

Constructing an Alien Double: Mr Blair Meets Mr Mugabe

Julia Gallagher¹

¹Royal Holloway, University of London, Politics and International Relations, London, UK

julia.gallagher@rhul.ac.uk

Anglo-Zimbabwe relations, which had remained reasonably warm after Zimbabwean independence in 1980, deteriorated sharply when Tony Blair became prime minister in 1997. Blair found Robert Mugabe difficult to deal with, and Zimbabwe remained a troubling spoiler to his wider help-for-Africa narrative. Mugabe was increasingly depicted as a rogue-president by the British government. Mugabe, facing economic and political pressure at home, managed skillfully to portray Blair and the British as neo-colonial meddlers. The relationship descended into tit-for-tat recrimination and name-calling, but to different extents, each drew strength from the encounter, for their own personal standing both at home and internationally.

Building on this case study, the paper explores the relationship between self-image and the creation of the image of an 'enemy' in international relations. It draws on the work of Julia Kristeva who has referred to the development of subjectivity as a process of constructing an 'alien double' in contrast to the creation of a 'resplendent [self]-image'. Charting the ways in which Blair and Mugabe made alien doubles out of each other in order to refresh their own 'resplendent images', it discusses the role of such subjectivity formation in relation to states.