrates from Bulawayo to Detroit Michigan as a result of her diasporic experiences. In addition, she crosses cultural borders and boundaries as she moves from one culture to another. Darling comes into contact with individuals from a diverse array of social, cultural and national contexts. Darling represents a transcultural figure as she adopts and rejects various new cultural codes in America. She undergoes processes of acculturation, assimilation and deculturation. Darling has a strong sense of connection to her Zimbabwean homeland which is evident in her cultural practices and ways of life in the USA. However, she also adopts a hybrid identity that is socially constructed in America. The novel may also be categorised as a *Bildungsroman* as it foregrounds Darling's passage from childhood to early adulthood. She undergoes a personal development and the text displays the development of her maturity, mind and character.

The title *We Need New Names* highlights the collective and communal appeal for new identities. The text foregrounds the Zimbabwean crisis⁶ and this is reinforced in the naming of characters, locations and events. Bulawayo implicitly shows the need for new identities through the transformation of society. In addition, she draws attention to the inequalities of patriarchy, exploitation and corruption. This critique of the inequalities is global and not only limited to the African continent. In America, migrants are subject to challenges as a result of their identities. Hence, Bulawayo pleads for a re-examination of identities.

SYNOPSIS

We Need New Names centres on the protagonist Darling Nonkululeko Nkala's narrative viewpoint, first as a child and later as an adolescent. The narrator is a ten-year-old Zimbabwean girl who resides in a shanty town ironically named Paradise with her friends Bastard, Chipu,

⁶ The Zimbabwean crisis reflected in the novel refers to the economic and social calamity that began in 2000. Sarah Chiumbu and Muchaparara Musemwa (2012:xx) explain that "The period between 2000 and 2008 will go down in history as the toughest one for most ordinary people in post-independence Zimbabwe". Furthermore, the crisis "resulted in the rapid decline of the economy, characterised by, amongst other things: steep declines in industrial and agricultural productivity; historic levels of hyperinflation; the informalisation of labour; the dollarisation of economic transactions; displacements; and a critical erosion of livelihoods" (143).

Godknows, Sbho and Stina. Paradise is an imaginary slum or squatter settlement where the citizens' lives are characterised by poverty, hunger and AIDS, and children are abused and neglected. Darling and her friends continuously cross borders from Paradise to Budapest in search of guavas to satisfy their hunger. Through Darling and her friends' adventures in Paradise, Budapest and Shanghai, they provide social commentary in a child-like but painfully insightful dialogue about the challenges in Zimbabwe and their marginalisation in society.

Bulawayo brings to light the abuse of power in Zimbabwe. Throughout the novel, Bulawayo makes references to events in Zimbabwe, for example Operation Murambatsvina⁷, which leads to Darling's first displacement. There are also descriptions of the helplessness of the citizens as there are no jobs and the currency has lost its value. Furthermore, the political violence in Zimbabwe is highlighted as powerful, and wealthy black citizens in the country oppress white citizens and black citizens of a lower class. The individuals in Paradise only display hope during the voting season; however, their hopes are not fulfilled. Many characters are forced into migration because of the unavailability of choice.

Kristeva's notion of abjection is described as follows:

What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one's existence, constantly challenging one's own tenuous borders of selfhood. What makes something abject and not simply repressed is that it does not entirely disappear from consciousness. It remains as both an unconscious and a conscious threat to one's own clean and proper self. The abject is what does not respect boundaries. It beseeches and pulverises the subject. (McAfee 2004:46)

The abject is something repulsive to the self; however, it forms part of the self. The abject mobility theme is evident in *We Need New Names*. Toivanen (2015:2) states that the primary dimension of this theme is portrayed in the first half of the novel, where "abjection is an element of the failed postcolonial nation-state imposed on its national subjects". The dysfunctional actions of African political leaders result in the citizens of the country suffering and

⁷ Operation Murambatsvina/ Restore Order occurred in 2005 in Zimbabwe. The operation was sanctioned by President Robert Mugabe and other government officials, and it was led by the Zimbabwean police and army. The government campaign led to the demolition of houses and businesses that were designated illegal. This resulted in the displacement of over 700 000 citizens in the country.

encountering daily struggles. After independence, various African countries still experience social, political and economic problems. The problems impact on the citizens of the country. Through mobility, they are still labelled by the failures in their home country and are regarded as rejects of a failed state. In the second half of the novel, the abject mobility theme is articulated from the clandestine migrant perspective. Migrants are labelled as outsiders and invaders. In the diaspora, migrants are subject to abjection as a result of their foreign identities.

The narrative is rooted in two worlds as Darling crosses borders and boundaries. Darling suffers dislocation and displacement in her homeland, Zimbabwe. Darling, her family and other characters in the novel struggle for economic and social survival because of the poverty and corruption in the country. Darling migrates to America to live with her aunt, Fostalina. As a result of her black, female, African, migrant identity she is subject to marginalisation, discrimination and oppression. Through migration, she encounters many challenges including an identity crisis as a result of the clash of cultures. In the host country, Darling experiences nostalgia as she has a longing for her homeland, Zimbabwe. She also reminisces about home and is subject to feelings of exile and displacement.

We Need New Names is a counter-hegemonic narrative. Govinden (2008:54) notes that “the question of selfhood and subjectivity has been important for black women generally as they have attempted to create and recreate new or alternative identities to counter suppression or obliteration of their identity as well as stereotypical constructions of themselves in oppressive contexts”. Darling is represented as an independent, candid and strong woman as she displays resilience, agency, humour, political astuteness and humanity. Through her narration, Darling provides social commentary about the problems in African and American society. The non-linear narrative offers flashbacks of life in Zimbabwe through Darling’s recollections. Darling is aware of the failures in her homeland; nonetheless, she does not disregard the country. She also subverts hegemonic and stereotypical views about Africans, children and women in general. Darling, together with the other child characters in the text, display survival in the face of turmoil. They have an optimistic approach to life. Additionally, Bulawayo displays appreciation for cultural diversity and hybridity. At the end of the novel, Darling represents a transnational and transcultural diasporic subject as she is rooted in Africa but assimilates American culture.

HOME IS AN ESCAPE FROM ZIMBABWE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This section identifies how Bulawayo uses the novel to reflect social realities, and I also provide a detailed analysis of the description of Zimbabwe in the text. This section also explores the push factors depicted in the primary novel which impel the characters' migration out of Zimbabwe. Moreover, I analyse how the black post-colonial Zimbabwean government inflicts destruction and violence on the lives of individuals. I also explore the significance of home, names, places and mobility in the text.

In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo investigates the lives of African individuals living in post-colonial Zimbabwean society. Literature is interpreted to be a product of society as it reflects the realities of society. Moyo, Mdlongwa and Hlongwane (2014:5) explain that writers “capture the vicissitudes, vagaries and failures of the society” in which they live. Bulawayo uses the selected literary work to reflect the historical occurrences and contemporary issues in Zimbabwean society. She explores the social, economic and political conditions in Zimbabwe which led to droves of migration.

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998:177) state that the “concepts of place and displacement demonstrate the very complex interaction of language, history and environment in the experience of colonised people and the importance of space and location in the process of identity formation”. A sense of place may be rooted in cultural history. However, the interference of colonialism leads to a sense of displacement. Individuals from post-colonial states become victims of modernity, weakened by capitalism's upward mobility, and deprived of the securities and customs of national belonging (Toivanen 2015:1). It is a longing for development and a sense of disillusionment that motivates mobility. Characters desire an escape from Zimbabwe as a result of the socio-economic and political crisis in the country.

Toivanen (2015:3) states that the story takes place in an “unnamed Southern African country whose condition evokes Zimbabwe's crisis with its economic, social and political upheaval that includes the rise of patriotic discourses”. Darling lives in a shantytown named Paradise. The name Paradise is ironic as it is not an ideal, utopian place. Chitando (2016) explains:

The ironic name, “Paradise”, mirrors that of a block of flats in Harare’s Mbare high density suburb that is named, “Tagarika” (We are now rich/settled/comfortable). The flats are over-crowded and characterised by poor sanitary conditions. The name, Paradise, evokes a desire, an aspiration and a longing to graduate to a suburb that offers all the amenities and dignity. (116)

In Paradise, the people live in shacks that are “crammed together like hot loaves of bread”, the individuals also bath in dishes and defecate in bushes (Bulawayo 2013:25). Their lives are characterised by hunger, poverty and unemployment. Moreover, even if an individual (for example Mother of Bones) accumulates a great deal of money, he or she cannot even buy a grain of salt as the money is worthless. This emphasises the economic disarray where the currency of the country loses absolute value. The death rate in the town is also high as the graves in Heavenway keep appearing like rain.

Names are significant in the text as Bulawayo uses naming to allude to the Zimbabwean crisis and historical and social aspects in Zimbabwe. Thabisani Ndlovu (2017) explains that

unsurprisingly, characters’ names that NoViolet Bulawayo (2013) chooses are labels of discrimination and violence. She suggests that old and current names speak of lack, of inadequacy and those that suggest change or are full of promise, tend to be quashed. Some names are crippling whereas others are both dangerous and fatal. The main characters include Sbho, short for Sbhonda (vagrant or beggar), Godknows (a name that speaks of disappointment, defeat and a near loss of hope), Bastard (illegitimate, unwanted), Stina (brick), and Bornfree (born after the war of liberation of 1980). Sbhonda speaks of a lack of life’s basics such as food and shelter, a material reality for most Zimbabweans particularly between 2007 and 2009. It is not surprising that when the novel opens, it is with the incident of hungry children on a mission to steal guavas. Bastard is derogatory and suggests thwarted relationships between son, mother, and possibly a rogue father. [...] As for Stina (brick), the connotation is that of violence. (15-16)

Polo Moji (2015:184) further explains that “naming is also used to anchor the story in a Zimbabwean location”; hence the reference to Chimurenga Streets alludes to the Zimbabwean nationalist struggle for independence and Mzilikazi Road refers to the founding father of the

Ndebele nation, King Mzilikazi. The characters refer to their home as a “kaka country” as it emphasises their discomfort within the nation. Toivanen (2015:3) declares that defining one’s home country, a failed post-colonial state, in such repulsive terms is a characteristic of abjection. Bastard states that the school is “kaka”. The excrement or “kaka” is a symbol of underdevelopment and wasted political energies. “The children harness the image of kaka (human excrement) as a discursive resource to satirise the failures of the Zimbabwean postcolony and to degrade all forms of authority” (Ngoshi 2016:53). The characters in the novel feel a sense of dislocation and displacement as a result of the actions of their government which gives them void promises.

From the beginning of the novel, it is evident that mobility and travel are dominant themes in the text. Darling and her friends travel to Budapest, a neighbouring affluent suburb, even though they are not allowed to cross Mzilikazi Road. Darling and her friends engage in diasporic experiences in and around Zimbabwe as they travel to the neighbouring city of Budapest (Isaacs 2016:181). The children recognise their own abjection through their awareness of the socially privileged neighbourhood, Budapest. They say that “Budapest is not a kaka toilet for anybody to just walk in, it’s not like Paradise” (12). The children live in a marginal, poverty-stricken town that is separated from the wealthy Budapest and Shanghai. Within Zimbabwe, there are also borders that divide the affluent and the poor. The children are aware of the barriers and borders that separate Paradise from Budapest and Shanghai. This emphasises the significance of borders which separate and create barriers between individuals in society. Budapest embodies the pursuit of materialistic aspirations. According to Darling, Budapest is characterised by the “big stadium with the glimmering benches we’ll never sit on” (2). Budapest is in contrast to Paradise as wealthy individuals of a higher social class inhabit the area. Borders create difference as well as guidelines that dictate one’s life. This movement also signifies the characters’ personalities as they do not conform to social norms or rules. The characters travel to Budapest in search of guavas, as Darling explains: “we didn’t eat this morning and my stomach feels like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything out” (1).

Tendai Mangena (2016:191) argues that “names in literature constitute a significant and yet oft-neglected aspect of literary onomastics”. Mangena (195) further explains that one of the

streets in Budapest is named Chimurenga Street, which denotes the Third Chimurenga⁸. Bulawayo employs the naming of Chimurenga Street as a “symbolic reference to the reclamation of space of black people” (195). However, common citizens in the country are still excluded from metropolitan areas like Budapest, “as they are places that are occupied by the new political elite, and the name is associated with this group” (195). Bulawayo brings to light the segregation of areas which results in economic segregation. Affluent areas have well-resourced schools, better access to economic opportunities and enhanced resources. In Zimbabwe, the citizens are dislocated by their own black post-colonial government through their exclusion and neglect. Moreover, Bulawayo employs the naming of Shanghai in the novel to “signify the China-Zimbabwe relations as problematic” (197). In the text, the Zimbabwean characters have no faith in the Chinese economists as they critique the Chinese infrastructure and products. The children refer to the Chinese products as “cheap kaka” as they are unreliable and only last a few days (Bulawayo 2013:46). Bulawayo underscores the Chinese imperialism and Look East Policy where African nations pursued assistance from China; however, the Chinese investors were only concerned about profits. This resulted in corruption, labour abuse and criminal cover-ups. Godknows states that “China is a red devil looking for people to eat so it can grow fat and strong. Now we have to decide if it actually breaks into people’s homes or just ambushes them in the forest” (47). This emphasises the Chinese exploitation and domination in Zimbabwe as China is represented as an imperial power in the country. Zimbabweans’ lives are characterised by continuous social unrest, even post-independence.

Darling and the community face their first displacement when they are forcefully removed to the informal settlements. The state sanctioned the forced eviction and demolition of houses. This demolition denotes Operation Murambatsvina. Mpofu (2011:178) maintains that “Murambatsvina is a Shona word meaning ‘discarding the filth’”. Mpofu (178) further explains that this demolition and mass displacement targeted poor individuals, which resulted in worsened urban poverty. Operation Murambatsvina was carried out “without proper legal procedures, resettlement, relocation and/or compensation” (178). Mpofu (178) also explains that approximately 74,165 residents were affected by Operation Murambatsvina in Bulawayo, with entire communities’ livelihood destroyed. Darling describes the experience as follows:

⁸ The Third Chimurenga refers to the process in Zimbabwe from 1997 onwards where majority black Zimbabweans reclaimed land from white minority commercial farmers.

The men driving the bulldozers are laughing. I hear the adults saying, Why why why, what have we done, what have we done, what have we done? Then the lorries come carrying the police with those guns and baton sticks and we run inside the houses, but it's no use hiding because the bulldozers start bulldozing and bulldozing and we are screaming and screaming. The fathers are throwing hands in the air like women and saying angry things and kicking stones. The women are screaming the names of the children to see where we are and they are grabbing things from the houses: plates, clothes, a Bible, food, just grabbing whatever they can grab. And there is dust all over from the crumbling walls; it gets into our hair and mouths and noses and makes us cough and cough. (Bulawayo 2013:66)

The above scene emphasises the violence, chaos and destruction imposed by the black post-colonial government and the police officials. The language in the above passage intensifies the horror, wreckage and destruction that occurred. In the above extract, repetition functions to highlight the devastation of the loss of their possessions, houses and community. In addition, Bulawayo employs triple repetition to emphasise the citizens' disbelief as they are rendered confounded. They are struck with horror as they are innocent victims during this situation, they incessantly question what they have done; however, no one makes an effort to explain to them why this operation is occurring. The bulldozers continue bulldozing regardless of their efforts to protect their possessions. The scene depicts the citizens as objects who are discarded. Furthermore, they have no power or voice. As the subaltern, the citizens are silenced as even though they are relentlessly screaming, no one listens. The emphasis on screaming highlights the citizens' inability to register the situation and process the occurrence. Furthermore, the repetition of screaming and screaming has the effect of underlining their helplessness in this traumatic situation. Additionally, the men in the passage are likened to women, which indicates a gender crossing and emasculation. The males are depicted as defenceless, weak and a laughing-stock. On the other hand, the women are grabbing their possessions as they persistently attempt to save their hard-earned belongings. The repetition of grabbing highlights the arbitrariness of the situation. The imagery of dust in the passage denotes the finality of the destruction as the citizens cannot undo the damage. There is no repairing, no rebuilding and no hope. The individuals' lives are reduced to dust, which indicates a metaphoric burial of their lives. The crumbling walls are another metaphor in the extract to describe their lives. Just as the walls in the houses are crumbling, the walls in their world are caving in. The above passage

describes the people's abjection and abject identities as they are repressed and subject to victimisation.

In the text, a police official hits a woman on the head with a gun for trying to protect her house and belongings. Darling explains that he does not kill her because "all eyes are on him" (66). This alludes to the appalling crimes government officials commit behind the scenes. The woman in the text is innocent and vulnerable; however, the police official shows no remorse. In addition, a baby named Freedom is killed as he was sleeping in the house during the demolition. Infanticide is regarded as the worst crime. However, during Operation Murambatsvina, children were crushed to death. Furthermore, Bulawayo compares the life of the baby to the lives of the citizens, as all their freedom has been annihilated by the government. During the operation everything is broken, and damaged, and the people are left destitute and disillusioned. Everisto Benyera and Chidochashe Nyere (2015) state that

The ferocity of the Operation Murambatsvina left the most vulnerable groups of the Zimbabwean societies, particularly women and children, even more vulnerable. The timing of the operation was also not a coincidence given that it was executed in the middle of a bitter winter leaving room for asserting that this was a move meant to inflict the maximum damage, loss and suffering on the victims. (6524)

Citizens' hopes and dreams are destroyed by the black post-colonial government. This highlights that the post-colonial government did not bring the expected equity or justice; instead, it is brutal and malicious. A citizen in the novel explains that "we put them in power, and today they turn on us like a snake, mputhu" (67). The connotations of a snake are evil, betrayal and chaos. In the Bible, Eve trusted the serpent and she fell into sin and this resulted in chaos. In Zimbabwe, the citizens trusted the black post-colonial government and voted them into power; however, this resulted in chaos throughout the country. Instead of the government protecting its own, it is responsible for the destruction. The government officials do not support but they undermine citizens' welfare and strip them of their dignity. Bulawayo emphasises that one cannot reduce politics to racially determined boundaries only. Furthermore, she contests and questions the decisions of Zimbabwean leaders and government. Despite receiving independence, the citizens experience no physical change. Hence the term "real change" is repeated throughout the novel, and there is a chapter titled "For Real".

The police and freedom fighters regard all white people as the colonialists and believe that they do not belong in the country as “Africa is for Africans only” (111). The police interrogate the white man on Mandela Street and ask him if it is his father’s street and if he thinks Mandela is his father. This is ironic as Mandela is regarded as the father of South Africa. Furthermore, he is regarded as an international symbol of democracy, freedom and equality. He fought against racial segregation and for equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of race. Mandela believed in a rainbow nation where both black and white citizens can live together in peace and reconciliation. In Zimbabwe, Nelson Mandela Avenue is a street named in commemoration of Nelson Mandela. However, the police and freedom fighters are oblivious to Mandela’s beliefs and values. The children feel a sense of shame and humiliation when they see the freedom fighters’ brutal actions. These freedom fighters call themselves “Sons of the soil” (120). This emphasises their undefined and exclusionary beliefs as they differentiate between themselves and white citizens. The children display humanity and Ubuntu as they question “What is an African?” and argue that the white couple are also people (119). This signals the children’s ability to reject the abject national identity imposed on them (Tovianen 2015:6). Sbhoo understands the pain of the white couple and identifies with them. Furthermore, Eze (2016:116) explains that this question is significant as it is from one displaced individual about another suffering undue pain. The children have more humanity than the freedom fighters and acknowledge that Africa is home to all those who have a birthright. One’s homeland should not be determined by race or colour. This question is an “important moral and existential interjection in the narrative; it challenges the nationalist’s narrow definition of identity and its moral implications” (116).

Political violence is also highlighted in the text. Bornfree is brutally murdered in election-related violence. The children play a game to re-enact his murder. This scene is described as follows:

After the dancing we pounce on Bastard, who is now Bornfree. We scream into his face while we clobber him.

Who are you working for?

Sell-out!

Who is paying you? America and Britain?

Why don’t you scream for America and Britain to help you now?

Friend of the colonists!

Selling the country to the whites!
You think you can just vote for whoever you want?
Vote now, we want to see, sellout!
You want Change, today we'll show you Change!
Here's your democracy, your human rights, eat it, eat eat eat!

[...]

Axes to the head, kicks to the ribs, legs, knobkerries whacking all over.

With all our weapons clamouring for one person like that, it looks like we are hitting a grain of sand...Hitting hitting hitting. (141)

The above extract references the gross violence inflicted on citizens of the country. The word “clobber” emphasises the vigorous violence and assault Bornfree is subject to. He is subdued and annihilated by the freedom fighters because he opposes the current government. Even though Zimbabwe is a democracy, the citizens do not have the freedom to vote for who they want. Any opposition to the government is met with despotism. Bornfree is massacred with axes and knobkerries. Bulawayo uses the technique of repetition to emphasise the mass execution of Bornfree. He is compared to a grain of sand, which emphasises his vulnerability, fragility and the disintegration of his body. In Zimbabwe, the violence is so overwhelming that even innocent children who should be playing carefree games are enacting the violence. The children are aware of the political violence and abuse in the country. The game is a parody of reality as Bastard explains that “this is for real” (146). The children understand the plight of others and display Ubuntu as they empathise with others. Stina compares Zimbabwe to a Coca-Cola bottle as it can smash on the floor and disappoint you. Furthermore, once it is squashed you cannot put it back together. This emphasises the deleterious state of the country which inflicts pain and hurt on its citizens and is unsalvageable. Even after independence, citizens do not have the freedom to vote or power of speech. Even though Zimbabwe is a democratic country, individuals are denied their basic rights. The post-colonial government flaunts its power and oppresses those who show opposition. Extreme force through violence and murder is used to restrain citizens. Benyera and Nyere (2015:6522) state that “the use of violence as an instrument of governance predates independence in Zimbabwe”.

Zimbabwe is a country characterised by social unrest and dejection. Mpfu (2011:182) explains that the Zimbabwean government launched Operation Garikari/Hlalani Kuhle which is translated as Operation Live Well in 2005. This programme was designed to rebuild houses for

those displaced and homeless victims of Operation Murambatsvina. It was designed to restore individuals' dignity as well as improve the lives and future of citizens (183). However, Operation Garkikari was unsuccessful as not enough houses were constructed, the beneficiaries were not victims of Operation Murambatsvina, and they did not install running water and sewage systems in the houses that were built (186). Mpofu (187) further notes that "in March 2008, nearly three years after the start of the reconstruction programme, the beneficiaries were still fetching water from a communal tap and relieving themselves in the bush". The residents in Paradise live in makeshift accommodation after the traumatic experience when their houses are demolished. Individuals are forced to live in dilapidated conditions characterised by overcrowding, poverty and poor sanitation. Benyera and Chidochase (2015) further argue:

Most people who were evicted from their urban dwellings were forcibly taken and dumped in open spaces without water, electricity, housing and health facilities. Their food security was compromised and they faced starvation. The consequences of such evictions and displacement include an increase in vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and a disruption in HIV/AIDS services particularly Anti Retro Viral (ARV) Treatment, home based care and prevention. (6530)

The concept of home is blurred in the text as Darling explains that in her house, she follows her friends, "like it's their shack and I'm just visiting" (Bulawayo 2013:100). In addition, home is an ambivalent place. Home is not only a place of nurture, comfort and protection but it is also a place of catastrophe and danger. The characters discover that their homes are not a safe place where one is free from attack. Chipso suffers child abuse as she is raped and impregnated by her grandfather. This results in her becoming mute and communicating only through the use of her hands. Sbhoo desires an escape from her home. She believes that she will marry a man who will take her "away from Paradise, away from the shacks and Heavenway and Fambeki and everything else" (12). Darling desires an escape to the USA as she describes the country as the "big baboon of the world" (49). On the other hand, Bastard desires an escape from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg as he believes that America is too far away. He explains that "you have to be able to return from wherever you go" (14). The characters desire to move away from home to a more favourable place with more employment, affluence and opportunities. There is no established educational structure as the schools are closed. This has resulted from teachers leaving to teach in neighbouring countries where there is better remuneration. Furthermore,

Zimbabwe has a poor health care system as strikes are frequent, leaving hospitals without doctors or nurses.

The black Zimbabwean individuals work under harsh conditions for Chinese corporations. According to the children, the Chinese Fat Mangena looks “like he has swallowed a country” (45). This alludes to China taking over Zimbabwe so that it can make profits. The Chinese exploit Zimbabwean citizens. Darling describes the black workers as follows: “they look like they’ve been playing in dirt all their lives – it’s all over their bodies, their clothes, their hair” (44). Bastard explains that they look like pigs. This emphasises the dehumanisation and exploitation of workers in the country.

Many citizens in Zimbabwe are leaving in droves in search of improved conditions. However, migrants encounter many challenges in their host countries also. Darling’s cousin, Makhosi, migrates to Madante to work in a mine digging for diamonds. Darling explains:

When Makhosi came back, his hands were like decaying logs. He told us about Madante between bad bouts of raw, painful coughs, how when he was under the earth he forgot everything. He said all he knew inside that mine was the terrible pounding of the hammer around him, sometimes even inside him, like he had swallowed it. After a while, he too went to South Africa, like father. (23)

Makhosi’s experiences in Madante are characterised by undesirable working conditions in the mines. This results in sickness and painful ailments. Moreover, his hands are compared to decaying logs. This metaphorically describes the disintegration of his mind and body. He is deprived of all sense of memory and existence. Furthermore, the comparison emphasises the decline and deterioration of his state of being. He is reduced to a log which denotes that he is a fallen object. Migration also has negative psychological impacts on Makhosi. He is completely subjugated by the migration and mining experience. In addition, Darling’s father is absent in her life as he has left Darling and her mother at home to go and work in South Africa. “He never writes, never sends [them] money, never nothing” (22). When Darling’s father migrates to South Africa, he forgets about his family and his responsibility to them. He does not send any money, and does not visit or communicate with them. Darling’s father has a degree. However, when he migrates to South Africa he works in a menial job. He returns after several years “unable to move, unable to talk properly, unable to anything, vomiting and [...]

defecating on himself” (89). His body is described as a black, terrible stick that is dead and rotting. Darling hates her father for migrating to South Africa and returning sick. Another character in the text, Moshe, also migrates to South Africa. Bastard supports his migration as he says that it is better to go to South Africa than to work in this kaka place and get dirty. Migration to South Africa and other countries is seen as desirable; however, it can also have negative repercussions. Makhosi and Darling’s father experience negative encounters in their host country which leads to them being sick and individuals unrecognisable in society.

The children display a profound awareness of the inequalities in their homeland as well as in the world in general. They engage in childlike but painfully insightful dialogue about life on the global margins. The main child characters in the text are represented as independent, uncared for and neglected as the “mothers are busy with hair and talk, which is the only thing they ever do. They just glance at us when we file past the shacks and then look away” (1-2). Furthermore, the men are oblivious to their surroundings “since their eyes never lift from the draughts” (2). They grow up without any guidance, nurturing or care. Nevertheless, they are filled with laughter and have an ability to shrug off the pains and struggles of daily life. They travel on Hope Street with countless hopes and dreams in their minds and hearts. However, they acknowledge that they will never be able to sit on the “glimmering benches” because of who they are (2). The children desire to go to the “country-countries” like Britain, America and Canada. Darling and her friends display social consciousness of the world. They play a game named “Country Game” where each player fights for the ownership of a specific country. The country-countries are USA, Britain, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, France, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Russia and Greece. These are the developed countries with enhanced resources, high industrialisation and wealth. During the game, if they lose the fight they have to settle for countries like Dubai, South Africa, Botswana and Tanzania. Darling explains that “they are not country-countries but life is better there” (Bulawayo 2013:49). Nobody wants to be rags of countries like Congo, Somalia, Iraq, Sudan, Haiti and Sri Lanka. The word “rags” emphasises the negative conditions of the countries which render them worthless. When the NGOs come they scream, “take me with you” (54). The children desire to migrate to countries more desirable than Zimbabwe. The children are aware of the global politics and the socio-economic disparities between world powers and penurious, politically unstable countries like the ones they live in. Toivanen (2015:4) highlights that this emphasises their despondency over being stuck in a post-colonial state. As abject subjects, they refuse to claim the nation as their own. Alternatively, they desire to banish their negative, poverty-stricken past from their identity.

In a short bridging chapter, titled “How They Left”, the narrative shifts from the first person singular narrator to the third person plural. This chapter is narrated by an extradiegetic narrator who is a distant but omniscient voice. This interlude chapter provides an extensive social perspective to the chapters narrated by Darling. The reader is made aware that the children of the land are leaving in droves. They are “moving, running, emigrating, going, deserting, walking, quitting, flying and fleeing” to various countries (145). Bulawayo uses an intertextual reference to Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), as a collective voice in Chapter Ten explains that “When things fall apart, the children of the land scurry and scatter like birds escaping a burning sky” (145). This intertextual reference indicates the post-independence disillusionment and dislocation that African citizens are subject to.

Bachisi and Manyarara (2013) state that

Zimbabwean Diaspora literature also interrogates the impact that the diaspora has, not only on the displaced individual, but on the homeland as well. Thus, themes like the brain drain, dislocated families, the trauma and psychological anguish of separation and economic support to the motherland all take centre stage in these narratives. (15)

Darling’s grandmother explains that when all citizens scatter to foreign lands then the country will become a ruin. Individuals with nothing as well as those with strength, ambitions, hopes, loss and pain are all crossing borders. The phrase “crossing borders” is repeated as a refrain. This highlights that Darling has migrated to a new country. Furthermore, it is used as an organising device as it is also the border that divides the novel into two sections of almost identical length. Frassinelli (2015:715) states that the border tears apart imagined worlds but also connects and makes individuals see that fragmented realms are also part of a whole. A border signifies processes responsible for segmenting, shaping and recombining space and time. Furthermore, the border is a marker for social, linguistic and cultural difference (Frassinelli 2015:715).

Zimbabwe is represented as a dysfunctional and failed post-colonial nation state. The country’s economy is collapsing, the currency has lost its value because of inflation and citizens in the country are subject to impoverishment. The characters in the text embody a feeling of

despondency and hopelessness as they are burdened with poverty, hunger and unemployment. The social, economic and political crisis spurs their migration out of Zimbabwe.

HOME IS AN ESCAPE FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This section explores the representation of the American landscape and the failure of American society to be inclusive and hospitable to migrant characters. This section also focuses on a discussion of how the intersectional categories of race, gender, culture and nationality are used to define Darling's identity in the host country. Additionally, I analyse how language and culture are used as barriers in the host country. In this section, I also explore the challenges and dislocation migrants experience in America and how Africa is negatively viewed.

Individuals of African descent are leaving in droves. "They flee their own wretched land so their hunger may be pacified in foreign lands, their tears wiped away in strange lands, the wounds of the despair bandaged in foreign lands, their blistered prayers muttered in the darkness of queer lands" (Bulawayo 2013:146). African migrants desire an escape out of Africa to the USA as it is portrayed as the land of milk and honey. In the USA, African migrant characters encounter discrimination, systematic rejection, structural racism and oppression. Hegemony in American society is brought to light. Bulawayo reveals the discrimination and oppression African migrants are subject to as a result of their personal identities. In American society, Darling, Fostalina, Kojo, TK and various other migrant characters are subject to social, economic, cultural and physiological challenges. They are regarded as the Other as a result of their national, cultural and racial differences, leading to their exclusion and marginalisation in their host country.

Darling's migration is an escape from home where "things are falling apart" (91). America is a symbol of freedom and opportunity to many individuals. Darling believes that this is the land of hope, glory and freedom so she leaves her home in search of opportunities, freedom and autonomy. However, she faces a great disappointment when she realises that America is also a dysfunctional country. It is not the paradise she imagined it to be where she would receive support, camaraderie and opportunities. Youna (2011:10) explains that "The nature of the diaspora involves identity as a subjective condition marked by contingency, differences of power and position, internal differentiation, inner conflict and contestation, indeterminacy and continual construction". Darling pronounces Detroit Michigan as "DestroyedMichygen" to

emphasise the struggle she encounters speaking English as a result of the language barriers. The “Destroyed Michygen” also signifies the economic recession in 2008 in America. Detroit Michigan as a city experienced the worst effects of the Great Depression in America. The homes are valueless, and individuals can no longer afford cars as the people earn less money and work fewer hours. The poverty and unemployment levels have also increased since the recession. Darling says America “is not my country” (147) as she encounters a dislocation and displacement in the host country. She is teased about her name, accent and hair and the way she talks, dresses and laughs. She feels wrong in her skin, body, clothes, language and head as these characteristics are signifiers of her difference, otherness and unbelonging. Another character in the novel, Tom, commits suicide as he is teased by other children and regarded as a freak. Dumi is forced to marry a white American woman so that he can get his citizenship papers.

Van Hear (2010:1531) explains that “migration is linked in complex ways to class, gender, generation, ethnicity and other social cleavages, which are embodied in hierarchies of power and social status”. In addition, Patterson (2006:1896-1897) explains that “with each ethnic group, personal and collective identity-conflation is wrapped up in a shared sense of vulnerabilities and anxieties concerning the political, social and economic landscape”. In America, Darling discovers adverse cold and snow. She personifies the cold to highlight the alienation and disdain she receives in the country. She explains that there is this “coldness that makes like it wants to kill you, like it’s telling you, with its snow, that you should go back to where you came from” (Bulawayo 2013:148). Furthermore, this cold and snow are described as a greedy monster, which alludes to the constraints and lack of welcome she discovers in the host country. She also describes America as a place that does not even look real. Darling explains that there is “too much whiteness, as if somebody told the snow the other colours don’t even count” (157). This quotation makes reference to hegemony in America where white is seen as the dominant race and all other races are seen as inferior. Furthermore, Darling wishes it was “rainbow-like”, thus referencing the myth of the rainbow nation where everyone is seen as equal.

Another character in the text named Prince migrates from Zimbabwe. His migration is prompted by the violent attacks in his homeland, which are visible in the scars and burns on his arm. He also has terrible nightmares where he screams and kicks and yells for help. Even though he is still young, he looks aged. Prince is subject to dislocation by the Zimbabwean

government; however, he finds himself in the same predicament in American society. Darling explains that “his face is hard and terrible and the light in his eyes are gone, like the snow maybe sneaked in there and put it out” (155). Darling personifies the snow to emphasise the apathy and disenchantment he encounters in American society. All the hope, optimism and vivacity have been extinguished from his life.

John Foster and Wayne Froman (2002:3) explain that “invocations of culture speak with a double tongue [...] [T]hey can promise visions of harmony and deepened understanding, they can also provide alibis for hatred and injustice”. To be able to fit into America, Darling has to change her accent and sound American. However, she acknowledges that the language and the entire process are “messed up” (Bulawayo 2013:194). Language becomes a signifier of detachment, psychic disconnection and social immobility (Frasinelli 2015:717). Darling’s American accent also leads to her disengagement from her community. Furthermore, language acts as a barrier between individuals in American society. There is a disconnection between Kojo and Darling and Fostalina as Kojo does not understand their home language while they do not understand his. TK is an American-born child, therefore he also does not understand African languages. TK is described as an individual who “lives in his own country by himself” (153). This emphasises his psychic disconnection as he cannot relate to those around him. Furthermore, he is alienated and subject to feelings of isolation.

Kristeva and Lechte (1982:128) state that “abjection is in fact a recognition of the fundamental lack of all being, meaning, language and desire”. Darling is torn apart by an increasingly unfulfillable desire for her motherland. She says, “I find the food does nothing for me, like I am hungry for my country and nothing is going to fix that” (Bulawayo 2013:153). Darling, together with other characters in America, experiences a nostalgia and a desire to return to the homeland. Kojo becomes reclusive because he speaks a language that no one understands. However, when he is with someone from his country, he becomes a different person as he reveals his true identity. He listens to the Ghanaian music that makes him forget himself. Prince communicates with wooden animals that remind him of home. Furthermore, the only medicine and cure for Tshaka Zulu (a South African migrant living in America) are speaking to him in his mother tongue. Tshaka Zulu suffers from a mental illness that leads to him believing that he is the founder of the Zulu nation. Furthermore, he collects images and newspaper clippings of South African icons so that he can remain connected to his country of origin.

The pain of adjustment is evident in *We Need New Names* as individuals are regarded as outsiders. Lechte (1990:81) states that “the foreigner becomes rootless, a wanderer in exile, living different personas in a life of the mask”. Bulawayo highlights the incapacity of American society to consider African immigrants as part of the national community. Darling is described as a wandering calf. She occupies several liminal positions as she is an adolescent and a migrant. As a black, African, migrant subject, Darling is viewed with suspicion wherever she goes. She states that she is scared to run when police are around because “the police will shoot you for doing a little thing like that if you are black” (Bulawayo 2013:219). America can never be the immigrants’ country. They work for “low-paying jobs, doing backbreaking jobs that gnaws at the bones of their dignity, devours the meat and tongues the marrow” (244). Darling works cleaning toilets, bagging groceries and separating beverages. In America, the migrants live like prisoners and lose their individuality as they are identified only by names of puzzles, myths and countries. They live in the country as illegal citizens and have no land to call their own.

Darling experiences a disenchantment and disillusionment in her host country. She is regarded as a reject of a failed state. Africa is regarded as “a place where the sun never rises” (265). Americans regard Africa as one country, therefore Darling is supposed to comment on all the negative occurrences in Congo, even though she knows nothing about the rapes and killings in that country. Furthermore, when the woman says her niece is going to Rwanda, she believes that she is doing great things for the whole of Africa and not just for Rwanda. Darling also has to repeatedly tell Jim, her boss, that “Africa is a continent with fifty-some countries, that other than my own country” (253). Additionally, the phrase “back there” is always used to refer to Africa. This emphasises that Africa is viewed as backward.

Robert Young (1995:53) cogently comments that “Culture never stands alone but always participates in a conflictual economy acting out the tension between sameness and difference, comparison and differentiation, unity and diversity, cohesion and dispersion, containment and subversion”. Darling struggles to adapt to American culture and ways of life. African cultures and norms are in contrast to those of America. African children are brought up differently from those in America. Darling states that Mandla (an American born child with an African father, Dumi) has not been taught about reading eyes which is a common practice in Africa. Furthermore, when she slaps Mandla she is looked upon in disbelief and disgust as this is taboo in American society. Tshaka Zulu tries to justify Darling’s actions by explaining that this is

how African individuals handle unruly children in their culture. As a result of migration, Darling encounters an identity crisis. Her traditional African life and culture are in contrast to American ways. She is subject to cultural tensions and ethnic conflicts which lead to a feeling of unbelonging.

Bulawayo portrays the powerful condemnation of political leaders who have failed significantly. The political turmoil leads to individual, family, communal and national failure. This leads to “droves of migration”. The USA is perceived as the promised land flowing with milk and honey. It is also deemed to be an idealised, dream country for migrants as it is regarded as the land of the free. However, the African migrant characters in the text are subject to displacement, discrimination, exploitation and oppression in the American landscape. Intersectionality directs Darling’s life and experiences. The intersectional categories of race, gender, culture, religion and economics determine her identity and how she is viewed by others in her host country. The African migrants face identity predicaments in their new home. In America, Darling desires an escape to Paradise as it is a place that provides her with safety, comfort and belonging.

TRANSCULTURALISM

This section explores the representation of Darling’s hybrid identity as she assimilates American culture. I also analyse how she undergoes acculturation and deculturation through the identification of cultural practices and objects. Additionally, I discuss how the *Bildungsroman* genre relates to transculturalism in the text and how Darling’s identity-formation is depicted in the novel.

Foster and Froman (2002:3) state that “the ability to cross a cultural threshold assumes that one’s connection with a given past can involve something richer and more creative than the unbending absorption of a heritage, can be reconceived as requiring a dynamic process of revision and transformation”. In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo acknowledges the importance of cultural diversity and respect for difference. The title of the text refers to personal identities; hence she is appealing for a re-examination of the African identities. African migrants are subject to discrimination, marginalisation and oppression. However, Bulawayo implicitly appeals for an acceptance and respect for individuals who are different in society. She calls for new identities that will be welcomed and accepted in society.

Young (1995:26) states that hybridity “makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different”. Cultural identity is a theme that features in the novel. In Darling’s host country, she undergoes a cultural exchange and develops a hybrid identity. This hybridised identity leads to a disconnection from her Zimbabwean homeland and family as she can no longer completely relate to her cultural past. Chipso explains that as a migrant living in America, Darling does not understand the suffering and plight of those in Zimbabwe. However, Darling’s hybrid identity also leads to her connecting with her host country as she identifies with American culture. She yearns for food from her homeland; however, she enjoys eating American food. She discards certain African cultural elements and embraces selected American cultural ways of being. In African countries, it is regarded as disrespectful to look an adult in the eye; however, she learns that it is disrespectful not to look at an adult in the eye in America. Hence, she follows the American customs. She also learns to enjoy American television programmes, for example That’s So Raven, The Simpsons and Glee.

The text may be identified as a *Bildungsroman* as the text displays Darling’s growth into a mature adolescent. Victoria Barnett-Woods (2016) explains that “The protagonists of the *Bildungsroman* are traditionally male, highlighting the historical disadvantage of women’s social mobility” (614). However, Youna (2011:2) elucidates that presently women are “active participants in the increased scale, diversity and transition in the nature of international migration”. As a counter-hegemonic narrative, *We Need New Names* provides a representation, voice and mobility to subaltern African migrant women.

Bildungsromane focus on formation, development, maturation and education. Barnett-Woods (2016:615) notes that “the *Bildungsroman* narrative arc begins with a young heroine who develops into a subject of worldly awareness over the course of the novel.” The motif of journey and quest is depicted throughout the novel. The novel centres on Darling’s search for finding a place in the world as she is subject to abjection in her home and host country. *Bildungsromane* depict the conflict with the environment as well as inner conflict. Darling is displaced by her social environment; however, she also suffers an identity crisis as a result of her outsider status. Woods (616) explains that being an outsider and subject to exclusion is thematically central to women’s growth, understanding and critique of the world. Darling discovers a transcultural and hybrid identity through her diasporic encounters. She undergoes experiential learning through her interaction with diverse individuals. Barnett-Woods (615)

further explains that *Bildungsromane* depict “fictional women, who represent both figures of the social imaginary and figures that exist in the reality of a historical moment, are positioned to be both ‘in’ and ‘out’ in their critiques of empire, education, and gender”. In Zimbabwe, Darling is portrayed as innocent and credulous. Furthermore, she is beleaguered by Chipo’s rape and pregnancy. During their attempt to abort Chipo’s baby, Darling and her friends exhibit immaturity and naivety as they believe a hanger can be used during the abortion procedure. The children are not accustomed to television, media or sexual activities. However, in America, Darling watches porn and sexual torture videos which indicates her ability to withstand trauma. Furthermore, it highlights the maturity of Darling’s American peer group as compared to her Zimbabwean one.

Barry (1995:195) states that post-colonial writers focus on issues of cultural difference, and “celebration and exploration of diversity, hybridity, and difference become central” to the text. Darling learns to navigate between the intersectional categories as she overcomes race and gender-based discrimination which is precipitated by hegemonic discourses. Furthermore, Darling is more interrogative of patriarchy, global inequalities and discrimination. At the end of the novel, she displays self-actualisation and social awareness of the world. Her diasporic experiences allow her to gain greater insight and a wider perspective of life and reality. She acquires knowledge on the importance of race, gender, culture and nationality. This results in her finding similarities with those individuals who are different from her. Youna (2011:10) notes that “identity is partly inherited and partly modified, as well as partly produced”. Darling’s identity is socially constructed by many factors. She strives to preserve her traditional African culture while she assimilates American cultures. The novel reveals the influence of the cultural world and environment on her personal development and identity. Diasporic experiences lead to a development in her self-awareness. On arrival at the host country, she has a clash with the expectations of American society; however, Darling undergoes acculturation and deculturation and she acquires knowledge on how to adapt to the American landscape. She learns to navigate through American life and culture by adopting a transcultural identity. As a transnational subject, she maintains ties to her home country and she also sustains the idea of return while she is living in America. In addition, the boundary between Zimbabwe and the USA is blurred through Darling’s migration.

In the diaspora, migrants have new names, new locations and new identities. However, they still maintain a strong spiritual connection to their ancestral homes. Darling represents a

transcultural subject as she occupies several cultural spaces that define her hybrid identity. Despite the challenges Darling encounters in her host country, she displays resilience and candid behaviour. She employs various tactics and adjusts her life accordingly so that she can fit into American society. Darling masters the American accent. In the beginning, she regards English and the entire process as “messed up”; however, she learns to speak English proficiently.

Fiona Moolla (2016:233) explains that maize epitomises the link between Africa and America and it is also a symbol of “home in a new locale”. Bulawayo finds similarities between African and American society through the image of maize. As a transnational subject, she points out that individuals can have homes in two different continents. Additionally, maize “represents the food that lightens Darling’s life-journey”, while guavas are a “potent symbol of the ambiguous anti-pastoral of Darling’s lost Zimbabwean childhood” (233). Darling’s heritage, background and beliefs will always be her guide as she navigates and journeys through life. She yearns for her Zimbabwean home; nonetheless, as a diasporic subject, she is open to new encounters, localities and philosophies.

The term Afropolitan may be used to describe Bulawayo’s African identity. Eze (2016:114) explains that this concept “highlights the fluidity in African self-perception and visions of the world”. Bulawayo is rooted to her Zimbabwean homeland; however, she is also open to the world. This is also evident in the protagonist in the selected text. Darling has an open mind and she has various conversations and encounters with individuals from different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in American society. She is not judgmental or dismissive towards those who are different from her. Darling is open to Western customs, music, films and products.

Darling discovers that there are also social, economic and political issues in the USA. Darling has to live in a house with planks, and when it rains, it gets mouldy and smells. Furthermore, Detroit has a lot of crime as Darling fears leaving her house because of the gunshots. In addition, one of her neighbours drowns her four children in a bath tub. American life is also characterised by poverty as there are homeless people living on the streets and beggars standing with sign boards on the road. When a boy brings a loaded gun to school with a list of people he wants to shoot, Darling draws parallels with the stampede incidents in Zimbabwe. Darling learns that “everywhere where people live, there is suffering” (285).

Darling decorates her room with a cloth that resembles the market place in Zimbabwe which is characterised by a collective traditional community. She also displays a copper clock that is shaped in the map of Zimbabwe with a giraffe in the middle of her wall. These objects signify her attachment and relation to her homeland. She also places a peculiar mask that is half white and half black on her room wall. This mask symbolises her hybrid identity. The mask also denotes her transformation and understanding of the world in general. Finally, the last artifact she displays on her wall is an ivory slab that is the shape of the African map, and right in the centre of it is carved an eye. These artifacts also allude to Darling's new transcultural identity. Darling is rooted in Africa and her perspective of the world is shaped by Africa; however, she understands and appreciates the diversity of cultures. In America, Darling and other individuals have social gatherings with other migrants from Zimbabwe. During these occasions, they communicate in their home language, cook traditional Zimbabwean food and sit on the floor and eat. They also play music from Africa and dance. This dancing symbolises bringing culture into their host country to feel at home. This occasion may also be regarded as a hybridising strategy as Bulawayo represents African ritual, culture and language.

When Darling leaves, she leaves something of herself behind. This is reinforced during Darling's phone call home and the fact that Chipso's daughter is named after her. She also carries the shadows, the dreams, the fears and dragons of home under her skin as she is deeply connected to her homeland. Hence, she has to straddle two distinct cultures, identities, and continents, sets of friends, languages and levels of awareness. In the selected novel, *Bulawayo* offers a breaking down of cultural boundaries, and promotes the acceptance of transcultural identities.

PATRIARCHY

This section illustrates patriarchy revealed in the text through a discussion of religious exploitation and oppression of women and children in Zimbabwe. I provide a detailed discussion of how religion is used as an instrument to oppress women. This section also identifies patriarchal attitudes and beliefs which are revealed in the novel. Furthermore, I highlight how patriarchy is assimilated in the host country. Finally, I explore the representation of Darling as a counter-hegemonic character.

Bulawayo brings to light the patriarchal ideologies that exist in Zimbabwean society. George (1996:1) explains that the concept of home “immediately connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy [and] gendered self-identity”. Women are denied the ability to realise their full potential as patriarchal attitudes and behaviour limit their personal freedom. As the subaltern, women are told what to do and how to do it. Furthermore, they are silenced by hegemonic practices in society.

In *We Need New Names*, the church exemplifies typical stereotypical patriarchal attitudes and behaviour. The men and women sit on opposite sides “like they are two different rivers that are not supposed to meet” (Bulawayo 2013:32). This emphasises the unequal relations between men and women which are reinforced in Zimbabwean society. Wilkinson (2016:127) points out that “as the church service proceeds, Darling’s commentary makes it increasingly clear that this power is held predominantly by men, and is used to keep women in an inferior, subservient position in this community”. In the church, only women stand up to confess their sins while men in the congregation appear to be exempt from sin. Darling explains that the prophet “goes around touching each of the sinners – there’s seven of them, all women” (37). Bulawayo reveals the patriarchal dominance in traditional Zimbabwean society. Furthermore, when a woman’s baby starts crying she impulsively silences it because “no woman wants to be chided in front of the church” (34). Women are expected to live up to a moral and upright standard in society or they will be looked down upon.

Revelations Bitchington Mborro is a prophet at the Holy Chariot Church of Christ. He carries a long, fat stick that looks “like it can actually injure and do ugly things” (33). This alludes to his personality and oppressive abuse of power in the church. Ngoshi (2016:56) explains that “The last part of his name, when spelt without the double ‘r’, is the Shona word for the phallus”. Ngoshi (56) further notes that “the prophet’s obscene name is thus symbolic of the vulgarity of his religious authority”. Bulawayo employs the surname to criticise the false prophet. Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro exerts excessive power over his church congregants who are mostly oppressed, impoverished women inhabitants of Paradise. He is a false prophet who uses his authority to satisfy his personal desires and abuse women in his church. The abuse of power is highlighted in the scene in which the prophet tells his congregation that God told him that the devil is coming. He further explains that “the devil is a woman in a purple dress that’s riding up her thighs” (Bulawayo 2013:40). The scene is described as follows:

The Evangelists and the Prophet are already screaming prayers even before they've heard what is wrong. They pounce on the woman and pin her down. She is kicking and twitching like a fish in the sand; she obviously doesn't want them to hold her down like that and she's screaming for them to stop [...]

Leave me alone, leave me alone, you sons of bitches! You don't know me! The woman screams at Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro and the Evangelists. Her voice is angry, like it can strike and kill things, but they don't even leave her, they are busy yelling prayers [...]

Then Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro raises both his hands for everyone to be quiet. He points his stick at the pretty woman and commands the demon inside her to get the hell out in the name of Jesus, his exact words, and in his most loudest voice. He says more things to the demon and insults it even. When nothing happens, he wipes his forehead with the back of his sleeve, throws the stick to the side, and leaps onto the woman like maybe he is Hulkogen, squashing her mountains beneath him.

Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro prays for the woman like that, pinning her down and calling to Jesus and screaming Bible verses. He places his hands on her stomach, on her thighs, then he puts his hands on her thing and starts rubbing and praying hard for it, like there is something wrong with it. His face is alight, glowing. The pretty woman just looks like a rag now, the prettiness gone, her strength gone. (38-40)

In the above extract, religious oppression is brought to light. The prophet is depicted as exempt from the law as he is physically and sexually abusing the woman in public; however, no one views it as abuse. The individuals are so obsessed with religion that they cannot see the reality of the situation. The woman is screaming; however, no one helps her or challenges the situation. Religion is portrayed as perverse, which is an oxymoron as religion is supposed to be sacred. The prophet exploits his power and authority as he manipulates religion to exonerate his behaviour. He uses the guise that she is possessed to physically take advantage of her. The words "pounce" and "pin" emphasise how the woman is seized, restrained and rendered powerless. In addition, the prophet is compared to Hulk Hogan, which highlights how he

wrestles with the woman while she lies defenceless. Darling's reference to Hulk Hogan emphasises the prophet's strength and force as Hulk Hogan is regarded as the greatest professional wrestler of all time. Wilkinson (2016:128) aptly comments that "under the guise of religious devotion and divine power, the minister is thus shown to be instrumental in upholding patriarchy of the church and violently maintaining an unjust gender status quo". The above extract is overtly graphic and sexual as Bulawayo highlights how religion is used as an instrument to oppress women. Darling compares the woman to Jesus after he was beaten and nailed to the cross. This emphasises that innocent women are subject to unjustified suffering at the hands of oppressors. The woman is robbed of her dignity, humanity and beauty. She is also compared to a rag which underlines how she has been exploited and demoralised. Wilkinson (2016) further states that in *We Need New Names*,

Women are made to feel guilty for things that are beyond their control, such as a crying baby, while men are of the belief that nothing they do requires penance, not even rape; this speaks to the disequilibrium that exists in terms of gender in this society. Bulawayo clearly highlights how religion becomes a means by which women are made inferior, positioned as sinful failing beings who constantly need to seek forgiveness and approval from the more powerful members of society, while men achieve god-like status through the belief that they are either morally perfect, or that if they have faltered they need not be inclined to feel remorse, or be held accountable for their actions. (128)

An egregious example of patriarchal abuse is in the depiction of Chipo, who at the age of eleven is raped and impregnated by her grandfather. However, no one in society acknowledges her abuse. Her breasts are compared to stone which emphasises how young, immature and undeveloped she is. Furthermore, Chipo is subject to discrimination as a result of her pregnancy. Bastard tries to exclude Chipo from the group of friends. In addition, he sees her pregnancy as a sickness that prevents them from doing their usual things. The children are also socialised into patriarchal attitudes, as when they argue whether Chipo's baby is a boy or girl, Darling says, "it's a boy. The first baby is supposed to be a boy" (3). Bastard constructs his argument on the fact that the baby is a girl because he never felt it kick. Darling reinforces this stereotype as she says, "Yes, boys kick and punch and butt their heads" (3). This emphasises the stereotype that women are gentle, passive and docile while men are active, pugnacious and violent.

Patriarchal behaviour is evident in selected African migrant characters in American society. The patriarchal ideologies and conventions are assimilated into American cultures. The responsibilities of producing, preparing and serving food are all assigned to women. When Fostalina does not cook any meals, Kojo states that “in my country, wives actually cook hot meals every day for their husbands and children. [...] They actually also do laundry and iron and keep the house clean and everything” (156). In addition, when Dumi’s grandmother sends a letter from Africa, it reads that

she hopes he has chosen a healthy, pretty, respectful, and grounded wife who will bear strong sons and teach them our beautiful culture and come home and revive the ancestral homestead as expected of the first daughter-in-law. A wife who knows her place and who will listen to and obey her husband and make him a man among men. A wife who is quick on her feet and talented with her hands and hard-working and pure and faithful. (172)

The above extract underscores the patriarchal views that men hold the primary power, moral authority and social privilege. In addition, this passage highlights how society grooms individuals for two distinct roles. Men are groomed to be dominant and authoritative leaders who hold the power in a relationship, while women are groomed to be dutiful, respectful and attractive. Nadje Al-Ali (2010:118) claims that “Gender not only denotes the social and cultural construction of what it means to be a woman and a man but it also refers to relationships characterized by power differences”. Bulawayo highlights the gender inequalities and discrimination that exist in patriarchal households. Men are empowered by cultural norms while women are disempowered as they are socio-culturally conditioned to be submissive and subordinate. Dumi’s grandmother enforces patriarchal gender roles. She expects Dumi’s wife to be confined to domesticity and housewifery. This patriarchal expectation of women impedes their opportunities to work or study. Furthermore, she does not consider the attributes of intellect or autonomy when describing the perfect wife for him. Dumi’s grandmother also reflects son-bias as she hopes his wife will bear strong sons; she does not mention daughters. This highlights the perception that sons are of a greater value than daughters.

Chapter Six of the novel is entitled “WE NEED NEW NAMES”. This chapter focuses on the children adopting new identities to complete the abortion of Chipó’s baby. According to the children, “in order to do this right, we need new names” (82). This emphasises the need for

new identities. Sbhoo tells Darling that she has to be Dr Roz; however, Darling says, “I don’t want to be man”, Sbhoo then further argues that “either you are that or you are nothing” (82). This statement has a double meaning, as Darling will have no role in the enactment; however, it also signifies the patriarchy that exists as women are regarded as inferior and objects in society.

Patriarchy in the text is revealed as a social construction. The children are socialised to believe that males are superior to females. Bulawayo also highlights the harmful effects of patriarchy as it can lead to gender-based violence. This is portrayed through the prophet’s abuse of a woman and Chipo’s rape, as discussed previously. In the novel, gender ideologies and rules assign the majority of domesticity to wives and children. In the beginning of the novel, only male characters migrate for economic purposes. However, counter-hegemony is displayed as Darling’s mother takes sole responsibility of the house in the absence of her husband. As the novel progresses, Darling becomes more critical of patriarchy and she learns to challenge the system. Bulawayo highlights that patriarchal ideologies, practices and norms can be challenged.

hooks (1992) asserts that

Contemporary fiction by black women focusing on the constructions of self and identity breaks new ground in that it clearly names the ways structures of domination, racism, sexism, and class exploitation, oppress and make it practically impossible for black women to survive if they do not engage in meaningful resistance on some level. (50)

We Need New Names is a counter-hegemonic narrative in which Bulawayo subverts patriarchal norms in ways highlighted by hooks. Chitando (2016:117) states that the men are represented as disempowered as they have lost their role as protectors of women because they have been rendered effeminate by the weak Zimbabwean economy. Bulawayo challenges the men’s masculinity as “they have been castrated by both the economy and the state” (117). Bulawayo presents the women as demonstrating financial power. Moreover, the protagonist employs humour despite the crisis she encounters at home. She displays resilience as she is able to cope better than the male characters in the text. Darling represents the marginalised and subaltern individuals in society. Bulawayo has exploited the ideology that girl children are the most

vulnerable beings in society (Chitando 2016:115). Furthermore, she contests the negative stereotypes that African women are passive: Bulawayo employs a subversive strategy, in which the protagonist in the text is characterised in a positive light. Darling is represented as an active, assertive, strong, resilient and independent character.

CONCLUSION

In the selected novel, fictional representations of the Zimbabwean and American diaspora are explored. Darling as an African diasporic subject leaves her Zimbabwean homeland as a result of the adverse social, economic and political conditions. She flees from the poverty, political unrest and corruption. However, in the USA, Darling is subject to discrimination, displacement and nostalgia which lead to a longing for her home country. Darling and other African migrant characters in the text are regarded as the abject as they are labelled by the failures in their African home countries. Furthermore, they are excluded from the metropolitan public. While living in America, Darling desires an escape to her Zimbabwean homeland where she feels a sense of belonging. There is a blurring of the concept of home in the text.

We Need New Names is a counter-hegemonic text as it presents an African migrant woman's resistance to hegemony and oppression for marginalised women in African and American society. Even though Darling is a child, she is aware of the patriarchy and sexism that exist in society. African women are deemed as the subaltern as they are subject to patriarchy, marginalisation and abuse. Bulawayo provides counter discourses to the hegemonic ideologies about Africa and African migrant women. She provides alternative ways of speaking about the Zimbabwean landscape and citizens. In addition, Bulawayo provides a voice to the subaltern subjects. Ngoshi (2016:53) explains that the child characters in the text challenge hegemonic practices and authoritative discourses. Furthermore, "social norms are suspended and the children have a subversive agency, courtesy of parody and satire" (53). The protagonist, Darling, displays agency and defiance as she challenges patriarchal attitudes and stereotypical behaviour. Darling is depicted as a strong, candid, resilient diasporic figure. Even though intersectionality directs her personal identity and life, Darling learns to navigate between the intersectional categories of race, gender, class and nationality. She discovers how to deal with stereotypes and discrimination, and challenge negative perceptions. At the end of the novel, Darling portrays self-confidence and positive psychological adjustment. She creates an identity

for herself that is transnational and transcultural. Darling is rooted in her traditional African background while she maintains respect for diverse cultures and individuals in society. Darling has a hybrid identity as she assimilates various American cultural elements while she still remains true to various traditional African norms and values.

Bulawayo is a diasporic author who can no longer be related to one national literary space as she has a hybrid, transcultural and transnational identity. She is an Afropolitan diasporic subject as she is rooted in Africa but travels across the globe and remains open to the world and various cultures. This is reflected in the protagonist's identity in the selected text. Darling has a strong connection to her Zimbabwean homeland and families. Throughout the novel, Darling has recollections of Paradise, her family and friends. Darling's identity is presented as relational as she constructs a personal identity that is fluid. She maintains her traditional African heritage, norms and values while she embraces new American ways. Darling expands her vision and perception of life. She learns to accept and appreciate differences. The title, *We Need New Names*, makes reference to the struggle for identity. Bulawayo appeals for new identities that will be welcomed and accepted in society instead of being oppressed.

Violence and Exile in Meg Vandermerwe's *Zebra Crossing*

INTRODUCTION

Violence is often deployed as part of a futile quest to produce certainty, a means to reinforce essentialised ideas about identity and belonging. [...] It appears as the very antithesis to our sense of belonging, so destructive of identity, relationship and lifeworld that the vocabulary of the social seems completely out of place.

(Broch-Due 2005:1,17)

Zebra Crossing is an example of a post-apartheid text where the author provides social commentary on the South African condition that is characterised by social unrest and xenophobia. In the novel, Meg Vandermerwe chronicles the odyssey of African migrant subjects in South Africa. Contemporary fictional works by Phaswane Mpe, Lauren Beukes and Patricia Schonstein also explore the lives of African migrants and the failure of South Africans to be hospitable.

Zebra Crossing is also an example of protest literature as the novel provides representations of the social, economic and political issues in South Africa. Vandermerwe challenges the notion of xenophobia and critiques the violence exercised in the name of nationhood and belonging. In the text, Vandermerwe explores the notions of hospitality, freedom and Ubuntu. She implicitly calls for a transformation in society and a re-assessment of the South African nation. Praeg (2014:14) explains that "Ubuntu is an exercise in power, a primordial attempt to get the fact and meaning of blackness, black values, traditions and concepts recognized as of equal value to the people for whom they matter". Ubuntu is a traditional African philosophy that offers individuals an understanding of themselves in relation to the world. The philosophy emphasises that there is a common bond that exists between all individuals which leads to wholeness, interconnectedness and compassion. In *Zebra Crossing*, Vandermerwe emphasises that Ubuntu is only vaunted in South Africa as she explores migrant and diasporic experience.

Vandermerwe uses her literary fiction to critique South African society particularly in respect of the xenophobic acts of violence inflicted on African migrants. In South Africa, during apartheid, non-white inhabitants were constructed as the “savage Other” and the “ethnic/tribal Other” (Reddy 2000:1). However, post-apartheid, African migrants are labelled as the Other and are subject to xenophobia⁹. According to Mikael Hjerm (2001:43), xenophobia is defined as “a negative attitude towards, or fear of, individuals or groups of individuals who are in some sense different (real or imagined) from oneself, or the group(s) one belongs to”. In the literary text under discussion, South African citizens behave towards migrants in a derogatory way as a result of their national, cultural and ethnic differences. In post-apartheid South Africa, the figure of the *Makwerekwere*¹⁰ has been constructed and deployed to render African migrants as the nation’s aliens. According to Matsinhe (2011:310), “the violent aversion towards African foreign nationals in South Africa can best be described as Afrophobia”. Freek Cronjé, David van Wyk and Doret Botha (2010:297) further explain that the term Afrophobia has been coined to refer to the “attacks by poor black South Africans on foreign black Africans”. The ideology of *Makwerekwere* seeks to make visible the invisible object of fear in order to eliminate it”. Xenophobia is an innovative theme that is relevant in contemporary South Africa; however, it is also a theme that is universal. Xenophobia is a global social problem and it is a concept used to highlight the predisposition individuals have to treat individuals different from themselves in a negative way.

Vandermerwe brings to light African diasporic dislocation in South Africa and she also depicts the transnational texture of the South African national space. Furthermore, the novel centres on the life of the African migrant woman protagonist who is an albino. The protagonist, Chipso Nyamubaya, is a displaced subject who is exiled in the South African diaspora. In this chapter, I explore the themes of home and belonging, otherness, the power of superstition and

⁹ Post-apartheid, a scourge of xenophobic violence erupted in South Africa. This resulted in individuals questioning South Africa’s democracy and title of the “rainbow nation”. Critics challenged the country’s notion of being inclusive and hospitable. Furthermore, the xenophobic violence is equated to the apartheid regime in South Africa. During apartheid, the white minority oppressed the black majority in the country through unjust laws. Subsequently, through xenophobia, black South African citizens oppress the African migrant minority. South Africans target non-nationals from other African countries who are regarded as foreign on the basis of language and physical appearance. David Matsinhe (2011:306) argues that during the 2008 xenophobic violence in South Africa, “the aggressors were black insiders and they blamed their victims for crime, unemployment, the spread of HIV and patronisation of local women”.

¹⁰ Christina Steenkamp (2009:441-442) explains that *amakwerekwere* means a “person who speaks an unintelligible language”.

patriarchy. In addition, I explore Chipo's migration from her home country to her adopted homeland. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the dehumanisation of marginalised migrants in South Africa who are regarded as the Other, and the failure of South Africans to show Ubuntu and hospitality. Finally, I analyse the transculturalism and patriarchy that are revealed in the primary text.

Vandermerwe brings to light xenophobia, homophobia and albinophobia. The characters in the text operate as symbolic instruments for ideologies and stereotypes that exist in society. Vandermerwe publicises the repercussions of hegemony, discrimination and prejudice in society. In addition, she exposes the violence and extremism that are executed in the name of national borders and fear of otherness. The text features cultural displacement, heterogeneity and syncretism.

The title of the novel is significant as it refers to the dominant themes of African migration and albinism¹¹. The title signifies travelling from one place to another, whilst alluding to the difficult position of individuals with albinism as they are members of the black African community but have a pale skin like white people. Chipo, as an African, albino woman, is subject to triple prejudice. She finds herself on the fringe of society where she is a source of curiosity for some and superstition for the majority. She is labelled as a "*makwerekwere*" and she is also teased as a "monkey" or "sope" (80, 10). She is asked, "Is it true that you people do not die, only disappear?" (19). Her daily existence is shaped by the African myths and prejudices surrounding her condition. Furthermore, as a young woman, she is regarded as subordinate and subservient to her imperious brother and the other males in their provisional household. Chipo is socialised according to the discriminatory patriarchal system. Her job is to cook and clean, and not to stick her nose where it does not belong. Her diabolical brother labels her as a tortoise, leper or burden.

SYNOPSIS

Zebra Crossing gives the fictional and dramatic account of the protagonist's journey to and reception in South Africa. The protagonist, Chipo Nyamubaya, is a 17-year-old Zimbabwean

¹¹ Nathalie Wan (2010:277) explains that "Albinism is a rare genetic condition that affects the pigmentation of the retina, hair and skin. Consequently, people with albinism world-wide experience the stigma and negative repercussions of an unconventional physical appearance, as well as a visual impairment".

girl who is saddled with the congenital disorder of albinism. Chipo finds a pattern with words and she has a proclivity for finding connections through rhyming words. Examples of this in the text are, “The word diesel sounds a bit like the word lethal”, “Dizzy rhymes with fizzy”, “Bad. Sad. Mad.” (17, 31, 73). Chipo and her brother, George, are both orphans and subject to harsh living conditions. They flee from Zimbabwe as a result of the social, economic and political issues in the country. In the text, Zimbabwe is characterised by poverty and political and private turmoil. George and Chipo both work for the General. However, the General finds his wife cheating on him and he believes that this affair could not have occurred without the assistance of the servants. The General decides to interrogate all the servants. However, George decides to leave Zimbabwe because if the General finds out about his knowledge of the affair he will ensure that George finds no other job in Zimbabwe.

On the eve of the FIFA World Cup, Chipo and George illegally migrate from Zimbabwe as they are smuggled into South Africa with the assistance of a truck driver. They migrate to South Africa in search of an improved life and to share in the exhilaration of the greatest sporting event ever to unfold in Africa. After George and Chipo arrive in Cape Town, they live in a one-bedroom apartment with their childhood friends from Zimbabwe, Peter and David. They are subject to challenges as a result of their African, foreign identity. They encounter difficulties in their attempts to get a permit and in their search for jobs. Furthermore, they are met with disdain and enmity from South African citizens.

Chipo seeks camaraderie with Jean-Paul, a Congolese tailor, who also resides in the apartment building. Jean-Paul offers Chipo a job and also provides her with mature advice and beautiful dresses. However, Chipo becomes obsessed with David and so blinded by jealousy that she seeks help from Doctor Ongani to win David’s heart. Doctor Ongani is a traditional doctor in Long Street who provides Darling with muti (indigenous medicine) that she cannot afford to pay for. As a result, Chipo, together with George, David and Peter, fall prey to Doctor Ongani’s manipulation.

Doctor Ongani exploits Chipo’s albinism and the superstitions surrounding the disorder. He develops a money-making gamblers’ scheme named “Gambler’s Paradise”. The initial customers are migrants who come to him for assistance with jobs, identity documents and Home Affairs problems. However, soon individuals come for predictions of the FIFA World Cup results and other personal issues. Julius and the Tanzanians also join the scheme as they

offer to provide protection from the police and robbers for fifty per cent of the profit. However, the gambling scheme has negative consequences as there is a police raid and David, Jean-Paul and George are arrested. In addition, Chipo is held prisoner by Doctor Ongani as she is secluded in a room without access to food or sanitation. Eventually, she is taken by Julius and the Tanzanians and killed for her body parts, which can be sold by the kilo.

The novel centres on the narrative viewpoint of Chipo who has an idiosyncratic voice. *Zebra Crossing* is set against the backdrop of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The novel introduces the countdown to the World Cup as migrants in the country are apprehensive about the after-effects of the soccer contests. In the primary text, South African citizens exhibit vindictiveness towards the migrants as there are resurgent threats of xenophobic attacks after the World Cup. *Zebra Crossing* expresses South Africa's reconnection with the African continent after years of isolation during apartheid. However, the novel also reveals the discriminatory nature of South Africans whereby they construct African migrants within a vocabulary of otherness. This echoes apartheid's perceptions of South Africa as a space apart from the African continent. African migrants and refugees residing in the country are frequently victims of violence. South Africa is alleged to be an inclusive, humane and hospitable country as it is described as a rainbow nation. However, in the text black citizens in the country turn on the poor black Africans who have come to seek work and shelter in South Africa. Vandermerwe highlights that the oppressed black South Africans during apartheid have now become the oppressors of those who are even more vulnerable than they are. Hence, the oppressed oppressing is a central theme in the novel. Vandermerwe also highlights the stereotypical images associated with African migrants which are pervasive in the South African public sphere. The perceptions cast specific African nationalities in terms of generalised categories (Fasselt 2014: 72).

HOME IS AN ESCAPE FROM ZIMBABWE TO SOUTH AFRICA

This section focuses on the characterisation of Chipo and the representation of Chipo and George's life in their home country. It also explores the myths associated with albinism and the impact these have on the life of Chipo. It also provides a description of Chipo and George's journey across the border. Finally, it explores the significance of borders.

Chipo is burdened with oculocutaneous albinism¹². Charlotte Baker, Patricia Lund, Richard Nyathi and Julie Taylor (2010:169) explain that this albinism “results in the partial or complete absence of pigment from the skin, hair and eyes. Consequently, people with oculocutaneous albinism have pale skin, sandy coloured hair, light brown eyes and suffer from nystagmus, photophobia and poor visual acuity”. Chipo’s physical appearance has ominous effects on her personal identity. She is isolated in society and subject to psychological and physical victimisation. Moreover, her reduced visual acuity results in her being mocked in school because she takes longer to take down notes from the board. Hence, she is given the name tortoise. Furthermore, she is regarded as a burden to her teacher, friends and George.

Omotayo Oloruntoba-Oju (2009:13) notes that in Africa, names are symbolic as they may be regarded as anthropological statements. Naming is an important practice within Africa and the names given to an individual plays an important role within society and culture. Names can be used to classify and individualise people, therefore names may play a significant role in the way people are viewed in society. Oloruntoba-Oju (13) further maintains that “Names are rooted in the cultural and social significance surrounding the birth of the child”. It is ironic that Chipo’s name translates as gift as her albino identity is deemed a sin. In Zimbabwe, the myths associated with albinism have a profound influence on the lives of individuals with the condition, from the moment of their birth, which is evident in the characterisation of Chipo. Her father leaves her family because he believes that her mother cheated on him with a white man. Chipo explains that “My pale skin was the product of an interracial betrayal” (21). This emphasises the myth in Zimbabwe that albinism is a form of a curse for a marital misdemeanour or infidelity. Baker, Lund, Nyathi and Taylor (2010:170) further assert that parents of children with albinism embody a lack of knowledge about the condition as they are not given an adequate explanation by medical personnel as to the cause of their child’s condition. Baker, Lund, Nyathi and Taylor (172) also clarify the absence of Chipo’s father as they note that “Because of the stigma associated with the condition, many children with albinism are brought up by single mothers because the father often leaves when the woman gives birth to such a child”. Moreover, in the text, Chipo does not mention her father’s name, which indicates her disconnection to him as a result of his absence. Stanley Mupfudza is her mother’s next lover; however, they discover that he is married and has children. Nonetheless, Chipo is blamed for

¹² Andres Cruz-Inigo, Barry Ladizinski and Aisha Sethi (2011:79) estimate that the prevalence of oculocutaneous albinism in Zimbabwe is 1:4000.

the misfortune as she is deemed a curse. Baker, Lund, Nyathi and Taylor (169) comment on albinism, explaining: “The beliefs and superstitions surrounding the condition affect family life and interfere with access to education, employment and marriage”.

The life of albino subjects is arduous as their lives are mostly characterised by poverty, exclusion and calamity. Chipo and George both previously attended school. They had dreams and ambitions as George wanted to be a businessman and Chipo wanted to be a social worker or district nurse. However, their dreams and ambitions are crushed by the black post-colonial Zimbabwean government. They lived in a comfortable house where their mother ran a tavern business. However, during Operation “Remove Moral Filth” in 2003, the government sanctioned the demolition of taverns and street markets. After the demolition, Chipo’s mother’s health deteriorates and their fortunes are threatened. The children live in abject poverty. However, this is the plight of many Zimbabweans. Chipo explains that only people like the General can afford satellite television. Furthermore, before Chipo’s mother dies, her physical appearance is compared to that of a famine victim. This emphasises the deterioration of her health as a result of the trauma of the government’s demolition operation. Chipo notes that “Mama was so light I could carry her on my back as though she were a child” (Vandermerwe 2013:18). The hospitals could not assist them as there is no medication in stock. In addition, the nurses and doctors are not being paid. Chipo explains that the doctor “was not unkind, only out of options like the rest of us” (18).

Vandermerwe brings to light the profound economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe. David studies legal studies in Harare; however, it is of no benefit as he explains: “I didn’t have the money to bribe my way into a firm to do my articles and jobs were so scarce that I couldn’t even find work at a supermarket” (39). This emphasises the precipitous economic calamity and corruption in Zimbabwe, reinforced through Chipo’s statement that “in Beitbridge the rain fell as rarely as an honest politician’s words” (47). Furthermore, Zimbabwe is characterised by poverty, unemployment and social unrest. Chipo’s mother explains that when “there was a bad drought [... individuals began to fight.] Neighbour versus neighbour. Sister versus sister. Mothers against daughters” (85). This references the crisis in the country which affected the majority of the citizens as a result of the resource scarcities.

In the novel, Zimbabwe is plagued by harsh economic conditions where citizens’ “food cupboards [are] no doubt empty and they [are] in need of school fees and books” (33). Chipo

also affirms that “money is tight for everyone these days, and what was once a small treat has become an unaffordable luxury for most” (11). Whitman (2000) argues:

Many illegal immigrants are compelled to migrate by conditions of political turmoil and socio-economic deprivation in their home countries, and are drawn to South Africa in the expectation of political freedom, stability and economic opportunities resulting from the advent of democratic government. (62)

Chipo and George’s journey across the border is challenging. They hide under mattresses that smell of “sweat, beer and unwashed bodies” and they are bitten by lice (Vandermerwe 2013:20). Moreover, they are warned about the border police who are corrupt as they take bribes from individuals who have no passport or visa. A truck driver who offers them assistance explains that “there are plenty of thieves about. They take your money but hand you over to the police. And those border police, they will rob you before they throw you into jail. And even if you somehow manage to escape them, there are the magumaguma gangs¹³” (19). At the borders, young men look for individuals to rob, beat, rape, kill or sell into slavery for other gangs. Baker, Lund, Nyathi and Taylor (2010:170) note that “As well as the practical problems associated with living with albinism in Africa, an enduring problem encountered by people with albinism is the stigmatization and ostracism they face as a result of the web of myths surrounding the condition”. Chipo is more vulnerable as individuals will take her “organs, chop them out and sell them to the muti men” (Vandermerwe 2013:19). Nonetheless, the truck driver is also deceitful as during the journey, he demands more money than previously agreed upon. After George gives him the money, he strikes him on the side of his head and instructs them to stay locked in the back like prisoners. This journey across the border foregrounds the challenges they are going to encounter in the host country. Crossing national borders makes them feel trapped, isolated and like prisoners. National borders function as formidable indicators of difference, exclusion and division between individuals in society. Whitman (2000:65) notes that “borders become sites of struggle for competing rights claims: those of the state, its citizens and universal human beings”.

¹³ Norman Chilya, Reginald Masocha and Stanislaus Zindiye (2012:565) explain that the maguma-guma is “a term that translates as people who seek to make a living through dubious means”. They operate at the border and attack illegal migrants who attempt to cross the borders.

“A border is where you swop home for hope”, comments Chipo (Vandermerwe 2013:8). Zimbabwe’s crisis has accelerated mobility, displacement and migration. In the novel, the country is characterised by corruption, high unemployment, inflation and poverty. Individuals are displaced by the political instability and economic collapse of Zimbabwe. Chipo and George migrate to South Africa where they believe they will have a prosperous future. George believes that in South Africa, there are plenty of jobs and that they “won’t have to crawl on [their] knees to earn a pittance” (11). Furthermore, they are optimistic about sharing in the excitement of the most distinguished sporting event ever to be held in Africa.

HOME IS AN ESCAPE FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO ZIMBABWE

This section focuses on an analysis of the depictions of South Africa, Cape Town and President Heights in the novel. Secondly, it explores the lives of Chipo, George and other African migrant characters in the text. This section also highlights how the attitudes of South Africa citizens toward African migrants are entrenched and systemic, resulting in violence and crime. Finally, I explore the homophobia within the novel as well as the myths surrounding Chipo’s condition which result in her being murdered.

According to Fasselt (2014:7), over the past two decades South Africa has been a popular destination for African migrants who cannot meet the expenses of travelling to the West. Chipo and George represent the plethora of African migrants who have come to populate South African landscapes (Vandermerwe 2013:71). They arrive in the country with hopeful expectations and envision the host country as a land of plenty and abundance. However, their dreams of a better life are shattered by the hostile realities of xenophobia (75). South Africa is a symbol of freedom and opportunity to many migrants. However, the characters face a great disappointment when they discover that South Africa is also a dysfunctional country. As a result, they go from hope to disillusionment and trepidation.

Vandermerwe explores the myth and malice in Cape Town. The name “Mother City” is used in an ironic way. Chipo states, “The Mother City. All That’s Pretty. iKapa The Mother City. A Place Without Pity.” (28). One usually associates a mother with affection, compassion and hospitable conduct. However, “The Mother City” in the novel is portrayed as a sinister, hostile and malicious place. The novel’s main locale is “President’s Heights”, which is a subtly disguised version of the slum block known as Senator Park on Long Street in Cape Town. This

name is also ironic as it is not the type of building that any president would choose to reside in. The infamous Long Street in Cape Town is a precarious place for migrants and albino subjects. Chipo explains that the “street runs like a spinal column through the city centre, almost down to the ice-cold Atlantic” (28). This quotation references the callousness of South African citizens. The reference to the “ice-cold Atlantic” foregrounds the inhospitability, cynicism and antagonism they are met with in the country.

The primary text presents members of the African community, illegal immigrants and refugees from impoverished African nations, who reside in a dilapidated apartment block, President Heights. Chipo describes the building by saying, “There is washing hanging from every window and the mismatched curtains flap like tattered flags in the window” (28). The mention of tattered flags signifies the diverse individuals who live in the building from various countries. Tattered also emphasises their fragile and dilapidated state of being as they are subject to austere living conditions. The apartment in which Chipo lives has one bedroom where four of them have to reside. Furthermore, it has no toilet seat, which emphasises the lack of basic hygiene.

Martin Baumann (2010:19) states that the term exile “aligns to experiences of loneliness, foreignness, homesickness and an enduring longing to remigrate to the place of origin”. Chipo acknowledges that she is not the only one in President’s Heights who cannot find peace. She “feels dizzy from all this newness. Dizzy rhymes with fizzy” (Vandermerwe 2013:31). Migrants like Chipo and George start asking themselves, “Why did you leave your home country?” (34). George says, “I didn’t leave Zimbabwe to sleep on the street in South Africa like a stray dog” (35). He is forced to work like a maid, washing plates and mopping floors. George is even forced to sweep dead cockroaches and clean human faeces from the pavement. People like David, Jeremiah and Isaiah are lawyers, accountants and electrical engineers in their home country. However, their education and status are not acknowledged in South Africa as they have to start from the bottom, doing menial jobs.

In South Africa, foreigners from specific countries are at a greater risk than others. Bronwyn Harris (2009:179) states that “the biological-cultural features of hairstyles, accents, vaccination marks, dress and physical appearance can be read as indexical markers or signifiers. They signify difference and point out foreignness in a way that is immediately visible”. Matsinhe (2011:304) notes that “language and accent are crucial signifiers of imagined nativity and

strangeness”. As cultural differences give rise to prejudice and antagonism, African migrants are marked by exclusion, discrimination and fear. Vandermerwe points out that in Cape Town, certain nationalities have certain jobs. The Somalis keep to themselves and only employ family or Xhosa-speaking locals. The Congolese people do all the security jobs for shops or are parking marshals. The Zimbabweans are mostly waiters, chefs, cleaners or shop assistants. Chipso declares that “nationalities sound like irrationalities” (32). The stereotypes in South Africa are not unique as there is a global archive of denigrating representations of African migrants.

The African migrant characters in the novel are represented negatively as they are depicted within a language of difference and are juxtaposed with the South African citizens. These depictions allude to images of Africa and Africans which are pervasive in the South African sphere. In the novel, African migrants are associated with chaos, disorder, crime and violence. They are depicted as illegals, criminals and aliens. African migrants are met with antagonism, indignation and resentment. Praeg (2014:198) notes that “only when belonging becomes a problem for thought does ubuntu become possible as Ubuntu; only then does a philosophy emerge that seeks to re-present in a contemporary idiom the givenness of belonging that historically existed as a function of political economy of obligation”.

Harris (2002:169) notes that “the foreigner stands at a site where identity, racism and violent practice are reproduced”. During the apartheid era in South Africa, the black disenfranchised majority regarded Africans as allies; however, post-apartheid, the enfranchised black majority regard African foreigners as enemies and threats to the nation. Harris (169) further points out that in South Africa post 1994, “unity has replaced segregation, equality has replaced legislated racism and democracy has replaced apartheid, at least in terms of the law”. However, discrimination, oppression and violence are still rife in contemporary South Africa. Foreigners, in particular black foreigners, are targets and victims of violence and physical abuse in the country. Miki Flockemann, Kudzayi Ngara, Wahseema Roberts and Andrea Castle (2010:248) explain that “xenophobia is a misnomer for scapegoating foreign nationals and is indicative of misdirected frustration at the government for poor service delivery. At the same time, it was read as a manifestation of hopelessness and the brutalising legacy of apartheid”. During xenophobic attacks in 2008 in South Africa, foreigners’ houses were destroyed in townships, migrants were killed and approximately one hundred thousand were displaced.

Despite such social rifts, Cronjé, van Wyk and Botha (2010:297) note that soccer is regarded as “a great unifier of humanity”. “Ke Nako (it is time): Celebrate Africa’s humanity” was the official 2010 FIFA World Cup Slogan (34). This slogan proposes to advocate a positive image of Africa and Africa’s ability to host the world. In addition, it alludes to communalism and unity of the continent. South Africa had the privilege of hosting the World Cup on behalf of the people of Africa. Furthermore, South Africa was deemed to host the World Cup in partnership with all the African states. Cronjé, van Wyk and Botha (2010:298) explain that “One of the most prominent latent functions of this world class event was expected to be the unification of the continent as well as to enhance the feeling of nationalism in South Africa”. The country used sport to promote its cultural diplomacy and assert its “African-ness” (Ndlovu 2010:145). The slogan also presents South Africa as a genuine representative of African hospitality. South Africa claimed to promote political and economic integration in Africa (146).

South Africa is expected to be a country that fosters and ensures peace, democracy and human rights for all individuals irrespective of their race, gender, class or nationality. Furthermore, Ndlovu (2010:146) explains that South Africa’s foreign policy in Africa identifies fundamental values which are mandatory in South Africa; these include “freedom, equality, solidarity and tolerance”. However, South Africans show no hospitality towards their African brothers and sisters. Instead, South African citizens and agents of the state abuse migrants because they are poor, vulnerable and foreign. Harris (2002:173) explains that one of the reasons for South Africans’ hostility to foreigners results from isolation. She further explains that “due to the creation of strict boundaries between South African citizens, as well as between the country and other nations, South Africans are unable to accommodate, and indeed, tolerate difference” (173). Chipó’s perpetual outsider status, and the way she is perceived with suspicion wherever she goes, is an authentic metaphor for the plight of the unwanted immigrant. Migrants face serious quandaries as they are threatened, accused of taking the citizens’ money, jobs and women, and they are told to go back to their own country. Chipó exclaims, “Refugee sounds like flea. [...] Like fleas that need to have their heads squeezed off” (Vandermerwe 2013:36). Eva Knopp (2009:64) states that “comic breaches of norms and conventions raise awareness of the existence of the dominant discourses of identity at work in a given society and may thus function as a site of playful but nevertheless effective negotiation of cultural stereotypes”. Vandermerwe employs humour to transgress established discourses of African migrants and she also plays with racial and cultural stereotypes.

Fasselt (2014: 76) states that “The novel brings to the surface contradictions and cleavages in the social fabric of the young democracy that is manifestly failing to live up to its constitutional promise of belonging to all who live in it”. Vandermerwe reveals the sovereign authority of the nation state which designates belonging and assigns political rights to certain individuals. George refers to his Home Affairs papers as a “pass book”. When the white Nationalist government ruled the country during apartheid all the black citizens had to carry a pass book. The pass book determined who could go where and when. The pass book law was a discriminatory regulation that was used to control black South Africans. George points out that the Home Affairs papers are a means by which the present South African government controls the migrants. Without the permit paper, “the police will arrest you and deport you, no questions asked” (37). Hjerm (2001:39) affirms that “citizenship is a state’s way of defining who does and who does not belong to the state or nation, and thus its way of defining what comprises the nation”.

Praeg (2014:24) states that “an acknowledgement of the necessity of limits implies an acknowledgment of the inescapability of violence, for where there is a limit, there is policing, control and coercion”. George is arrested because a ticket inspector is under the impression that his girlfriend, Harmony, is a South African. South Africans feel threatened as they believe that foreigners are ‘stealing’ their South African ‘girls’. The ticket inspector also threatens him and says “Just you wait. When the World Cup is finished, we will drive all your foreigners out! If you stay, you will burn” (81). Foreigners are refused updated residence permits and are arrested at Home Affairs during their attempts. Furthermore, they are put into prison with common criminals until the deportation plane leaves. This is the case of Luc’s cousin. He is deported to the Congo while his wife and two children are still in South Africa awaiting their residence update. Furthermore, nurses and hospitals also refuse assistance to foreigners, as Jeremiah’s cousin is denied access to health care after the nurse discovers that he does not have a Xhosa name. After eight hours of waiting, he dies. George explains: “We are all Africans and yet they see us as worse than colonisers” (84).

Rosemary Marangoly George (1996:27) asserts that “Home is neither where they have to take you in nor where they want to take you in, but rather the place where one is in because an Other(s) is kept out”. Vandermerwe foregrounds grotesque scenes of sadistic behaviour designed to keep others out. Peter explains that “a young Zimbabwean man died of starvation after waiting for weeks to be seen by Home Affairs” (37). In this case, Vandermerwe references

factual events as in 2007 Adonis Musati died under similar conditions in Cape Town. In *Zebra Crossing*, Jean-Paul explains that the migrant who died while waiting for his asylum papers is a fantôme, a ghost that “does not know what to do. It died far from home and its own people. It is a fantôme caught between home and here, between this world and the next” (72). This emphasises the homelessness of migrants as they are subject to non-belonging. The trauma is so extreme that even after death their soul wanders as they cannot acquire peace. Furthermore, the migrants have to lie to the Home Affairs officials and say that they are political exiles as “Starvation will not get you a temporary asylum-seeker’s permit” (36). The Home Affairs officials are also corrupt as they obtain bribes from individuals but still do not provide any assistance. Moreover, they are disrespectful as they do not talk to but shout at Chipo.

Hegemonic discourse and domination prevail within the social sphere. The notions of belonging and exclusion are significant when focusing on issues of heteronormativity, homophobia and queer. Chipo explains that “The Bible commands, ‘Love thy neighbour as thyself’” (96). However, individuals’ lives are defined by the intersectional categories of race, gender, nationality and heterosexuality. Chipo, George and Peter are prejudicial towards Jeremiah because of his Congolese identity. Furthermore, they label him as a ‘Choirboy’ as a result of his homosexuality. He is subject to exclusion as he does not prescribe to socially prescribed norms. Homosexuality is viewed as alien to black cultures and it is disparaged. Additionally, at the gay club, a rainbow flag flutters. This is ironic as the post-apartheid South African government sanctioned the decriminalisation of homosexual acts. Nonetheless, individuals are still discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation. Chipo makes mention of the pejorative terms given to homosexuals: “Moffie, Buttock Beak, Homo, Homosexual, Pédé, Gay, Festering Finger, Ngochani” (110-111). This underlines the stereotypes, prejudices and stigmatisation that queer individuals are subject to within the black cultural community.

The theme of the enfranchised black individuals oppressing the disenfranchised black individuals is reinforced in the novel when David and Chipo visit a museum of natural history. David, as a counter-hegemonic character, shows her a wooden panel which he believes is forgotten because it is placed above the door. The panel is described as follows:

This panel is very different from the previous one. Now there are eleven figures, not seven and they are not baboons but men. Some of the men are clearly slaves or

servants. They are dressed in rags and are on their knees or bent over working the ground. Around them are men who are better dressed, standing tall, barking orders. [...] David says [...] “In my humble opinion, whoever made this carving, and it must be very old, has made both the servants and the masters African”. (53-54)

The above extract reinforces the theme of black individuals oppressing their fellow black associates. In the wooden panel, the slavery and suppression of black individuals in the hands of African subjects is depicted. The black servants are described as dressed in rags, emphasising their dishevelled and frazzled state. It also highlights how they are being dishonoured and derided by their own African comrades. Furthermore, the masters are portrayed as affluent and formidable individuals who are “barking orders”. This reference indicates their forcefulness and potency. In addition, the masters are metaphorically compared to dogs, alluding to their inhumane behaviour, heartlessness and lack of emotion. Vandermerwe exposes the hegemonic disparity between black and black which is usually discounted in society as prevailing discourse only publicises black and white hegemony.

Vandermerwe also brings to light the power of superstition and myths. Doctor Ongani claims that Patience has put a spell on David which is why he is bewitched and following her. He constructs fallacious postulations without any merited evidence; however, Chipo falls prey to his fabrications. Doctor Ongani is compared to the Zimbabwean president as they both have blue eyes. Chipo notes that “those black Africans with the rare gift of blue eyes are destined for great things” (106). This is ironic as a President of a country should not be compared to a treacherous, perfidious and immoral individual. Nonetheless, Chipo observes similarities between the two individuals as they both are egotistical, mercenary and suppress others for their personal interests. Doctor Ongani provides Chipo with a muti which she describes as smelling like grey dust from under the cupboard. This highlights how Chipo is deceived by Doctor Ongani as the muti is not authentic. He cons her into paying him for simply “dust”. Furthermore, he is an iniquitous individual as he blackmails Chipo into cooperating with him. Cruz-Inigo, Ladizinski and Sethi (2011:79-80) note that there is a “belief that individuals with albinism possess superpowers or that their body parts bestow fortune and health”. Consequently, Doctor Ongani manipulates this belief to gain a fortune; however, during this process, Chipo’s individuality is eclipsed. During the gambling scheme, Chipo is prevented from cooking, running errands or even leaving the house. Chipo becomes like the animals in the museum that are caged and frozen in time. This image emphasises how black African

individuals oppress their fellow African brothers and sisters. At the end, Chipso is killed for her body parts as a result of witchcraft, superstition and desire for wealth. Her body is decapitated so that the Tanzanians (who believe in several myths and superstitions regarding the etiology of albinism) can supply her body parts for amulets.

After centuries of segregation, oppression and violence, culminating in the acutest system of racial repression, South Africa aimed to redeem itself and promote democratic values with freedom and equality for all. However, the xenophobic attacks in the country have resulted in individuals across the globe questioning its new democracy. South Africa has a key role within Southern Africa as it is the most powerful and industrialised country. Furthermore, it has a fortune of natural resources and mineral wealth. South Africa claimed to promote the African Renaissance and usher in new progress in the continent. The 2010 FIFA World Cup, in particular, was a celebration of national unity and a commemoration of the African Renaissance. However, Vandermerwe highlights how South Africans oppress poor, black African individuals who migrate to the country in search of improvement from their own failed post-colonial nations. Furthermore, she brings to light hegemonic practices in the country as individuals are categorised according to their nationality. This results in violence and oppression within the country. However, hegemony does not only exist between South Africans and other Africans but between Africans from other countries also. *Zebra Crossing* reveals how ideologies and stereotypes are constructed which ensue in discrimination, crime, violence and death.

Govinden (2008:356) critiques this ideology as she observes:

While there is a moving away from race there is the assertion of ethnicity (with rainbowism sometimes merely a euphemism for racialisation or ethnicisation). There is hope that identities may be negotiated without the old power hierarchies; yet the reality is that many of the old hegemonic distinctions linger.

TRANSCULTURALISM

In *Zebra Crossing*, Vandermerwe reflects the contemporary South African landscape which is characterised by transcultural post-colonial identities. This section concentrates on a discussion of transculturalism within the primary text. Firstly, I discuss Vandermerwe's Afropolitan

identity and how South Africa is regarded as home to many Afropolitan individuals. Additionally, I explore the significance of South Africa's designation of the rainbow nation. Finally, I analyse the relationship between African spirituality, Christianity and Ubuntu.

Vandermerwe may be regarded as an Afropolitan as she has travelled and lived overseas. She has split allegiances between South Africa, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. She has many cross-cultural experiences as a result of her diasporic and academic experiences. Her literary work reveals her transcultural identity as she explores diverse individuals, locations and situations. A key attribute of transculturalism is seeing oneself in the Other which is displayed in Vandermerwe's literary work. In the selected novel, she provides representations of the African, migrant, albino Other, and she encourages empathy for the shared humanity of the Other.

Blanc, Basch and Schiller (1995:684) define transnational spaces as "sites at which new and multiple identities are fashioned and a variety of old and new forms of power or domination exercised". South Africa is described as a rainbow nation as a result of its racial, cultural and ethnic diversity. The spectrums of the rainbow allude to the various identities that co-exist in South Africa. In the novel, Vandermerwe provides representations of individuals from a diverse array of cultures, thereby highlighting the richness of diversity in the country.

Chipo as a migrant, attempts to make a new life regardless of the challenges in South Africa. Chipo seeks friendship from other African migrants, in particular, Congolese tailor Jean-Paul, who encourages individuals to dream and be filled with hope. Jean-Paul embodies the Ubuntu spirit as he displays communal values. He gives hope to Chipo and encourages her to dress well so that she can feel good about herself. Jean-Paul does not discriminate against Chipo as a result of her albinism; instead, he treats her with respect, affection and generosity. After Chipo seeks camaraderie with Jean-Paul, her confidence and self-esteem are strengthened. This emphasises how positive interactions can have positive impacts on individuals.

Vandermerwe pleads for change and re-assessment of the state of the nation. Everyone in the nation needs to take responsibility for building a nation that one can be truly proud of. Praeg (2014:80) further explains that "Christianity is borrowed [as] a spiritualised notion of an almost infinite *forgiveness*; from human rights, a quasi-sacred notion of *dignity* and from nationalist discourse, an emotive appeal to reconciliation as conditioned for imagined *belonging*". Ubuntu

and African spirituality are closely connected as they are both linked to good values and moral character. Furthermore, both focus on nation building and the honour of creation.

Vandermerwe quotes from Isaiah 51:3, saying that “joy and gladness will be found there, thanksgiving and the voice of song” (2013:5). She highlights that Africa will be restored again from its ruins. Africa will not only be distinguished for its fertility but also for its beauty and order. Even though there is mourning and despair now, there shall be rejoicing and celebration in the future. One way to achieve this joy and gladness is to have “love without borders” and practise the spirit of Ubuntu. In the spirit on Ubuntu, individuals can work together and have respect for human dignity. Fasselt (89) states that, “If South Africa is to truly pursue an ‘opening to the rest of the continent’, the meaning of the phrasal verb needs to be extended beyond its primary designation of ‘allowing access or passage’ to encompass, in its figurative sense, the opening up of the ‘inner self ‘to the Other’”.

Mbongeni Malaba (2005: 274) explains that it is only permissible for South Africa to be a multicultural society if there is “mutual trust and the acknowledgment of the dignity of the ‘Other’”. In addition, the “gulf between people can be bridged by a willingness to encounter them as individuals rather than reducing them to stereotypes” (277). Malaba’s observation emphasises the importance that society has on individuals’ personhood. In *Zebra Crossing*, David is ostracised as a result of his African, migrant identity and sexual preference. However, throughout the novel, he displays counter-hegemonic characteristics. David reads Athol Fugard’s play, *The Island*, and he also refers to the famous expression “No man is an island” (100). This inspirational quotation by John Donne is connected to the notion of Ubuntu as it highlights the interconnectedness and interdependency of individuals.

PATRIARCHY

Vandermerwe highlights how patriarchal practices in society shape and preserve gender inequality and deprive women of power and a self-actualised identity. This section focuses on an exploration of patriarchal practices featured in *Zebra Crossing*. It also centres on an analysis of how religion and culture are used to advocate patriarchy.

Rosemary Marangoly George (1996:19) explains that “the association of home and the female has served to present them as mutual handicaps mutually disempowering”. In the novel,

Chipo's life is characterised by subordination, subservience and dependency. Labour is largely dependent on the hierarchies of gender within the household. Chipo represents dutiful women in the household who have to perform the traditional roles of cooking, cleaning and ensuring everyone is happy. She has a passive acquiescence to servitude as she is socialised into being an obedient and submissive housekeeper. Maureen Kambarami (2006:2) further supports the belief that patriarchal attitudes are reinforced within the home as she notes that "The family, as a social institution, is a *brewery* for patriarchal practices by socializing the young to accept sexually differentiated roles". In patriarchal societies, girls are taught to do domestic chores as they have to provide housekeeping and personal services to their father, husband, brother, children and guests. Chipo states that "A lady knows when to do the men's dishes" (Vandermerwe 2013:29). This highlights how culture teaches women to serve men, thereby reinforcing subordination.

Vandermerwe also brings to light gender stereotypes as women are profoundly disadvantaged within gender hierarchies. In patriarchal societies, women are deemed irresponsible, hence George tells Chipo that she is bound to lose the permit and that he will keep it for safekeeping. This underlines the dependence of women on men as women are judged to be helpless without the assistance of a male figure in their lives. Furthermore, Chipo states that "Border rhymes with orders. You follow your brother's order" (8). Borders symbolise hegemony, domination and limitation, thus the above quotation emphasises how women's lives are dictated and controlled by men. Chipo explains that she cannot question her brother; instead, she has to wait patiently for him to explain as she is considered to be inferior and he has power over her, therefore she cannot assert herself. She further adds, "It is my job to listen. When I am not scrubbing, or sweeping. But most of all it is my job to obey" (9). She is socialised into acquiring the qualities of passivity, gentleness and acquiescence.

Patriarchy is further represented in the novel through the characterisation of the General. He has three wives; the third wife is young enough to be his daughter and she was previously his mistress while he was still married to his second wife. This highlights how polygamy is accepted in patriarchal societies. Furthermore, it brings to light the mistreatment of women as the General is promiscuous and he uses women for his personal satisfaction, regardless of their age. Chipo also explains, "but it is true that, since their marriage, the General's attentions have once again begun to wander. There is gossip among the servants. He is courting the flirtatious Miss Patience. He is interested in Miss Hazel, a woman with round, jiggling breasts and

questionable morality” (9). The General is the president of the country therefore, as the president, he has the supreme responsibility to ensure rights are protected, that there is justice, accountability and that individuals uphold the law. However, he is characterised as a devious, immoral and narcissistic man. When the General learns about his third wife’s affair, he throws her out onto the street. The General is a hypocrite as he is unfaithful and deceives his wife; however, he does not consider his actions to be immoral. Furthermore, he regards his third wife as an object that he uses and just discards when he feels the need.

Religion and culture are used to strengthen patriarchal customs and to negatively control women in society. The pastor in the novel symbolises oppressive, religious figures, as Chipo explains that the pastor has a “habit of raising his voice at the end of each sentence until his voice boomed, demolishing our private thoughts” (65). The reference to the words “boom” and “demolishing” allude to the powerful and forceful actions executed by the pastor in the name of religion. Additionally, the pastor states that “The dev-il comes in all guises, my brothers and sisters. Yes, he is a master of temp-ta-tions! Wine and women. Wine that dulls the senses and creates for lax morals. Women who tempt us into siiiin with their charms” (64). The pastor deems women as the devil. This assumption is based on the patriarchal attitude that Eve succumbed to the Devil’s temptation and influenced Adam to fall into sin, and this has resulted in the need for dominance over women. Kambarami (2006:3) asserts that the “portrayal of women as the weaker sex has made men to treat women as people who have to be kept under constant supervision lest they err”.

Vandermerwe also draws attention to the religious exploitation of vulnerable individuals. Ruth, Chipo’s aunt, believes that the pastor is a good man. However, Chipo’s mother describes him as a “self-righteous superstitious idiot” (Vandermerwe 2013:67). Chipo’s mother’s opinion of the pastor is expressed in the scene when Chipo seeks blessings from the pastor but receives none. This is a paradox as pastors are supposed to provide solace, blessings and deliverance; however, his disposition and integrity are questionable. The pastor enquires about Chipo’s parents’ marriage before the church ceremony and then manipulates this information in disguise to the church. He explains to the congregation that God spoke to him in a dream and said that Chipo “bears the mark of the sope. It is a curse” (66). He exploits Chipo’s albinism to manifest his own spiritual glory and receive praise from congregation members. Furthermore, Chipo notes that during the sermon “the pastor pushed me down onto my knees [while] the

congregation was still deathly silent” (65). The pastor exhibits ferocity; nevertheless, individuals remain passive as a result of his clerical status.

Adichie (2015:46) cogently asserts that “Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture”. In the text, Chipo reads a slogan stating, “A Woman Needs a Man Like a Fish Needs a Bicycle” and on the poster, there is a drawing of a fish pedalling a bicycle (Vandermerwe 2013:100). Vandermerwe challenges stereotypical patriarchal traditions, values and beliefs as she deems them absurd and superfluous. Traditions have socialised women into dependency at the hands of men. However, this culture can be unlearned and a new culture of autonomy, humanity and equality can be developed, as Adichie points out. David as counter-hegemonic figure further explains that, “Most men are not worth the trouble” when he observes the slogan (100). This makes reference to women’s ability to be independent, audacious and have self-determination.

CONCLUSION

In Vandermerwe’s *Zebra Crossing*, the concept of home is obscured as the protagonist is subject to exile in her homeland, Zimbabwe, and in her host country, South Africa. In Zimbabwe individuals are likely to starve as a result of the high poverty, inflation and unemployment levels, as well as scarce food and resources. Alternatively, in South Africa the migrants are threatened with being burnt to death as violent hostility and xenophobia are rife. South Africa has experienced tumultuous social and political change since the end of apartheid. However, the country experiences new challenges of unemployment, crime and violence which threaten its democracy. Furthermore, social cohesion and Ubuntu remain undermined.

In contemporary South Africa, systematic and institutionalised racial and ethnic segregation and oppression of the Black population still prevail. Chipo and George are subject to prejudice because they are poor and foreign. Moreover, Chipo endures physical and emotional challenges as a result of her albino dermatological abnormalities. She is ostracised in society because of her African, migrant, female albino identity. Throughout the novel, she is exiled and she yearns for belonging.

Mongezi Ngidi (2005:83) states that

Albinism is not just a condition defined by a lack of colouring in the body. Instead, albinism can be seen as showing us the “colour”, which defines us all as human beings first. Albinism is the “colour” within being! This is a “colour”, that is expressed only by what defines us all inside, and by what truly makes a person, a person. [... Albinism] is also a beautiful representation and celebration of both black and white as one.

Vandermerwe employs the characterisation of the protagonist as an albino subject to emphasise how intersectional categories define individuals. Furthermore, intersectionality ensues in discrimination, violence and exile of individuals. Nonetheless, she appeals for a transformation of society where othering, xenophobia and homophobia are non-existent. In addition, Ubuntu has been regarded as a counter-discourse to xenophobia in South Africa as it encourages citizens to be hospitable. South Africans have a social responsibility and moral obligation to their African brothers and sisters as a result of their shared humanity, interconnectedness and equal social standing. Vandermerwe encourages an alternative vision of South African where citizens extend hospitality and the nation is a united one with equality, freedom and respect for all individuals, regardless of their identity and differences. The novel urges readers to focus on the commonalities that everyone shares as human beings. Individuals need to see the world with an inner eye and a deeper understanding so that they can see beyond borders, boundaries and differences. Kristeva defines exile in a positive manner, as follows: “Exile thus means: to open up new possibilities, to be able to confront new challenges; but most of all, it means coming to terms with ‘difference’ and the ‘other’ – not destroying them, either by violence or indifference” (Lechte 1990:80). Despite the horrors of exile, alienation, oppression and murder, the novel inspires a humanistic desire for a better society.

CONCLUSION

Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.

Adichie (2009:Online)

The focus of this dissertation has been to examine the representations of migrant women protagonists in selected African literary texts. Following my exploration of the migrant literary genre and notions of identity, transculturalism, and the subaltern in relation to the selected post-colonial African diasporic novels and the representations of the respective protagonists, I conclude my argument by elaborating upon a few of the numerous similarities and differences evident in my three selected literary texts and their authors. Most of the commonalities present are between Adichie, Bulawayo, and their novels, whilst Vandermerwe's text tends to differ, principally due to the south-south migration as well as the focus on albinism, xenophobia, Afrophobia and Ubuntu. In this chapter, I also briefly summarise the ways in which each of the selected literary novels relates to the objective of this dissertation.

Each of the texts examined in this project provides fictional representations of social realities of the African and American continents, as literature is deemed a product of society. Bachisi and Manyarara (2014:18) explain that the "migration narrative is inspired by the lived experiences of [... migrants] abroad and at home respectively; as a result, the characters in the various works of fiction become an artistic extension and expression of these lived experiences". The selected authors are migrants themselves who have concentrated on diaspora in their literary texts. Adichie and Bulawayo centre on diasporic experiences within their host countries, while Vandermerwe focuses on the diaspora in her home country. All three authors provide insights into the nature of the migration process and the experiences of being an African migrant woman. The novels provide representations of the Afropolitan protagonists' emotions, encounters and practicalities of the departure, travel, arrival and endeavour to re-establish home in the United States of America and South Africa. The literary texts reveal the nostalgia, anomie and exile that all three protagonists are subject to in the diaspora.

Additionally, the novels feature the displacement the protagonists encounter in their home countries which are represented as failed post-colonial African nations. In the selected texts, Zimbabwe and Nigeria are characterised by poverty, unemployment, social unrest and unavailability of choice, which prompt migration. The selected texts reveal the prominent concatenation of political, economic, social and cultural conditions which provide structural forces propelling migration. In both *Americanah* and *Zebra Crossing* respectively, the character of the General is present. In both texts, he occupies a similar characterisation as he is described as an old man who has mistresses. This reinforces the existence of patriarchy within leadership but also emphasises how leaders are more concerned about satisfying personal needs instead of improving conditions within the nation. The three protagonists all migrate from an African geographical location to another location in search of achieving a more prosperous future.

Al-Ali (2010:118) states that “The study of diasporas has greatly influenced the expanding and evolving field of gender studies through theoretical and political affinities around notions of marginalization, subversion, fluidity, hybridity and transgression”. The social and historical contexts of the authors are significant in relation to the characterisation, plot and themes within the novels. The representational characters narrate the story of many individuals who flee to the diaspora in search of supposedly greener pastures. However, the principal characters are all subject to traumatic experiences within the host countries as their personal identities comprise various elements as seen in the theory of intersectionality. The migrant characters are subject to abjection as they are alienated from society and they struggle to fit in and discover their selves. They also find themselves in an often hostile and exploitative host country where they cannot be formally employed because either they have to wait for their asylum documents to be processed or they are undocumented migrants who fear deportation if they join the formal system of employment. Furthermore, in *Zebra Crossing*, xenophobia and Afrophobia are brought to light as Vandermerwe exposes the exile and alienation African migrants encounter within the continent. Nonetheless, the issues of race, class and politics raised by Vandermerwe are foregrounded in the other two literary texts under scrutiny. The protagonists are all subject to marginalisation and exile through the experiences of racism, discrimination and oppression.

Ambivalence is a theme that appears in all three texts as the protagonists contemplate their past, present and future. Ifemelu, Darling and Chipso all retain memories relating to their original homeland. Their past is a connection to their home, families and culture. Furthermore,

they are subject to an ambivalence towards their home and host country, standards of behaviour and cultural expectations. Ambivalence is presented in the characterisation of the protagonists through the issues of fragmentation, dislocation and alienation which are all divulged throughout the discussion of the chapters. Despite all the protagonists' nostalgia, Ifemelu is the only one who has the opportunity to return to her homeland while Darling cannot visit her Zimbabwean home and family as she does not have the finances or the legal documentation. Moreover, Chipo is killed and she remains a fantôme who is caught between her home and host country. The theme of return migration is only evident in *Americanah* as previously discussed through the re-exploration of Nigeria and Ifemelu's personality as a result of return migration.

Discourses of Africa are significant in relation to the construction of identities and cultures in the diaspora. In addition, race is a central factor in the construction of identities. The selected novels under discussion reveal how Africa and the migrant African are represented negatively. In the texts, the continent of Africa appears as a homogeneous, undifferentiated place. There is no distinguishing that it is a large continent composed of many different countries. People in the West identify Africa as a "country" characterised by wars, woes, famine and poverty. Both Ifemelu and Darling respectively are questioned about the challenges in Africa. Furthermore, in *Zebra Crossing*, the African migrants are treated with indifference, as South African citizens detach themselves from the rest of the African continent.

Culture is a significant part of diaspora and migration studies. Our world is interconnected and cultures are intertwined. One of the reasons for society's richness in diversity of race, ethnicity and cultures is migration. Culture facilitates the formation and shaping of migrants' identities, lives and experiences. Throughout the dissertation, I explored the process of cultural transformation and exchange of migrants in countries where a blurring of cultural boundaries occurs. The literature under discussion presents the transformation in the protagonists' lives as they are subject to new experiences resulting from encounters with diverse people. There are shifts in identities which are evident in self-perceptions and self-images. Additionally, in the novels, the transformation of the principal characters is revealed through language, cultural artefacts, food and clothes. Ifemelu and Darling are exemplary transcultural figures because they depict the complexity of culture as they move between identities, highlighting their fluid and hybrid identities. Moreover, they have a strong desire to retain their cultural roots while they are drawn into assimilation as a result of their otherness. Chipo's identity slightly differs from that of the previous two protagonists as her transcultural identity is not explicitly

illustrated. Nonetheless, the shifting of her identity is portrayed through her relationship with Jean-Paul and her contextual society as a result of her diasporic experiences.

Discourse on cross-cultural issues is important in society today. Even though societies are ethnically diverse, migrants are still labelled as Other and treated callously. All three protagonists find themselves in situations where they are confronted by alternative hegemonic discourse that labels them and confines them to a stereotyped otherness. In all three novels, language and hair are used as signifiers of cultural difference. Furthermore, the concepts of intersectionality and culture are used as a way of distinguishing and excluding migrants in the host countries. This results from a clash of cultures.

This dissertation examined the literature within a transcultural study. The concept of transculturalism can be used to promote Ubuntu and social integration. This theory reflects on the constantly varying complexities of culture and it is a term used for diverse cultural communities. Transculturalism is extensive as it includes both natives and migrants. It focuses on seeing oneself in the other. It also encourages harmony instead of fragmentation. Migrant literature encourages individuals to take into consideration the migrants' identity and language so that they be not be regarded as Other but as mutually related.

This analysis has also been conducted through the lens of gender and has therefore expended special attention on the construction of the protagonists' identities. In the novels, African migrant women are confronted with further dimensions of discrimination. Patriarchal traditions define their social identities in their home country. This is internalised and continues to condition their self-perception in their host country. The novels foreground the search for a female identity amidst cultural pressures. However, the protagonists confront challenges by adopting diverse acculturation strategies. The characterisation of Ifemelu and Darling, in particular, advocates the assertion of female subjectivity against patriarchal structures.

Ruby Magosvongwe and Abner Nyamende (2016) aptly assert:

The best way to partly address women's concerns, transform attitudes, influence constructive change and create more stable and peaceful spaces for women, could be to first understand the challenges, practices, conditions, considerations and

possible opportunities from the perspective of women themselves in view of their respective cultural expectations and desired goals. (129)

Although there has been progress in the improvement of lives of women and migrants, xenophobia, oppression, discrimination and patriarchy still prevail in society today. Women are generally regarded as inferior or subordinate as they are under the rule of men. The individuality of women is compromised. African feminist writers provide alternative representations of women to prevailing discriminatory hegemonic views of women. Women are represented as capable of being free, innovative and intelligent individuals even though they are raised differently. In all the three texts, the female protagonists are not dependent on a male character. Ifemelu, in particular loves Obinze; however, she chooses to build herself up first before returning home to Nigeria. Feminist writers highlight that positive change can take place in society. Women do have the power to show resistance and overcome the oppression they face. Women can be self-reliant, and they do have many options available to them. They just need to use the power they have to make decisions on their own.

Each of the scrutinised authors of the primary texts reveals an awareness of the need for women's and migrants' rights. Education can either domesticate or liberate people. Education for liberation refers to education that disrupts unequal power relations. The selected texts are counter-hegemonic narratives as they disrupt prevailing hegemonic views. The first step to achieving equality is through 'conscientisation', which refers to becoming conscious of the injustices in society. The selected texts are a critique of reality as the authors provide representations of social realities. The selected authors highlight how the world is characterised by hegemony, oppression and patriarchy. Literature is an instrument for developing environmental awareness, addressing societal challenges, and enabling individual and communal aspirations to social mobility and transformation.

This dissertation draws attention to social issues that are frequently ignored. The selected literature promotes openness and transparency as readers are encouraged to see that the Self and Other are closely aligned. Additionally, the novels challenge the reader to empathise with the subaltern and the Other. Adichie, Bulawayo and Vandermerwe encourage dignity, respect and Ubuntu towards migrants. They emphasise the need for individuals to transcend their negative, naturalised prejudices and understand as well as appreciate the differences of those in society. This analysis therefore raises awareness of social justice and equality for women

and migrants. Furthermore, the issues of identity, sexism, xenophobia, and equality raised in three African texts are specifically located but simultaneously broad and applicable universally as individuals can relate to them despite their geographical position or cultural concerns.

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