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Editorial Note:

This latest issue of the Journal of Contemporary Society Education (JCSE) arrives at a moment when the boundaries between the academic, the social, and the urgently practical have never been more porous. A glance at the twenty-one articles in this forthcoming collection reveals a publication that understands its mandate: to serve not merely as a repository of scholarship, but as a sharp, coherent lens through which to examine the pressing complexities of contemporary society, with a firm grounding in education as a transformative force.

What distinguishes this issue is its refusal to settle for disciplinary comfort. The contributions, drawn from institutions across Africa, demonstrate a welcome intellectual restlessness. We see scholars interrogating the intimate, such as Mudau et al.'s exploration of language as a source of family conflict within Vhavenda families alongside those grappling with structural questions, such as Sikwela and Diedericks' critical look at performance management as "a mirror of inertia" in public administration. This range is not a sign of incoherence; it is a testament to the journal's understanding that societal education occurs in classrooms, in homes, in municipal water governance (as Zulu and Nojiyeza's work on Zululand shows), and in the very language we use to communicate.

Several pieces stand out for their conceptual bravery. Maungedzo's reframing of academic literacy through sociocultural theory for rural teacher development tackles a perennial challenge with fresh theoretical rigour. Similarly, Lubombo and Zethi's work on "linguistic justice" and the Disciplinary Literacies framework asks a question that South African higher education can no longer afford to postpone: how do we re-imagine instructional communication not as a barrier, but as an equitable foundation? These are not abstract debates; they are core pedagogical interventions.

The journal also demonstrates a commendable commitment to surfacing marginalised voices and experiences. Nkumane's exploration of intersectionality and the lived experiences of Black women scholars at UNISA, and Sibango's ethnographic look at how belonging is negotiated in Anthropology departments, remind us that the university itself is a site of intense social contestation. When Lekoa and Nojiyeza connect off-campus housing to "ecologies of distress" affecting student mental health, they do what good contemporary scholarship must: they trace the material conditions of life directly into the outcomes of education. If there is a through-line to this collection, it is the insistence that no social phenomenon, whether climate governance under the AU (Yemisi and Ani), the antinomies of decolonisation in literature (Moopi), or the gendered nexus of marital status and poverty (Dunga), exists outside the purview of rigorous inquiry. The JCSE is building a platform where scholars can hold those complex phenomena up to the light.

This volume does not offer easy answers. It offers something more valuable: a coherent, sharply focused set of questions, pursued with methodological care and regional relevance. For a journal of contemporary society and education, that is precisely the work that matters.

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ANTINOMIES OF AFRO-RADICAL AND LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC DECOLONIZATION IN ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA IN SUE NYATHI'S *THE GOLD-DIGGERS* (2018)

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Abstract

*The question of decolonization has pervaded the history and imaginaries of South Africa and Zimbabwe for long and is still topical in the present era. The threat of the persistent logic of coloniality threatens to destabilize political sovereignty and socio-economic freedom in both nations and this has compelled some members of society and the nation's institutions and social movements to engage in urgency seeking to find new ways at achieving a decolonial turn. Post-apartheid South Africa and independent Zimbabwe have engaged in debates and campaigns focusing on the need for social, political, economic, gender, curriculum and epistemic decolonization that will extricate each nation from the continued effects of colonialism and apartheid. This article analyzes the nature of decolonial interventions experienced in South Africa and Zimbabwe that is depicted in Sue Nyathi's novel *The Gold-Diggers* (2018). As with other decolonial initiatives in former colonized nations globally, Zimbabwe's and South Africa's decolonial projects remain entwined within global imperial designs, defined by decolonial scholars as global coloniality (worldwide colonial matrices of power in the areas of knowledge, power and being that continue to plague former colonized territories) and post-colonial modes of self-governance. The African National Congress' initial decolonial approach focused on fostering inclusivity and unity in diversity while Zimbabwe started on a reconciliatory note in the 1980s and moved towards radical decolonization in the post-2000 period. Thus, this study examines Nyathi's representations of state-imposed and socially motivated approaches of decolonization in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The study, which explores how the two countries' approaches to, and interpretations of decolonization are depicted, focuses on issues related to the decolonial question such as colonial and apartheid legacies, violence, corruption, exploitation, social, economic and political discrepancies, xenophobia, dehumanization, gender and the abuse of human rights. The overarching argument is that decolonial initiatives of both countries are constrained by colonial matrices of power and contemporary challenges of self-governance. A key finding of this analysis is that the Nyathi's novel poignantly reflects on the decolonial question in Zimbabwe and South Africa in ways that resonate with most former colonized territories, while simultaneously broadening the contours of the socio-political debates about the decolonial phenomenon.*
Keywords: Decolonization, Afro-radicalism, Nativism, decolonial initiatives, *The Gold-Diggers*, South Africa, Zimbabwe,

1. Introduction

The decolonial imaginaries and national agendas in South Africa and Zimbabwe are still haunted by social-economic and political patterns and notions dating back to apartheid and colonialism (the logic of apartheid and coloniality) while self-governance is beset with internal conflict and divisions, political struggles and economic dilapidation and the associated ills such as racism, gender inequalities, violence, corruption and displacements. In this article, I make use of Maldonado-Torres' (2007) concept of racist/imperial Manichean skepticism and Bhabha's (1994) notions of hybridity and liminality to explore the absurdities of Zimbabwe's Afro-radical and exclusionary model of decolonization, the complexities and ambiguities of South Africa's neoliberal democratic decolonial agenda as shown in Nyathi's novel *The Gold-Diggers* (2018). The novel is set in both Zimbabwe and South Africa and narrates experiences of forced migration, political turmoil, economic deprivation, violence, colonial/apartheid spatial discord and xenophobia that connect both countries. These historical overlaps and similarities between Zimbabwe and South Africa justify my interest in Nyathi's novel which narrates how the two countries have grappled with the decolonial question. I analyze Nyathi's treatment of the economic crisis of 2008, particularly the racial animosity, violence, unemployment and deprivation that ensued in Zimbabwe, and forced many to migrate to South Africa. I further explore the representation of the 2008 xenophobic attacks which were accompanied by other social ills such as child trafficking, rape, violence, displacement and dehumanization of migrants, especially

those from Zimbabwe, in South Africa. The article explores the link between Nyathi's novel and the decolonial question in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

I will start by exploring how Nyathi depicts the economic crisis and its associated poverty, violence and forced migration of Zimbabweans to neighbouring countries such as South Africa. I argue that the misery and displacement endured by Zimbabweans, as depicted in the novel, underscore the ironies of former President Robert Mugabe's decolonisation project. I will also explore how Nyathi deploys the motifs of xenophobia, human trafficking, rape and dehumanization to foreground the enigmas of liberal democracy and nativism in South Africa. I will conclude by examining the resilience of Nyathi's characters as they navigate economic hardships and hostile conditions in Zimbabwe and South Africa. My argument is that Nyathi's fictional depictions of the Zimbabwean crisis and its consequences, as well as the outbreaks of xenophobic attacks, violence, exploitation and anti-migrant sentiment in South Africa, underline paradoxes of the decolonial approaches that the two-sister liberation movements- Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and African National Congress (ANC)- adopted to address colonial/apartheid injustices.

The concept of racist/imperial Manichean Misanthropic Skepticism that I use to frame my analysis describes how colonialism questioned the humanity of the colonized people (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). It designates how "Africans are constructed as incapacitated beings marked by

knowledge deficits and ontological deprivation” (Moopi & Makombe, 2023, p. 123). While Maldonado-Torres (2007) formulates this concept to define the ontological decimation of the former colonized in the context of the colonial difference, I draw on it as a lens to read relations of subjection, violation, exploitation and alienation in Zimbabwe and South Africa as depicted in Nyathi’s novel. I postulate that racist/imperial Manichean Misanthropic Skepticism manifests through the unjust treatment of ordinary citizens, the brutalization of white people in Zimbabwe and the attacks on migrants in South Africa.

I also incorporate Bhabha’s (1994) ideas of hybridity and liminality as discussed in his book *The Location of Culture*, to explore the ambiguities associated with the Afro-radical and liberal democratic decolonization processes in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Bhabha (1994, p. 33) notes that the colonial encounter was a site for the “production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of the native traditions”. The process of hybridization takes place in what he calls the “third space of enunciation” or the liminal space where social meaning has no ancient fixity. The notions of hybridity and liminality contest the colonial forms of domination and underscore the contradictions of local-national-global decolonization agendas as well as assert the dignity of the migrant others when they become victimized. I use these terms to examine how Nyathi’s characters in *The Gold-Diggers* reconstitute their identities and chart new ways of inhabiting the liminal/third space, unveiling the novel’s decolonial expressions. Characters such as Lindani, Dumisani,

Portia and Christine contest the prevailing “dangers” (unemployment, corruption, xenophobia, violence, dehumanization) of ZANU-PF and the ANC’s “single story” about decolonization and nation-building (Adichie, 2009). Essentially, *The Gold-Diggers*’ setting in Zimbabwe and South Africa, with characters from both countries intermingling and the narration of each country’s history intersecting with the other, demonstrates an interconnection of geopolitics. This situates the novel as an important site for the analysis of both countries’ senses and/or states of coloniality, and of their tactics for prosecuting their disparate decolonial programs.

1.1. Narrating Afro-radical and nativist decolonization in Zimbabwe and South Africa: an outline of *The Gold-Diggers*

The Gold-Diggers is Zimbabwean investment analyst and novelist, Sue Nyathi’s third novel. It narrates the experiences of Zimbabweans during the 2008 political violence and economic meltdown, which eventually led them to take desperate journeys across the Limpopo River in search of better socio-economic prospects in South Africa. Nyathi, like her characters such as Portia, Lindani and Chamunorwa, left Zimbabwe for South Africa in 2008 in search of economic opportunities. *The Gold-Diggers* was longlisted for the 2020 Dublin Literary Award and the 2019 Barry Ronge Fiction Prize, with Nyathi winning the Fiction Award at the Humanities and Social Sciences Awards and the Novel Award at the 18th edition of the South Africa Literary Awards in 2023. *The Gold-Diggers* traces the lives of Zimbabwean characters: Portia and her son, Nkosi; Christine; Gugulethu;

Dumisani; the twins, Chamunorwa and Chenai; and Lindani, Melusi, and Givemore. The novel is narrated in a non-linear plot, as shown by alternating sections that present the characters' experiences separately. The novel starts with Melusi, a taxi driver, waiting for his passengers at Max's Garage in Bulawayo before they depart for South Africa and reflects on the disastrous political and socio-economic conditions that forced these characters to abandon their homes in search of a better life in South Africa. The trip to Johannesburg is juxtaposed with each character's background: their family, school and tertiary education, employment before the economic breakdown, and the conditions that informed their decision to leave. The novel later describes the characters' bleak lives in Johannesburg. The characters find themselves battling economic, political, and social discrimination rather than the prosperity they had imagined would be overflowing in Johannesburg. The South African society is shown as exposing the Zimbabwean migrant characters to low-paying jobs, dehumanization, various forms of discrimination, rape, violence and xenophobia. Moreover, Dumisani, Chenai and Chamunorwa do menial jobs that expose them to exploitation and dehumanization and yet create alternative ways to survive these punitive circumstances in South Africa.

Nyathi's novel affords the reader the chance to consider the complications of Afro-radical and democratic decolonization approaches in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Although some scholars (Fasselt, 2018; Motahane, 2022) read *The Gold-Diggers* as a transnational novel that depicts the complexities of diasporic identities and border politics, I examine how the novel,

through the experiences of its characters, engages with the underlying contradictions of Afro-radical and liberal-democratic decolonial routes in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The novel shows the intra-African relations that are paradoxes of their avowed democracy, fairness, equality, unity and socioeconomic empowerment, as well as the statutes of the African Union Commission, such as to attain unity and commonality between African nations and their citizens and endorse democratic values and institutions, popular involvement and good governance. Nyathi's novel forms part of post-2000 Zimbabwean literature such as Tsitsi Dangarembga's *This Mournable Body* (2018), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) and *Glory* (2023), which explore the socio-political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe and South Africa's problems of xenophobia, discrimination, exploitation, alienation and violence.

1.2. Complications of Mugabe's Afro-radical decolonial turn

The novel highlights the issues of violence, economic inequalities, poor service delivery and unemployment, which reveal the paradox of Mugabe's Afro-radical decolonial turn. These issues are paradoxical demarcations of Mugabe's post-2000 land reform programme and provisions of the Economic Empowerment Act of 2008, in determining a new politics of radical economic transformation and land reform. When Zimbabwe gained independence from colonial domination in 1980, "Mugabe had reneged on his promises to provide Zimbabweans with basic government services, adequate living standards, and a democratic government that embraced the rule of law and human freedom" (Moyo &

Besada, 2008, p. 2). Later, Mugabe introduced the land reform programme, the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act of 2001 (ZIDERA) and Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act of March 2008 (IEEA) to reform the economy, redistribute land and wealth to empower the black Zimbabwean majority. However, state violence ensued, poverty and redundancy increased and capital declined. Low exports drained foreign-exchange reserves, leading to a dire economic crisis that left many in a quagmire of deprivation.

Nyathi articulates decolonial hints such as decolonizing colonial-spatial economic imbalances, equal redistribution of wealth and socio-economic empowerment for all Zimbabweans and full participation of Zimbabweans in government initiatives, as well as nation-building. The novel depicts the 2008 political violence between the ruling ZANU-PF and the opposition MDC, underlining how the ruling ZANU-PF used violence as a mode of governance and tool for silencing political opponents:

The atmosphere was charged with tension as Zimbabwe prepared for the March 2008 elections. Newspaper headlines screamed of violent skirmishes between the opposition party and the ruling party. For the first time in Zimbabwean history, Morgan Tsvangirai challenged Robert Mugabe's stronghold on power. (160)

This quotation highlights how Mugabe suppressed any opposition against his government. The “atmosphere was charged with tension” because challenging ZANU PF was regarded as

treachery that deserved punishment. Mugabe and ZANU-PF delegitimized the MDC and its supporters as dissidents and “sellouts” who colluded with the West to entrench neocolonialism (Makombe, 2019, p. 37). Similarly, the “newspaper headlines screamed of violent skirmishes” because ZANU-PF supporters, war veterans, youth militia and state security forces, plus the police and the army launched Operation Tsuru in 2000, which involved repossessing the farms from white commercial farmers, and threatening and deploying violence against the MDC supporters to guarantee that they voted for ZANU-PF party (Marongwe, 2022, p. 48). Similarly, a university student, Gift Tandare, was killed by police at a demonstration by MDC followers and Morgan Tsvangirai and a few leading MDC representatives were also attacked by police on the same day (Chitiyo, 2009). The MDC was ZANU-PF's major rival since its formation in 1999 and its members and followers were always assaulted and sometimes killed by ZANU-PF supporters. From 2000 until his dramatic demise in November 2017, Zimbabweans endured long decades of Mugabe's tyrannical leadership. To silence any form of political dissent, Mugabe implemented “draconian legislation such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) (2002) and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (2002)”, accentuating the problematic of his anti-imperial and Afro-radical decolonization (Nyambi, 2024, p. 2). Nyambi (2024, p. 247) reveals that “disputed elections in the past have created a crisis of legitimacy in Zimbabwe”. The socioeconomic crisis in Zimbabwe is largely a result of the former liberation movement's rigid

ideological outlook and poor economic policies.

The novel shows the spatial and economic discrepancies emanating from the colonial era in Zimbabwe. Uledi and Hove note that “the Zimbabwean government has done little to sustainably and effectively provide basic amenities to rural areas since independence” (Uledi & Hove, 2021, p. 56). The spatial demographics of post-colonial Zimbabwe reflect structural inequalities with a few black people and the white middle-class living in elite suburbs while many Zimbabweans, mostly black and coloured, wallow in social and economic misery. Thus, the impact of the 2007-2008 socio-political-economic crisis that affected the livelihoods of ordinary Zimbabweans. Nyathi suggests that those (blacks and whites) who live in the affluent suburbs of Bulawayo such as Burnside, Matsheumhlope and Khumalo suffered less. The author depicts spatial inequalities through the Khumalo suburb, which exhibits quasi-colonial spatial patterns that were entrenched by Mugabe’s redistributive decolonial politics:

[Melusi] admired the sweet-smelling madams who were no longer white but black with long silky hair that reached their waists. Their money cosseted them from the vagaries of the life that the rest of them were forced to endure. It was a new and mushrooming suburb for Bulawayo’s upper middle class. A new breed that had risen by gambling on the rising and falling fortunes of the Zimbabwean economy. (16)

The above quotation illustrates the spatial, social and economic divisions

between middleclass and lower-class Zimbabweans and the ontological and epistemic differences between rural and urban spaces. These differences, which reflect the “spatial colonial difference” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 470), are metaphorically shown in Bulawayo’s *We Need Names* (2013) through the poor conditions in Paradise and the opulence in Budapest. Like Bulawayo’s depiction of the ironically named Paradise and the affluent Budapest, Nyathi’s depiction of the spatial differences between rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe underscores economic, ontological and epistemic differences constituting these areas. The black “sweet smelling madams” represent the black middle-class women who have taken the position of former colonial white madams and their husbands, as Fanon (1963, p. 65) puts it, have taken “over [the] business offices and commercial houses formerly occupied by the settlers”. The images of affluence in the Khumalo suburb, as shown through the “luxurious suburban lifestyles” (16), reveal the structural economic disparities that continue in Zimbabwe. Mugabe’s failure to redress the colonial spatial inequalities between the rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe shows that his radical economic transformation policies, such as ZIDERA and IEEA, did not yield the intended objective of total decolonization in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, the new Zimbabwe that emerged after Mugabe’s radical decolonization project produced a new bourgeois elite whose intentions were never to dismantle the social, economic and political edifice of colonial structures and other domineering Euro-American and Asian influences. The above-cited quotation describes a “new breed that had risen by gambling on the

rising and falling fortunes of the Zimbabwean economy” (16), which underlines the ironies of the post-2000 radical and anti-colonial projects such as the land reform programme and radical economic transformation touted in Zimbabwe. Chazireni and Mudzengi submit that “urban districts or those close to urban centres generally have better socioeconomic development than those with rural inclination” (Chazireni & Mudzengi, 2017, p. 245) in Zimbabwe. Therefore, Nyathi’s novel shows the colonial spatial demographics that persist in Zimbabwe. She also highlights the economic divisions and widening gap between rich and poor Zimbabweans, which are a legacy of Western economic policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (1991), and the nationalist elite’s projects such as the Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy (2008), Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (2009) and Five-Year Medium-Term Plan (2011-2015). Nyathi suggests that Mugabe’s decolonial project of the post-2000 period entrenched these divisions instead of dismantling them. The Afro-radical politics and economic policies were retrogressive as they did not address the legacy of colonialism, particularly economic and class divisions. These socioeconomic and class divisions that the novel depicts distort Mugabe’s Afro-radical and Pan-Africanist pursuits. The wealthy Zimbabweans who go to Musina epitomize the national bourgeoisie in many African postcolonies who play intermediary and unproductive roles in the national economy. This group lives lavishly because it has access to economic opportunities that ordinary citizens cannot access. Reflecting on this new bourgeois class, Nyathi writes:

These Zimbabweans walked tall, cash bursting from the bulging wallets. Their faces did not articulate any struggle, nor did their eyes convey any despair. Ask any retailer in Musina and they would tell you that there are two types of Zimbabweans: the obscenely rich and the filthy poor. (54)

The Zimbabweans who walk tall with cash bursting from their wallets represent the political and economic elites who use their power to secure national resources through corruption and misuse of state funds. Corruption and class divisions persist in Mnangagwa’s so-called New Dispensation which is a copy of Mugabe’s regime. According to Nyambi, “what constitutes post-Mugabe ‘transition’ is, in fact, a return to an autocratic nationalism that propped Mugabe’s power for close to four decades” (Nyambi, 2024, p. 271). Bulawayo (2022) fictionalizes this “return to autocratic nationalism” in *Glory* through the repressive and violent regime of Tuvius Delight Shasha that continues to preside over Zimbabwe’s economic meltdown. Both regimes of Robert Mugabe and Emmerson Mnangagwa show no signs of genuine commitment to transformation but an insatiable appetite for power and primitive accumulation. This confirms Matamanda, Chirisa and Rammile’s observation that at independence “power was shifted from the colonial government to the new elites” (Matamanda, Chirisa & Rammile, 2021, p. 456) who continued to govern using colonial instruments and systems. During Mugabe’s tenure, Grace Mugabe used public funds to build “a Z\$5, 8million-house in which she never lived

and went on to sell to the Libyan embassy, yet that money could have built about 25 middle-income houses” (Matamanda et.al, 2021, p. 458). Nyathi’s treatment of the socioeconomic crisis and its associated social divisions in Zimbabwe reveals parallels between colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe and raises questions about the unfinished project of decolonization.

The novel also illustrates, through the struggles that the characters such as Christine and Dumisani encounter, that Mugabe’s Afro-radical decolonization project generates poverty, unemployment and violence. Christine observes as the economy crumbles in Zimbabwe that politics play a significant role in their lives. As a result, she decides to vote in an election for the first time in her life because “she had seen how their fortunes had changed as the economy nosedived into an abyss due to bad political decisions” (160). Christine worked as a nurse at the city of Bulawayo’s major health centre, Mpilo Hospital, while her husband, Dumisani, worked as an engineer at a local engineering firm and later both lost their jobs due to the economic crisis that bedeviled the country. Dumisani lost his job because the company had to close as “the economy was deteriorating and trading conditions were hard” (24). The company declared that they were moving to new lucrative markets and offered Dumisani a job in their London office. However, Dumisani could not go since he did not have a passport, and the Zimbabwe registry office had “suspended the issuing of passports and temporary traveling documents” (24). Dumisani is thus left in limbo, in a liminal space marked by ambiguity (Bhabha, 1994), where he has been retrenched but the system cannot allow

him to get a passport and change his life. This is why he takes a chance like many other Zimbabweans to cross into South Africa, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi illegally despite the journeys’ risks. Dumisani’s situation suggests that Mugabe’s ill-conceived economic policies have trapped many ordinary citizens within a web of joblessness and vulnerability that pushes many to leave the country.

1.3. Ambiguities of liberal democracy and gestures of a nativist decolonial turn

In *The Gold-Diggers*, Nyathi depicts the issues of xenophobia, child trafficking, rape, exploitation and dehumanization as social realities that distort imaginings of democratic and liberal citizenship in South Africa. The issues highlight the paradoxes of liberal democracy and emerging gestures of nativist decolonial schema in South Africa. The South African constitution “grants a democratically elected government the power to harmonize interests of citizens in a truly retributive sense and to maintain a public legal order in which political freedoms, civil freedoms and societal freedoms are guaranteed” (Strauss, 2008, p. 194). Accordingly, the liberal democratic government promotes equality, respect for human rights, fairness, unity and essential freedoms. Kruger notes that the “concept of a liberal democracy aims at providing justice and equal opportunities for all people in a particular society” (Kruger, 2016, p. 7). Indeed, South Africa approached the nation-building agenda under the rubric of liberal democracy and adopted a new constitution that guarantees political, public, and social freedoms. However, Nyathi’s novel illustrates the ambiguities of the neoliberal approach to decolonization

which has emboldened those seeking to address decolonization through nativist approaches. The novel also suggests, through the calamitous experiences of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa such as Chamunorwa, Dumi, Portia and Gugulethu that neoliberal democracy is an illusion that has morphed into violent nativism in the form of xenophobia.

Nyathi demonstrates that South Africa's ideals of liberal democracy exist only in rhetoric, as the country embraces an inward-looking decolonial approach that views immigrants as contributing to the country's socio-economic challenges. This is shown when Chamunorwa defends a woman called Lerato from her abusive boyfriend, Kgosi, in Alexandra, a township in South Africa. When Chamunorwa tells Kgosi to stop beating Lerato, Kgosi reprimands Chamunorwa using derogatory language:

***'Kwerekwere' jeered Kgosi. 'You come here and take our jobs, now you want to take our women! Tsek! Go back to where you came from! This is not your country!'* (144)**

The term "Kwerekwere" is a pejorative word used to refer to black immigrants in South Africa. The term indicates the hostility and aggression of the South African community, which manifests in Kgosi's adversarial attitude towards Chamunorwa. The notion of kwerekwere resonates with derogatory terms used to refer to black people such as negro and kaffir. Just like the term negro and kaffir, the term kwerekwere is used "to make anyone appear as belonging to the hell of sub-humanity" (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 16). This is also shown when Kgosi insults Chamunorwa and says, "Piece of shit.

You come into our country and disrespect us. I will teach you a lesson, kwerekwere" (144), casting him as a non-human "thing" that must leave South Africa and return to where it came from. Kgosi's treatment of Chamunorwa reveals the growing anti-migrant sentiment and hatred of others that resembles the racial discrimination imposed by the divide-and-rule tactic of the apartheid regime. Harris intimates that "South Africans have been disciplined to hold "a dislike, a fear, or a hatred of the other" (Harris, 2002, p. 170). Kgosi's statement that "you come here and take our jobs" accentuates the post-apartheid national view that African migrants especially undocumented migrants are the cause of unemployment and lack of opportunities in South Africa. In a report entitled, "Department of Home Affairs Steps up Efforts to Address Illegal Migration", Sakhile Mokoena (2024) reveals that Mr Adrian Roos of the Democratic Alliance stated during the debate of the department's budget vote that they "have a collective duty of correcting the immigration system and creating an environment that creates jobs for South Africans". This implies that African migrants are seen as an economic burden in contemporary South Africa. Kgosi's statement that Chamunorwa must "go back to where [he] came from" indicates an anti-migrant sentiment that was expressed through Operation Dudula and Put South Africa First, two civic movements which "blamed foreigners for high unemployment as well as crime" (Masson, 2023) and called for the eviction of foreigners. Mlombo submits that the "application of settler colonialism in South Africa was made through modes of extreme violence and consequently has become a marked feature of contemporary politics in

South Africa” (Mlombo, 2018, p. 717). The hostile treatment of Zimbabwean migrants shown in the novel symbolizes South Africa’s reenactment of the violence of apartheid and adoption of a nativist decolonization agenda such as that adopted by ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe.

The novel shows that, like Zimbabwe after 2000, South Africa is shifting from a democratic to a nativist approach to nation-building through the violent xenophobic attacks on foreigners, which in Nyathi’s novel led to Chamunorwa’s death. Nyathi uses the mob’s attack on Chamunorwa to reflect on the death of a Mozambican migrant, Ernesto Nhamuave, who was burnt alive during the xenophobic outbreak in South Africa in May 2008 (Underhill & Khumalo, 2023). One morning, Chamunorwa was still in bed when he heard a group of men chanting in unison, “Phansi ngamakwerekwere. Phambili ngenkululeko. Down with foreigners. Forward with the liberation” (202), outside a room that he rented in Alexandra. This chant indicates that the gender-violence-xenophobia-corruption-south-africas-human-rights-problems-continue-in-idea of liberation in South Africa is conceptualized as involving the jettisoning of African migrants in the same way as Mugabe’s post-2000 land and economic reform discourse conceptualized economic emancipation as the jettisoning of white farmers, members and supporters of the MDC and Zimbabweans who did not support ZANU-PF from the national imaginary. As Chamunorwa leaped out of bed to see what was happening outside, the mob forced itself inside his room and started attacking him:

They encircled Chamunorwa and bulldozed him into the corner of the room... The

yelling was accompanied by physical force. Hard blows of rage... They dragged his body out into the street leaving behind a trail of blood... Someone supplied a rubber tyre, which was doused in petrol. They necklaced Chamunorwa with it before they set it alight. The foreigners were rude and abrasive. They disrespected them in their own country. They did not even want to learn their languages. (203)

The image of the mob bulldozing Chamunorwa into the corner of the room invokes how shantytowns and illegal residences were bulldozed during the forced removals of the 1960s in South Africa and during Operation Murambatsvina (get rid of dirt) of 2005 in Zimbabwe. This shows how colonial/apartheid temporalities transform into coloniality in modern South Africa and Zimbabwe through the xenophobic attacks and white farm invasions that occurred post-2000 in both countries. Chamunorwa is conflated with the slum/dirt that needs to be removed from South Africa as shown in the way he is dragged out into the street and burned afterwards. The fact that the mob necklaces Chamunorwa and burns him shows the temporality of violence and racial animosity in South Africa because the tradition of necklacing has its genealogy in the history of apartheid. The new currents of hate, simmering in South African communities, show the inadequacies of the discourse of reconciliation that characterized the early years of South Africa’s democracy. Southall notes that “South Africa is in a state of drift; the danger is that the ANC turns the way of Zimbabwe’s ZANU-PF” (Southall,

2022), as illustrated through Chamunorwa's encounters of hostility that end in his death through a brutal cold-blooded murder.

Nyathi shows that Zimbabwean migrant women experience dehumanization and sexual abuse in a way that invokes the legacy of colonial and apartheid sexual exploitation of women. These issues challenge the ANC's constitutionalized ideals of safety, security and economic empowerment for women. The mandate of the ANC Women's League is to ensure the protection of women in South Africa. However, women and especially immigrant women continue to be abused, raped and violated every day in South Africa. Batisai and Manjowo note that "although migrant women are subject to the same types of gendered and sexualized violence as non-migrant women in the workplace, the specificity of their positions as migrants increases their vulnerabilities to certain types of violence and may limit the forms of protection to which they have access" (Batisai & Manjowo, 2020, p. 20). The implication is that women continue to suffer abuse and violation, but migrant women are more susceptible to various abuses and have less protection than local women. Chenai's work as a maid at the Van Tonder's home in Bryanston exemplifies the dilemma of migrant women in South Africa. She is overworked and later sexually abused by her employer. The author describes Chenai's grime domestic worker experiences thus:

By midday Chenai was often about to keel over in exhaustion just from cleaning the downstairs area. She wondered how someone could commit to doing this kind of work for the

rest of their lives. Her mother had been working for her mlungus for years. Had raised their kids and were now looking forward to raising their grandkids.. (116)

This quotation shows the calamity of many black women who work as domestic workers in the "mlungus"/white people's households as marked by how Chenai almost keels over in exhaustion every midday. Their plight is also shown in the way Chenai's lack of exposure continues to limit her to demeaning jobs. What is also catastrophic is that Chenai's mother, Sibongile, has "raised [the Van Tonders'] kids and was now looking forward to raising their grandkids" and yet she left her kids when they were four years old. This evokes the predicament of many black women during apartheid who left their children to raise children of their white employers leading to the scourge of broken families in black communities. These experiences of vulnerable women suggest that South Africa is slowly deviating from its inclusive approach to decolonization.

The novel also shows that migrant women are victims of sexual oppression by their white employers and black men. This current gender-based violence and sexual oppression mirrors the colonial/apartheid reality of patriarchal gender discrimination. Nyathi shows that in Zimbabwe and South Africa, women continue to be affected by the colonality of gender (Lugones, 2010) or the perpetuation of colonial/apartheid gender inequalities. This colonality of gender reflects the slow progress that organizations such as Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) and ANC Women's League (ANCWL) have made in both countries. When

Danie finds Chenai wearing one of the madam's dresses, he accuses Chenai of stealing her madam's clothes before he forces himself on her, thus indicating the vulnerability of women in the workplace:

He pushed the dress down till it fell in a circle around Chenai's legs. He pulled her panties down and Chenai knew the fate that lay before her. He prized her legs apart and shifted his member between her thighs. (120)

This quotation shows the helplessness of domestic workers and the persistence of the coloniality of gender. The way Danie guilt-trips Chenai by accusing her of stealing the madam's dress stems from longstanding tendencies dating back to the colonial era when black people were stereotyped as thieves. This is shown when Chenai protests by saying that she was not trying to steal and Danie asks her, "How do you think it would look? Who do you think she would believe?" (119). The implication is that the madam would not believe Chenai over her husband because black people are always suspects like the narrator in Oswald Mtshali's poem "Always a Suspect" (Mtshali, 1971). Thus, Danie is aided by racial stereotypes of the apartheid era, indicating the continuation of the logic of apartheid and the illusion of freedom in South Africa. The way Danie forces Chenai into having non-consensual sex corroborates Gqola's view that South Africa is a "rape capital of the world" (Gqola, 2015, p. 78). Gqola (2015, p. 79) submits that rape is a persistent nightmare in South Africa and "a patriarchal act of aggression linked to language and power". This implies that men in power, such as Danie, can use

their authority to rape women as they please. Former President Jacob Zuma was accused of rape in 2005, but he was later acquitted on a technicality, leaving his victim with a lifetime stigma and shame. Therefore, rape remains a constant nightmare that haunts South Africa and Zimbabwe, thus, showing that the decolonization of gender remains partial in both countries. The objectification and sexual violation of women is also perpetrated by black men. Nyathi depicts rampant moral decadence and toxic masculinity in the Zimbabwean and South African postcolonies. The author shows that despite the constitutionalized statements of women's empowerment, safety and security, children in South Africa and women and children in Zimbabwe continue to experience violations that include beatings, rape and child-trafficking. What is troubling is that women and children experience these inhumane violations at the hands of black men, which further shows the coloniality of gender and the double oppression that black women continue to suffer at the hands of the neoliberal order and African patriarchal traditions (Lugones, 2010). In *The Gold-Diggers*, male characters such as Vusi, Kgosi and Givemore are shown as enacting the objectification of women and irresponsible patriarchal dominance. Vusi, Portia's husband, gets angry and beats her when she arrives at his apartment in Johannesburg:

Vusi backhanded her. Portia's lower lip split painfully. 'The problem is you don't listen, Portia!' As he said this, he loosened the belt around his trousers. He whipped it out with ease and raised it in the air. With swiftness he drew a line across

Portia's face. She shrieked in pain. (72)

Besides representing the brutal abuse of women by black men, this quotation shows the entrenchment of patriarchal domination as Vusi expects Portia to do his bidding and take care of his mother and son. Vusi also beats Portia because she does not listen, which suggests that she must be submissive and listen to him without exhibiting any form of agency. The way Vusi beats Portia reveals his disregard for women's rights and selfhood in the same way women are seen as weaklings with "no role to play in the socio-economic and political affairs of the nation" (Makombe, 2019, p. 83). In fact, Vusi expects Portia to stop being "a bad woman" and serve the patriarchal agenda by taking care of his mother and Nkosi, which confines her into domesticity and objectification. Therefore, the violation of women and children is an issue that continues to poke holes in the idea of post-colonial independence from colonial legacies in the South African and Zimbabwean governments. Clearly, *The Gold-Diggers* depicts, through Vusi, Melusi and Givemore, the abuse and commodification of women. The women characters are also victims of both neoliberal imperialism and the masculinist national ideologies that construct them as incomplete beings.

1.4. Survival Tactics and Decolonial Reconstitutions

Despite the multiple challenges that they face, some of Nyathi's characters still exhibit resilience, resistance and survival strategies that subvert the prevailing logic of coloniality. Decolonial reconstitution is about finding new ways of existence and charting new subjectivities. Reinders (2019, p. 4) defines decolonial

reconstitution within the specificities of South Africa as the "creation of a new South African society through a clear paradigmatic shift from a Eurocentric one to a decolonizing paradigm". This idea resonates with what Fanon (1963) terms the new humanism that fosters coexistence, peace, unity, socio-economic freedom, gender equality and pluriversality. Nyathi effectively foregrounds the new decolonizing ways of being that foster cross-cultural and national dialogue to re-humanize the modern world as well as transpose the former colonized in a world that breathes coloniality (Moopi & Makombe, 2023).

In *The Gold-Diggers*, Lindani and Christine adopt survival strategies to navigate joblessness, hyperinflation, shortages of basic supplies, poor service delivery and the declining socio-political conditions in Zimbabwe. In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis in Zimbabwe, Lindani's life became "a desperate fight for survival" and "all her life she had tried to live off her looks. It was supposed to be her passport to a better future" (47). Lindani relies on her looks and resorts to prostitution to survive the economic hardships in Zimbabwe. Her plight, like that of other women who "stood on the side of Josiah Tongogara Avenue selling their bodies" (114), is an indictment of ZANU-PF's failed attempt to establish "an egalitarian society through equal distribution of resources, fostering income equality and raising the living standards for all the people" (Dzawanda & Matsa, 2023, p. 205). These women who sell their bodies along Josiah Tongogara Avenue show that ZANU-PF has betrayed the sacrifices of liberation heroes such as Josiah Tongogara, Herbert Chitepo and Solomon Mujuru. The lack of opportunities compels Zimbabwean

women to regard prostitution as a profession that empowers them. Lindani effectively uses prostitution as one of the “somatic and emotional options open to women in a patriarchal, corrupt social system” (Stobie, 2018, p. 39). Thus, for Lindani and other women in Zimbabwe, prostitution has a profoundly sustaining, redeeming quality that provides personal fulfillment and registers a decolonial feminist trope (Terrefe, 2020, p. 137). This decolonial trope functions as a counterpoise to the patriarchal, phallocentric and heteronormative ethics underpinning the Zimbabwean polity.

Nyathi's characters demonstrate resistance and agency that enable them to challenge the ongoing anti-migrant sentiment, hostility and exploitation in South Africa. Dumisani and Portia survive the hostile conditions in their host country through creative and often unconventional ways. While Dumisani worked as a waiter at Grant Avenue, he befriends a middle-aged Jewish man called Solomon Kaufman, who owns an investment management company in Johannesburg. Mr. Kaufman always reads the *Business Day* and *The Financial Times* newspapers and Dumisani starts reading these newspapers every evening. When Mr. Kaufman recognizes Dumisani's profound knowledge of the financial markets, he offers him a job as a financial trader at his company: “We would sort out all your paperwork and I am willing to give you on-the-job training. Six months and then we'll see if there's a future for you in the markets” (129). Although Dumisani is a qualified civil engineer, his determination to read the newspapers to gain knowledge about the financial markets becomes an avenue through which he empowers himself. Dumisani uses reading as a decolonial

strategy to grow beyond his low-paying and exhausting job as a waiter. He eventually becomes a CEO and stakeholder at Investage and serves on various boards of JSE-listed corporations (223). Therefore, Mr. Kaufman and Dumisani's connection can be read as a decolonial turn that seeks to “clear the way for new intercultural communication” and “for an interchange of experiences and meanings” (Quijano, 2007, p. 177) that allows them to touch and feel the other (Fanon, 1963, p. 79). This turn also fosters co-existence and human dignity beyond the logic of coloniality, anti-migrant sentiment, racial hostility and xenophobia in South Africa and globally.

Nevertheless, Dumisani's situation creates an ambivalence as he must assume a new South African identity. Although he made riches for himself and became a “derivatives trader and was profiled on many financial publications from Financial Mail to the Financial Times” he regretted the fact that “none of the publications ever alluded to his Zimbabwean origins” (223). This highlights the predicament that many undocumented migrants face worldwide as they must assume new identities to make a living for themselves. The question becomes whether migrants must forego their identities to survive in other countries? This creates angst for Dumisani who realizes that “other Zimbabweans had achieved immeasurable success without having to hide behind an assumed identity” (223). Dumisani wants to come clean and reveal his own identity, but he is afraid that the “price he would have to pay [would be] too much” as he had worked hard to achieve what he had (223). Thus, there is a discrepancy in global relations and immigration

policies that favor some and devour others across the world. Although Dumisani occupies a third space characterized by ambivalence, regrets and identity issues, he reconstitutes his subjectivity and creates new possibilities for himself. This shows a new decolonial reconstitution located in the everyday acts of survival. Clearly, Nyathi stimulates a decolonial reconstruction that not only gives voice to the voiceless but also enacts what Ngugi (2014, p. 248) terms “Globalectics”, which upholds unity, interconnection, communication, fairness and human dignity. Portia is an important character in the development of the strand of decolonial reconstruction in the novel. Like Dumisani, Portia assumes a new identity after she picks up a handbag with a green ID booklet at Joubert Park, which belongs to Phakama Hlope. Portia changes her name to Phakama Hlope and gets a job as a cleaner at a law firm called, Hulisani, Hirsch, Hlomani, and Associates and enrolls her son, Nkosi, at Angels Daycare Centre. The new identity enables Portia to navigate the exclusivist policies in South Africa and escape xenophobic attacks and blend into South African society. Portia starts at the bottom of the corporate ladder “cleaning toilets, making tea and sweeping the floors” (122), but her fortunes change when one afternoon she hears Advocate Hulisani shouting that he needs some documents typed and she offers to help since she has taken a typing course at school (126). Advocate Hirsch and Advocate Hlomani soon realized that Portia’s talent was “underutilized in the kitchen and that was how Portia got promoted to the front office” (127). Portia then starts the process that Fasselt calls “identity erasure” (Fasselt, 2018, p. 820) as she starts listening to “how Kopano and

other ladies spoke and would imitate them. She would practice religiously at night, imitating the intonation and mannerisms” (127). Although the process of self-erasure is liberating for Portia, it is alienating as she “preferred to distance herself from her kith and kin” and the “old Portia began to disappear, making way for Phakama” (127). Portia’s mimicry produces “its slippage, its excess and its difference” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122), as she sometimes slips up with words or loses the right intonation and “would brush it off with a smile” (245). Portia succeeds when she gets married to Advocate Hulisani who adopts Nkosi. She “assum[es] her new role as Advocate Hulisani’s wife and r[uns] his home” (245). Fasselt notes that “the formation of a new South African-Zimbabwean family through Portia’s marriage to Hulisani serves as a narrative device for restoring harmony and extending community to absorb outsiders” (Fasselt, 2018, 823). Therefore, self-erasure and mimicry serve as survival strategies that Portia uses to empower herself and disrupt nativist formulations of identity. Portia and Dumisani disrupt nativist ideologies entrenched in xenophobia and other forms of discrimination based on nationality to open new decolonial pathways beyond national boundaries.

1.5. Conclusion

I sought to explore how *The Gold-Diggers* depicts the antinomies of Afro-radical and democratic visions of decolonization in Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively. I analyzed the novel’s portrayal of Zimbabwe’s 2008 height of the economic meltdown that promoted racial hostility, violence and poverty in Zimbabwe. I also described the xenophobic outbreaks, human trafficking, sexual violence, alienation,

dehumanization and self-effacing that characterized the South African polity to which many Zimbabwean migrants entered around the same time. I also read the spatial, social and economic divisions between the middle-class and lower-class in Zimbabwe and the ontological and epistemic variations between rural and urban spaces from a decolonial perspective. Consequently, the divisions were discerned as underscoring the persistence of colonial spatial discrepancies, economic inequalities and drawbacks of economic policies such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (1991), Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy (2008), Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (2009) and Five-Year Medium-Term Plan (2011-2015).

Nyathi illustrates, through the experiences of characters such as Christine, Dumisani and Portia, that Mugabe's Afro-radical decolonization creates deprivation, redundancy and violence instead of economic empowerment. It was also noted that issues of xenophobia, child trafficking, rape, abuse and dehumanization thwart conceptions of democracy and liberal citizenship in South Africa. The novel depicts the struggles and antagonistic treatment of Zimbabwean immigrants such as Chamunorwa, Dumi, Portia and Gugulethu in South Africa. This ill treatment is noted as reflecting the inadequacies of South Africa's democratic decolonial model and the shift towards a nativist national agenda as championed by vigilante groups and populist political formations such as Operation Dudula and Patriotic Alliance. The xenophobic attacks that led to Chamunorwa's death show that South Africa is moving away from a democratic and inclusivist decolonial

approach to a nativist agenda like that adopted by Zimbabwe post-2000.

As shown in *The Gold-Diggers*, Zimbabwean migrants confront exploitative, dehumanizing and low-paying jobs. Some women, such as Chenai, Lindani, Gugulethu and Portia are sexually abused and violated by white employers and black men, foregrounding issues of gender-based violence and sexual violence, which show the persistence of colonial/apartheid and patriarchal logics of inequality. I further noted that characters, such as Lindani, Christine,

Dumisani and Portia, develop resilience, resistance and adopt survival tactics that underline the decolonial reconstitutions needed to achieve peace and socioeconomic decolonization. Finally, *The Gold-Diggers* disrupts Mugabe's Afro-radical model of decolonization while at the same time pointing out the complexities and ambiguities of South Africa's neoliberal and democratic model. The novel creates avenues for reflection and thinking about the future of decolonial projects in Southern Africa in the context of persisting struggles for decolonization and migration.

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