

## **Decolonization, Neo-Apartheid and Xenophobic Violence in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow***

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### **ABSTRACT**

South Africa is undoubtedly one of the most unreceptive destinations in the world for black African refugees due to the prevalent xenophobic violence since the dismantling of apartheid in 1994. Previous research claimed that attitudes of intolerance and xenophobia towards foreigners were results of social and economic insufficiencies. Yet, this study argues that apartheid was not really dismantled, and that incomplete decolonization led to a state of neo-apartheid which catalysed citizens towards aggression and intolerance against foreigners. The article looks at *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) by Phaswane Mpe through the lens of Fanon's concept of decolonization, and attributes the actions of xenophobic violence in South Africa to the incomplete process of decolonization after apartheid. The article concludes that unsuccessful liberation and incomplete decolonization can lead to a state of neo-colonialism and ultimately, neo-apartheid. Xenophobic violence is triggered and motivated by the reality that nothing has really changed in South Africa even after the dismantlement apartheid.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The fear of the unknown can be seen all over the world and the fear of strangers has grown manifold because of the human

diaspora and dislocation of people from their native lands due to war, uprising, racism, ethnic cleansing and natural calamities. Xenophobia originates from the Greek words *xénos* 'stranger' or 'guest' and 'fear' *phóbos*. Remarkably, the second implication, 'guest', has lost its validity. It is translated as 'fear of strange'. M. S. Bhatia defined xenophobia as "an irrational and excessive fear of strangers or strange (foreign) cultures, which can often become converted into intense, Jingoistic patriotism and/or racial or cultural prejudice" (2009, p. 453).

In South Africa, xenophobia appears as a reaction to the economic decay and the unchanging state of poverty of its people after liberation. The failure to achieve complete decolonization after the collapse of apartheid led people to be xenophobic against African migrants because they perceive them as invaders and competitors for the nation's scarce resources and thus their state needs to be fully decolonized. South Africa experiences severe discrimination with a racist system of segregation and apartheid. William Beinart and Saul Dubow (2013) stated that "Segregation was the name coined in early twentieth century South Africa for the set of government policies which sought to regulate the relationship between white and African colonizers and colonized" (p. 1). The most significant discriminatory regulation is the law that bans black Africans from acquiring or renting property outside the capital from individuals who are not black Africans.

Since the independence of South Africa, xenophobic violence has escalated, alongside the mounting number of strangers pouring into the state. The attitude of revulsion towards newcomers is particularly aimed at individuals approaching from other African states (Hopstock & de Jager, 2011). In May 2008, countrywide xenophobic violence broke out in South Africa, starting in the Alexandra Township in Johannesburg. The South African Human Resource Commission (SAHRC) stated that 62 people were murdered and over 100,000 were evacuated. The substantial damages ran into millions of Rands. Jonathan Crush stated that the aggressive insolences towards foreign inhabitants living in South Africa had continued to harden (Crush, 2001). Based on numerous researchers, South Africa is considered as one of the most unreceptive and xenophobic states worldwide. Many sources of literature portray xenophobia as an intensely engrained, continuous, growing phenomenon in South Africa which will remain to be categorized as an essential human rights concern in the state for the foreseeable future (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013).

Having garnered worldwide attention and public concern, literary scholars had started to record this phenomenon in the literary scholarship. Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) is extensively observed as a significant work in the literature of post-apartheid period. Similar to other novelists such as Zakes Mda and K. Sello Duiker, Phaswane Mpe is considered as one among the three

who established the core principle for the post-apartheid state. The text was one of the first works to address African immigration to South Africa after apartheid, and the uncomfortable frustration with those immigrants in the country. Mpe's novel stands out from many of the scripts with its revolutionary and cautious narrative style focusing on African refugees and the attitudes of xenophobia concentrating on them (Fasselt, 2014).

Carrol Clarkson in her study "*Locating Identity in Phaswane Mpe's Welcome to Our Hillbrow*" (2005) explored Mpe's treatment of the South African identity not only as a reaction to place, but also as a linguistic and physical writing in the novel. In her article, Clarkson (2005) argued that a repeated characteristic of numerous new novels in South Africa was the examination of individual, social and ethnic characteristics in its relation to the individual's indecisive reactions to place. She added that *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* thematically traced the closure of concepts of "home, of what establishes a community" (Clarkson, 2005, p. 451). The researcher focussed on how the suspension of the traditions, of considerations of society and home, posed a test to the capability of the individual's liability, and then to his understanding of his being. Thus, the study explored the concept of home and identity yet failed to focus on the xenophobic violence against foreigners in South Africa.

Sandra Saayman (2016) in "*Imagining the "other" – The Representation of the African Migrant in Contemporary South African Literature*" stated that probably

the first South African novel to explore the term "Makwerekwere" is *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, by Phaswane Mpe. A Makwerekwere is a term constructed and used in South Africa to render and categorise black Africans coming from other African states. Saayman (2016) argued that the novel was incomparable in its crucial request for the understanding of outsiders. The article argued that in his novel Mpe presents the expression "Makwerekwere" at the opening of the novel (Saayman, 2016, p. 75). The article focussed on the term "Makwerekwere" and its connotations in South Africa and how it reflected citizens' reactions towards foreigners. The article missed to focus on the neocolonial condition and the xenophobic violence in South Africa.

Hardev Kaur (2012) in her thesis *Apartheid and The Reconciliation Process in Post – Apartheid Novels of South Africa*, explored the concern of xenophobia in South Africa and examined the reconciliation process among citizens in the post-apartheid era. She highlighted the issue of xenophobia in *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, among other texts. She underlined the plight of the migrants in South Africa and posited that xenophobia was one of the dominant themes of *Welcome to My Hillbrow*. Kaur (2012) focussed on the reconciliation process in South Africa, yet missed to underline the black on black violence and the fallacy of the rainbow nation.

Rebecca Fasselt (2014) in her article "*Towards an 'Afropolitan Deixis': Hospitality and 'You' and 'We' Narration in*

*Phaswane Mpe's Welcome to Our Hillbrow*” explored the notion of the spatial politics implied in the method of hospitality shown towards black African foreigners coming into South Africa. The research emphasized how “hospitality towards African migrants is denied, contested and extended in the diverse and complex spatial arenas depicted in the text” (Fasselt, 2014, p. 99). She claimed that the text raised the concept of generosity, and the language of openness went on to encompass the organization of the whole novel. The article explored the text’s application of “you” and “we” as methods utilising the conception of linguistic tools. As such, previous studies explored notions of place, identity, home and hospitality, yet overlooked the xenophobic violence and its causes and consequences on the African and the South African communities. In this sense, the article aspires to fill the gap of the study and open new horizons to study xenophobia in South Africa and to unearth the reasons behind it. As mentioned above, previous studies focused on the economic and the social factors of the phenomenon, whereas the current study attempts to revisit the past of South Africa and to review the decolonization process of the state. The decolonization is incomplete and this leads the state to fall in a neocolonial\neopartheid reality which is the argument of the article.

## METHOD

The concept of Decolonization was addressed by numerous theoreticians like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Frantz

Fanon in their influential works. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993) was more involved, as the title of his book proposes, with the cultural dimension in the process of decolonization and, particularly, in chapter three of the book “Resistance and Opposition.” Said argued that “culture played a very important, indeed indispensable role, both in extending and securing empire and in eroding and undermining it” (1993, pp. 221-222). He defined culture as a group of principles, ethics, standards, customs, conducts, formalities, and a method of life that could distinguish one set from the other (Kim, 2003). Fanon (1968), in his book, paid more focus on the process of decolonization and stated that while “decolonization must always be a violent phenomenon; Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties... [it] is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence” (1968, p. 61).

In *The Wretched*, Fanon (1968) argues that colonialism is totalitarian, with the ‘native’ experiencing domination internally and externally. In fact, there is no occupation of the country, he argues, without the occupation of the people, and thus there is no liberation of the country without the liberation of all the people. Colonialism, according to Fanon is a complete process. It is constructed on segregation and subjugation, the colonized is regulated and relentlessly ordered not to relocate. Liberation, in this context, consists of terminating these inner and exterior fences which did not happen in South Africa in the

post-apartheid period and as a consequence xenophobia has become a dominant culture against foreigners.

According to Fanon, decolonizing the land is not enough, it is important to decolonise the mind as well; otherwise, the process of decolonization is not complete. He argued that it “is not possible to take one’s distance with respect to colonialism without at the same time taking it with respect to the idea that the colonised holds of himself through the filter of colonialist culture” (1968, p. 114). In other words, decolonizing the mind means liberating the state from all the rules and systems of colonialism and to create new democratic systems totally different from those of the colonizers. In *The Wretched*, Fanon warned against the pitfalls of national consciousness and stated that “decolonization has to be totalitarian and incomplete liberation may lead to fragmentation, chauvinism, racism and xenophobia” (1968, p. 156).

Undoubtedly, in discussing xenophobia in South Africa we cannot ignore the political and psychological phenomena, which are results of, in Fanon’s words, an “incomplete liberation” (1968, p. 13). South Africa in post-apartheid times is on the one hand, expressing itself to the international community as a prosperous, welcoming and a democratic state, a “rainbow nation”, a state that every individual, no matter what his nationality, can succeed from unrestricted commercial marketplaces. On the other hand, it is characterised by environments of paucity, violence and xenophobia, emphasising the international

opinions of it as a perpetually warring and suffering ‘tribal’ state.

Eventually, a Fanonian perception maintains that we need to perceive the pleasantness of South Africa’s political independence from apartheid as unpleasant, recognised instantly when “the people find out the ubiquitous fact that exploitation can wear a Black face” (Fanon, 1968, p. 145). This is in reference to the exploitation and xenophobia practised by black South Africans on black Africans, a process of exchanging roles from oppressed to oppressors. Thus, Fanon asserted that, “decolonization is incomplete if it is not waged on both levels, political-economic and psychological, objective and subjective” (Fanon, 1968, p. 13). Thus, failing to achieve complete decolonization will produce nationwide and racial dogmatism and this will lead to the creation of a new class of “bourgeoisified Blacks”.

Furthermore, just as black elites pursue political authorisation in the country, black political liberation is not liberation from chauvinism because it leaves the state of human liberation incomplete. This is precisely what Fanon discussed in his criticism of the drawbacks of national consciousness, explicitly that the “elite bourgeoisie will attain political independence in the country but without completely liberating the state” (1968, p. 158).

At the conclusion of “Colonial War and Mental Disorders”, perhaps the most under-read chapter of *The Wretched*, Fanon remarked that:

Total liberation is that which concerns all sectors of the personality. Independence is not a word which can be used as an exorcism, but is an indispensable condition for the existence of men and women who are truly liberated, in other words who are truly masters of all material means which make possible the radical transformation of society (1968, p. 310).

It is in this sense of speaking to comrades that we find expressions of Fanon's 'living' dialectic. First, the concept of total liberation as a product of the process of social liberation; and second, true liberation as the liberation from all forms of alienation, and as the returning to human beings all of their creative powers which Fanon emphasized on in the pitfalls of national consciousness (1968, p. 315).

### **RESULT: INCOMPLETE DECOLONIZATION IN *WELCOME TO OUR HILLBROW***

The issue of xenophobic violence and inhospitality towards outsiders is embedded in every aspect of *Welcome to our Hillbrow* (Fasselt, 2014). Phaswane Mpe in an interview with Lizzy Attree (2005) clarified that he contemplated the practice of tackling topics such as xenophobic violence in the novel as not burdensome, "but an opportunity to explore stories that have not been told on the one hand and on the other, to revisit old stories, retell them in a new context and see what you can learn", thus, the novel is exploring old stories in

reference to the history of South Africa under colonisation and apartheid and their consequences on the citizens (Attree, 2005, p. 146).

At the end of the 1990s, Hillbrow became either a rational multicultural society, class and ethnic group, or a deteriorating urban landscape of xenophobia, violence, narcotics, sex trafficking and HIV- AIDS. Examples were highlighted regularly by Refentse, the protagonist, and Cousin, his cousin in the novel. In his journey, Refentse uncovered the victims of official intolerance demonstrated by governmental discourse and popular rejection practised by Cousin and his colleagues, an obvious demonstration of the continuity of apartheid in the post-apartheid age. During the apartheid era, foreigners, like black Africans were blamed for stealing whatever scarce resources there were, from others and were apprehended and found guilty for the outbreak of most of the communal misfortunes in society. The many victimized, stigmatized and embittered people living in Hillbrow now become perfect perpetrators of xenophobic crimes of the worst kind. As shown in the text, foreigners are being blamed by South Africans for all the corruption, criminality, poverty and all other ills that have befallen their society even though they realize that these foreigners are not the main cause of these ills. As Fanon warned, citizens would not be able to direct their anger towards the source, thus they would target the vulnerable section of society. So, foreigners will be "convenient scapegoats for everything that goes wrong in people's lives" (Mpe, 2011, p.

118). As such, foreigners are considered as the weaker faction in the society, in addition to the accusations of being invaders and competitors, this makes them the logical target to channel all the frustrations and disappointments of citizens.

Thus, the state's incapability to improve its overall economy is not merely due to a deficiency of incomes or the burdens of cosmopolitan investment. It is also because of the economic and political preferences that the nationalist political elites have defined and taken during the period of transition whereby they turned their backs on mass democratic participation which steered the public to direct their irritation and objection in the wrong direction (Fanon, 1968, p. 52). South Africa should not then be seen as an extraordinary case, but only as part of colonialism's lasting legacy (Ahluwalia, 1996). In other words, decolonization is incomplete, and this has led people to frustrate over the unchanging state of poverty and unemployment. Under these circumstances, it would appear that the only recourse they have is to blame their misfortunes on these foreigners.

As demonstrated in the text, South Africa has had a cultural heritage of violent actions that are rooted in inequality and colonial segregation and its impact on people in post-colonialism (Saayman, 2016), and its continuous presence in the post-apartheid period. Similarly, Fanon (1968) warned against such circumstances and insisted that decolonization has to be totalitarian and incomplete liberation may lead to fragmentation, chauvinism, racism

and xenophobia. Refentse proved Fanon's prophecies and offered many examples of migrants' experiences with xenophobia, the legacies and the continuity of apartheid (colonialism) rule which indicated that South Africa's liberation and decolonization were not totalitarian.

Thus, the struggle to attain this state of affairs- of bridging the gap between the new and the old - is further stressed when apartheid continues to rear its ugly head to further divide and racially segregate the masses. This calls to mind Lindsay Bremner's disturbing declaration that "Apartheid is not over, it has simply been deferred" (2010, p. 171). Instances of apartheid and legacies of colonial systems were seen through, the lens of Refentse and Cousin, both of whom validated the claims of Bremner that apartheid was deferred but not dismantled. Specifically under such authoritarian rule, citizens cannot oppose government and authorities so they blame foreigners for all the social ills, moral decay and economic crises in the country, all of which are conducive to the growth of xenophobia.

Cousin, the antagonist, uncovered an important revelation about the legislative innovation post-apartheid that was supposed to be driven by a new multiracial debate which would combat the discriminatory system of the apartheid regime. This forthcoming debate was projected to alter the South African state into a democratic, welcoming and receptive state known as "rainbow nation". However, there is a noticeable miscarriage in undertaking this

political schema which has led several intellectuals in post-apartheid to stigmatize and falsify the 'democratic rainbowism' as a deceitful objectivity from the tangible reality of violence, intolerance, and xenophobia in the South African society (Mari, 2012).

Thus, post-apartheid, people's expectations of the rainbow nation may have given rise to hope and a promise of better things to come yet, there is also an awareness that the democratic machinery set up to achieve equality for all and alleviate poverty will not achieve its purpose; this then fuels further dissatisfaction and resentment. Obviously, individuals are more mindful of their deficiency than ever before. So, with much indignation and resentment, and foreigners pouring into the country, it is an ideal environment for a plague like xenophobia to take root and flourish, and as Fanon suggested, "citizens are incapable to direct their anger and frustration towards the real sources of these disappointments" (1968, p. 15). Thus, for Fanon, this is the reality of the neo-colonial city and the demonstration of the failure to achieve complete liberation and decolonization.

Through the narrative Refentse reveals that political alteration to democracy in South Africa has exposed the uneven delivery of incomes and capital in the state and particularly in Hillbrow. Of particular notice is the practice by which foreigners coming from elsewhere in the greater continent are otherized and marginalized as portrayed by Cousin. Those foreigners are perceived as threats to civilians' very existence, and also deemed to challenge

authority and status. Cousin blames foreigners for taking jobs from citizens and that they are "responsible; not just for the physical decay of the place, but the moral decay" (Mpe, 2001, p. 17). Thus, internal refugees are destined to co-exist and fight for survival with inter-African migrants in the marginal areas of cities. Thus, the sole emphasis on xenophobia alone, may also obscure the fact that internal migrations and xenophobic consequences are mainly due to the failure of the post-apartheid political agenda in the redistribution of wealth and, above all, land (Mari, 2012), an indication of Fanon's neo-colonialism and the pitfalls of the incomplete liberation.

Refentse exposed the fact that South African citizens accused the foreigners in the country of corrupting their community with social ills like AIDS which was already so prevalent within the country. In addition, the foreigners are blamed for a universal ethical deterioration linked to the prompt expansion of the country in the post-apartheid period. Within this xenophobic discourse, and similar to apartheid times, foreigners are considered as voiceless bodies, accessible only for sex and cheap labour. According to natives, foreigners contaminate others with AIDS, while their indigenous languages, cultural customs, and historic background cannot be transmissible (Davis, 2013). Such practices and attitudes by natives towards foreigners mark the advent of the neo-apartheid city, which in Fanon's words, is not unlike apartheid towards all the black Africans at that time. Thus, the processes of exploitation and

otherizing enacted in the creating of such wretched individuals may be perceived as establishing an insensible expression of discrimination and xenophobia that remains still in post-apartheid indicating a new phase of neo-apartheid (Fryer, 2014). Apparently, along with Fanon, South Africans even after the supposed democracy, still follow and sustains the approach of colonialism and apartheid which is reflected in the continuation of oppression and humiliation against foreigners in the community.

#### **DISCUSSION: NEO-COLONIAL AND NEO-APARTHEID CITY**

Refentše's journey to Hillbrow from Tiragalong represents a journey from the past to the present, from old apartheid to new post-apartheid. Refentse confesses his longing to go back to his previous life in Tiragalong. Hillbrow represents the present, the post-apartheid age, not a present that the South Africans had dreamed of and were promised by the new democratic state officials. Thus, having been privy to atrocities committed against humanity and the failure of the powers that be to transform the state, there is a state of yearning for the way things were in the past. The narrator addressing Refentse to this: "with your memory constantly jogging back to Tiragalong with such nostalgia that one would have thought you had not been there for at least a year" (Mpe, 2001, p. 9). Citizens feel that nothing has really changed in their lives; no wealth distribution, no land and no secured country. Thus, South Africa lives a state of neo-colonialism

and neo-apartheid that Fanon had warned newly liberated states from becoming, if they did not achieve full and complete decolonization.

Xenophobia has political and psychological roots in South African society. Due to such disappointments and indignations, natives, on the contrary feel that their lives under apartheid were better than their presence in terms of job opportunities and resources. Along with Fanon's projections, the only change was with the 'elite', the black agents who are supporting the hegemony of white rule. However, the black masses were becoming increasingly disillusioned by the abject poverty they were living in. With every kind of misery Refentše observed in the present, the stronger his sense of longing for Tiragalong, for the past. This then is an indication of the failure of the transition and the incomplete process of decolonization expressed by Fanon.

According to Fanon, emancipation continues unfinished when the apartheid or colonial state is not restructured but merely taken over. So, Mamdani agreed with Fanon, that in order to attain full emancipation, it was crucial to reconstruct the state from the remnants of colonialism and apartheid. Hence, in his comments on South Africa, Mamdani emphasised that "the colonial state was deracialised but not democratised" (Mamdani, 1996, p. 20). It is true that South Africa was politically decolonized and the black majority rules the country, yet socially, culturally and psychologically, the legacies, imprints and scars of apartheid still exist in the neo-apartheid city.

Observably, Mpe is constructing a clear assessment of the apartheid and post-apartheid regimes and their management of the state and its citizens. Along with Fanon, Mpe also emphasises that the decolonization process in South Africa is unsuccessful because nothing really changes after the transition. Mpe recalled some grim memories of what black people and foreigners experienced under apartheid and post-apartheid rule:

Many writers, politicians, social workers and lecturers and the endless string of South Africans hanging and jumping from their ninth floor prison cells because the agents of Apartheid government wanted them to do so (2001, p. 19).

Consequently, Refentse through his various observations of life in Hillbrow, concluded that there was no big change in South Africa, “black agents of the Apartheid State, playing their various roles with a mastery that confounded the minds of even the State itself” (Mpe, 2001, p. 19). Black agents of apartheid ensure the continuation of apartheid yet this time around, it is practised and enacted by black people themselves, which results in the neo-colonial and the neo-apartheid state described by Fanon. Along with Fanon’s conceptualization about the failed process of decolonization, the system in post-apartheid did not change, and there is no complete liberation as the government and the police, along with others like Cousin are still practising apartheid towards people in South Africa, hence breeding a fertile ground

for xenophobic violence. Refentse added, “black police officers contorting bribes from fellow blacks accused of political and other dissents. Black police and security forces hitting fellow blacks mercilessly for crimes that were often not committed” (Mpe, 2001, p. 19). In this sense, apartheid dealt with black people in the same way that post-apartheid is treating foreigners in the present time. Thus, Refentse could deconstruct the post-apartheid new spatiality and refuted the so-called “democratic rainbowism” which had turned to a hegemonic discourse in post-apartheid (Mari, 2012).

Thus, living in Hillbrow, Refentse could uncover the hidden realities in South Africa in reference to the unchanged conditions in the post-apartheid period. Along with Fanon, Ahluwalia insisted that the “system of direct rule or apartheid may well have been dismantled, indirect rule continues to shape its future” (1996, p. 100). Refentse exposed, through Cousin, the methods of extracting information from suspects revealing that Cousin was “part of the interrogating police force that knew only one reliable way of accessing the truth from suspects: torture” (Mpe, 2001, p. 19). Such methods of investigation and interrogation were practised by the apartheid regime before 1994, revealing the huge similarity between the two regimes; the only thing that changed was the skin colour of the rulers.

Fanon asserted that “liberation is the total destruction of the colonial system” (1968, p. 105) yet, South Africa was not completely liberated and the process of decolonization was not successful since

the state of post-apartheid reproduced the systems and the actions of their ancestors. Consequently, South Africans do not experience complete emancipation from apartheid laws and regulations concerning the economy; they still live in squalid poverty, without any land distribution and/or jobs. As such, being powerless to oppose the government because of authoritarian rule, they direct their anger towards the most vulnerable faction in society, namely the refugees and migrants.

Refentse made another reference to the unsuccessful decolonization in the state which was demonstrated by the fact that white people were still superior to the blacks. They live in gated communities with security forces protecting them from 'black' criminals. Working in a kitchen of a white family is still a privilege for a black individual, which was the case during apartheid. The process of poverty and frustration continues among black people, they are still inferior to the whites and even their psychological transition after 1994 did not benefit them much. White suburbs are considered as low crime zones unlike black zones, where according to Refentse, "police bothered you less often in the suburbs, because those were not regarded as high crime zones" (Mpe, 2001, p. 22) which indicates the unchanged reality that the white and black people are still living the same life with the same privileges due to the incomplete decolonization.

Necklacing was one of the most popular and violent methods for death punishment

during apartheid, which indicates that the colonial mentality still exists in people in the post-apartheid period. Necklacing was done to people who were suspected to be informants to the apartheid regime. This act demonstrates that the violence committed by citizens after 1994 is somewhat due to the unchanged reality of colonial culture and traditions. Unquestionably, Mpe emphasized how apartheid patterns still assembled the cultural background and thought of post-apartheid (Ogden, 2013), because, as Birmingham put it; "Africans continued to work on colonial assumptions, making cultural, emotional and intellectual decolonization difficult for the heirs of empire" (1995, p. 7). For that reason, Fanon emphasised that the need to decolonize the mind was important, a mission he anticipated to be much harder than just eliminating the colonizer.

Thus, Mpe highlights that the language of study and writing fiction in South Africa should be English, which is the colonizers' language, or it will not be appreciated or published. South Africa has twelve formal languages but if a writer wants to publish his story he has to write it in English, which is a surviving remnant of the colonizers' culture. The novel also reveals the unchanged condition of South Africa in the post-apartheid, Mpe narrated:

She did not know that writing in an African language in South Africa could be such a curse... The woman of your fiction, Refentse, was writing in 1995, one year after the much acclaimed 1994

democratic elections; one year after the overthrow of the political and the cultural censorship, and the damaging and the dishonest system (Mpe, 2001, pp. 56-57).

Thus, even one year after the acclaimed elections and the overthrow of the colonial regime, the state is still following and enacting the procedures and rules of the previous state's politics. That there was no full decolonization of the state is evidenced by the continuous authority and use of the colonizer's language. Though South Africa has twelve formal languages, English is as yet, the formal medium in writing. Mpe reveals that "in 1995, despite the so-called new dispensation, nothing had really changed. The legacy of Apartheid censors still shackle those who dreamed of writing freely in an African language" (Mpe, 2001, p. 57). Fanon had forewarned that "true liberation is not that pseudo-independence... liberation is the total destruction of the colonial system, from the pre-eminence of the language of the oppressor and departmentalization" (1968, p. 105).

Consequently, South Africans feel that nothing has really changed, and being unable to direct their anger towards the sources of corruption in the state, they vent their anger and frustration on the foreigners since the latter are the most vulnerable part of the community. Thus, according to Fanon, since citizens are unable to "attack the source of oppression, the government and the employers, foreigners became victims of this struggle because they were close at

hand" (1968, p.52). Fanon added that "this incomplete decolonization marks post-apartheid society and reverses the liberation project to mark neo-apartheid and violence instead of creating a new history" (1968, p. 52). Thus, similar to Fanon, Mpe offered a panoramic picture of the neo-apartheid society in his text.

A factor common to the neo-apartheid state and the continuous impact of apartheid is the prevalence of violence. Much of the xenophobic violence that is detailed in the text is committed by black natives. Sexual exploitation of black foreign women is executed by the native black policemen, "some of the womenfolk bought their temporary freedom to roam in Hillbrow streets by dispensing under-waist bliss" (Mpe, 2001, p. 21). These nefarious actions by the police are contradictory to the principles of police jurisdiction enshrined in the new Constitution. This brings us to the observation of Ndebele that "Power and wealth became the dominant determinants of behaviour: two key ingredients in the recipe of socially embedded corruption" (1998, p. 24).

Finally, a Fanonian view insists that we view the sweetness of the South African transition from apartheid as bitter and incomplete, realised at the moment when "the people find out the ubiquitous fact that exploitation can wear a Black face" (Fanon, 1968, p. 145) and the apartheid rule was replaced by a neo-apartheid one. In reference to the exploitation and xenophobia practised by black South Africans on black Africans, it has become a process of

exchanging roles from the old oppressed to the new oppressors. This failure to achieve complete decolonization has resulted in the formation of both national and racial xenophobia and a new bourgeois class of the Blacks. In this situation, South Africa has become a neo-apartheid and neo-colonial city and blacks will have to fight again to get democracy but this time the colonizers, according to them, are black Africans.

## CONCLUSION

*Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is a panoramic picture of the incompleteness and unsuccessful process of liberation and decolonization in post-apartheid South Africa. Refentse had witnessed the acts of xenophobic violence towards strangers in post-apartheid South Africa. Previous research had concluded that xenophobic violence in South Africa had contributed to the economic and social decay, yet the current study attests to the fact that the unsuccessful process of decolonization can lead to destructive consequences like xenophobia. The frustration of citizens in post-apartheid age due to the grim, unchanging realities of poverty and unemployment ultimately led citizens to target foreigners who are perceived as a threat to the economy. Colonialism is totalitarian as Fanon had suggested thus, decolonization should similarly be totalitarian otherwise incomplete liberation will lead to destructive consequences like xenophobic violence.

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