



The trauma of home and (non)belonging in Zimbabwe and its diaspora: 'Conversion disorder' in *Shadows* by Novuyo Rosa Tshuma



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The renewed outbreak of xenophobic attacks in March and April 2015 in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, the killings, looting, and burning of homes and shops, and the flight of thousands of foreign Africans to refugee camps, have brought to the fore not only the question of the African diaspora in South Africa, but also into focus the notions of home and homeland in a diasporic context. In *Shadows*, for which she was awarded the Herman Charles Bosman Prize in 2014, Zimbabwean writer Novuyo Rosa Tshuma presents the dislocations of life in present-day Zimbabwe and the relocation and double displacement of the Zimbabwean diasporic community in South Africa. The text, comprising a novella, 'Shadows', and five other stories, is best approached as a story cycle, the individual narratives being linked not only by the theme of diaspora but also by a number of recurring diasporic situations, figures, and tropes. Drawing on a wide range of contemporary diaspora theory, including the African and *intra*-African diaspora, as well as current research on Zimbabwe and its diaspora, this article examines the ambiguous diasporic concepts of *home* and *belonging*, and *inclusion* and *exclusion*, with reference to Tshuma's fictional depiction of daily township life in Mugabe's Zimbabwe with its food queues, depleted resources, and crashed economy, as well as in the marginal world of the present-day Zimbabwean diaspora in Johannesburg with its police corruption and brutal exploitation of illegal immigrants. The article considers the psychogenic condition known as 'conversion disorder', which Tshuma foregrounds in one of the stories, as a metaphor for understanding the paradoxical diasporic identification with, and alienation from, home, community, and home country in Zimbabwe as well as in the unaccommodating host country, South Africa.

Die trauma van tuiste en (nie)behoort in Zimbabwe en sy diaspora: 'Omsettingsversteuring' in *Shadows* deur Novuyo Rosa Tshuma. Die hernude xenofobiese aanvalle in Maart en April 2015 in Durban, Johannesburg en Kaapstad, die roof, afbrand van huise en winkels, lewensverlies, en vlug van duisende vreemde Afrikane na toevlugskampe, het nie alleen die hele kwessie rondom die Afrika-diaspora in Suid-Afrika na vore gebring nie, maar ook die vraag oor die betekenis van die begrippe 'tuiste' en 'tuisland' binne 'n diasporiese verband. In *Shadows*, wat in 2014 met die Herman Charles Bosman-prys bekroon is, beeld die Zimbabwe se skryfster Novuyo Rosa Tshuma die ontwrigte lewensomstandighede in die hedendaagse Zimbabwe uit, asook die hervestiging en dubbele vervreemding van die diasporiese Zimbabweër-gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika. Die teks bestaan uit 'n novelle, 'Shadows', en vyf ander kortverhale, en kan bes beskou word as 'n verhaalsiklus, waarbinne die afsonderlike verhale verbind word deur die tema van diaspora en ook deur 'n aantal herkenbare diasporiese situasies en beelde. Die artikel put uit 'n reeks opvattinge oor diaspora, insluitende die Afrika- en *binne*-Afrika diaspora, en huidige navorsing oor Zimbabwe en sy diaspora. Die dubbelsinnige begrippe van *tuiste* en *samehorigheid*, *insluiting* en *uitsluiting*, word ondersoek na aanleiding van Tshuma se uitbeelding van die alledaagse township-lewe in Mugabe se Zimbabwe met sy voedseltekorte, algemene gebrek aan middele, en vernielde ekonomie, en hierteenoor, die randbestaan van die hedendaagse Zimbabwe-diaspora in Johannesburg met sy gewelddadige vervolging en korrupte magsmisbruike teen onwettige immigrante. Die artikel stel voor dat die psigogeniese toestand van 'omskakelingsversteuring', wat Tshuma beklemtoon in een van haar verhale, as 'n metafoor kan dien vir die paradoksale diasporiese vereenselwiging met, en vervreemding van, 'n tuiste, gemeenskap en tuisland in Zimbabwe sowel as in die onvriendelike gasheerland, Suid-Afrika.

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Introduction

The attacks against foreigners that broke out in March and April 2015 in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town resulted in people being killed, shops being looted and burnt down by rampaging mobs, and thousands of Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, Somalis, Nigerians, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) nationals, Ethiopians, and Malawians having to flee their homes and seek shelter in refugee camps. Some of them have subsequently returned to their home countries, independently or with the assistance of their governments; others have been widely reported as refusing to leave and saying that South Africa has become their home and that oppressive conditions in their countries of birth do not allow them to return.

In the national – and international – clamour that ensued around the problem of xenophobia in South Africa, the Minister of Home Affairs, Malusi Gigaba, cautioned leaders against making inflammatory statements that targeted foreigners, with obvious reference to the Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, who had declared in a speech that foreigners were contributing to the breakdown of Zulu culture, that they were responsible for crime, and that illegal immigrants should be deported. Zwelithini later condemned the violence and warned against a potential genocide. The Minister of Police, Nathi Nhleko, proposed that the attacks be understood as ‘Afrophobic’ and not ‘xenophobic’.¹ President Jacob Zuma proclaimed in a national television broadcast that xenophobia was un-South African and un-African. Local, provincial and national authorities and leaders of various political parties and religious bodies denounced the violence as criminal and expressed sympathy and support for victims and their families; and local Chambers of Commerce deplored the damage done to the business profile of their cities. Other responses ranged from criticism of the country’s inadequate border controls and of the incompetence and corruption in the Department of Home Affairs to many South Africans being outspoken about their resentment of foreigners for taking jobs from them and using unfair and illegal practices to outsmart local traders.² There was also widespread retaliatory protest action in countries such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Malawi, and Mozambique, which had hosted South African freedom fighters during the struggle against apartheid. What the xenophobic attacks have brought to the fore is the question of the African diaspora in South Africa. The subsequent difficulties around repatriating illegal foreigners to their home countries, or reintegrating legal immigrants into their former communities (such as Isipingo, Chatsworth, and uMlazi in Durban), have further brought into sharp focus the notions of home and homeland for diasporic peoples.

The Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa, in particular, has been comprehensively researched by scholars in volumes

such as *Zimbabwe’s exodus: Crisis, migration, survival* (edited by Jonathan Crush and Daniel Tevera 2010), and *Zimbabwe’s new diaspora: Displacement and the cultural politics of survival* (edited by JoAnn McGregor and Ranka Primorac 2010). According to Crush and Tevera, especially after 1990:

the accelerating social, political, and economic unravelling of [Zimbabwe] led to a rush for the exits. An economy in free fall, soaring inflation and unemployment, the collapse of public services, political oppression, and deepening poverty proved to be powerful, virtually irresistible, push factors for many Zimbabweans. (2010:n.p.)

Crush and Tevera (2010) explain that the current migration flow from Zimbabwe is extremely mixed:

There are almost as many women migrants as men; there are migrants of all ages from young children to the old and infirm; those fleeing hunger and poverty join those fleeing persecution and harassment; they are from all rungs of the occupational and socioeconomic ladder; they are highly-read and illiterate, professionals and paupers, doctors and ditch-diggers (n.p.)

The Zimbabwean diaspora has also been the subject of significant recent works of fiction by Zimbabwean writers, such as Brian Chikwava’s *Harare North* (2009), about Zimbabweans in London, and NoViolet Bulawayo’s *We need new names* (2014), about Zimbabweans in the United States.

Bulawayo (2014) expresses the present-day exodus from Zimbabwe rhetorically in her novel:

Look at them leaving in droves, the children of the land, just look at them leaving in droves. Those with nothing are crossing borders. Those with strength are crossing borders. Those with ambitions are crossing borders. Those with hopes are crossing borders. Those with loss are crossing borders. Those in pain are crossing borders. Moving, running, emigrating, going, deserting, walking, quitting, flying, fleeing – to all over, to countries near and far, to countries unheard of, to countries whose names they cannot pronounce. They are leaving in droves.

When things fall apart, the children of the land scurry and scatter like birds escaping a burning sky. 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 their despair bandaged in faraway lands, their blistered prayers muttered in the darkness of queer lands. (pp. 145–146)

In *Shadows* (2013), for which she was awarded the Herman Charles Bosman Prize in 2014, Zimbabwean writer Novuyo Rosa Tshuma presents the dislocations of life in present-day Zimbabwe and the relocation and double displacement of the Zimbabwean diasporic community in South Africa. The text, comprising a novella, ‘Shadows’, and five other stories, is best approached as a story cycle, the individual narratives being linked not only by the theme of the Zimbabwean diaspora but also by various diasporic tropes. In her review of *Shadows*, Liesl Jobson says: ‘The breathless quality to these deeply unsettling stories depicts the psychic and physical rupture that is the common experience of many Zimbabweans’ (2013:n.p.). More specifically, I will argue, Tshuma depicts her diasporic subjects in the tension-filled space between a vulnerable home in a troubled home country and a contingent

1. See, in this connection, Tinyiko Maluleke’s article, ‘Xenophobia is not unique to us’ (2015:17).

2. The sociologist Imraan Buccus says that South Africans ‘have sunk into a moral and political abyss’ (Buccus 2015:19). For a brief overview and analysis of the xenophobic violence see Toby Chance’s newspaper article, ‘Hope and concern at xenophobia in SA’ (2015:23).



home in an inhospitable host country. For the psychological trauma resulting from such a fraught state of existence between paradoxical sites of identification and alienation, Tshuma proposes a psychogenic disturbance – ‘conversion disorder’ – as a symbol, which, I will suggest, provides a way of approaching the figure of the diasporic Zimbabwean in South Africa.

Diaspora

The Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa needs to be understood in terms of contemporary debates around what actually constitutes a diaspora. In their introduction to *Theorizing Diaspora*, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur (2003:4) point out that the term ‘diaspora’:

has been increasingly used by anthropologists, literary theorists, and cultural critics to describe mass migrations and displacements of the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in reference to independence movements in formerly colonised areas, waves of refugees fleeing war-torn states, and fluxes of economic migration in the post-World War II era.

Diaspora theorists such as Ato Quayson and Khachig Tölölyan maintain that although ‘not all dispersals amount to diasporas’ (Quayson 2007:581; see also Tölölyan 1996, 2007) diaspora studies nevertheless provide a useful interdisciplinary lens for understanding the consequences of globalisation, transnationalism, and cultural hybridity. In *Diasporas, cultures of mobilities, ‘race’*, Judith Misrahi-Barak and Claudine Raynaud suggest that older notions of diaspora need to be rethought, because definitional terms such as ‘[d]ispersal, dispersion, borders, host and home, origin and return, insider and outsider correspond to new realities and lived experiences that demand close intellectual scrutiny’ (2014:12), while the conditions that originally produced diasporas also still continue: ‘wars are waged that displace peoples, deportation, imperialism, and racism are not things of the past’.

Although ideas of what constitutes a diaspora today might vary, the typology first developed by Robin Cohen in his book, *Global diasporas: An introduction* (1997),³ has remained an important point of reference for subsequent theorists, especially his emphasis on the notions of home and homeland. Cohen defines diaspora in terms of the homeland from which diasporic peoples have been involuntarily (Jewish and African diasporas) or voluntarily (colonial or trade diasporas) dispersed. According to Cohen, diasporas are characterised by a collective memory and myth about the homeland, an idealisation of the real or imagined ancestral home, and the collective development of a return movement to it. Diasporic communities sustain a strong ethnic group consciousness in the foreign countries where they live. Their relationship with their host society may be troubled, but they can also develop a distinctive and enriching life in their adoptive homeland, especially where there is a tolerance for pluralism (Cohen 2008:17).

3. Cohen’s typology is derived, in turn, from William Safran’s (1991) identification of the key characteristics of diasporas.

In *Diaspora and multiculturalism: Common traditions and new developments* (2003) Monika Fludernik opens up Cohen’s second criterion of voluntary dispersal from a homeland into three further categories: the ‘colonial diaspora’, and, adopting Vijay Mishra’s terms, the ‘old and new diasporas’ (1996:421–422), the latter consisting of free labour movements across the globe; the really new diaspora, she maintains, comprises ‘the movement of individual professionals and their families to mostly anglophone industrial nations’ (2003:xiii). In her study, *Diaspora: An introduction*, Jana Evans Braziel provides a taxonomy of distinct groups of people whose movement from ‘a native country across national or state boundaries into a new receiving (or “host”) country’ (Braziel 2008:27) qualifies them for inclusion in present-day diasporas: *colonial settlers* ‘living outside of their motherlands’ (p. 28); *transnational corporate expatriates* who move freely across national borders to do business; *students*, mainly from developing countries, on study visas in developed countries; *postcolonial émigrés* who have relocated themselves to the colonial motherland; *refugees* from political persecution, civil war, or state violence in their own country ‘who have been granted political asylum within a host country’ (p. 9); *political asylees (or asylum seekers)* who are in the limbo between seeking refuge in a host country and not yet having been granted formal asylum; *detainees* ‘who are held in detention camps at immigration prisons’ (p. 32); *internally displaced persons* who have been uprooted from their homes as a result of ‘violence, civil warfare, famine, disease, “ethnic cleansing”, political persecution, or religious oppression’ (p. 33) and who seek shelter elsewhere within their native countries; *economic migrants* who move from their home countries to work in host countries because of a whole range of economic constraints and opportunities; and *undocumented workers* (‘illegal aliens’) who have gained entry into a host country to make a living there but who have not obtained the legal permits needed for them to enjoy the status of economic migrants. The situations of many of the characters in the stories in Tshuma’s (2013) *Shadows* – economic migrants, students on visas and illegal immigrants – fit into the diasporic taxonomies outlined above and exhibit a number of the typological features of diaspora.

Although the statistics are unreliable, it is generally estimated that there are between two million and three million Zimbabwean nationals living in South Africa, which has the bulk of Zimbabwe’s diaspora community (Ndlovu 2013). JoAnn McGregor points out that ‘the extraordinary exodus’ (2010:3) from Zimbabwe since 2000 has involved as much as a quarter of the country’s population, or three million people. Moreover, she says, the idea of ‘a community of “diasporans” (*madiaspora* in Shona, or *amadiaspora* in Ndebele) has entered popular discourse since 2000, both as a self-identification and ascribed label’ (p. 6). South Africa has been their main destination:

Within southern Africa, South Africa has been by far the most important destination for labour migrants, professionals, refugees, and circulating traders, though Zimbabweans are also numerous in other SADC countries. In South Africa, Zimbabweans also have a particular embeddedness, shaped by shared histories of struggle



against white minority rule, more than a century of labour migrancy, close integration across a common border as well as a multitude of older, precolonial connections and some shared languages.

The question arises whether an immigrant African community in another African country (South Africa) can technically be regarded as forming part of an African diaspora. In his essay, 'Diaspora Dialogues: Engagements between Africa and Its Diasporas', Paul Tiyambe Zeleza describes African diasporas as including 'all those peoples *dispersed from the continent* in historic and contemporary times who have constituted themselves into diasporas' (2009:34, emphasis added), which he supports with the definition of the African Diaspora that was adopted by a technical workshop of the African Union in Trinidad in 2004: 'the geographical dispersal of peoples whose ancestors, within historical memory, originally came from Africa, but who are currently domiciled, or claim residence or citizenship, *outside the continent of Africa*' (p. 35, emphasis added). In their critical reassessment of the concept of African diaspora(s), Geneviève Fabre and Klaus Benesch point out, however, that '[t]hough still a land of origin, Africa has shifted conceptually: it has finally become an ambiguous place, a conflict-ridden continent' (Fabre & Benesch 2004:xvi). Because of the differences among the various experiences of dispersal, they point out that the 'idea of an African diaspora was thus gradually replaced by that of multiple diasporas, unified solely through their lost center and mythic homeland, Africa' (p. xvii). And the current situation, they say, is still more complex:

With the rise of new, postcolonial African nations and, concomitantly, an increase of migratory flux and the appearance of multiple, temporary homelands, the cultural, historical, and geographical differences within the black diaspora itself are being increasingly recognized. Today scholars are more interested in how these various forms of diaspora are connected to each other than in links between the dispersed former Africans and a mythic homeland or spiritual center. (p. xviii)⁴

According to Michael A. Gomez, a historian of the African diaspora, the state of being 'out of Africa' can also be experienced elsewhere *in Africa*, and he defines his subject as 'people of African descent who found (and find) themselves living either outside of the African continent or *in parts of Africa that were territorially quite distant from their lands of birth*' (2005:1, [emphasis added]). The Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa may therefore best be understood as an *intra*-African diaspora.

Zimbabweans, like people from other African countries, have been attracted to South Africa for its culture of human rights, the economic opportunities it offers, and its perceived social security (Chance 2015:23). However, Crush and Tevera observe: 'The evidence suggests that Zimbabwean migrants as a whole are denigrated, devalued and marginalized

(especially in South Africa and the United Kingdom)' (2010:n.p.). Mpho, the protagonist of 'Shadows', registers the South African ambivalence towards immigrants from Zimbabwe in his ironic reference to 'Johannesburg, eGoli/City of gold' (Tshuma 2013:90), and to 'beloved South Africa, land of plenty' (p. 89), 'that glittering land of gold' (p. 90). The democracy of the place, he says, 'is like a thorn in the side. Oh, how they love us here. How they hate us here. Too many of us desperate here' (p. 96).

The Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa, furthermore, raises fundamental questions about identity, in the light of a long history of migration in southern Africa that goes back to precolonial times.⁵ As Mpho puts it:

You pick through the threads of your identity. What is it to be Zimbabwean in this place? To be an Ndebele Zimbabwean in this place? You reach far back into the past and trace your origins back to this space that is now South Africa. Way back, before King Mzilikazi broke away from Shaka Zulu and herded his people into Matabeleland in today's Zimbabwe. Oh, history is so cruel. Why didn't King Mzilikazi just stay put in South Africa? But. But, but, *but*. Technically, if you trace history back far enough, then your roots are here in South Africa. And so, somehow, that makes you – deep down, somewhere – South African. This is an important discovery among the lies that you will later tell yourself; South Africa is Africa's United States of America. This is your roundabout identity, it could well be your green card to the fresh waters of freedom. The Ndebele dialect is similar to South Africa's Zulu and Xhosa, is that not so? So. There-a-fore. Conclusively. You can blend into this space. But nobody wants us here. Nobody. (p. 96)

It emerges from Mpho's interior monologue that this unaccommodating host country, South Africa, was once 'home country' for doubly-exiled Zimbabweans.

Home and (non)belonging in Zimbabwe

A diasporic consciousness is formed between a dwelling in a home country and a contingent home in a host country, in a mixed space of acceptance and rejection. The diasporic motif of home is foregrounded from the outset in 'Shadows' as Mpho describes the Bulawayo township he comes from, where 'a man is never alone' (p. 13). Avtar Brah (1996) describes our 'home' as the site of our everyday lived experience:

It is a discourse of locality, the place where feelings of rootedness ensue from the mundane and the unexpected of daily practice. Home here connotes our networks of family, kin, friends, colleagues and various 'significant others'. It signifies the social and psychic geography of space that is experienced in terms of a neighbourhood or a home town. That is, a community 'imagined' in most part through daily encounter. This 'home' is a place with

4. In this connection, Tshuma has said in an interview: "... I am almost tempted to say the term 'Africa' is a fallacy, there is very little or no unity, Zimbabwe or South Africa as 'African' spaces would sooner be more concerned with the West's representation or opinions of them than say with those of Namibia or Libya, fellow 'African' countries" (in *The African book review* 2015:n.p.).

5. In his study of population migration into and out of present-day Zimbabwe from precolonial times to 1990, Alois S. Mlambo points out: "Population movement into the area began with the peopling of the Zimbabwe Plateau. In the nineteenth century, there was an influx of groups from the south fleeing the Mfecane/Difaqane in South Africa. In the twentieth century, white immigrants from Europe and South Africa established farms and plantations and mines where they employed black migrants from neighbouring countries such as Malawi and Mozambique. South Africa's 'Thirty Years War' of liberation (from the 1960s to the 1990s) brought white immigrants fleeing independence in Africa and black refugees from the civil war in Mozambique" (2010:n.p.).



which we remain intimate even in moments of intense alienation from it. It is a sense of 'feeling at home'. (p. 4)

In a similar vein, in their introduction to *The postnational self: Belonging and identity* (2002), Ulf Hedetoft and Mette Hjort (2002) speak of 'a foundational, existential, "thick" notion' (2002:vii) of home that is interdependent with belonging:

Our home is where we belong, territorially, existentially, and culturally, where our own community is, where our family and loved ones reside, where we can identify our roots, and where we return to when we are elsewhere in the world. (p. vii)

Out of this notion of home come our feelings of 'homeness' (and homesickness when away), our sense of identity, and national belonging. Hedetoft and Hjort then go on, however, to label such a harmonious conception of home and belonging as 'organicism' or 'prepolitical' (p. xii). They point out that the assumption that '[c]ulture equals nation equals home equals identity' is complicated by contemporary transnational religious and ethnic alliances and globalising processes and 'the new types of identity formation, boundary confusion, and ethnic politics that follow in their wake' (p. xv).

In *The politics of home*, Rosemary Marangoly George qualifies any essentialist or 'thick' notion of home, community, and home country by emphasising the fundamental ambiguity of the notion of 'home'; it is also a way of establishing difference because it is premised on select inclusions and exclusions: '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' (George 1996:9). 'Home', she elaborates further, is always doubly coded in terms of those who belong there and those who do not. Importantly, she continues, home defined in terms of inclusion as well as exclusion forms the basis of community: 'Communities are not counter-constructions but only extensions of home, providing the same comforts and terrors on a larger scale'. And extending the notions of home and community still further to home country, George explains that home as a place both inclusive and exclusive lies at the heart of the term 'home country', which 'in itself expresses a complex yoking of ideological apparatuses necessary for the existence of subjects: the notion of belonging, of having a home, and a place of one's own' (p. 2).⁶

The images of home and community in Mpho's description of the township in the opening pages of 'Shadows' are presented in terms of ambiguity and alienation. They are projected as paradoxical sites of belonging and non-belonging, with the stench of shit as a recurring trope. In Nyoni's house, where a sewer had burst several nights

6.Tshuma has said what 'home' means to her in her own diasporic situation: "Home makes me squirm; perhaps it is both personal and social; the me in Zimbabwe resonates an uncomfortable social intimacy; I am now more accustomed to the me here in South Africa, who easily melts into the many folds of anonymity in this huge and vigorous space. At home, one meets familiar faces at every corner, and one is ever aware at once of belonging to a larger, more intimate social quilt. One embroiders these seams with something of the expected social discourse" (Tshuma 2015:n.p.).

before, the family had awoken 'to find shit bubbling through the cracks in the floor' (2013:13); 'a stream of shit flows' in the gutter next to MaG's shebeen; and clumps of wild sugar cane flourish 'in the midst of all that shit'. George's notion of home as a place defined by both inclusion and exclusion, as 'a place to escape to and a place to escape from', is exemplified by Mpho's own home, his Mama's house which, he says:

has walls the colour of avocados that have stayed too long in the sun. Its asbestos roof is pulled low over its window eyes, like an experimental design from the book of an apprentice builder. It is a semi-detached, and shares one of its walls with its neighbour. It's Mama's crowning achievement, the one thing she has managed to acquire in her life. I have tried before to burn down this house, and I think one of these days I shall try again. (2013:20)

Mama is 'a veteran prostitute', old, no longer beautiful, and dying from HIV/AIDS. Mpho tells her directly that she is ugly and that her prostitution disgusts him, but that he loves her nonetheless. He has come to associate Mama's home with her screaming as she is beaten up by an assemblage of abusive lovers, and he has himself become part of its violence. When Mama dies, he inherits her house and all that it symbolises:

There is a violence that shall never leave this house. I feel the texture of Mama's walls, green plaster peeling back to reveal naked grey cement, lumpy like her hands. I place my cheek against a wall. I cannot help but cry. If you place your ear against the wall and listen closely, you hear whispered stories. Everything is old. The doors of the wooden cupboards sag; the mismatched china inside is chipped and broken. Holes gape in the maroon sofas where the rats have burrowed (p. 67)

Behind Mama's home lie two earlier ones: 'eNkayi' (p. 24), the rural home of her youth from which she had run away with a truck driver (who might or might not have been Mpho's father); and later the *khaya* in the garden of the suburban mansion where she worked as a domestic servant for the Nleyas, 'polished blacks' (p. 33), unlike Mpho and Mama who were 'black that did not have the shine'. Mama was banished from this house when her sexual relationship with Mr. Nleya was discovered by his wife. Pregnant with Mr. Nleya's child, she naively imagined herself replacing Mrs. Nleya as mistress of the mansion, but when she lost the child, she was left with only the title deeds to 'the ugly avocado-coloured house' (p. 32) that Mr. Nleya had put in her name.

The house belonging to Holly, Mama's flamboyant prostitute friend who similarly has her roots in a rural village, is also a paradoxical place of inclusion and exclusion for Mpho. Holly's house is 'painted a lustrous pink, which stood out among the dull brick township houses' (p. 40), bigger than the others with two bedrooms and a separate kitchen, living room, and inside bathroom with pink and gold fittings. This is the site where he has a sexual 'quick fix' (p. 61) with Holly, who is the mother of his girlfriend, Nomsa. The home that Mpho has provided for Nomsa consists of a rented room in a house with 'a brick façade with plastic sheeting in the windows, and an asbestos roof with a hole gaping at the sky'



(p. 14). It smells of paraffin, has a two-plate stove in the corner, and is furnished with a mattress and a battered suitcase – an appropriate dwelling for the only woman who can love him, he says, because they ‘are both ... damaged’ (p. 63).

The Bulawayo township is an extension of Mpho’s home, a site of both filiation and alienation. When he watches the locals fighting in the rain over bags of mealie meal on a delivery truck, he feels estranged from the community that he belongs to, and says: ‘I watch them, these people I have always known, screaming and kicking and kicking and screaming, turning into people I have never known’ (p. 16). And when the rain clears, he is aware only of ‘the wet smell of runny shit’ that hangs in the air. The Evangelical Church of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to which his mother has been converted offers him no spiritual home. Although he accompanies her there, he dismisses it as ‘one of those crazy Pentecostal churches where the pastors preach “Money, money, money,” and smack you to the floor so you can be healed’ (p. 33). The National Art Gallery becomes Mpho’s artistic home. It is here that he comes under the tutelage of the dreadlocked sculptor, Rasta, who helps him to realise his artistic talent and also introduces him to smoking ganja. Mpho begins to take his art seriously; he becomes known as ‘Rasta’s boy’ (p. 54), and Rasta becomes the closest thing to a father that he has known. Mpho frequents the Gallery, assists with setting up some of the events, and his works are also included in other artists’ exhibitions. However, when he stands, unwashed and stinking, before the curator, Miss Mlilo, and asks to have an exhibition of his work in the Gallery, she says dismissively: ‘[W]hat artistic credentials do you have?’ Feeling rejected in the one place where he has been spiritually most alive, he can only respond, ‘My art is in my heart’ (pp. 80–81).

Mpho’s home country of Zimbabwe is presented in ‘Shadows’ as home and community writ large, with (again to use George’s formulation) ‘the same comforts and terrors on a larger scale’. In a postcolonial context in which everything has become accommodately black, contradictions ironically persist: whites might have been ‘chased from the farms and disappeared from public view’ (p. 29), retreating socially to enclaves such as the Bulawayo Country Club, but the new black elite now model themselves on the former colonists while the bulk of the population have to suffer the consequences of a crashed economy and decaying infrastructure. Mpho offers ‘the chaos of daily living’ (p. 48) in the township as a metonymy of the national social geography: ‘everything bursts open. Burst pipes and burst transformers entwined with warped electricity wires and rubbish bursting from intoxicated minds’. His narrative details the chronic power failures, fuel shortages, and collapsing services countrywide, with endless queues for water. There is a wryness in his observing that ‘the people stretch into the distance and disappear behind a cluster of houses ...’ (p. 51) without essential foodstuffs; and of this, Mpho can only say: ‘There is nothing to laugh about, and everything to laugh about’ (p. 18). Zimbabwe is portrayed

as a country of depleted resources and humiliated people where township clinics routinely run out of ARV medication and HIV-positive people queue in vain all day. There is ‘Waiting. Waiting. More waiting. There is nothing special about it, it’s everywhere’ (p. 49). Hospital patients have to supply their own cotton wool, syringes, and drips, and patients and nurses alike are ‘all drowning in the shit’ (p. 64). The national currency has become worthless, and banks remain closed. ‘There used to be a certain decorum’, Mpho observes, ‘people did not storm banks the way they stormed trucks that arrived at supermarkets carrying foodstuffs. But now desperation has overtaken good manners’ (p. 76). Unpaid teachers quit the profession in their numbers, further crippling a previously efficient and enviable education system. The most powerful symbol in the narrative of a people being unhomed in their own country is the government’s ‘ungracious destruction of illegal dwellings and unsanctioned structures’ (p. 59) in the ‘insolently named Operation Murambatsvina – “clean out the trash”’, despite many of the houses being respectable dwellings. The prevailing political culture is presented as one of mass gatherings and demonstrations, rallies organised by the ruling party, and protests against government action by the opposition, which are broken up by riot police using gunfire and teargas. And presiding over everything is ‘His Excellency, the President’ (p. 64), the personality cult around him symbolised by ubiquitous framed photographs and T-shirt images. The general climate, Mpho says, is one of fear, its smell familiar:

All around, a shitty-scented fear smothers the future before it arrives, so that the chanting masses, drunk on threatened promises and promised threats, sing ever louder to clear the clog in their throats. (p. 65)

The extent to which Mpho has assimilated the conflicts and the violence of his home country is evident from his own history of violent outbursts. The bad mothers and no (or many?) fathers that he and Nomsa have in common have resulted in his identification with a society in which, as he explains to her: ‘Men beat women up. That’s just how men are’ (p. 44). His narrative is punctuated with incidents in which he cannot contain his anger, beginning with his being expelled from school for spitting into the face of a teacher who had failed him in a test. After threatening his mother with his fist during one of their fights, he resorts again to spitting into her face; as he confesses: ‘The violence had become everything to me, you see. I found an empty satisfaction in my exchanges with Mama, which became such a common feature that, in spite of their cruel weight, they became light banter’ (p. 62). When Rasta is shot dead by riot police in a demonstration, Mpho further absorbs the anger as well as the fear of his home country. He says: ‘I became angry – angry at this country, angry at my existence ... The smell of my own fear began to overpower me. It clung to me and refused to let go’ (p. 62). It permeates the poetry that he begins to write – as he has warned the reader at the beginning of his narrative: ‘words flow from me like shit running from buttocks’ (p. 18). When Mama dies in Mpilo Hospital, he



reacts to Nomsa's criticism of him by striking her with 'a backhanded slap that sends her across the sofa' (p. 74). The violence around and in him intensifies. When the gathering of people around his impromptu exhibition of his work on the pavement in front of the National Gallery is broken up by the police, he is struck by one of them with 'a backhanded slap, the kind of slap you would give a dog' (p. 84), and he retaliates by punching the policeman in the face. Afterwards, when he realises that Nomsa has left Bulawayo for Johannesburg with the encouragement of her landlady, the teacher Mrs Ndlovu, he spits in her face as well, admitting, 'It is an ugly scene. There is ugliness brewing in me' (pp. 88–89).

The Zimbabwean diaspora in Johannesburg

The Zimbabwean diaspora is introduced into the narrative of 'Shadows' through Mpho's decision to follow and find Nomsa in Johannesburg, and is further elaborated in the other five stories that make up the fictional ensemble.⁷ Migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa, from a conflicted home country into a contested diaspora, is presented in *Shadows* as a process of increasing self-alienation. Tshuma's stories reflect this development of a fractured diasporic consciousness in their modes of narration: whereas 'Shadows' is narrated by Mpho in the first person, a fully-inhabited 'I', the young female narrator in 'Crossroads', a hopeful student who acknowledges that she and other immigrants have come to Johannesburg to 'find new selves, reinvent ourselves' (p. 183), is split between first- and second-person narration to distinguish between her own individual subjectivity, 'I', and herself as emerging diasporic subject, a more objective 'you'. Narratively signalling a further degree of alienation from self, the young female protagonist in 'You in Paradise' addresses herself throughout in the second person 'you', having become in Johannesburg a 'stranger unto yourself' (p. 136). In 'Waiting', which is set in Zimbabwe, the next stage of separation from self is represented by the young girl who tells her story while referring to herself in the third person as a figural narrator, 'she' (p. 143). The narrative consciousness in 'Doctor S' has so distanced herself from her own experiences in both Zimbabwe and Johannesburg that she fully fictionalises herself as a character called 'Noma' (p. 154). And in the final story, 'For the Love of the Country', as a kind of narrative coda to the cycle, the narrator also speaks of herself in terms of a generic second-person 'you', her self-estrangement in present-day Zimbabwe being in narrative counterpoint to the experience of diaspora in the earlier stories in the collection.

Mpho's account of his visit to Johannesburg in 'Shadows' adumbrates the diasporic experiences presented in the other stories, beginning with his journey, without the required visa, squashed in a kombi from Bulawayo via Beitbridge to Johannesburg: 'Police have to be bribed at the roadblocks. Officials have to be bribed at the border' (p. 90). He stays

with Nomsa's cousin, Tafi, in the squalid bachelor flat on the eighth floor of a dilapidated building next to Johannesburg station that he shares with two other men, their respective territories separated by grimy sheets. The decrepit inner-city area, like many throughout South Africa, has become home mainly to immigrants who occupy its crowded spaces:

There are flats all around. They are a sorry sight. They squat in the filth of the streets, with broken windows and dingy walls. Clothes dangle from the balconies. Smoke and dust rise from the streets and cling to the clothing. Babies wail. Radios blare forth different stations, all at the same time. (p. 93)

Mpho is scathing about Tafi's possession of a university degree in environmental sciences which does not stop him from being reduced to a mere restaurant worker in Sandton, and about the toyi-toying garbage workers whose march is monitored by riot police and media alike: 'Welcome to South African democracy' (p. 94), he says. Mpho also caricatures other African and Asian immigrants: 'Everywhere you go', he says, 'you hear loud, rapid Shona and lilting Nigerian English' (p. 95). The Shonas 'don't give a damn. Loud and brash, there's an abrasiveness in their entrepreneurial resistance to South African culture' (p. 96). The Nigerians tout their fake designer goods outside their stalls, '[p]elting you with pleas for this and for that, buy this buy that, cheap this cheap that, ma broda-oh, oh ma broda-oh ...' (p. 97). The shops belong mainly to Indian and Pakistani immigrants. Inside, Mpho says:

selling cheap material at cheap prices, and sometimes expensive material at cheap prices, you will find yellow-brown skin wrapped in trinkets and saris. They rule the cheap stores, these cheap people ... They pounce on everything that walks into their stores, these small people, hovering with their yellow smiles and curry breath. (p. 95)

All these immigrants are vulnerable to the 'vultures' (p. 97) – the pickpockets and the patrolling police vans. The muggers demand money, cell phones, and passports, 'especially the passports, they are gold, those things, every Zimbo back home is desperate for one'; and immigrants without identity documents who do not speak any of the local languages are routinely arrested and jailed. Foreigners who find themselves 'identification-less in this hell-hole' are in a state of virtual paralysis, Mpho says, resorting to his standard trope:

'You know what it feels like to be a nobody in this hell-hole? Amidst this shit, all this shit, you need *something* to hold on to. Otherwise, you will lose yourself. So. You have been told to run and not to run. The result: immobility'.

When Mpho eventually meets Nomsa, she tells him her story, her experience in Johannesburg reflecting in many respects their life back in Zimbabwe. Caught up one day in the confusion of a police raid on illegals, she was thrown into the back of a police van and, not having the money to pay the police off and not wanting to be deported, she was raped by them.⁸ Having learnt that her body could be her meal ticket,

7. See, in this connection, Daniel Makina's (2010) study of the Zimbabwean population of contemporary Johannesburg. He points out that 80 percent of Zimbabweans recorded in the 2001 South African Census lived in inner-city Johannesburg.

8. See also Kate Lefko-Everett's (2010) account of the Southern African Migration Project's 2005 qualitative research project on the experiences of Zimbabwean women migrants in the Johannesburg area.



she later hooks up with a Nigerian ('Dirty man, short and stocky, with bulky arms and rolls at the back of his neck. But he has money', p. 103) and then an Afrikaner ('old, with sagging skin and thinning hair that is dyed a horrible black', p. 104). She works as a pole dancer in the Lollypop Lounge; as she explains her diasporic *impasse* to Mpho:

I don't like my job. I don't particularly hate it. I'm not here to play. I'm here to make money. I don't claim to be happy here. But neither am I unhappy. I don't really mind it. (p. 105)

Barely controlling his impulse to strike her, 'to push her down, to pummel her and destroy the beauty that spits in [his] face, to crack it against a hard surface' (p. 107), Mpho demands money from her for his bus ticket back to Zimbabwe, and denounces her as being no better than her prostitute mother.

Nomsa's and Mpho's stories of disillusionment in South Africa are repeated with variations in the experiences of the other protagonists in the short stories. In 'Crossroads' the motif of crossing into South Africa, both legally and illegally, by the eponymous 'shadows' – those who cross and the others who prey on them – is taken up again in its opening sentence: 'There are shadows that lurk within the evening shadows at the border. Shadows that embrace dark corners and watch those in the light' (p. 172). The South African border post at Beitbridge is presented as a place with yet another 'godforsaken queue' (p. 174), where stories about the dangers of Johannesburg are exchanged, new friendships are struck, and the ignorant and poor are denied entry because they are not familiar with the protocols of greasing palms. It is an achievement, the narrator says, just to have been able to reach the immigration building at the border:

It is a long way to the border – much, much longer than the road distance. It is a distance measured not in kilometres, but in sweat and tears and ingenuity, in beguiling smiles and the tallest of tales. And begging, begging, and more begging. (pp. 175–176)

Shifting from the first to the second-person voice, the narrator describes the typical process of obtaining a visa at the South African Embassy in Harare: the queue outside the compound that 'runs the length of the perimeter fence and peters out into the road' (pp. 176–177); the daily quota for visa applications; the people who sleep outside the embassy so as to sell their place in the queue; the presentation of police clearance documents and a valid Zimbabwean passport that have been obtained through bribery and sexual favours – and the 'bittersweet' (p. 180) triumph of being granted a visa.

Like other new arriving immigrants, the narrator is overwhelmed by Johannesburg, 'the great big bustling City of Gold' (p. 174). At first she views 'this mirage of a utopia with hope-filled eyes' (p. 184); however, the living conditions of its diasporic subcultures are soon impressed on her. Her aunt Mi's home, where she is to stay, is no more than a room with a mattress on the floor, a two-plate stove in the corner, and clothes spilling out of a plastic bag:

A single room in a conglomeration of rooms full of God knows how many people, rooms in a narrow dilapidated building that rushes towards a phantom salvation in the sky. (p. 182)

Outside the vendors' stalls pack the pavements and spill onto the road, all part of the dirt and grime. She becomes conscious of the special poverty of these immigrants, most of whom do not have papers or money:

It is not a naked poverty, mind you. It is not the poverty of war, of guns and machetes. Not the poverty of Sudan, of women burdened with babies – tiny bags of bones, their bloated bellies ballooning. Not a poverty of never-ending queues, or empty supermarkets. This is a poverty that glitters, that is still able to smile in its quest, proclaiming that the gold is somewhere out there, and it is determined to find it. It is a poverty that makes you giddy with the cheap hope it peddles. (p. 185)

'Crossroads' ends on a note of tension between the narrator's determination to get a job and save enough money to go to university, and the disillusioned Mi's advice (spoken in her now Zulu-accented Ndebele): "'School and all that crap, my dear, forget it. I came here, as naïve as you are, with nothing but a pocketful of dreams. But look at me'" (p. 185).

'You in Paradise' bears an ironic title that provides a further stage in the dialectic between Zimbabwe and its diaspora, as well as between the Zimbabwean and other diasporic communities in Johannesburg. The story of the young female narrator contains elements of both Nomsa's story in 'Shadows' and the narrator's story in 'Crossroads'. She begins by saying that she can immediately identify the man, Obi, who makes advances to her in a downtown Johannesburg street, as a Nigerian from his 'thick staccato accent' (p. 133) and from the heavy chains around his neck, his diamond ear studs and flashy ring. The day she arrived in Johannesburg her Aunt Ntombi had advised her: 'All Ngongongos around here are the same ... Anyone dressed like he's 50 Cent's cousin is a Nigerian'. The narrator characterises the diasporic Nigerians as: 'More extravagant than the Nigerians back home. Just as enterprising. Nigerians in Zimbabwe. Nigerians here in South Africa. Nigerians everywhere' – and then balances this with a picture of her own diasporic countrymen and – women, as described by her Nigerian landlord: 'Zimbabweans everywhere. Growing like a cancer ...' (p. 133).

She recalls the day when shortly after her arrival she and Aunt Ntombi had been rounded up together with other illegals unable to produce their IDs and were bundled into a police truck that was '[w]olfing down yet another of Joburg's many thousand illegal immigrants' (p. 134). She can never forget how Aunt Ntombi, unable to negotiate her release like other illegals by paying off the police and having nothing else to give, had voluntarily subjected herself to being raped by the policemen, who afterward raped the narrator as well, 'kicking and screaming as they punched and laughed' (p. 135). Traumatized, she had telephoned her boyfriend Tho in Zimbabwe. She had had to listen to his telling her that he loved and missed her, that 'it was just bad, bad in Zimbabwe'.



He kept on insisting that she was lucky 'to be away from all of it' and 'having the time of [her] life in the City of Gold'. She had not been able to bring herself to tell him the truth about the ugliness of Joburg's city centre, its congestion and filth and stench, and about what had happened to her. Instead, she had remained silent; she says: 'It was as though something was choking you. Like a knot. Strangling you' (p. 136). She realised that Tho had become a stranger to her, she to him, and she also a stranger to herself.

She had arrived with the dream of studying for a BA degree in Johannesburg rather than at the run-down university back home. Instead, she now washes dishes at a Wimpy outlet and plaits people's hair on a street corner, and can only pretend to be a final-year BA student. She considers how she has been at the mercy of the Greek manager of the Wimpy: 'How the threat to hand over an illegal immigrant to the authorities was so subtle, layered with money talk and how-hard-it-is-to-find-a-job talk and my-friend-from-the-police-has-been-asking-questions-and-I'm-still-considering-what-to-tell-him talk' (p. 139), and how during the xenophobic attacks in 2008 she had cowered in Aunt Ntombi's room in terror of the pandemonium outside and the 'screaming placards':

Zimbagwenz. Go Bac 2 Yo Mugabe! Nigerias Go Bac 2 Yo Umaru!
Dont Want You Here!
Thivz! Stealing Our Woman, Our Job, Our Money! (p. 140)

When another police van happens to roll past and the Nigerian Obi exploits the fear and mayhem to drag her into his stall and sexually ravage her, the narrator is forced to remember other things about the Greek manager she 'would prefer to remain locked in that part of your mind where things you want to forget are imprisoned' (p. 140). She recalls the time when, pregnant with the manager's child, she was probed by another Nigerian, Doctor Ujo, whose posters for cheap abortions were plastered around the city centre. She considers, furthermore, how she has become estranged from her family back home, no longer collects their letters, and is 'always hysterical' (p. 142). During the panic caused by the passing police truck, the narrator recognises from her Ndebele dialect one of the vendors who frantically scoops up her goods together with her toddler as a fellow Zimbabwean, and when afterwards the woman returns to her corner and sets up her wares again, the narrator says, 'You wonder what her story is'.⁹

Conversion disorder

The story, 'Doctor S', provides a way of understanding the diasporic condition as it has been presented throughout the collection. The protagonist, Noma, a Zimbabwean student of actuarial science, experiences the University of the Witwatersrand as a 'distinctly depersonalising' (p. 154) environment. From the age of sixteen she has suffered from

'episodes' characterised by a 'rush of heat to the chest, followed by a weakening of the limbs' (p. 156). More specifically she had 'the strange sensation of her hands separating from the rest of her body', which later led to blackouts. When these episodes suddenly recur at Wits, she is referred by the doctor at the campus clinic, whom she guesses to be Nigerian, to a psychiatrist, Doctor S, who is Indian. He diagnoses her symptoms as psychogenic, attributing them to a condition called 'conversion disorder' (p. 162), which, as he explains to Noma, is brought about:

when the mind undergoes prolonged stress, but you don't deal with it, so your body decides to deal with it itself. In effect, it is psychological stresses that manifest themselves physically.

In her case the disorder was first brought about by the death of her father when she was six and by having to help her mother who had to leave her teaching position to become a cross-border trader when the Zimbabwean economy collapsed.¹⁰ Noma insisted throughout on remaining strong despite the hardships – as she claims: 'Zimbabweans are the most resilient people in the world' (pp. 161–162). The extent to which she has suppressed, and not expressed, her feelings emerges more fully during her sessions with Doctor S when she tells him about her relationship with an older, married Zimbabwean businessman, and the subsequent abortion for which he had paid. Doctor S explains to her the tendency to romanticise her early childhood in contrast to the disconcertingly matter-of-fact, detached manner in which she speaks of the traumatic experiences of her life in Zimbabwe and Johannesburg, and her failure to deal with her emotions. Instead of taking the anti-depressants that he prescribes, she keeps a diary of her walks on the periphery of Hillbrow, overcoming her fear of Joburg's dangers and concluding that it is 'simply a more crowded, more corrupted version of Bulawayo's Lobengula Street' (p. 166). She discontinues her visits to Doctor S when her medical aid runs out, but when she decides to resume them the following year she is shocked to find that he no longer remembers her or her story. Tshuma's narrative tells us that Noma may well be just another troubled diasporic subject, but it does at least provide a name for her condition.

Episodes of conversion disorder, which is also called 'functional neurological symptom disorder' (Mayo Clinic 2015:n.p.), whereby a person shows psychological stress in physical ways, can be triggered by a stressful event, emotional conflict, or depression. The usual symptoms are weakness or even paralysis, unresponsiveness, and numbness or deafness. Noma's psychogenic disorder is narratively enacted in *Shadows* through the various degrees of self-alienation of her narrators and protagonists, and it further provides a narrative symbol for understanding the state of paralysing immobility experienced by illegal Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa as depicted in the different stories. The diagnosis of 'conversion disorder' may in some ways also apply to Noma's indifference towards her work on the fringe of the Johannesburg sex trade in 'Shadows', and to aunt Mi's abject

9.Tshuma has explained the source of this incident: it 'was born from a scene I saw whilst standing on a street corner in Johannesburg, when a police truck drove slowly past and people began to scramble for cover; I will never forget the vendor next to me, who grabbed her baby and her wares and ran for cover, her breasts jiggling wildly as she ran; she was shouting in Shona and I thought; wow, this is how it is to be a Zimbabwean and illegal in this place. I was shocked to the core' (Tshuma cited in Geosi 2011:n.p.).

10.France Maphosa (2010) provides an illuminating account of such regular cross-border economic activity within the framework of transnationalism.



state in 'Crossroads'. As a metaphor this indifference enables the reader to understand more fully the traumatised, self-estranged narrator of 'You in Paradise' and her feelings of being choked or strangled after the rape. She prefers to suppress the memory of being abused by the Greek manager and the subsequent abortion, and she lives constantly on the edge of hysteria. The psychological states that these migrants experience in Johannesburg have correlatives in the two stories in the collection that are set in Zimbabwe. 'Waiting' offers a study of the stark ambiguity of home and home country, and of personal and public denialism. The young narrator and her father are in a long queue shortly after dawn outside a bank in Bulawayo that has run out of money but that hides behind the daily excuse of computer networks being down. She is conscious of the physical proximity of her father and his stench, and of her pregnant belly. The child she is carrying, and has unsuccessfully tried to abort, is probably the result of her father's sexual abuse of her, which her mother has known about but dealt with only by removing her little brother from the single room they all share whenever her husband visits their young daughter's mattress. Avoidance and suppression of the truth have become their domestic, as well as the national, abusive condition. 'For the Love of the Country' concludes the collection with its satirical depiction of a divided home, community, and home country. The narrator is the wife of a ZANU-PF government minister, who had left 'the ramshackle township house' of her Ndebele father, broken off all ties with her family, and sold herself into a marriage with a much older, wealthy Shona politician who possesses three confiscated farms. Although reluctant, she finds herself obliged to attend a party rally in a rural area, where she is dragged from the safety of her seat by the wife of the Minister of Rural Development, and forced to dance in full view of the television cameras together with the Vice President and the First Lady, all in party regalia and 'with the President's grinning face emblazoned on their broad behinds' (p. 188). Her embarrassed gyrations, beneath a banner proclaiming *Operation clean out the rubbish*, are probably being watched on television by her family in their home in the township. Her performance, she reassures herself, is not for her Borrowdale mansion, BMW convertible, and state-funded shopping trips abroad, but 'for the love of the country'. The story ends with the words, 'Say (no)w, Africa. And you danced on' (p. 189).

Conclusion

To conclude by returning to the novella that begins the story cycle: 'conversion disorder' enables the reader to understand something of Mpho's identification with, and alienation from, his home, community, and country in 'Shadows', and why he can express only in his art these conflicts. Often they erupt in violent outbursts; as he tries to explain to Nomsa: '... this is the only way I know how to be. I see the world, I see people, and my art speaks for me' (p. 75). After returning from Johannesburg he is arrested by the police for refusing to leave Mpilo Hospital without his mother's body. He is charged under the Criminal Law Codification Act for 'insulting the authority of the President of the Republic of

Zimbabwe and causing prejudice to the creed of the state as a whole' (p. 113), and taken away by detectives from the Central Intelligence Office. He is interrogated and tortured by a detective Sam, a ZANU-PF ideologue whose job, he says, is 'to safeguard the – the *dignity* – of this our great nation and its governing body' (pp. 117–118). The detective uses Mpho's scribbling, his poems, and musings with all their scatological references to the 'excrement from intoxicated minds' (p. 120) of 'those shitheads up there in the government', to get him to confess to treason. Through the intervention of a woman from Amnesty International, Mpho's case becomes internationally celebrated. While awaiting trial in the Khambi Maximum Security Prison, he confronts his own 'consciousness of being' (p. 129). It becomes clear to him that he has become 'utterly senseless'. His story ends in the High Court at the moment when he takes the oath, and has a vision of 'Mama' sdecomposing body roaming the streets ... a mad old prostitute walking in circles in search of something, something important that I know but have somehow forgotten, something that makes her frantic' (p. 131). In this portentous hallucinatory vision, Mama is thrusting an accusing finger in his face. Tshuma leaves the reader with this symbol together with Mpho's final words, 'There is nothing to say. Mama and I, perhaps we'll find peace in the shadows', as an indicting comment on a stricken home country and its diaspora.

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