



## Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*: A Pedagogy of Resistance in an Exile Narrative

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### Abstract

Connecting Zimbabwe and England through an exile narration, Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* is received with acclamations and excitement among critics, particularly literary critics. The unnamed protagonist, through his particular way of telling [his] transnational stories has attracted critical attention and given rise to analyses combining exilic, linguistic and identity issues among other interests. In this analysis though, emphasis is placed on the very protagonist and his narrative style with the objective of showing that the novel is a pedagogical material bringing to the forefront pragmatics of resistance; resistance being a space of negotiation across geographical locations. As a consequence, this work is elaborated through Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's postcolonial perspective which will shape the interpretation of the novel and recounted events throughout the analysis. This study is located within the terrains of decolonial discourses with the aim of resulting in possibilities of countering alterity among African migrants/exiles.

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## Introduction

Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* is a novel that narrativizes hybridity and, most particularly, stands as a literary experiment of resistance. It merges exilic reconfiguration stratagems and struggles for selfhood maintenance. The novel seems to introduce new perspectives about hybridity and resistance – as common interest in diasporic writings – in relation to alterity discourses. In African Anglophone literature for instance, it is expressed through characterizations at the nexus of geographical frontiers nesting migratory and identity discourses. Writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and NoViolet Bulawayo addressed the question of hybridity in their novels *Americanah* and *We Need New Names* respectively. In *Americanah*, hybridity is materialized through Ifemelu, for instance, who appropriates and performs the American cultural and linguistic heritage as a result of her migratory experience in the US. It is told “in the following weeks, as autumn coolness's descended, she began to practice an American accent” (Adichie 134). In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo displaces the issue to descendants of Zimbabwean origin, or again, the Zimbabwean diaspora in the US where characters, people of African descent, embody, both, Americanness and Africanness. Telling about identity complexity, the narrator says “That fat boy, TK, who is also supposed to be my cousin even though I have never seen him before, says, This is America, yo, you won't see none of that African shit up in this motherfucker” (Bulawayo 147). This extract reveals the character (TK)'s identity comprising exhibited American heritage and silenced African heritage. In both cases, hybridity operates as a strategy for resistance as concerned characters often resort to the new heritage to fit into the new societies. But, unlike Ifemelu and TK, Chikwava's unnamed character resists linguistic accommodation. As a result, Brian Chikwava, with his novel *Harare North*, seems to open new perspectives in resistance discourses directed toward countering alterity.

Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* traces the journey of an unnamed male character from Zimbabwe to England. The unnamed character, who is the protagonist of the novel, is a political exile fleeing oppression from home, in search of rest and ways to collect the amount of US\$4.000 to appease his oppressors (Chikwava 18). His journey is staked out by unwelcoming relatives from home – namely his cousin Paul and his wife Sekai – and his encounter with his former schoolmate Shingi and his friends with whom he (the protagonist) strives for a living. A particular aspect of the novel is the

narration style. The stories are told in an English which is not entirely academic and which combines a variety of Englishes, including African Englishes. For critics such as Dunlop Ochieng, the restructuration of the English language throughout the novel, which contrasts with British Standard English, offers the possibility to translate local artefacts to the global landscape. He invents the term “Globlish” (Ochieng 33) to identify the English spoken by the protagonist and uses it to signify that language serves as a means to globalize local heritages, African heritages included. For Hanna Garber however, language is presented as a revolutionary apparatus. In her analysis of the novel, she considers the deformed English language as a “way to push back against the dark realities African citizens have faced through colonization” (Garber 21). Nevertheless, this linguistic manifestation across the narrative is connected to the protagonist’s identity and deserves to be viewed from a different angle; as a form of resistance. In fact, through his insubordination as far as linguistic transformation is concerned, the protagonist destabilizes power structures.

Thus, the objective of this analysis is to show that *Harare North* is a pedagogical material bringing to the fore pragmatics of resistance. In this work, pedagogy refers to the learning process about resisting host-society normativity through the protagonist’s performance. It is about how the novel offers the readers possibilities of resistance by confronting the oppressed and the oppressor. Pedagogy here overlaps with the argument that “the oppressed are not “marginals,” are not people living “outside” society. They have always been “inside” ... The solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become “beings for themselves” (Freire 76). In one word, the novel contrasts with what Paulo Freire identifies as “banking concept of education” (72) in which the protagonist (the student) is the sole recipient in the teaching process. Rather, he (protagonist) contributes in producing and sharing knowledge through his performance. Actually, the non-standard and unconventional English (protagonist’s performance) nurturing the narrative carries along the manifestation of resistance in the sphere of language. Thus, how does Chikwava’s use of an unreliable voice transform linguistic nonconformity into a form of resistance? What does the London setting reveal about home, exile and self-invention?

The combination of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis and Ngugi Wa

Thiong'o's postcolonial perspective helps to understand the protagonist's fixities and steadfast being and paves the way to elaborating on a new perspective of resistance in exile discourses. Practically, Freud's concepts of the ego, the id and the super-ego along with Ngugi's perspective conceptualized as "decentering-centering" allow to debunk the protagonist's steadfast attachment to his selfhood in a foreign location where identity naturally becomes a space of negotiation.

### **1. No English, but Englishes: Language as a Space of Resistance (and Affirmation)**

One of the most striking features in Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* is the type of language used for narration. The narrator uses a disruptive English language which counters the rules of conventional English as observed with contemporary writings. On the ground of such a language pattern, it is given the impression that the narrator substitutes conventional Englishes with a non-conventional English appropriated and used as conventional. The use of "non-conventional English" in this analysis refers to what Dunlop Ochieng has termed "non-native English" which he says refers to "a variety that exhibits systematic grammatical, structural, phonological, and morphological differences from Standard British English" (21). The narrator makes use of an English language that combines multiple Englishes from different origins. This syncretic linguistic achievement operated by the narrator, though resembling linguistic disorder, carries along ideological engagements. The English language, used as a writing technique transgressing modern codes, is established in the terrain of power negotiation.

#### **1.1. The Normativity of Linguistic Deviation**

*Harare North*'s unnamed protagonist is an activist character whose efforts are blended with political engagement and literary creativity aimed at propagating Africanism across the global literary landscape. His engagement as an activist national to Zimbabwe merges with his engagement as a continental advocate (through using African Englishes) that transcends national boundaries. Throughout the narrative, language serves as a space where his efforts are executed. His narrative style makes the English language a cosmopolitan space where colonial linguistic hegemony is ruptured at the expense of africanity. As a matter of fact, the colonial linguistic normativity is repressed while the character's conscious is governed by an *ego* (Freud 19) which constructs and

normalizes a linguistic deviation. So doing, syntactical and grammatical norms are transgressed for the benefit of constructing a linguistic heritage which does not reside in the constraints of the former colonial master's structure. For instance, he is familiar with using such awkward formulations as "Sekai say", "Poor Paul, he don't know", "Sekai want" etc... (Chikwava 103). This repetitive grammatical awkwardness is nothing but the protagonist's materialization of freedom of expression – being freed from colonial linguistic oppression. That is, he refuses to comply with the grammatical norms. For example, in his oral execution, he removes the "s" of the third person singular in the present tense (of "say" and "want") and the inflexion mode (with "don't").

Though using English as a colonial heritage, he demonstrates a detachment from a linguistic supremacy that has the tendency of dictating how users have to verbally behave. His countering standpoint becomes evident when telling about his employer who, in his mind, is misbehaving. He says about Tim, his employer: "Now he start trying to confuse me, talking fast and mixing proper English with his cockney and I can't hear even one thing" (101). The use of "proper English" to describe Tim's speaking exposes the narrator's cognizance of appropriate and convenient English. His speaking of such an English that does not align with proper English establishes a distance between himself and the English ruler. It reveals the protagonist defensiveness vis-à-vis his new linguistic environment.

For the protagonist, English, as a language, stands as an apparatus worth expanding interests. As a national of Zimbabwe, he is aware that the language has served as a state apparatus to extend the British's domination and that it has been a means to erode local languages. Consequently, he uses the same language to operate within the terrain of decolonial discourses. The use of non-conventional language within the novel resonates with resistance activism as well as a commodification of African linguistic heritage for a British readership. In fact, the use of such a non-conventional English is a means to resist the English authority.

The novel's engagement in resistance covers a broad geographical spectrum connecting Zimbabwe and England. The representation of these geographical spaces is reminiscent of the British domination. As such, the protagonist's evolution, in his function as a narrator, is grounded within the very localities with the intent of tracing back the former colonial master's

route coupled with his counter-hegemonic performance. Through narrativizing home and exile, he approaches history in an actualized lens. He refuses to differentiate between home and his place of exile on the basis of language which accounts for territories in respect of identity. To put it differently, he uses his non-conventional English to silence the master's language operating in both Zimbabwe and England. It therefore comes out that he replaces linguistic normality with linguistic abnormality – linguistic abnormality being is primary means of expression. Commenting about the novel, Hanna Garber says:

Brian Chikwava, author of *Harare North*, created his novel with language in mind; the entirety of the novel is written in broken English. This can be analyzed in a multitude of ways; the first of which is to consider that the broken English serves as a way to push back against the dark realities African citizens have faced through colonization—it is the reclamation of their identity through language use. (21)

Through such a comment, Garber sheds light on the intricate relationship between the author Brian Chikwava and his character, the unnamed protagonist and narrator, who conveys linguistic reconfigurations. As an individual who left Zimbabwe in 2001 for London where he has since been residing (Pucherová 162), there is no doubt that he is constantly in contact with “proper English”. Yet, he creates a character who cannot, apparently, speak a clear English. It is evident that the narrator has been purposely used to distill a non-conforming English which appears as a way to “push back against” the colonizer.

## 1.2. The Transplantation of Home in the Host Society: A Linguistic Manifestation

The use of a non-conventional English has a politico-ideological engagement. Through it, the protagonist claims a recognition of the African heritage/identity, in the global landscape while attenuating the supreme Us of the colonial power expressed through language. As a result, the African as Other is moved from the margin to the center. In his search for graft – appellation for job –, the protagonist comes to realize that English is a criterion for selection in working with Tim's Fish Bar. To this selection criterion that resembles an act of injustice and discrimination, he refuses to

flinch. He tells “But he don’t hire me on the first day because he think he can find someone that speak English better than me” (Chikwava 78). Later on, he tells “But now it’s evening and we is all sitting and going yari yari yari about my new graft” (80). His persistence and successful selection in spite of his non-conventional English at the expense of a better English shows that his English must be given a place. He refuses to replace his English by a conventional and correct one.

Writing about the protagonist and his English, Garber says that “his inability to capture proper language is a persisting reminder of his situation” (22). Garber advances that his linguistic awkwardness is a consequence of his status as a migrant as he attempts to place his identity in an ever-changing world (20). Even though this argument is persuasive and reminds of the dynamicity of identity, it is still relevant to consider that the character engages in an activism consisting in promoting African identities. In this regard, the novel takes on the form of a political writing as it stands with the interest of Africa within a global context (Feldner 20). For the protagonist, English is a site where power is negotiated. For that, he makes African heritages visible instead of Europeans’. The character thereby becomes a space of the materialization of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s point of view about the world under modernity.

In this work, the notion “decentering-centering” is used as an analytical term to conceptualize Ngugi’s argument meant to address global injustices subaltern nations, also constructed as Others, are victims of. The concept calls for the relocation of the nation-states, populations, cultures etc... to transition from the world periphery into the global centre. Ngugi states “there could never be only one centre from which to view the world but that different people in the world had their culture and environment as the centre” (27). Again, he says “I believe that the question of moving towards a pluralism of cultures, literatures and languages is still important today as the world becomes increasingly one... The cultures of Africa, Asia and South America, as much as those of Europe, are an integral part of the modern world” (28). Thus, “decentering-centering” is about decentering (the process of removing Europe as sole component of the centre/moving away from self/global judgment from a Eurocentric view) and centering (the process of bringing others, including one’s self, in the centre). To align with such a postulate, the protagonist substitutes the Queen’s language with a

reappropriated and reinvented English language.

Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* politicizes the use of the Queen's language. For the unnamed protagonist, it serves as an instrument of resistance and affirmation. In this regard, he consequently speaks using an English that combines African Englishes, codes local to Zimbabwe, broken English... used at his convenience. For example, he says "Shingi come from his graft and lie on his bed like defeated man" (Chikwava 165). Also, he says "Poor Paul, he don't know that he is pounding front bum that have already been thief by this point-headed Rasputin" (103). The expressions "graft" and "front bum" are deriving from Zimbabwean English, formed from local names. According to Ochieng, they respectively mean "job" and "female genitalia" (28). There are also such expressions as "*kaka*" (41), "*Shumba*" (84), "*rapoko*" (124) borrowed from local languages to construct English sentences. The usage of such an English covers the whole narration including events taking place in both, Zimbabwe, his place of origin and departure, and England, his host country and place of exile. Through the use of such an English, the protagonist demonstrates Africans' ability in Africanizing the European heritage and expresses the African presence within the global terrain. Linguistic (English) Africanization or "Africanism refers to the introduction of characteristic features of an African language into a non-African language (Collins Dictionary, 2024). It refers to elements drawn from African languages and incorporated into English constructions for different reasons" (Ochieng 24). As Ochieng reminds, this linguistic ramification is meant for many reasons and in this analysis, it is meant for the flourishing of African identity through language.

To promote the African identity through language, the protagonist constantly silences the primacy of Standard British English throughout the narration at the expense of an English infused with African elements. His Africanized English is not solely attached to Zimbabwe but is also given preeminence in England, mainly in London where he stays. Considering such a manifestation, it comes out that the protagonist engages in a sort of linguistic resistance – Londonian/British English being the target of resistance. In this perspective, Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* stands as a pedagogical material bringing forth African identity through linguistic resistance – operated even in the place of exile. The perpetuation of African identity through multiple African codes and elements is reminiscent of an actualized hybrid mode

coupled with the protagonist's psychological mechanisms that exposes his insensitiveness regarding linguistic influence in exile.

## 2. "Not Civilian": Otherness and the Search for Home

Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* has a strong interest in identity issues at the nexus of alterity and resistance. By alterity, it is meant what, quoted by Marthe Prisca Letsetsengui, Paul Ricoeur identifies as what we become as a result of relating with others, "ce que l'on devient au contact des autres" (Letsetsengui 29). And, resistance refers to "this inability to dismantle the self indicates a different form of resistance at the level of narrative, one which refuses to collapse the aesthetics with the political" (Krishnan 65). In this section, emphasis is placed on the representation of resistance in respect with alterity. In other words, it is about how alterity is subjected to resistance. For the achievement of this task, postcolonial theory and psychoanalysis are convoked. More specifically, Ngugi's perspective on globalization embodied within the concept of decentering-centering and Sigmund Freud's concept of the unconscious are central herein.

### 2.1. Becoming an Other

Brian Chikwava's unnamed protagonist has a consciousness marked by selfhood. Throughout the narrative, he constantly functions while demonstrating a deep interest and attachment about his self. A well-known approach to make it is by identifying himself as "not civilian" (Chikwava 59). This identification of his about himself derives from his experience as a military trainee, thereby a military person as he says. This appellation reminds the dynamicity of identity and that he decides to define himself in reference to a particular period of his life. The protagonist is a [former] member of a Zimbabwean militia, the "Green Bombers" (17). He tells "If you is back home leading rubbish life and ZANU-PF party offer you job in they youth movement to give you chance to change your life and put big purpose in your life, you just don't sniff at it and walk away when no one else want to give you graft in the country even if you is prepared to become tea boy" (17). Again, he says "And the jackal – it is full with them new boy recruits heading for training camp; they is all lugging football-size eyes because they don't know what everyone who remain behind is going to think of them now, but me I don't let such foolishness hassle me" (18). His membership in the Green Bombers has not only offered him "graft" but also a new face of identity to

which he demonstrates an attachment.

The protagonist's identification as "not civilian" is an apparatus for differentiation. He uses the term to establish a distance between himself and his relatives. Though Zimbabwean like others, he rather makes it his choice to showcase a selfhood resting upon a military experience. In fact, the phrase "not civilian" has a defensive and ideological performance. It carries the protagonist's military training and marks his identification with the ZANU-PF's inherited doctrine. But for critics such as Dobrota Pucherová, the protagonist's recruitment in and adherence to the Green Bombers makes him a partaker of the ongoing violence implemented by the local government. She says:

Becoming a member of the Green Bombers, loyal to the ruling ZANU-PF party, the protagonist turns from being a victim to an oppressor ... This includes Robert Mugabe's on-going political violence against ethnic minorities, white farmers and opposition voters that culminated in the cynically-named Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Drive Out Rubbish) of 2005. This large-scale government campaign to forcibly clear Zimbabwe's slum areas displaced over 700,000 people. (Pucherová 163)

Considered from Pucherová's perspective, the protagonist would then be considered as proudly exhibiting his identity as an oppressor. But, the most intriguing aspect of the protagonist's identification, is his ability to publicly express such an identity which sets him as an Other in connection with other characters. Of course, working as a member of a political party has social implications. This explains the protagonist's and some other characters' stay in England as political exiles. He says "US\$5,000 – US\$1,000 for my uncle because that's what I owe him for my plane ticket here, and US\$4,000 to sweat that pack of them hyenas that chase me around Zimbabwe wanting to catch me until I have to run away here because I don't have the money that they want so they can make my troubles go away" (Chikwava 18). This utterance by the protagonist gives a gist of both his political experience in Zimbabwe and his stay in England. But, as mentioned few lines above, his identification as "not civilian" in regard with his relatives is intriguing. It raises curiosity on how he is able to maintain such an identity across the narrative – from Zimbabwe to England.

A close consideration of the protagonist across the novel shows that

his evolution [and performance] is shaped by psychological operations. Through the manifestation of psychological mechanisms, he succeeds in establishing a difference compared to others and maintain a militia-based identity. By the terms “civilian person” (he uses to describe others) and “not civilian” (he uses to describe himself), he sets a difference from others, silences his being “civilian person” at the expense of “not civilian” that he exalts. His constant use of the term turns him into an individual who wants to maintain his uniqueness. Consequently, he becomes the site of operation of Sigmund Freud’s unconscious which grants him such possibility. The unconscious is defined as “the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them” (Tyson 12). The identification negotiation he is involved in implies being civilian and not being civilian. Out of loyalty and gratitude to the Green Bombers, he intentionally silences his state of being a civilian person which appears to be repressed. In fact, considering his discourse about transitioning to being a Green Bombers recruit, he gives evidence of negating his pre-militia life which is formulated through “If you is back home leading rubbish life and ZANU-PF party offer you job...” (Chikwava 17). The use of “rubbish life” describes his life before recruitment which, for the purpose of framing an identification, is repressed. Defining identification from a psychoanalysis perspective, Freud says “identification is known to psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person” (60). It then becomes evident that the protagonist frames his identity on the ground of a tie.

Becoming a Green Bombers member has not only offered him a job, it has also offered him a second personality, thereby yielding a fractured selfhood he has to negotiate. As a matter of fact, the protagonist becomes a double-minded character who has to negotiate and frame self-referencing in connection with affirming a social status/recognition appealing to whether to be a civilian person or not civilian person that are antagonistic personalities internal to him. But his repetitive self-identification as “not civilian” reveals that he has opted for the Green Bombers’ heritage. This constant Green Bombers self-referencing reveals the manifestation of psychoanalysis selective perception and the confrontation between the ego, the id and the super-ego in the protagonist’s mind. Selective perception is one of the mechanisms

through which the unconscious is established. It is the fact of “hearing and seeing what we feel we can handle” (Tyson 15). As such, the constant identification of the protagonist as “not civilian” exposes the constant manifestation of the unconscious shaping his personality causing the repression of his “civilian person” side.

In Freudian terms, this is the manifestation of the *id*. Freud calls “the other part of the mind, into which this entity extends and which behaves as though it were *Ucs.* (unconscious), the ‘id’ (17). Again he says “the repressed merges into the id as well, and is merely a part of it” (17). What happens in the protagonist’s mind is that his super-ego that “represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices” (Freud 30) judges across his fractured identity, represses his “civilian person” dimension (*vicissitude*) under the operation of his id which is, in turn, executed by his ego. From the ego “which represents what may be called reason and common sense” (Freud 19), the “civilian person” is rejected at the expense of the “not civilian” dimension which becomes his point of identification. Thus, he intentionally (consciously) establishes his identity on the basis of the heritage (not civilian) he believes he can assume, which he actually does.

Put differently, the protagonist is subject to two heritages embodied within “not civilian” and “civilian person” terminologies he has to negotiate. His constant identification as not civilian reveals his attachment to the Green Bombers heritage which, in turn, is an expression of resistance on the basis of psychological mechanisms. But, the use of the term “not civilian” in a Londonian context has a further goal which is not to be disregarded.

## 2.2. At Home When not at Home

The maintenance of one’s selfhood in the elsewhere is an important deal among literary artists. Among new generation African novelists particularly, it raises concerns about discrepancies pertaining to globalization and global injustices thereof. Marginalization is a social injustice going rampant among Africans living in foreign countries. A particular way through which marginalization is formed is when Africans do not feel at home in their places of arrival. Diasporic African writers locate the search of home as a central issue among African representative communities in other homes. Maximilian Feldner defines diaspora as “a collective living outside its homeland, a displaced population” (14). Thus, in addition to its exilic agenda, Brian

Chikwava's *Harare North* can be categorized as a diasporic writing. Actually, the novel combines exilic and diasporic discourses in the context of African politics.

The title of the novel *Harare North*, which has been appropriated and used several times by the narrator is a metaphorical construction. It is used to represent London as the perpetuation of Harare (capital city of Zimbabwe). Tanaka Chidora and Kudzayi Ngara observe that "Usually, when Zimbabweans speak of 'Harare North' they are referring to London. This reference to London is based on the understanding that London in particular, or the Global North in general, are just extensions of Harare because of the population of Zimbabweans living there" (78). Their argument is that Harare North is the perpetuation of Harare (Zimbabwe) to the extent that the characters experience the hardship they try to escape back at home. And, the novel confirms its diasporic dimension by advancing that, the narrator speaking, "he should not complain if Zimbabwean community in Harare North start throwing funny kind of mouth around" (Chikwava 132). In that, the protagonist is not but an additional home citizen joining his fellow citizens in Harare North (London).

The living conditions of the protagonist and his relatives in London, including his friend Shingi, make no difference between home and the host country. In this perspective, Chidora and Ngara have observed that they, protagonist and friends, "live in a perpetuate state of lack (they lack both time and money) in an environment that they had perceived as enabling" (83). Thus, London (England) becomes a mirage for these Zimbabwean adventurers; a place where hoped bliss remains unattainable. However, identity paradigm stands as a reality they cannot escape. Like contemporary diasporic texts, African communities living abroad constantly suffer identity crises and loss. In Teju Cole's *Open City* for instance, Farouq from Morocco is concerned with difference in foreign countries. He complains about the fact that a foreigner cannot fully live and be accepted on the ground of his uniqueness. The narrator, Julius, says "My friend's specific trouble is about being here and maintaining his uniqueness, his difference" (Cole 143). Whereas material possessions are central to new African diasporic discourses, realities about selfhood remains of high interest.

Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* is deeply concerned with selfhood and alterity. It aligns with general occurrences related to exile. In the narrative,

characters from Zimbabwean origin are victims of Londonization – the becoming, transformation, as a consequence of living in London. Such transformations, in many cases, are means of integration within host countries and often serves as means of camouflage. This (camouflage) is made visible through that character who is said to have reinvented himself. The narrator tells:

With hands in my pockets, I sit on bench. That old man from Tulse Hill Estate, the one that don't like being known by homeboys, he is there wearing cap and brown oversized dungarees, blue long-sleeved shirt and old boots. He have reinvent himself complete; you never think he is Zimbabwean if you don't know him. Now he is busy sucking cigarette, blowing them great clouds of smokes while everyone sit around him, hanging on every word he talk". (Chikwava 127)

The metamorphosis of this character, the old man, is both for dissimulation and an attempt to erase a past that is likely to expose him to his countrymen. His dressing style and behavior are all reflection of London, which also accommodate weather realities. He crystalizes his transformation by an intention of becoming an unknown to his people. He is a clear evidence of London (England) being a hegemonic space subjugating exiles as well as immigrants/displaced persons. His intentionally framed attitude also demonstrates his attachment and option for the Londonian heritage. To this extent, Marthe Prisca Letsetsengui is right to affirm that exile is one of the strongest sites for identity torn apart; "L'exil, phénomène ancestral, s'inscrit dans l'histoire de l'humanité comme l'une des plus profondes déchirures identitaires" (21). This remarks effectively applies to that character identified as "old man".

However, the protagonist stands as a transgressor of such transformation tradition. He breaks up with the tradition by maintaining his home-exported-uniqueness – thereby resisting alterity as a consequence of living in London. His being not civilian becomes a silencer of London/England affect. Here, in the Londonian context, his state as not civilian bears on an ambivalent meaning. He symbolically turns out to be a military whose defensive actions reside in protecting the Zimbabwean heritage. "Not civilian" carries along the idea of not being a part of ordinary individuals who usually undergo transformation in the elsewhere. For that, he

has set on psychological processes in order to dilute the Londonian influence over him. Actually, he gives evidence of knowing how to become a London-like individual but rather maintains his attachment to home and keeps his pre-Londonian self. He tells:

I stir the sugar inside Shingi and Tsitsi for days and tell them that to learn this culture they also have to ease down some of they native behaviours so they don't frighten them important English people.

It is important to use your eyes, your ears and mouth if you is wanting to catch culture, I teach them. Look, listen and taste. Listen to the music that them people here is listening to, and be careful about them names of the bands that you is listening to. (Chikwava 147)

The paradox about the protagonist's performance is that he knows how to become a reflection of London, gives evident of learning the British/London culture (147) but apparently remains unchanged. In this extract, he clearly tells his friends how to become Londonian-like individuals but remains, in practical terms, attached to Zimbabwe while, himself, a resident in London. Thus, the protagonist appears as ridiculizing the Londonian hegemony, both materially and psychologically. As such, he refuses to become an Other by transferring his home practices. He tells "I walk into the park and my bladder is full. I want to pee, I go straight to them trees on the edge of the park and don't care if people can see me. The biggest tree. It have one untidy small anthill growing on its foot and the anthill is crawling with them termites. I pee on them straight and square" (184). Here, the protagonist is acting according to habits developed back at home. This urination scene implies a masculine performativity and disregard for public norms. Such a behavior contrasts with London's/England's ethics but does it anyway, not caring about people around him. The scene reveals the protagonist's attachment to home. He is, in this perspective, engaged in a process of countering psychological interference from Harare North (London) which acts like a demiurge intending to shape exiles' ways of life.

The protagonist's resistance to alterity in England is nothing but the operation of psychoanalytical frameworks mixed with postcolonial perspectives. As an opponent to the metropolitan cultural hegemony, he has a personality strongly dominated by the unconscious. The maintenance of his uniqueness in London in spite of its power observable through other characters exhibits his constant disregard of the Londonian heritage at the

expense of a selfhood imported from Zimbabwe which is actually a mixture of heritages. In that, Pucherová is right to remark that “the protagonist both resists and flirts with power” (162). It comes out that to maintain his personality in London and constantly disregard its influence is a manifestation of that psychological mechanism identified as selective perception which consists in hearing and seeing what one feels he can handle. In addition, the transfer of the protagonist’s pre-exilic self in Harare North is reminiscent of Ngugi’s conceptualized ideology of decentering-centering. By that, the protagonist becomes the expression of acting home when not at home. Living in London on the ground of his uniqueness turns London in a cosmopolitan environment and a space of difference in which he lives under the dependence of his own self.

### Conclusion

Brian Chikwava’s *Harare North* is an exile narrative that revitalizes resistance discourses in the literary milieu. Its protagonist has raised concerns about linguistic operations and political manifestations but also remains the epicenter of resistance in this analysis. Throughout the novel, he is able to maintain an English language typical to himself and a selfhood that appears to be transcendental and transnational. In this analysis, the ability to unwaveringly maintain such personal traits across geographical locations and various social and cultural environments is perceived as a form of resistance.

In this regard, the concern of this work has been to explore the protagonist’s evolution with the intent of searching possibilities of resistance. Through Ngugi’s postcolonial perspective about globalization, it appears that the protagonist’s maintenance of his uniqueness in England, his place of exile, is not but the materialization of being at home even when not at home. Through him, the concept of decentering-centering is well formed to the extent that readers are offered a living environment which does not solely reside on a category of people but where the marginalized become centered. Altogether, under Freud’s psychoanalysis, it comes out that the protagonist constantly puts forth his pre-exilic self while constantly repressing the “civilian person” and Londonian heritages manifested through linguistic and cultural habits.

Such an achievement has been possible through the protagonist’s [un]conscious. Actually, he is a character whose life is governed by the

unconscious (the id) that constantly bounds him to past Zimbabwean heritages at the expense of present English heritage which is repressed. His *ego*, dominated by his *id* (unconscious), takes over and places him as an unreliable character. In one word, Brian Chikwava's novel is a pedagogical material whose resistance discourse rests upon postcolonial and psychoanalytical processes. It offers (teaches) readers, in the process of reading and interpreting, strategies for maintaining a selfhood in the host society.

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