

Crime and Survival in the Post Colonial World/Text

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Abstract

While oppressive regimes seek to suppress, dominate and at times dehumanize subject peoples, they also, by so doing create spaces which the oppressed manipulate and/or navigate for their own purposes. This paper takes up Bill Ashcroft's theory of postcolonial transformation so as to demonstrate that subjects of repressive regimes do not suffer in passivity; rather they actively negotiate through repressive structures in the same way that the colonized manipulated and transformed colonial discourse. In his theory of postcolonial transformation, Bill Ashcroft insists that the colonized were not mere victims of colonial repression; instead they devised ways of interjecting colonial hegemony in order to ensure their own survival. Similarly, this paper argues that in a repressive environment, where all avenues of personal growth have been blocked, the instinct for survival takes precedence over moral considerations. As a result, deviant subcultures emerge in an attempt to challenge and/or navigate the conventional culture instituted by the repressive regime. In order to substantiate these claims, I refer to Richard Wright's depiction of Jimcrow America in *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, Athol Fugard's and Lewis Nkosi's portrayal of apartheid South Africa in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *Mating Birds* respectively. While the selected texts focus on Jimcrow America and apartheid South Africa, I also allude to my experiences of repression in Zimbabwe.

Introduction

'What happens to the concept of home when home is colonized, when the very ways of conceiving home, of talking about home, writing about it, remembering it, begin to occur through the medium of the colonizer's way of seeing the world.' (Ashcroft, 2001:15)

Repressive regimes have a tendency to monopolise discourse, manipulate and censor public opinion, control and silence any kind of dissent. I am thinking about apartheid South Africa, Jim Crow America, Hitler's Nazi Germany and many other repressive regimes that have emerged the world over. When every aspect of life has fallen under the firm grip of a totalitarian regime, how do the subjects of that regime find space for their own personhood and survival? This paper investigates the ways in which subjects of oppressive regimes interpolate exclusive power structures for purposes of registering their own subjectivity. To this end, I will use Richard Wright's fictional representations in *Black Boy* and *Native Son*, Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*. I want to slightly alter Bill Ashcroft's question and bring it into perspective within the scope of this paper: 'What happens to the concept of home when home is [under a ruthless dictatorship], when the very ways of conceiving home, of talking about home, writing about it, begin to occur through the medium of the [dictator's way] of seeing the world?'

Bill Ashcroft's question is indeed pertinent especially in the context of the emergence of totalitarian regimes in the postcolonial world. What happens, I want to ask alongside the postcolonial theorist, when home is under the firm grip of a ruthless dictator? How do we

refashion and reposition ourselves in the new home? How do ‘the interpellated subjects within it interpolate the various modes of imperial (dictatorial) discourse to use it for different purposes, to counter its effects by transforming them?’ (Ashcroft, 2001:14). As much as the colonized embrace and in the same breath transform the discourse of the colonizer, subjects of oppressive regimes also find ways of refashioning their habitation to serve their own purposes. While Bill Ashcroft’s theory of postcolonial transformation was designed particularly to demonstrate the ways in which the postcolonial society engages with and translates the hegemonic discourses of the colonizer, in this paper, I want to argue that Ashcroft is equally relevant in conceptualizing the way the oppressed in totalitarian regimes manipulate fractures within the dominant discourse for their own purposes.

My readings in African-American and South African literature and personal experiences in Zimbabwe since the late 1990s have inspired me to launch an inquiry into the correlation between criminality and survival. The thesis of this paper, if I should mention it at this early stage, is that any kind of repressive regime or oppressive system seeks to interpellate, to silence and even objectify those it dominates. In fact the whole idea of domination, as we have seen through Said’s *Orientalism* is an attempt to institute a totalitarian discourse of knowledge and power, so that the knowledge of the dominant is the knowledge that rules. Bhabha would call this ‘a form of governmentality that in marking out a ‘subject nation,’ appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity.’ (1994: 70). However as Bill Ashcroft and Homi Bhabha have argued, the subaltern, to use a term popularly associated with Spivak, have a way of opening spaces within the dominant discourse without confronting it violently and in the process transforming it. Any kind of oppression-- and colonial oppression is a case in point--keeps those that it oppresses under extreme pressure of one sort or another; it also keeps them pressed, hard up like a spring pressed down and awaiting an opportunity to ‘snap’ and in order to survive, the oppressed often seek alternative ways of ‘sticking with the alienating experience’ (Bhabha, 2000: 373).

The main discursive site of interpolative contestation, as we shall see in the following pages, in any oppressive society is located in the instinctual quest for survival, in ‘excess’ as Ashcroft (2001) argues. This is the third space of enunciation, the gap between consumption and production as Ashcroft puts it (2001:43). In simple terms, Karl Marx has argued that basic material needs like food and shelter always come first before man engages in making history. So when the instinct for survival goes ahead of every other consideration, it follows that questions of integrity, decency and morality are overtaken if not replaced by that need to survive.

Interpolative Contestations and Survival across Spaces

This paper was inspired in an immediate sense by a conversation that I had with a co-lecturer in the Department of English and comparative studies at the University of Fort Hare (South Africa). While it is difficult to generalize human behaviour or to prescribe an all embracing theoretical framework for it, it is plausible that there are certain circumstances, social, political, ideological etc. that make certain forms of behaviour possible. Sociologists and criminologists have done much to substantiate this claim. In a repressive political system like Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe for example, oppressed subjects often engage with and translate the discourse of the oppressor on the rhizomic continuum (political, economic, religious etc) as Ashcroft puts it, manipulating *certain* fractures in the hegemonic discourse and thus transforming it in a *particular* way. ‘Postcolonial subjects, in their ordinary dialogic engagement with the world, are not passive ciphers of discursive practices.’ (Ashcroft, 2001: 48). For example, a man may know that taking a bribe is wrong, but under certain

circumstances he may find himself accepting it with a straight face. The question is: under what circumstances can a man/woman engage in subversive criminal activity with a clear conscience and a sense of self-justification. I must testify that I lived/ 'survived' through the economic hardships in Zimbabwe, particularly in the hyper-inflation years of 2007 to 2008. I was really stunned when my co-lecturer, in the conversation highlighted above, told me that he had refused to take a good bribe of about R30 000. This is not to say that what he did was anathema to me in particular because I am Zimbabwean or that no Zimbabwean would have refused such a bribe. That would be a grand generalization, but my point is that such men are becoming scarce in our times. I was surprised because I was thinking like a worker or a peasant in Zimbabwe between 2007 and 2008 and I asked myself how a man could refuse such a fat bribe unless his financial circumstances were reasonably stable. Suppose his wife was sick and there was no money for her to see the doctor or his children had just been sent back from school for unpaid fees. Suppose there was no money for rent and he was imminently faced with the possibility of eviction or being endorsed to the reserves as we see in the case of Aniko in Athol Fugard's play, *The Coat*. Was he going to refuse the bribe?

Let me briefly narrate the story that my co-lecturer told me. He had been given a contract by a certain company to supply sand to a construction site and while he was working on it, one man called him and said, 'Man, here is a chance to make money. Can you simply sign here and confirm you are going to provide us with a TLB.' Mr. Mdebele, my co-lecturer, didn't have a TLB on site, not even at home. So he went up to the man and said, 'No, I cannot sign because I don't have that kind of equipment, either on site or anywhere else.' But the man insisted, explaining that it was not necessary at all for him to have the TLB, all he had to do was sign, get the money involved and split it. Deal sealed. Immediately, his conscience whispered to him, 'this is corruption' so he said to the man. 'I am sorry I can't take this offer. I just can't take it.' Mr. Mdebele really meant what he said. He didn't take the offer. But that money could have sent five poor kids to school, I said to myself. Thirty thousand rand was a year's salary for a Zimbabwean teacher in those tumultuous years. Why couldn't he simply take it? When he finished telling the story, I said to him, 'You are strong man- that was a real challenge. How did you escape that?' Then he went on to tell me about his conscience and how he was going to feel if he had taken the money, so he decided to let it go, he said.

One of the facts about living in any kind of repressive regime, and this is my thesis in this paper, whether it is apartheid South Africa, Idi Amin's Uganda or Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, is that public conscience simply dies a natural death and survival becomes the ultimate goal. I was glad my brother still had a conscience. My experience in Robert Mugabe's dictatorship has taught me that any form of oppression has a claustrophobic effect on the victims of that oppression- it stifles; it restricts, it keeps anxious. It also dehumanizes. To borrow a phrase from Frantz Fanon (1963), it keeps you penned in. One feels muffled and cramped so much that when an opportunity avails, perhaps through a fracture in the system, one literally snaps like a spring and the consequences are often criminal as we shall see in the unfolding pages. The question that should be asked in the post colonial world/text is: why has it become so difficult for us in the post colonial world/text to stand on our dignities and integrities and overcome the temptation to take bribes or engage in any other criminal activity?

When I read Richard Wright's *Native Son*, I was fascinated by that incident when Bigger Thomas suffocated Mary Dalton to death, brutally severed her head with a hatchet and threw her body into a blazing furnace. How could anybody in his right senses do a thing like that? When I read *Black Boy* I also came across very interesting incidents of how people living in

an oppressive society go about opening spaces for survival. I then realized that Bigger's 'black boy' experience in segregationist America is no different from Sizwe Bansi and Ndi Sibiyá's experiences in apartheid South Africa as represented in Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* respectively. The point I am making is that in a repressive socio-political environment, crime becomes a very attractive adventure if not an inevitable option-- it becomes a way of negotiating fractures within the system (and in a dictatorship the fractures are plenty). Bigger is overtly violent while Sizwe Bansi in Fugard's play, for instance, is strategic and tactical- manipulating crevices within the system for his own purposes. The difference is only in terms of methodology, how to deal with the system so as to make it work for one's purposes.

As Bill Ashcroft argues 'the most effective post colonial resistance has been the wrestling, from imperial hands, of some measure of political control, ... to culturally make use of aspects of the colonizing culture so as to generate transformative cultural production.' (2001: 47). Ndi Sibiyá in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* has just been sacked from University for refusing to keep where he belongs as a black South African. Now restless, he finds himself fatally attracted to Veronica Slatter, a white woman, who by apartheid law is a no-go area for black South Africans. Sibiyá negotiates the interstitial space between the stairwells of extreme cultural poles-- black and white-- through metaphorically having intercourse with Veronica Slatter in his imagination. He uses his eyes in place of his hands and penis, to fondle Veronica, negotiate through her smooth white thighs and enjoy the forbidden territory. It is fascinating to note that both Sibiyá and Veronica actually reach an organism in their imaginations. The repression that is symbolized by the 'for whites only' billboard is destroyed by Sibiyá's anxious eyes (how does it feel like to be caressing that soft white skin!). This anxiety penetrates the artificial wall of racial separation and thus in the end he performs his fantasy by actually raping Veronica. But what is important is that Veronica is first raped psychologically, to imply that the marginalized always have a way of interpolating dominant discourses even in their imaginations.

The first incident that I would like to scrutinize is an episode in Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. Richard, the protagonist, gets to a point where he is so desperately hungry that he decides to sell his dog, Betsy, in spite of his love for it. He walks around the white suburbs, looking for someone to buy it. Fortunately, one white woman offers to buy the dog and Richard is excited at the prospect of earning some money. We see Richard standing there, looking desperate as any other hungry 'nigger' of his time could be. The white woman goes back into her mansion and when she comes back, she only has ninety seven cents, meaning that the money is three cents short. Richard takes the money, counts it and says, 'But this is only ninety seven cents, my dog is worth a dollar.' 'Ninety seven cents is almost a dollar boy, take it,' the white woman says. The woman is white, and she lives in a mansion (which means she is privileged in this society) and yet she cannot pay a dollar for the dog. Richard insists that his dog is worth a dollar and refuses to take the ninety seven cents. Case closed. In this particular incident it is clear that Richard has a very limited choice. He must either give in (sell his dog at three cents less) or refuse to be patronized and starve. In this case, he takes one option. He refuses to be patronized by the white woman and hence when he walks away, hungry and moneyless, his future is obviously bleak.

The question that immediately comes to our minds is: how is he going to survive. One is actually tempted to castigate him as a stupid boy who must face the consequences of his complacency. He is hungry yet he refuses ninety seven cents? Is there any integrity in hunger and starvation? Is a hungry man a dignified man? It is clear that Richard's quest for self pride

will definitely be short lived. How long is he going to hold on to the hunger in his stomach? The point is that survival is more urgent than his pride. That is why later in the text we see him embezzling money at the hotel and fleeing to the north, inevitably succumbing to the demands of his environment. In Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* a similar predicament is projected in the case of Nonkanyezi, the narrator's mother-- a proud Zulu woman from a respectable traditional Zulu family-- who in spite of her royal Zulu background, strategically transforms her life to ensure survival in the city. She abandons her traditional Zulu pride, becoming a shebeen queen in the process, not because she is inclined to moral decadence but because running a shebeen is the fastest way she can earn enough money to educate her son, just as much as embezzling money at the hotel is Richard's fastest way of liberating himself financially. For all her Zulu pride, Nonkanyezi ends up sleeping with her new found lover, Big Joe in full view of her son.

In another incident, in Wright's *Black Boy*, Richard finds a job at a shop in town. One day his white employer comes to him and tells him to be very careful in his dealings with Harrison, a young black boy who is also working at a nearby shop. 'Why should I be careful,' Richard asks, 'I don't have anything to do with that boy'? But his white employer says he also doesn't know. All he knows is that Harrison wants to stab him. This is just a warning. Richard is afraid and worried now. So the white man buys him a knife for self defense. Harrison's master also says the same thing to him, 'be careful with Richard, he is always carrying a knife to stab you.' Now the boys are pitted against each other. Each one carries a knife everywhere he goes in self defence. They keep sizing each other up-- each hating the other but always wondering why. One day, the boys manage to overcome their fears and come together to discuss the matter, only to find that the idea of a fight has been created and planted in their minds by their white employers. None of them had actually wanted to fight. When the white masters see that their plan to get the two boys cut each other has failed, they decide to use money as bait. They tell the boys that if they agreed to fight they would pay them five dollars each. This is indeed a lot of money especially for someone who earns as little as twelve dollars a month. At first, Richard is reluctant to take the offer because he does not want to fight for white people. But Harrison is so desperate that he immediately takes the offer. He needs the money to make a lay bye for a suit. Hence they take up the fight, promising not to hurt each other. Their white employers sit on the stairs, laughing and shouting obscenities at them.

What we learn in this story is that oppressors create situations like this among the oppressed, what Frantz Fanon calls 'internecine feuds.' In this case, conscience simply dies a natural death and the instinct for survival takes precedence. Harrison's position is that as a black boy in the segregationist American south, he has no dignity to protect or maintain. All that matters to him is the money that can allow him to purchase a suit. With this attitude it is clear that Harrison has totally lost any sense of self worth. As far as he is concerned he can only be someone if he has money to buy a suit. I want to argue that this is the same kind of predicament faced by most people living in a repressive environment. Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe is a case in point. Although the middle class and other social classes may be corrupted differently, ordinary people, the Harrisons and Richards of this world, are trapped in this situation, a situation where they must choose between their very humanity and 'survival.'

The question is-- how do we maintain our pride and dignity in a society like this, how do we avoid normalizing criminality in an environment where the equation of life is: lying+dishonesty+trickery = to food on the table? Let us look at my co-lecturer's story first.

It was indeed a noble idea that he refused to take the bribe and thus managed to hold on to his pride and dignity. It is probable that he couldn't take the offer because the circumstances of his life at that point weren't so dire that his principles preceded the instinct to survive. When you live under a repressive regime, and all avenues of survival are tightly closed (as all repressive regimes are capable of doing), an opportunity like that simply ceases to be corruption. It becomes a matter of choosing between life and death. It becomes an opportunity to survive.

I remember there was a time in Zimbabwe, between 2007 and 2008, when the Zimbabwean dollar was depreciating every hour or perhaps every minute, to be more precise. At that time, the situation was so bad that you could get paid now only to discover that by the time you got to town to do your shopping; all the money in your pocket (I mean a whole month's salary) could not buy you a loaf of bread. Someone asked me at that time –How do Zimbabwean workers survive? They go to work every day, yet the money they earn at the end of the month cannot buy them a loaf of bread. I said, 'The answer is very simple. When the going gets tough, the tough get going.' That was exactly what most Zimbabweans were doing. In those days, we had to break the law in order to live.

What I learnt through the Zimbabwean experience is that the human instinct for survival dies hard. The heart of the matter is that when life becomes difficult, as it was in Zimbabwe at that time, people simply alter their definitions of theft and corruption. For many, in those years, to steal was to survive. But this theft was 'acceptable' because 'everyone' was doing it. If you didn't steal, then you had to suffer more than those who were corrupt. As a matter of fact, those who lived through illegal means became role models. One pastor in a fastest growing Pentecostal church, in which I was a member, actually burnt his house because he was selling petrol illegally. This is perhaps what Chinua Achebe is talking about in his *Things Fall Apart* through the story of Eneke the bird. Eneke says 'since man has learnt to shoot without missing, I have also learnt to fly without perching.' When people are under pressure to survive or just to put food on the table, issues of self pride and dignity become a luxury.

When I was a teacher at a high school in Zimbabwe, there was a certain male teacher who used to make and sell sweets to his students. These students used to borrow from him and some of them were truants when it was pay time. I really sympathized with this teacher because at some point he had to ask female students to pay in kind and they did. Someone may argue and say, this had nothing to do with the crisis in the country; this teacher was merely abusing students. However, what must be understood is that victims of abuse are always likely to abuse others. When you are oppressed, you are always depressed, pressed down like a spring, so when opportunity arises, you also turn around to look for someone smaller than you to oppress as well. At that time, teachers could not even afford to pay fees for their own children, yet they were teaching other people's kids. Some could not afford to pay for their extra marital sexual needs, so they had to compromise with students-- teenagers whom they could easily con into sexual relationships. Fanon has a point when he says that the trauma of such experiences is psycho- pathological. I want to add that it is psychic as well, given that everything becomes so abnormal that one's behaviour cannot be predicted even against the backdrop of cultural norms and values.

It was a pity those days that you could see a student with pocket money double the teacher's salary. There were cases also of teachers who borrowed money from students only to fail to repay. Some even went to the extent of asking students to buy them liquor when they met them at the beer halls. The question is when a society has degenerated to this extent, when

home has become a new place, how do we go about inhabiting it without losing our dignity and self worth. How is it possible in a situation like this to talk about pride and dignity? How do we define what is criminal and what is non criminal.

Was it not Albert Memmi who proposed that the condition of being colonized is a nervous condition? I want to propose that living in any kind of repressive regime is equally a nervous condition. Living under colonial repression may be better because at least the white man has the entire paraphernalia of reasons to support his ruthless behaviour. The first one being the obvious difference in the color of his skin, followed by all those claims to intellectual superiority backed by what his race has done by way of inventions over the years while the black man was still in the mantle of his sleep. Any people living under a repressive regime are necessarily given to anger of the Bigger Thomas type. I want to argue that this state of anger can degenerate into subcultures of corruption, immorality and even physical violence. This is the spring's 'snap' effect that I mentioned before. When you live under a repressive regime, you are always angry because at every turn in your life, whether it is to the east or to the west, you have to find yourself bumping into something that turns your very bowels. It may be in the form of a news bulletin that is out rightly false, as was the case with Zimbabwe's media.

This is exactly Bigger Thomas's crisis and in Bigger's case the burning anger inside him is so powerful that it consumes him and everything around him. The way he beats his friend Gus has nothing to do with their failed plan to rob Blum's shop. His behaviour is typical of anyone living under any form of repression, be it political, cultural, sexual, psychological, etc. I want to believe that many people who were not properly connected to the powers that be, in Zimbabwe of 2007/2008, experienced this type of anger. This is the reason why Bigger Thomas is so angry. He has no education, no decent job or any money in his pocket but just across the line someone has millions of dollars in the bank. That person can even afford to spend some on ping pong. Perhaps our consolation in Bigger's case is that the Daltons are white, so they must be better than him. He is black, so he must learn not to overstep his limits, as Fanon puts it. But Bigger's predicament is not isolated to Jimcrow America, neither is Ndi Sibiya's case in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* isolated to apartheid South Africa. It is a trend in any kind of environment that chokes/suffocates the individual with any kind of repression.

Ndi Sibiya's case is very fascinating especially if we take cognizance of the fact that he consciously puts himself in a dangerous situation that attracts a death penalty. But it is clear that the artificial boundary demarcated by the 'for whites only' billboard on the beach stimulates the burning anxiety in Sibiya. Like Bigger in *Native Son*, he is curious to explore the treasure in the white woman. 'It was I, the narrator says, 'who chose to run after the girl; out of my own inclination, with no other purpose in mind than to discover the sexual reasons for the white man's singular protectiveness towards his womenfolk...' (p. 24). Sibiya is driven to rape by the way apartheid legislation over-protects the white woman as if she has unique feminine qualities that a black man is being deprived of. Veronica, the white lady that Sibiya later rapes, is in his imagination, more of a goddess than a human being. Because his desire has been restricted for so long, Sibiya is actually breaking down when he rapes Veronica, the way Bigger is also breaking down when he kills and metaphorically 'rapes' Mary Dalton. The two cannot hold it any longer and as Fanon says about Bigger Thomas, when the tension reaches its climax, he acts. (1952: 139). This is a breakdown because he has been withholding this desire for too long, he has tried his best to keep it where it belongs, but when he acts the pressure has become so powerful he can't hold it anymore.

This is the spring's 'snap' effect that I have hinted on previously. When Bigger and Sibiya 'snap' like springs that have just been released, the consequences are destructive. In Sibiya's case, his anxiety for the white woman takes a suicidal dimension. He wants the white woman in exchange for his very life. While Bigger is overwhelmed by the possibilities of his proximity to Mary Dalton, Sibiya cannot withstand the power of Veronica's soft skin, especially when the girl undresses in full view, exposing the forbidden treasures of her white body. What we see through Bigger Thomas and Ndi Sibiya is the power of repression to stir feelings of anxiety that often finds an outlet through the spring's snap effect.

Bigger Thomas is all anger because everything around him makes him sick. He does not need to try anything because he knows, it is bound to fail or get him into trouble. When he kills Mary Dalton, he is releasing that hatred, that anger that has been part of his life. Mary Dalton is a fragile tender girl, but the way Bigger Thomas kills her, the brutality applied, tells us that Bigger Thomas is not actually killing her. He is exorcising himself by releasing the tension that has accumulated inside of him for years. The anger that Bigger exudes is the very same anger that a Zimbabwean teacher felt when the President said, 'I was once a teacher also, and that's why I left teaching and joined politics. That profession does not pay.' That level of arrogance broke you down if you were a teacher awaiting the President's word pertaining a strike that has taken weeks on end. How do we maintain our dignity and self pride in a socio-political environment like this? How can we be honest citizens? We are hungry. Our children are hungry and the president says 'that profession doesn't pay.'

The white woman who gives Richard ninety seven cents is a typical oppressor. She knows that Richard is desperate. Hence she gives him ninety seven cents because she believes that in his desperation he will take it. If the oppressed are not prepared to take up the struggle like Sembene Ousmane's workers in *God's Bits of Wood*, their plight will never be alleviated. The oppressor's strategy is that he gets the oppressed desperate so as to cheapen their bargain. During those tumultuous days in Zimbabwe, some civil servants actually lost their jobs when they refused to obey an order to take up a proposed 'destitute salary.' I had an opportunity to work with one of those fellows who had been victimized for participating in an 'illegal' strike. Mr Mlambo was his name. The government didn't reinstate him just like that. He was charged with dissent and the punishment was for him to work for six months (half a year) without pay. To make matters worse, Mr. Mlambo's wife (presumably because she came from a well to do family) got an opportunity to go to London. She never came back and in those difficult times, Mlambo was toiling without a salary, abandoned by his own wife.

In the conversation that I narrated at the beginning of this paper, I remember telling my compatriot that he didn't take the 'fat bribe' because his situation was not very dire. Perhaps I was wrong because Richard's situation in Wright's *Black Boy* was very desperate yet he refused to take the ninety cents and stood on his pride, sacrificing his growling stomach. But is it really possible for a poor little boy like Richard to lead an innocent life in a society founded on corrupt values, violence, deception, stereotype, racism, discrimination- you name it? Yes, for one day perhaps, like what Mr. Mndebele did-- but on a daily basis, this is very difficult. That's why we see the young Richard later becoming a thief, embezzling money at the hotel and escaping to the north.

Does a hungry man have any dignity? Does he have a choice? Is it possible to stick to values of self pride and dignity, to say 'no' to crime when one has been reduced to a state of abject poverty? This is the question that Athol Fugard, the South African playwright is asking in

Sizwe Bansi is Dead. If our pride will only get us into trouble with the authorities or get us deported to the dry and barren Ciskei, does it benefit anything. If we abandon self pride and integrity as core values of life, how do we live? As we see through Sizwe Bansi's case, without these values, one becomes a ghost and what a ghost does is that it gives no rest to the living. If a colonial condition is a psychopathological one as Fanon has argued and if dictatorships are equally dismembering as argued in this paper, living in any kind of repressive regime, I want to insist, is living like a ghost. Sizwe Bansi has no identity to think about. His children may as well be called after Robert Zwelinzima. What is important for him is survival for the moment. Yet the question that immediately comes to mind is whether food can be so important that we can sacrifice our very identity for it. I want to maintain that when people live in conditions of abject poverty, anything goes for them. In the Richard/ Harrison story, we see that the two boys are keen to protect their integrity. They cannot fight for white men. Yet they end up fighting because they need five dollars.

Conclusion

What do we do when home is Jim Crow America, apartheid South Africa, or Mugabe's Zimbabwe? Do we allow ourselves to be dehumanized, to engage in a fight and hurt each other for a living like Richard and Harrison or do we hold on to our pride and die? Does pride have any meaning if it cannot guarantee food on the table? The issue of survival is indeed pertinent especially in the post colonial world/text. This is perhaps the bone of contention in Zimbabwean politics to date. Do we go it alone and starve or we allow ourselves to be exploited and live? But what kind of survival can we have without our self pride, our integrity and our self respect. And if we stick to self pride without food, can we survive. Should we perish firing to the last bullet or we should relinquish the struggle and explore other avenues of survival? One of the lessons that we draw from Richard and Harrison's predicament is that even if they fought and felt embarrassed, they managed to get the money they needed and moved on with life. Perhaps the question is whether we can call that 'moving on.' Is dignified survival possible in the post colonial world/text?

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