'Ersatz Europeans and Their Minions': Performing Whiteliness in Non-white Postcolonial African Ghettoes

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By Zvenyika Eckson Mugari, Kudzaiishe Vanyoro and Chipo Hungwe.

Zvenyika Eckson Mugari
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8628-1370 / Email: mugariez@staff.msu.ac.zw

Kudzaiishe Vanyoro
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8146-9342 / Email: kudzaiv@uj.ac.za

Chipo Hungwe
Email: hungwec@staff.msu.ac.zw

Abstract

White lust and Black shame among blacks across all classes is a phenomenon that has not been fully explored and accounted for particularly as part of a residual inter-generational colonial psychosis expressed in everyday talk among black folk in postcolonial Africa. This leads to the questions: What aspects of whiteness or coloniser/colonised transactional relationships do the former colonised blacks manifest in conversations? How does whiteness refracted by class, gender, and ethnicity, remap itself onto new psycho-social relationships among blacks in former British settler colonies like Zimbabwe and South Africa? How are contemporary class differences expressed in terms of distance from or closeness to imagined whiteness in everyday ghetto language and communication? This research analyses meanings that attach to terms *murungu* (white person), and its plural form *varungu* (white persons) as used by Shona speaking black Zimbabweans in address or with reference to phenotypical non-white individuals as people engage in naturally occurring and undirected conversational talk in three

different locations. In *Black Skin White Masks*, Fanon broached the idea of the psychotic split personality as a condition suffered by the colonised subject resulting from the colonial situation itself. The situation taught the blacks to place in a pedestal and pursue all that was white, to self-hate and to seek escape from their black skin that kept their soul prisoner. The article seeks to show cases through which everyday talk by black Zimbabweans online and in Zimbabwean based taxis reveals deeper undertones of black shame and an exaltation of whiteness. It concludes that we can still trace colour schizophrenia through everyday talk among ordinary black people of Southern Africa.

Keywords: Ersatz Europeans; whiteliness; race; class; white lust; black shame; race and ethnicity communication

Introduction

The meaning of the term black shame has been a subject of debate in available literature (Wigger 2010; Dahn 2014; Du Bois 1933; Osborne 2023). One school of thought such as that of Wigger (2009) and Dahn (2014) uses it to refer to the situation that arose when France deployed African troops to guard the Rhine as part of punishment for Germany's part in the First World War. In terms of widely shared notions of white racial supremacy it was unthinkable, indeed shameful that an African soldier, a member of an inferior race, could be placed guard over his white overlords. The deployment of black troops by France should be understood in the context of post-war Europe wanting to mete out punishment on Germany and least likely as recognition and acknowledgement of blacks as equals of their white counterparts. White moral panic over possible miscegenation, racial dilution and degeneration, and the threat to the preservation of racial purity and white supremacy found expression through the Black Shame on the Rhine campaign which started in Germany and quickly gained popularity in continental Europe in the inter-war period. In this sense Black shame thus actually referred to how interracial sexual mixing between black male soldiers and white women was a source of shame for Europeans. So it was from the European position that blackness was viewed as marring white racial purity. Black shame in this school of thought was thus what Europeans faced and were concerned with, rather than the other way around.

Another school of thought proffered by authors such as Du Bois (1933) and Osborne (2023) deploys the term black shame to denote a complex sense of racial inadequacy that supposedly assails every black African in the presence of white people whom they regard as superior and whom they therefore

envy. It results in psychological contemptuousness and denial of one's "blackness" and a lusting for the white Other. Black lust for whiteness would manifest in the lengths to which some black men and women were prepared to go in order to acquire phenotypical proximity to whiteness in their looks, language and deportment in pursuit of a phenomenon Fanon (1967) refers to as the psychological goal of every black man – to become white. It is in this latter sense that the terms white lust and black shame are being used in this paper; to refer to the phenomenon of internalised racial inferiority complex or what Herr (2005) refers to as colour schizophrenia and its manifestation in everyday talk among ordinary black people.

The (in)transience of racial identities as a basis of self-definition and self-knowledge can be both a source of hope and despair about possibilities of forging new, more equitable and just post-racial societies in Africa. For example, the post-racial Africa that anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles had envisioned as encapsulated in the preamble to the South African Freedom Charter (1955), a society where values of human equality, liberty and fraternity beyond the colour line could be celebrated has largely remained a receding dream. Jean Paul Sartre's warning in a preface to Franz Fanon's book; *The Wretched of the Earth*, went unheeded as the seeds of new forms of inequality were being sown in the crucible of the Pan-African struggle against colonial racism on the continent then. Satre alluded to "the European elite *undertaking* to manufacture a native elite" (Sartre 1963, p. 7) [emphasis added] who would be entrusted with the onerous task of ensuring the colonial *status quo* survived the end of colonialism in Africa. This was by no means the first time a policy of reproducing social inequality was invoked in dealing with subject

populations. The education system introduced for Indian subjects of British colonial rule in the early nineteenth century presents a forerunner of similar colonial policies. Advocating that system, Lord Macaulay had argued in 1835: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay 2015, p. 247). Products of this process of (mis)education were always bound to occupy the liminal space between their racial identity of origin as Indian and the unattainable racial identity of destiny as English.

Sartre (1963, p. 7) calls the grotesquery who came out of colonial social engineering branded as with a red hot iron "white lies" to emphasise their status as poor imitations of their former white masters. Many scholars of race after Fanon have further elaborated on how in different geographical spaces and historical moments the artefact of white supremacy and the inferiority of phenotypically black people with or without the direct involvement of whites themselves was circumstantially developed, refashioned and reimagined in the service of power (Mamdani 2020; Mboti 2019; Memmi 2013; Said 1978). A motif that continues to run through the literature on the psychosis of racial identity in the colonial and postcolonial situation

> "
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since Fanon, is the tension between identifying as white surrogates and retaining racial identity as autochthonous black Africans (Magubane 2001).

According to Fanon (1976), skin colour masked unstable, complex and in certain instances pathological personality complexes across the colour line. Social identities are always plural, in a state of flux and contingent upon relations of power, particularly so, in the colonial situation and its aftermath. In the contexts of colonialism's aftermaths, centuries long colonial conditioning had left behind a psychic self-hate and an insatiable longing for escape into whiteness in the African's collective unconscious which needed to be unmasked, exorcised and expunged (Fanon 1967a). The Zimbabwean musician Oliver Mtukudzi well captures the subliminal and tension-fraught struggle with self-hate as black Africans and an ambiguous attraction to and identification with the white Other in the lyrics of one of his songs titled *"Tsika Dzedu"* (Our cultural etiquettes):

> *Kusvika rinhi tichitiza mimvuri yedu?*
> *Kusvika rinhi* (Till when must we continue to run away from our shadows)
>
> *Kusvika rinhi uchitiza mumvuri wako?*
> *Kusvika rinhi* (Till when must you continue to run away from your shadow?)
>
> *Kusvika rinhi tichinyara mimvuri yedu?*
> *Kusvika rinhi* (Till when must we continue to be ashamed of our shadows?)
>
> *Dada nerudzi rwakoo, nedzinza rako, dembedza rurimi pwere dzigoyemura.* (Be proud of your identity, your race and your language to set a good example for the young)

It took many years of alienation, acculturation, and inculcation to impress on the black African mind-set, a sense of self recognition as racially inferior, self-doubt and an abiding longing for seeking validation with the superior white Other. That pathological sense of doubt in one's claim to being human remains the most pernicious aspect of the legacies of centuries of European enslavement and colonial domination of the black African at home (those located in Africa) and in the diaspora. To extend Achebe's argument; "At the center of all the problems Europe has had in its perception of Africa *(and by extension Africans' own perceptions*

of themselves) lies the simple question of African humanity: are they or are they not like us?" (Achebe 2009, p. 88) [emphasis added].

The legacy of white doubt of African humanity was so poignantly articulated by Joseph Conrad's prototype European explorer Marlowe. The fictional Skipper of the Nelli documents his "discovery" (as a first arrivant on that epic journey in search of Mr. Kurtz in *The Heart of Darkness*), of specimens of a race whose humanity he had an extreme difficulty acknowledging as such, in the following terms:

> The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon a shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly (Conrad 1950, p. 98)

European racist ideology according to which the African was placed at the lowest rung of being had been well set by the time of Conrad's penning it down in *The Heart of Darkness* and provided the logical and moral grounds for European conquest and subsequent colonisation of the continent of Africa by the end of the nineteenth century. The real tragedy of black exposure to racist white treatment as subhuman, over time, lies in the black Africans beginning to believe as fact the white suspicion of their not being human. The primary focus of this discussion is on how the psychological effects of racial subjugation on the subject populations themselves continue to manifest through common talk in predominantly black ghettoes many years after the most vicious of the brands of colonialism, apartheid, ended in former Rhodesia and South Africa.

Theoretical entry point

The article employs a whiteliness heuristic. In addition to referring to racial experiences, the term "black" now also connotes poverty, oppression, and marginalization (see Vanyoro, 2020). A Black

> " In Zimbabwe, the Shona term *murungu* [white person] is used to describe anyone who is financially capable, regardless of race *(Tagwirei and De Kock 2015, p. 193).* "

person's experiences are initially primarily compared to those of a superior "white" Other. But according to Frye (1992) and Tagwirei and de Kock (2015), who use "whiteness" as a more critical theoretical conceptualization of what it means to be "white," "whiteness" is a term used to identify characteristics of white behavior, whether it be by Black or white people. In Zimbabwe, the Shona term *murungu* [white person] is used to describe anyone who is financially capable, regardless of race (Tagwirei and De Kock 2015, p. 193). They demonstrate how being white has come to be seen as having political and economic advantages, while being black has grown to be seen as having disadvantages. Therefore, they draw the conclusion that whiteness and blackness cease to function as fixed and self-contained categories when considered in this light. They are instead unstable and in a state of flux (Tagwirei and de Kock 2015, p. 194). Given this, the article employs this entire heuristic associated with whiteliness to interpret the underlying discourses in the everyday talk under study.

Methodology

This research analyses meanings that attach to terms *"murungu"* (white person), and its plural form *"varungu"* (white persons) as used in

address or with reference to phenotypically black individuals as people engage in naturally occurring and undirected conversational talk in different contexts. We draw data from selected postings between January 2023 and December 2023 on a social media gossip *Facebook* platform titled @ domesticworkerDiaries where domestic workers meet and share their workplace experiences as they gossip about the conduct of their bosses and employers. The creator administrator of the page professes that she created the page specifically to serve as a space where those engaged in domestic work as house helpers can freely share their experiences and give each other advice on how to handle particularly stressful situations that often arise as they deal with and relate to difficult-to-handle employers. The platform also serves as a free employment agency where prospective employers and prospective employees can advertise and meet up. This page was identified as a relevant corpus of data on black domestic workers' conceptualisation of their black employers who after independence emigrated and now live in former white suburbs. As bell hooks (1992) recommends, in order to glean some insights details, facts, observations, psychoanalytic readings of those blacks whom circumstance has thrust into privilege as the new employer class we rely on these domestic workers diaries of black domestic servants working in black homes just as in the past, "black domestic servants, working in white homes, acted as informants who brought knowledge back to segregated communities about the white 'Other'" (hooks 1992, p. 338). Domestic workplaces can serve as productive sites from which one can gaze at the phenomenon of blacks playing at being white through the vantage point of their domestic employees.

Rhetorical talk in the marketplace in Gweru, a city in Midlands in Zimbabwe, as ordinary people transact petty business deals as vendors and clients, and as commuter omnibus operators and commuters at public transport termini also provided an alternative source of insights about ordinary people's intergenerational co-constructed diction and understandings on racial difference between whites and blacks. Common catch phrases invoking taken-for-granted shared understandings of whiteness juxtaposed with blackness such as; *"varungu* or *maboy"* (European people or African people), *"zvechirungu* or *zvaanaMseyamwa"* (highbrow or lowbrow), were thus collected ethnographically as researchers plied their routes between home and workplace via the city centre and through the hustle and bustle of the 'black' market between January 2023 and December 2023.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was sought and the research was approved through the Midlands State University Ethics Board for Human Study in Zimbabwe. With respect to data sourced from online platforms such as a *Facebook* page where content is public, Gupta (2017, p. 15) cautions the researcher to determine whether the use of content reveals the identity of the author or the owner of the content and take steps to remove these identifying markers to achieve anonymity before they proceed with online data mining. In cases where identifying markers cannot be excluded without undermining the integrity of the data, it becomes imperative for the researcher to proceed by way of seeking informed consent to use the data from owners of the data if these can be identified and authenticated. Despite the fact that information published on the @domesticworkerDiaries *Facebook* page may justifiably be regarded as information that is in the public domain and publicly accessible by anyone online, due care was taken in accordance with best practice in measures to protect the identity of unwitting participants (Townsend and Wallace 2016) and to ensure, as much as possible, that identifying details were excluded and that all data used was anonymized and could not be easily traced to the authors of such posts.

Data collection done through physical field observations in the marketplace as ordinary people transacted petty business deals as vendors and clients, and as commuter omnibus operators and commuters at public transport termini had to be done through covert ethnographic research methods for two main reasons. First, seeking consent from research participants would inevitably interfere with their naturalist behavior as doing so would make them aware that they were under observation (Spicker 2011). Second, it was also difficult to tell beforehand who among the commuters or among those going about their own business in the hustle and bustle of a busy

marketplace was going to be the source of research relevant utterances as the behaviour of the research subjects was undirected by the researchers. Since the identity of the sources of research relevant information was of no special significance to the study beyond the fact that they were black, their privacy and anonymity were maintained.

Results

The results of this study are presented and discussed below under three thematic areas according to the three spaces from which data were drawn; namely the *Madhumbe Domestic Worker Diaries Facebook* page; at the marketplace and bus termini and on commuter minibuses in Gweru.

Varungu in *Madhumbe Domestic Worker Diaries Facebook* page

On the *Facebook* page titled *Madhumbe Domestic Worker Diaries* (@domesticworkerDiaries) the term *varungu* (white people) is the generic term used to refer to employers whether black or white. The word *Madumbe* is slang for domestic worker in Zimbabwe. It was derived from a popular television drama series *Gringo* a character played by the late Lazarus Boora and premiered in 1998 on the Zimbabwean public broadcaster Zimbabwe Television (ZTV). *Gringo* is a comedy starring a black male "garden boy" who starts working in the household of a black middle-class family where he meets his nemesis Madumbe the "house girl" a house help. From the time Gringo begins working at the Gweshe-Gweshe homestead tending the garden, and throughout the drama series, Gringo calls the Gweshe-Gweshes *varungu vangu* (my white people) when he is talking to either his friend John Banda or his mother. At some point John Banda, comes to claim his debt of one Zimbabwean dollar from Gringo and Gringo incessantly chases him out, threatening to beat him up every time he comes asking for his money back. Gringo argues that John Banda's behaviour will undermine his good reputation *kana varungu vangu vakazviziva* (should my white people know about this). The Gweshe-Gweshe yard and house is therefore a carnival for the playout of many tensions where the unskilled are at loggerheads over the protection of the black middle-class family's interests who have become ersatz Europeans – substitutes for 'real' white people.

Against this backdrop, the *Madhumbe Domestic Worker Diaries Facebook* page adopted the slang *Madumbe* to signify domestic workers. Most posts on the page loosely refer to potential or current domestic workers' employers as *varungu* (white people). In one of the posts on the page, the contributor says: *"Musatitukirawo nekutyisa varungu vedu vanounza mabasa please. Regai vanoda mabasa vabatsirike"* (Please do not insult our white people who bring us employment on this page. Let those who require employment find value on this page). This shows how all potential and current employees are framed as white regardless of their race. Another post read *"Vaya vaichemera testimony, murungu ati awana munhu"* (Those who were asking for a testimony, the white person (employer) said they have found an employee through our page), accompanied by a screenshot of a *WhatsApp* conversation between the page administrator and a domestic worker confirming that they had found a job. Part of this page's focus is the facilitation of conversations on experiences of black domestic workers. In one of the video posts on the *Facebook* page, the female domestic worker shares the experiences of a Zimbabwean migrant domestic worker based in South Africa and how she was prohibited by her employer (a middle-class black employer) from accessing health care when she fell ill. She says something in her native Shona language which when translated would loosely read: "This business of a sick domestic worker being refused access to health care by her white man (employer) because they are working is not good. The white persons (employers) are refusing her the freedom to visit the clinic threatening to report her to the police for not having a passport. The things that we as domestic workers go through are tough. Why do our white people (employers) do this?"

The above text has many intersecting themes such as race and migration. Apart from being exploited as workers, the woman whose story is being narrated above is also oppressed as a migrant. This shows the complexities of identity that exist in postcolonial spaces. Let us take a step back to another text where in a video on the page, one of the respondents is asked by the host the following question during their conversation:

"Zvamurikutaura izvi makazviitwa ne murungu akadii? Mukureva murungu-rungu chaiye here nekuti varungu chaivo

havadaro" (In this account what sort of white person did this to you? Are you referring to real white people or black employers? Because real white people do not do that)

to which she responds:

"Ndirikureva varungu vedu ava maboy" (I am referring to our white people, the black employers).

This example shows the dichotomy of whiteness that is upheld in these workers' framing of their employees. In this dichotomy, the "real white people" continue to be seen as more professionally superior and more humane in comparison to the "black whites"—Ersatz Europeans. This confirms the Fanonian "negro myth" which is a social and political system of representations or archetypes of blackness as evil (Hook 2004). Such myths tend to stick, as generalizations about black people based on a few "case studies" that are not naturally inherent acts of blackness. Hence, Steyn and Foster (2008) found that in South Africa, through white talk the imminent switch to tyranny and corruption among black people who achieve social or economic status is a firm expectation in the white imagination and it is always kept active in their hostile collective imagination. Therefore, while they can possibly be read as black people in proximity to whiteness, when the Ersatz Europeans "disappoint" by acting "black" there is not much to be surprised with.

In this instance, Ersatz Europeans are portrayed as white, but they fall short of the expectations associated with being white. They are deemed to "fail" due to an insufficient alignment with whiteness, lacking that elusive 'Even if' which, even in metaphor, serves to elevate the status of "real whites" to a more privileged echelon. As a result, we can see how selected black people in postcolonial Southern African settings, like Zimbabwe and South Africa, evaluate concepts like race and professionalism differently. The African postcolonial space is one where governments placed legal limitations on explicit white anti-black attitudes. In the postcolonial space, black middle-class people are not directly oppressed but are also considered in some instances by other black people they employ as cruel and exploitative. Because of this, accusations that they marginalize

their black employees carry weight. The implication is that privileged blacks, like certain whites, can maintain the devaluation of Black life. Here, Ersatz Europeans succeed in some respects and fail miserably in others when it comes to acting "white" as expected. These racialized encounters are therefore not simple occurrences, but multi-layered and contradictory. These experiences echo Fanon's (1952) description of the black physician who is discursively constructed as a failure even before they have conducted surgery. Likewise, in the eyes of the domestic workers, the Ersatz European will never live up to the same standards of phenotypical whites.

Despite how it plays out in the *Madumbe* discourses, the devaluation of black working-class lives is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. Goebel (2015) shows how in post-apartheid South Africa, policy, elites, and the state all act in ways that deny the working class Black poor full city citizenship and dignity. Poor quality, poorly located, or otherwise underserved infrastructure (housing, services) is common (Goebel 2015). This exemplifies the denigration of Black life among the working class. Just like the phenotypical apartheid whites, "black whites" or Ersatz Europeans are at times seen to be exploitative of migrant domestic workers as witnessed in the account of the ill domestic worker who was refused health care. Such relationships may be viewed as learned and internalized violence, founded on apartheid's labour policies that placed black migrant labour as essential yet vulnerable to exploitation. In these relationships there are layers of nationality and ethnicity, interpreted and enacted through the lenses of race. In migration spaces, the abuse of migrant domestic workers is also well documented in precarity literature (see Dodson 2018; Jinnah 2020). According to Griffin (2011) African migrant domestic workers in South Africa are often in vulnerable positions and taken advantage of. Most have no legal documentation and are often seen as desirable domestic workers who can be taken advantage of and a more submissive lot in contrast to their "troublesome" South African black counterparts (Griffin 2011).

These relationships and the racialization that exist across all black labour relationships can also be used to explain what has been referred to as xenophobia in South Africa. Apart from that, more generally, South Africa's internal disputes, disaffection and

violence have continued to derail the country's credibility as a leader on the continent (Andreasson 2011). South Africa's hegemonic potential is therefore derailed by intersecting factors that suggest that it houses western ideologies through citizen wielded superiority complex over other nations. Because it is making itself felt through racialized relationships of hate towards black people, it could be apt to consider framing forms of mistreatment towards black migrants by other blacks as Afrophobia not xenophobia. Some critics have questioned the suitability of the term xenophobia to describe the largely black on black violent conflicts that have flared up in South Africa recently (Tagwirei 2019). They find the use of the term Afrophobia to be more consistent with facts on the ground. Fanon had called it Negrophobia. In these migration-based relationships of black-on-black exploitation "South Africans are accused of regarding themselves as exceptionally not of Africa. Apartheid history is evoked to account for this pride, ignorance and attendant hatred for other Africans" (Tagwirei 2019). Overall, the Ersatz trope prevails in postcolonial landscapes where skin complexion and colour interact with class, resulting in discriminatory and in some cases violent outcomes.

Ndlovu (2014) takes note of what he regards as South African exceptionalism in his understanding of how some South African leaders like Jacob Zuma viewed other Africans. The paper contends that the concept of South African exceptionalism is rooted in a Eurocentric perspective of existence and development, which ultimately fosters anti-black racism and Afrophobia. Perhaps there is some truth in these accusations, and they go on to show not only the supremacist nature of some South Africans but also the white supremacist ideologies inherent in some black employer-migrant employee relations in the country. President Mbeki's confession that South Africa is a "country of 'two nations', one rich and white the other black and poor" (Andreasson 2011, p. 1176) would be rather simplistic in light of the complex social stratification in the post-apartheid situation where a new class of beneficiaries of the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy, though small by comparison, is increasingly acquiring white ways and attaining whiteliness. This is indicative of South Africa's internal neo-colonial structures that

are framed along neo-liberal market ideas where the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. In relationships between *Madumbe* as representing the majority black worker and *Varungu* (whites) the employing class, one sees exploitation and discrimination along intersecting axes of race, class and ethnicity. This can best be summed up using Magubane's position that "although racism cannot be simply correlated with the process of material exploitation, the discourse produces forms of knowledge which are of great utility in justifying the degradation of the exploited. It serves to define the superior whilst at the same time serving to regulate the inferior and putting them in their proverbial place" (Magubane 2001, p. 4). The discourses of race, ethnicity and class were mutually reinforcing and constitute of the ideologies of whiteliness that would endure well beyond the end of formal colonialism. Goebel (2015) contends that even after the conclusion of apartheid, numerous spatial, social, and service-delivery disparities persist. The marginalized, particularly women in informal settlements or those leading households, persist in facing challenges related to access to water, electricity, housing, and other essential services, indicating a lasting structural legacy of the apartheid system (Goebel 2015).

Whiteliness at the marketplace and bus termini

When transacting business particularly in the informal market, in black ghettoes popularly known as the black market in Zimbabwe, the term *"murungu"* (white person) is used interchangeably with such terms as "boss", *"ngezha"* or "shef", in situations when someone is addressing someone from whom a favourable return is anticipated especially in the form of money payment. In such cases the addressee is being equated to a white person. Those so addressed are expected to feel respected and honoured as the ones with the means of payment. The metaphorical significance of addressing someone as *murungu* stems from the myth that white people own inexhaustible wealth and are able to be able to pay for anything they like (Mashiri 2001). Such discourses were responsible for the perverse misconstrual of possession of wealth with skin colour according to which one is white because they are rich, and they are rich because they are white (Gibson 2008). In

urban ghetto spaces even where one can hardly expect to meet a white man, the term *murungu* is widely used to connote a higher social status for those from whom money is expected. For example, rank marshals and commuter omnibus drivers or any employee for that matter, would ordinarily use the term *murungu wangu* (my white person) to refer to their employer. In a context where a transactional relationship between buyer and seller at the marketplace or between bus conductor and commuter; the one who anticipates receiving money addresses the other as *murungu* (white person) or *varungu* (white people) if many. This address is expected and would make the prospective client feel special and more inclined to pay for the service.

At a busy *kombi* (Taxi) terminus in Gweru where University students' pick-up lifts to or drop-off from the Midlands State University campus in Senga, it is common to hear omnibus conductors, rank marshals or touts *(mahwindi)* hollering potential clients to board along the following lines:

> "*Senga, Senga, vanoenda, varikuda kumhanya. Murikuenda here sistren. One chete asara! Garisanaika varungu vangu tikwane tese. pindai tiende.*"(are you going to Senga my white people, quickly get in we are at your service) or:

> *Mati tidiiko vabereki, toenda here, pasina imi hatirarame varungu* (What are you saying elders? Should we transport you? You are our source for survival our white people)

As commuters board the kombi, the conductor would say "*ngatibatanidzei mari dzedu varungu tinoda mari dzakachinjika pakufamba*" (Let's pay off our bus fare white people. We want the exact fare from you; we do not have change). On drop off points for passengers the conductors normally say:

> "*tokuburutsirai papi varungu vedu kana mave kusvika pamadrop-off points mutaure vabereki , ndimi varungu vacho ,tinokusvitsai pamunonyatsoda chaipo*"(where do you want us to drop you off our white people, tell us when we approach your drop-off points our parents. You are the white people; we drop you off at the exact place you want).

> "*Ko urikuenda here ngezha? Kwiraka tibaye!*", beating the door as a signal for the driver to start the engine in readiness for take-off, "*Hwani asara ariega. Handei vabereki.*" (Are you going white boss? Board and let's go. We are left with space for only one more. Let's go my parents).

Reference to the paying black passengers as 'parents' takes one back to the paternalism that whiteness was associated with under colonialism. Cooper (1996) defines colonial paternalism as a governing approach in which European powers rationalized their control by depicting themselves as the "guardians" or "fathers" of African communities, asserting that Africans were "not yet ready" for self-governance and required direction toward "civilization" and "modernity." However, the paternalism we witness in the case above, takes a more communitarian form. Ogunbanjo and van Bogaert (2009) describe communitarianism as a framework for political organization that emphasizes bonds of affection, kinship, and a shared sense of purpose and tradition. For them, the idea of community, both in theory and practice, within the African context is deeply grounded in philosophical concepts like ubuntu and communalism. The term 'parents' is being used to suggest a reciprocal relationship is in existence. In their capacity as paying customers, the "parents" carry a certain form of privilege that is tied to its uniquely African origins. This is a privilege experienced by a financially liable passenger that enables them to remain connected to the community that "serves them." The passengers regarded as privileged in their ability to pay, possessing the funds that the other individual will benefit from- albeit, still being reminded that they remain connect to the individual as "my parents." This reveals the importance of a whiteliness heuristic because it captures the temporality of relationships and their fluid nature. Among those referred to as parents in this case are people of different ages, yet their position as paying passengers affords them temporary parenthood status.

Noteworthy was the fact that in all cases where such talk and conversational exchanges occurred, there was no serious objection on the part of those so addressed. Instead, it appeared that there was tacit acknowledgement of such addresses as a form of compliment as opposed to an insult. A debtor

explaining why they have failed to settle their debt in time says: *"Sha, murungu wangu haasati andigadzirira mapeni angu kana zvangoita chete ndinokuitirabho"* (My white person has not paid me my monthly earnings yet, I will pay you once that has been resolved). Here a strong association of whiteness and capacity not only to employ, but also to pay is implied as a given. The image of whiteness being invoked in the taxi was one of purity and beneficence rather than maleficence.

Further, the same taxi conductors who refer to clients as *varungu* (white people) also refer to the owner of the taxi as *murungu* (white person). For instance, when asked why they had not been on the road in the past month, the conductor mentioned that *"murungu wedu anga arikuramba kugadzirisa motokari"* (Our white person – the taxi owner – was refusing to get the taxi repaired). In all the examples above the use of the term *murungu* (white person) is used to connote a high social status for the addressee and it relies for its meaning on a shared archive of residual colonial stereotypes about phenotypical white people as set apart from and as belonging to a superior benefactor race as opposed to their supposedly poor and mean black subordinates.

What is paradoxical though is the fact that whiteness in these portrayals is viewed from a rich more nuanced perspective that accommodates the complexity consistent with real life possibilities of human nature. The Ersatz Europeans are true imitations not only of what is worst or what is best in their imagined whiteness, capable of both virtue and vice, meanness and generosity. The evidence considered here in a way confirms what earlier scholarship on the subject (Mashiri 2001; Mawadza 2000) also established, which seems to go against the grain of images of whites as harbingers of a brutal system of colonial domination and racial segregation found in much of orthodox literature critical of white settler colonial systems in former Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. This is made most evident in the tacit acceptance and absence of active rejection of such addresses by those to whom they are directed.

Another level of complexity is revealed in the results. One finds that communalism remains etched in existing relationships that are mediated through racialised understandings. This communalism confirms existing arguments made by scholar of hybridity, who found that postcolonial spaces consist of complex subjectivities. Ersatz Europeans are not simple beings but are shaped through complex neoliberal and neocolonial relationships that are premised on class, labor, culture, ethnicity and citizenship. Initially coined by Bhabha (2012, 2015), hybridity questions the notion that culture is untainted, distinct, or unchanging. Rather, cultural interaction creates "in-between" spaces where meanings are shaped and negotiated. According to Mambrol (2016), colonialization produces new transcultural forms in the contact zone, which are referred to as hybridity. This horticulture term describes the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, 'hybrid' species (Mambrol 2016. p. 2). Hybridization can be linguistic, cultural, political or racial among other forms (Mambrol 2016). The results of this article suggest that Ersatz Europeans are a product of hybridity which is invoked through how they are understood by fellow black working-class individuals who rely on their goodwill , professionalism and finances to secure a living. Ersatz Europeans are however a paradox in that their identify is based on the yardstick of phenotypical whiteness, a standard of which they are fated to unsuccessfully aspire to.

Conclusion

The way whiteness tends to be equated with possession of wealth in the above scenarios should not be dismissed as a figment of poor black people's fertile imaginations, rather it should be viewed as inspired by real economic conditions where whiteness, phenotypical or discursive signals ownership of the economic means of production and wealth. The study of utterances people makes undirected and unaware that they are being watched and as they go about their daily life routines opens a window to the psycho-social world they inhabit with a view to suggesting ways in which that world could be changed. The problem cannot be dismissed as a problem of a residual colonial mentality in poor black people's imagination. The class of black inheritors of white privilege whom Sartire satirises as "ex-'natives'" in his preface to Fanon's (1963) book, *The Wretched of the Earth* exhibit a pathological inferiority complex in the lengths they are prepared to go to in imitating white ways of life. It is however not all about imitation but about how the "ex-'natives'"

are read by the selected black working class. In both the scenarios, we have observed that in the postcolonial situation, the problem of a persistent black inferiority complex continues to make Fanon's proposal for "nothing short of the liberation of the man of color from himself" (Fanon 2008, p.10) relevant. Indeed, as Fanon had argued back then, the liberation of the man of colour remains incomplete until the decolonization of the mind (Wa Thiong'o 1998) has been accomplished and his fallen self-image reversed. To undo the black hate and to inspire pride and self-confidence in a people recently coming out of centuries of racial colonial domination a Marxist (Marx 1904) economic determinism view of the problem would argue that it is the material conditions of existence that determine consciousness. So instead of aiming at changing people's consciousness and the language and words they use to name the world, it is advised to aim at changing that world. A contrarian view from the thesis of linguistic determination of race (Sartre and MacCombie 1964, p. 18) would posit that the words people speak act as a constraining habitus that circumscribes and marks the outer locus points of possible behaviour it would be reasonable to argue as Mararike does that since, 'the slavery of the mind precedes the looting of material resources and creates willing partners who cooperate in self-enslavement and participate in their own exploitation' (Mararike 1998, p. 94-95), rolling out programmes aimed at decolonizing the mind through paying attention to the content of public education and socialization programmes may be all that needs to be done to create a new mindset and language that is commensurate with a free society.

This study however, suggests that post-colonial governments in Africa have little choice but to embrace first what Sartre refers to as 'this anti-racist racism' as the only road that will lead to the abolition of racial differences as they set in motion a dually pronged decolonial agenda at both the ontological and epistemological level of intervention because the concrete material conditions of life and the ideology that feeds off them are dialectically linked. The seemingly innocuous use of such a term as *murungu* discussed above signal the existence of a much deeper psychosocial problem that calls for attention among Zimbabweans. Further inquiries into other parts of the African continent are also needed.

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