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Zimbabwe/Rhodesia Writing Home: Space, Place, Mobility and Diasporic Identity in Selected Novels

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DECLARATION

I declare that "Zimbabwe/Rhodesia Writing Home: Space, Place, Mobility and Diasporic Identity in Selected Novels" is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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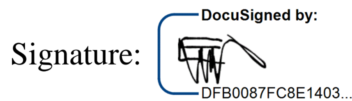
Signature: 

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how "unhomeliness" in a Zimbabwean context enjoins mobility and the diasporic particularities that manifest as subjects move back and forth in a home-making journey between the country-side and the urban, as well as mobility to foreign countries and back to the homeland. Particularities of inclusion and exclusion, (re)emplacement, (re)identity, assimilation, rejection and (un)belonging, all loom large as mobility, paradoxically, takes root and comes to shape experience in as significant a way as being in a homeland or hostland. This thesis is also about the ways in which the "diasporic" settler, in one of the novels which destabilises the familiar paradigms of diasporic literature, can exist and be dominant in the foreign but colonised spatial setting without needing to assimilate, and how this attempt to territorialise can traumatise those marginalised by the settler community. Since the end of the twentieth century, there has been a rise in the significance of space in humanities and literary studies. Theories about diaspora, identity and belonging have featured strongly in works of scholars of space and place such as Henri Lefebvre, Yi-Fu Tuan, Doreen Massey, Edward Soja, Tim Cresswell, Nigel Thrift, Robin Cohen, John Agnew, and Kelly Baker. Space is largely regarded as a dimension within which matter is located. Place is the "where" dimension in people's relationship to the physical environment, conjuring up feelings of "belonging" and "identity". The study of mobilities within altering space and place requires a clearly defined perspective of "home" and "away", and this will be at the centre of this study, especially as it relates to diasporic identity and (un)belonging in the new spatial setting. When space purchases individual and collective meaning, it becomes place. This leads to the (re)production and (re)constitution of identity. I will study how migrations can add to our appreciation of (un)belonging and identity, and how migration itself is recalled and fused into narratives about the past in varied contexts. Because they share identity, culture and traditions, diasporic people hold recollections about their homeland. When "away", they are often marginalised and ostracised. What they remember about their homeland helps them challenge victimisation in their hostland. While the geography of social relations fluctuates like relations between spaces, and new identity is created and triggered by many things that turn space into place, my focus will be on the production, sustenance, and transformation of identity in the diaspora, including notions of exclusion, inclusion, and (un)belonging, all through the lens of space and place. This study will focus on the novels of five authors for whom Rhodesia/Zimbabwe is a home or hostland, namely, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name* (1994), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician* (2014), and Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950). This selection of Zimbabwean novels allows a comprehensive examination of the key questions in relation to transnational relocation, including the less familiar exploration of these concerns in a *national* context. Lessing's novel is the anomaly in the group of novels since it allows the examination of the key questions in the inverted mirror image of the colonial moment from the white settler point of view.

KEYWORDS: Space, place, mobility, diaspora, belonging, identity, Zimbabwean novel, Doris Lessing, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Yvonne Vera, Tendai Huchu, NoViolet Bulawayo.

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INTRODUCTION

> *During the last 20 years or so, a 'spatial turn' has made its way across the social sciences and humanities. It has arisen from all kinds of theoretical and practical impulses, but its effect has been clear enough: the identification of what seems like a constantly expanding universe of spaces and territories, each of which provides different kinds of inhabitation – from the bordering provided by the womb, through all the things in the home that are just out of reach, through the corporeal traces of buildings and landscapes that provide a kind of half-remembered poetics, through the ways in which vast political and commercial empires – and the resultant wealth and misery – can be fashioned from the mundane comings and goings of ships and trains and now planes, through all of the billions of invisible messages that fleetingly inhabit the radio spectrum and each another dimension on to life.* (Thrift 139)

In so far as the novel, almost without exception, constructs space and place in its narrative structure, it constructs also conceptions of home and away. The Zimbabwean novels I have chosen to study are focused mainly on "away", but also with constructions of home in host spaces of relocation of the diasporic, the exile, the settler, the migrant, the asylum seeker, and the refugee, to name some of the terms by which the person who is "away" is described in contemporary discourses. Giving due regard to these concerns as this study will, one sees that in the contemporary postcolonial, globalised, transnational world, the stories told by great literature have been expanded to include not only the story of the journey, but also the story of the stranger who comes to town through the eyes of the stranger, rather than the stories about the stranger from the perspective of home communities. The texts under examination will demonstrate, through the movement of subjects, what is referred to in the

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epigraph as "constantly expanding universe of spaces and territories." In examining Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* (1994), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2014), Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician* (2014), and Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* (1950), this study seeks to illustrate that in all these novels, space is traversed literally or metaphorically to bring characters into new spaces, which they then negotiate in order to turn them into place; or, in other words, how in the journeys of characters, they are required to find varying ways of creating a sense of home. In many of these journeys, the journey itself, or mobility itself paradoxically becomes the only tenuous home.

Drawing on a wide range of contemporary diaspora, mobility, and space and place theories without being limited by any one approach, this study explores and examines the ambiguous diasporic concepts of "home" and "belonging", and "inclusion" and "exclusion". As we shall see, by carefully studying and interrogating the concepts of (un)belonging, assimilation and rejection, as they relate to "home" especially in the context of altering space and place, what becomes clear is the migrants'/exiles'/expatriates' ambivalence towards their native country. The very fact of their being away from home brings into sharp focus their commitment to the "homeland". The conditions under which they live in their new environment have a significant impact in whether the migrants'/exiles'/expatriates' set out to move on and forget about their place of origin, or if they at once proceed to carve a new home for themselves while longing for the homeland.

Through the study of the selected texts, this thesis examines how an initial "unhomeliness" enjoins the mobility towards an elsewhere from what the epigraph aptly describes as "the bordering provided by the womb, through all the things in the home that are just out of reach, through the corporeal traces of buildings and landscapes that provide a kind of half-remembered poetics" , and the diasporic particularities that manifest as subjects move

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back and forth in a home-making journey between the countryside and the urban, as well as mobility to foreign countries and back to the homeland. Particularities of inclusion and exclusion, (re)emplacement, (re)identity, assimilation, rejection and (un)belonging, all loom large as mobility proliferates. This thesis is also about the ways in which the "diasporic" settler, as opposed to the migrant or the refugee, can exist and be dominant in the foreign but colonised spatial setting without needing to assimilate, and how this attempt to territorialise can traumatise marginal members of the settler community.

We see the above processes at play in the selected novels. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is a novel which tells a story about personal struggles creating "nervous conditions" as a consequence of Shona patriarchy and colonialism. The novel allows for juxtapositioning the Zimbabwean rural, spatial setting and the colonial urban setting. The main character, Tambu, longs to experience the freedom that she believes her rural village denies her, thinking that when her well-off uncle offers to pay for her education, her dreams have come true. But she soon learns that the education she receives at his mission school, representing the "modern" urban, comes at a price. *Nervous Conditions* comes to illustrate how a subject who is strongly emplaced by her formative sense of place and identity has the capacity to re-settle in new spatial settings, even if it is with the understanding that no place is fully homely. Irony is the device by which the displaced subject registers her strategic emplacement in new locales. Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name*, on the other hand, more directly tracks mobility from country to city, and power relations through space and place in the city. Through the narration of Mazvita's plight of rape, of slaughter of the family, and later of the intentional killing of an infant, a comparison between space and place in the countryside and the city, and power relations through space and place in the contested city are articulated. Vera's *Without A Name* presents an "unhomeliness" which enjoins mobility from the countryside to the city space where particularities of rejection and (un)belonging persist

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as the subject finds herself alienated in the altered spatial setting. Here the subject finds herself negotiating a “home” in the *possibility* of mobility itself, since her various mobile homes also prove unhomely. *We Need New Names* examines, among other things, the movement of the key character, Darling, from the informal settlement Paradise in Zimbabwe to the foreign land of the United States. In the homeland, families suffer traumatising experiences of violence, of indignity, of hunger, and of death. Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names* allows an examination of cultural identity and belonging in an altered spatial setting, the United States, which offers diasporics the political stability and material comfort they cannot enjoy in the homeland. *We Need New Names* thus examines the impact the hostland can have on the “diasporic”, and the use of online and cyberspace communication to collapse borders between hostland and home, placing people everywhere at the same time. In Tendai Huchu’s *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, the focus is on three Zimbabwean expatriates, eponymously referred to in the title. Their stories are told with the focus on immigrant themes of belonging, social integration, identity, yearning and loss. Particularities created by the reality of displacement, fragmentation, isolation, and assimilation on the reformulation of identity form the focus of this novel. *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, explores expatriation of the “home” to the hostland and the consequent turning of space into place, including re-emplacement where the diasporic struggles to create “home” in a foreign city. *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, which assumes a transnational dimension, is about the struggle subjects go through in order to belong and to find home in a foreign land. Finally, we explore Doris Lessing’s *The Grass Is Singing*. This is a novel that tells the story of a movement from the city space to the rural, but, in contrast to the novels discussed, the movement is of a white colonial settler woman. It is a novel about the power struggle between racist settlers and oppressed natives where, interestingly, both the settler and the native are “unhomed”.

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Focusing on the key character, Mary, a struggle with assimilation and abandonment in the new space and place is manifested. We see that *The Grass Is Singing* presents the ways in which the "diasporic" settler can exist and be dominant in the foreign but colonised spatial setting without needing to assimilate, and how mobility, and (re)identity can traumatise subjects who are discriminated against in the patriarchal colonial order. In Lessing's novel we also see a contrasting of the settler with the immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker and the diasporic. Ultimately, the picture that forms in Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* is that the immigrant who thinks she is a settler or master in the oppressed native's land cannot and does not find home in a space that she racially dominates but to which she is foreign. While the female settler racially dominates, she herself is dominated by the patriarchy of the colonial hierarchy, creating paradoxes of belonging and unbelonging both for herself and indigenous subjects.

One way of studying the Zimbabwean novel, particularly to the extent that the selected texts are concerned, is to accept that the reader will be confronted with narratives that seek to expose the suffocation and untenable existential conditions suffered by the people of Zimbabwe. Often, these novels appeal to the consciousness of the reader while at the same time offering a resistance to the status quo. In these novels, subjects find themselves suffering losses of place and all the security that comes with it. They engage in mobility to other places in order to become what they cannot be at home, that is to taste freedom, to participate meaningfully in the economy, to be free of political persecution, and to have a fair chance at realising their dreams. They engage in mobility because nothing is clearer to them than the hope that things are better elsewhere. But even in the elsewhere, some of the subjects find that particularities that caused them to flee their places of origin still persist. They realise that it is not automatic that they will "belong". They realise that the urban, in the cities of the countries they flee to, does not always represent the milk and honey that their place of origin

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denied them. Although vastly different, they soon come to realise that the new spatial setting, just like the place of origin, is fraught with challenging particularities.

The novels selected for this study present intranational and transnational migrations. There are other Zimbabwean novels that could have been considered, but to include them would result in a potential duplication of ideas, making the thesis unwieldy. The novels considered as background to the study but finally not analysed include the following: Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* depicts an exile experience that is premised upon the escape of characters from places that are familiar but suffocating, for new places that are bewildering for various reasons. In the depiction of transnational movement, this novel is similar to Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, and Huchu's *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician*. In *Shadows*, Zimbabwean writer Novuyo Rosa Tshuma illustrates disruptions and interruptions of Zimbabwean lives and their subsequent migration to neighbouring South Africa, where they undergo episodes of re-traumatisation. Tshuma paints a picture of individuals trapped in particularities of tension and suffocation, on the one hand unable to carve a life for themselves at home and, on the other, finding it difficult to settle in the cold and hostile host country, even though it is African rather than American as in *We Need New Names* or British as in *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician*. Similar tropes occur in Meg Vandermerwe's *Zebra Crossing* (2013). Here, Vandermerwe chronicles the wanderings of migrants in South Africa, where threats of community disorder and scenes of xenophobia are real. The emerging interest in intracontinental African diaspora seen in these two narratives is explored further in the short fiction which forms the postscript to the thesis.

Across the range of novels selected for study there are overlaps of the themes of home, belonging and unbelonging. We see characters looking to an elsewhere for a better life, a life which the first home seems unable to provide. Because of the unhomeliness of

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home, we see developing the common thread of mobility, movement, and the impacts of mobility as characters break boundaries, and cross borders in leaving their homes.

The research component of the thesis is followed by a postscript which includes a reflective essay and a short fiction. In researching and analysing the selected novels, I often found myself wondering how questions may have been addressed and developed differently to the paths taken by the authors. These thoughts inspired the writing of the short story, “Bond and Transient Musings”, where I explore, most notably, the diaspora not only of human beings, but also of their companion animals. The negotiation of space, with the resulting formation of place, home, and belonging impact animals as sentient beings as much as they do humans. And when these animals are companion animals, they may influence the sense of belonging and identity also of human subjects. Two key concepts in this thesis are the ideas of “space” and “place” to which the focus now turns.

Space and Place

In the opening of his seminal work *The Production Of Space*, Henri Lefebvre notes that “[n]ot so many years ago, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area” (1). Today, as will be proven throughout this work, “space” has preoccupied the thinking of human geographers and spatial scholars, and its meaning has expanded. Through the texts examined, we will see that even for the creation of a narrative not ostensibly about relocation, authors have to negotiate space in constructing the landscapes and locales of their stories. Space, it is clear from the narratives, is endowed with meaning when it gets occupied and peopled by characters, becoming place. Thus, space and place are not simply neutral containers or backdrops for action. If a place feels like home, characters start to feel like they belong, they feel safe, and this comfortable feeling results in the contruction of new identities because of the accommodation to the new spatial setting.

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When this (re)identity takes place, subjects are often faced with a decision, consciously or unconsciously, to either do away with their original identity, or fuse both the new and the old to build something unique.

Place is essentially an "instrument" through which shared societal imperatives like culture, tradition, politics, economy, etc., can be produced and reproduced. But, as scholar Charles Tilley claims, place itself can also have an identity, much like the subjects who inhabit space: "Places, like persons, have biographies in as much as they are formed, used, and transformed in relation to practice ... stories acquire part of their mythic value and historical relevance if they are rooted in the concrete details of locales in the landscape, acquiring material reference points that can be visited, seen and touched" (33). In the close analysis of the narratives that make up this study, it will be clear that places are often presented and constructed in stories much like human characters are constructed. This is sometimes what is referred to as the "spirit" of a place.

Furthermore, space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, and temporalise it. The constant movement of people as they get on with their lives, for instance, is in itself a perpertual spatial contruction. A family gathering at a restaurant to celebrate Christmas, or a church gathering, the occupation of a bed in a hospital ward and thousands of people assembling to enjoy a live music performance – all these activities generate a spatiality, the shape of which depends on those aspects which serve to produce it. This notion of the spatial production occurring as contantly as those aspects which produce it is supported by Michel Foucalt. Foucalt writes in "Of Other Spaces," that "the great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history… [but in the twentieth century] [w]e are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed." (22). Foucault's conception of late modernity as "the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of

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the dispersed" cannot be read without the understanding that it is an epoch that is at once also responsible for the production of new identity for those involved in spatial production. What this study is tasked with, among other things, is to examine how we can understand place in its relationship with the formation of human identity, how we can understand place as having an identity of its own, and how we can understand place in its full spatial complexity and dynamism.

Here Foucault argues a movement from the temporal to the spatial. In so doing, Foucault has inspired the first explicit claims about this paradigm shift; since then, the idea of the spatial paradigm has been propagated among several human sciences. Foucault's theorisation about the production of space gave rise, it can be argued, to the notion championed by Edward Soja called the "spatial turn." In the final analysis, what becomes clear is that the constant transformation and mobility in what Foucault characterises as "the epoch of simultaneity" is directly responsible for Soja's "spatial turn", and if we consider that space is a social phenomenon being incessantly produced, grasped, and transformed through complex interactions of human activities and experiences, it becomes helpful to apply a spatial paradigm in order to examine the selected Zimbabwean/Rhodesian texts of migration, exile, and diaporic identity, inclusion and exclusion.

Because this study accepts that place is ultimately an occupation and modification of space, it will seek to reveal the struggle characters go through as they (or as the new spatial setting) bring into existence the modification. Also, in defining space and place, I agree with John Agnew when he suggests that

> [i]n the simplest sense place refers to either a location somewhere or to the occupation of that location. The first sense is of having an address and the second is about living at that address. Sometimes this distinction is pushed further to separate the physical

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> place from the phenomenal space in which the place is located. Thus place becomes a particular or lived space. Location then refers to the fact that places must be located somewhere. Place is specific and location (or space) is general. (6)

The simplicity of the definition will be helpful in my study. The creation of place is a direct function of ascribing meaning to space. In order for it to be a "lived space", a place, or put more simply, a "home", space needs to be occupied. Tim Cresswell, in concert with Agnew's point argues that "[a] place is a center of meaning –we become attached to it, we fight over it and exclude people from it – we experience it" (3). Agnew does not stop there, however. He stresses that "[p]lace is the setting for social rootedness and landscape continuity. Location/space represents the transcending of the past by overcoming the rootedness of social relations and landscape in place through mobility and the increased similarity of everyday life from place to place" (8). Using this assertion as a springboard, the study will examine how "mobility and the increased similarity of everyday life from place to place" (8) shapes daily experiences of characters in the selected novels as they move from one spatial setting to another. The study will also examine Agnew's other contention that "[p]lace is often associated with the world of the past and location/space with the world of the present and future. From one perspective, place is therefore nostalgic, regressive or even reactionary, and space is progressive and radical" (5). This becomes clear when one examines, for example, Vera's characters who move from the village to the city – only to find the city as unhomely as the village. Also, we shall see that Bulawayo's Darling, whose dream was to leave her Zimbabwean poverty-stricken informal settlement for an affluent city in the United States, does not find her new spatial setting as fulfilling as she had hoped. The sense of belonging and of dreams fulfilled of those who leave their countries for others is not always realised.

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A sense of place – which would have derived from the occupation of space, or the affective bond or link between people and specific places – is the expressive and sentimental connectedness people have with a particular area. This may result in the attachment to that particular place, or its rejection. This connectedness can essentially be recognised through how people identify with place, and how they ultimately depend on place for existence. As characters in the selected novels find themselves in foreign terrains, the study will seek to establish if the new spatial settings give meaning, a meaning which had not been available to the relocated person but acquired through the place itself as a result of the new "occupation". The study will examine if as a consequence of the new "occupation" fresh social and moral constructions arise and, whether there is a rejection of such.

Place exists because space is being occupied. Even though place is not part of that which occupies it – place, ceases to exist and morphs into space as soon as it becomes unoccupied. In other words, that which occupies place, and place itself, can be imagined independently. Owing to this notion, there will unavoidably exist a degree of tension, a resistance of sorts, from both the place itself and that which occupies it. The study will examine this tension through the lens of space and place. Because of the interconnectedness of place and space, the study will also examine and find examples in the selected literature which reveal that neither space nor place can exist without the other. It will also explore how aspects of the place of origin are transported across spatial settings in order to transform spaces to places. Do people construct themselves anew, completely regardless of the influence(s) of their place of origin? Even more importantly, do people construct themselves anew in spite of the new environs? What are the ongoing struggles between the new and the old, and how do these manifest? And since humans have the capacity to connect events that have occurred within different historical or sequential contexts, our life accounts are permeated with references to history and the historical construction of place. What degree of

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this construction is a function of the vestiges of the original home? Indeed, what degree of this construction is a function of the new milieu and its peculiarities? What happens to distance when spatial settings change? Is it "disappeared" through the imagining of the old and new as the same? Or does it remain pronounced, showing itself throughout the struggles between the new and original inhabitants of the new spatial setting? Ultimately, and perhaps most importantly, place can be seen as a cocoon which wraps itself around an occupant. When the occupant moves, it morphs to space, ultimately casing itself around a future occupant.

What does, for instance, the new experience of an elevator climbing a skyscraper somewhere in Detroit do to a foreign student whose original place is a Zimbabwean informal settlement? Does it make him or her appreciate the "backwardness" of their place of origin even more? Does it make the student wish that the homeland can one day offer its citizens such civilisation? Consumed by excitement, does the student quickly modernise and forget about the rural past? The altering of one's spatial setting can be both freeing and traumatising. It is an emotional, personal journey that does not necessarily mean that the "new" will in fact be embraced at the expense of the "old", nor does it follow that the new will be embraced at all. The dispersed, based on prevailing circumstances, make personal decisions which determine whether they find their new environs welcoming and homeley, or not. Ultimately, the question that arises is whether place ends up claiming people, or whether people end up claiming the new environs. We see that the geographical and the social work together in simultaneity to effect spatial production.

But the larger point of this study can be easily understood through its organising intent. It hopes to uncover significant new insights that will assist in extending our practical knowledge into more effective actions to achieve greater grasp of spatial matters as they relate to belonging and identity. Place plays an integral role in human experience, or in that

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which is endowed with meaning. Perhaps because they were not fully at ease with what they felt was a theoretically and experientially inadequate definition of place – a phenomenon that I believe in simple terms stands for that which is made meaningful, leading thinkers like Yi-Fu Tuan, Tim Cresswell, John Agnew, Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Edward W. Soja, Kelly Baker, Nigel Thrift, to name just a few, have spent time theorising about it. We will in a moment get to reflect on what some of them have to say, but let us first start by making clear what space and place mean in terms of this study. We submit that upon its occupation, space allows for place to come into existence, and therefore it is important for this study to immediately admit that space pre-exists place. The various studies by leading thinkers in this area sought to examine and ultimately clarify human circumstances, actions, meanings, and familiarities as they are known in everyday life – but usually beneath the level of consciousness, unobserved. The interconnectedness of space and place will be made apparent at the beginning of this study, and so we shall scrutinise space and place together before we break into dissecting them individually; however, neither space nor place can exist without the other. This approach has an important consequence in the fact that, between the two, neither space nor place should be privileged over the other.

In *Identity, Memory and Place*, Kelly Baker, who is a prominent scholar in the areas of rural and urban anthropology, space and place, and gender and sexuality argues that “the relationship between space and place is increasingly understood as incomplete, shifting, contextual, and constantly in motion, shaped by complicated networks and webs of power” (24). This is true of all of the novels studied where we see mobility and disaporic re-identification taking place within the nation-space, such as in the case of Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* and Vera’s *Without A Name*, as well as beyond national borders so that mobility, as in the case of Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names* and Huchu’s *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician,* assumes a transnational dimension. In all of these novels,

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relationships of power shaping and re-shaping space and place are clearly evident. Thus we see that "the relationship between space, place, and identity […] remains contested" (24), or in some cases, fluid in the novels considered. Furthermore, the novels also show how despite increasing mobility in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, human beings continue to have a need to convert the estranging spaces in which they come to find themselves into place. Therefore, "place is understood as having a continued relevance for, and dialogic relationship with, individual and collective identity … [a]nd despite increasing mobility, our physical situatedness in time and space places us; our bodies locate us physically in place, which localises at least some aspects of our lives and identities, as well as our searches for and senses of belonging" (26). I concur with Baker because place is essentially made up of the material environment that constitutes its existence, but also the way individual human subjects engage that environment. So, a "dialogic relationship" endures in the stories of placemaking told in the novels even when the stories end. In the Zimbabwean narratives of home and away that are considered, a static, closed sense of home and identity are not created. Instead the dialogic relationship with place continues till the end, and even beyond formal closure of the novels.

Baker's analysis of placemaking is interesting since it extends from the individual's sense of place to that of shifting communities to which that individual belongs. She suggests that: "An individual's sense of belonging to a place is thus a process that, embedded in personal and place histories, is framed by both imaginative and material senses of place, which, providing an impetus for collective belonging, can extend to fellow inhabitants of that place" (27). We see the dynamic between individual and collective senses of place being constructed in some of the novels. For example, in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, the key protagonist, Darling, fuses her individual sense of place with that of a larger exile community. Even though Darling is not related to any of them, three of these characters from

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back home in Zimbabwe are given family names: *Uncle* Themba, *Aunt* Welcome and *Aunt* Chenia. They come together in a foreign land and make Zimbabwean food and sing and dance to music from their homeland. Darling acknowledges that "the reason they are my relatives now is they are from my country too – it's like the country has become a real family since we are in America, which is not our country" (161). This process constructs new particularities in the new spatial setting, particularities which ultimately have a bearing on how place is contructed. Through this examination, an attempt is made to establish if there is shared attachment to place.

Nigel Thrift is another scholar of space and place whose ideas are quite relevant to this study. He argues in the epigraph, which is from the introduction to his 2006 article simply called "Space", that there are constant movements between home and host spaces, even though some are so insignificant as not to be noticed. The move from the womb to waiting world or movement from family home to one's own are spatial movements, certainly, but this study is concerned with bigger moves that are culturally significant. These would be movements, as we shall see in the selected texts that are examined, from countryside to city and back, and from one nation to the other. Throughout, as the selected literature is studied through the lens of space and place, the shaping of "the mundane comings and goings of ships and trains and now planes" will be examined. Owing to scholar Yi-Fu Tuan's observation that "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (6), there will be an emphasis on the materiality of places as occupied spaces, as containers that assume shape only as Tuan's "pause" takes effect, no matter how fleeting or permanent. As part of its focus the study of the selected works will determine if the "original home", which in my submission is both a bodily milieu and a set of mores and practices, is effaced to give way to the intricacies and complications of the new spatial setting. This is important, more so

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because a sense of home – a belonging to a people and place as embodied materially through all sorts of physical intricacies and milieus – can be understood as an existential experience that is entangled with the materiality of place. The struggle that characters in the selected literature will face in the new spatial settings, their figuring-out of what it means to be in a new space and place will be explored. What new representations and symbols come into play, and how do they compare to those of the original spatial setting?

Space, Place and Diasporic (Re)identity

In order to properly interrogate the concept of diaspora, it is helpful to start off by appreciating the full import of the meaning of the combination of space, place and (re)identity. As argued earlier, mobility results in ever altering spatial circumstances which have a direct bearing on how those who engage in mobility see themselves, and what form of identity they end up assuming or forming for themselves. It is for instance not always possible, while in diaspora, to listen to music from back home, to speak one's mother tongue, to exercise freely one's culture and traditions. Because one exists in a hostland that has its own culture and traditions, and because one seeks to belong and to carve a home for themselves in a place one fully knows is foreign, one tends to be quick to learn these new things so that survival (and maybe prosperity) can be achieved. Due to the interplay of concepts, there is a need to clarify the definitions of space and place, which have been extensively discussed by scholars and humanistic geographers, phenomenologists and philosophers. Of course, as we have already pointed out, space and place are two terms that cannot be separated, and to define their limits rigidly is not what we intend.

As will be clear through the examination of what leading scholars have said, space and place are intricate notions. Through their interconnectedness, one notion exists to make

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the other possible. The notions of space and place have to do with bodily experiences, optical experiences of the environment and locale within which one finds herself, including the traditions and cultures and languages that make that locale. All these constantly altering particularities make space and place complex, requiring constant reimagining by social scientists and human geographers. Leaders in the field of space and place such as Tim Cresswell and Myria Georgiou have led in this reimagination, and have shown the existence of the two notions to be dependent on each other because for one to speak of place, one must first speak of space that gets infused with human activity, which then translates into place. For this to happen, mobility needs to take root, and physical boundaries must be crossed. This mobility often happens when people are motivated by reasons such as their home space becoming unhomely or simply seeking to experience different environments. These movements convert spaces into places. Whether these places ultimately become "home" is not guaranteed because it all depends on the accompanying particularities existing in the hostland. Even scholars such as Henri Lefebvre have commented on the complexity of space, arguing in *The Production of Space* (1974), that space, as this study also argues, is in fact socially produced. Space, therefore has an impact on the existential experiences of that which exists in it, and the two are therefore connected in ways that make then inseperable. In *Thirdspace* (1996), Edward W. Soja has also emphasised the enduring link between space and what exists inside and outside of it. What seems to connect the scholars is the fact that space is a physical, social contruct. Thus everyday human behaviour converts space into place. This view is shared by cultural historian Michel de Certeau, who argues that the formation and reproduction of space and place is a function of constant physical movement, which is often fraught with struggles of (un)belonging and rejection. In other cases, the particularities of (un)belonging and rejection are a result of struggles between genders. Patriarchy and the treatment of women as less than equal to men complicate the construction

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of space and place. Thus women end up being spatially disdvantaged simply because they are women; and men beneficiaries simply because they are men. The "borders" that need to collapse in order to level the spatial playing field are therefore not only physical but also interpersonal.

In order to have a clearer perspective of what place is about, we rely on leading human geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan. Tuan, who is known for his groundbreaking views on the concept of a "sense of place", asserts that "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (6). This observation accords with the earlier argument that space becomes place – a home, if the dispersed manage to settle, once the dispersed is able to emplace themselves in it, or, as Tuan puts it, once they get "to know it better and endow it with value" (6). It is thus possible to derive from Tuan's perspective about space and place that place is in other words space that has been endowed with meaning. That is why this "space" that has been endowed with meaning can, in certain circumstances, be regarded as "home" by the dispersed. Accordingly, in order to have place, there must be space, and in order to have a home, there must be place that can be endowed with all those personal artifacts that make it possible for the dispersed to feel like they belong, that they can identify with place. It is for this reason that Tuan states: "From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa" (ibid.). Here Tuan speaks of "home" in terms of place. While in the hostland, the dispersed can only speak of "openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa" once they have settled, which could mean that they have achieved some degree of "security and stability" in the foreign land. Place and space, as we have seen, are inseparable, and their production depends on mobility and the particularities that accompany them. This notion gives credence to Edward S. Casey's assertion that "to be is to be in place" (ibid., 14). The negotiation of place is *ipso facto* to be in place. To exist is to be in place, to be emplaced

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through being where you are, through mobility as a destination or an instrument through which a destination is to be arrived at. Yet, to be mobile, to move, is to free oneself into a space that will turn into place and, hopefully, home. Therefore it is also true that to be mobile, to move, could mean to encounter greater suffocation, to be denied a place one can call home.

Space and place are also sites of conflict, either territorial or social. If, on the one hand, they unite, they also separate, exclude, marginalise, leading to process of colonisation and displacement in which identity and belonging assume characteristics that are often used to discriminate and separate.

It is undeniable that place is everywhere, so much so that it is, to all intents and purposes, not possible to be "unplaced" or even "placeless" because through the very fact of being alive one has some space to look to that one would have made place of. Casey makes the observation that:

> Whatever is true for space and time, this much is true for place: we are immersed in it and could not do without it. To be at all – to exist in any way – is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise? (ix)

Subjects in the selected texts examined here are, as Casey puts it, "immersed" and "could not do without" place. Simply because we are forever located somewhere, we see in the examination of selected texts that place, or the making of place, seems both unpreventable and bound to happen.

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Coming back to the question of diaspora, this study encapsulates human mobility and (re)settlement as co-existing elements of a world connected through movements and linkages. In "Identity, Space and the Media: Thinking through Diaspora", Myria Georgiou argues that:

> By thinking through diaspora, we observe the qualities of space as lived and as imagined, as context for identification and struggle, as dependent on memory, experience and ideology of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, of mobility and of contact or interruptions of contact with old and new others. Diasporic populations live within specific locales – urban places especially – and in national and transnational spaces. The social interaction and communication within the diasporic communities, among dispersed sections of the same diaspora and beyond the limits of diasporic communities, all take place in space. (6)

As a consequence of "mobility" and relocation attendant on diaspora, in this study we see subjects struggling with "identity", or reidentification. We see some in the diasporic populations studied being nostalgic for "home", while others move on. In trying to connect with "home", the diasporic often employ electronic communication such as Skype and even television to keep in contact and to be abreast of what is unfolding back at the homeland. Spatial settings, imagined and/or real, will be the focus of this study, and it is in this context, including interactions within the diasporic communities, that Georgiou's intervention becomes relevant. Further, Georgiou offers a diasporic definition with which I agree. She states that "[d]iaspora refers to people who cross boundaries and who settle in locations different to those of their origins. Diaspora is also a category that implies multiple connections across space and flows of ideas and information beyond a singular nation" (6). The struggle the subjects in selected texts go through "in locations different to those of their

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origins" is at the centre of this study. Equally important is the mobility that gives rise the crossing of "boundaries". For this particular study, Georgiou offers more food for thought when she argues that "[d]iasporic transnationalism is less about place and more about space" (5). It is less about the boundary and more about imagination of the new place and the challenges it presents.

It is also important to examine the extent to which constant communication – online and through cyberspace, between those based in the diaspora and the ones in the homeland effectively render the ones at home as part of the diaspora. Offering commentary on whether the diasporic relations effectively make those at home part of the diaspora, Georgiou asserts that,

> diaspora can arguably become a metaphor for life and identity in cosmopolitan times. As a metaphor it captures the human connection across boundaries and growing mediation. Media, telephony and digital technologies have altered transnational communication practices in the last couple of decades to such an extent as to allow daily and vast transnational exchanges online, on the phone and on television screens. (5)

This study therefore asks: to what extent do online relations collapse borders? Are we anywhere and everywhere as a result of this form of presence? Are we placeless even within our own clearly defined spatial settings? What of the possibility of virtual communities, and of the social interaction and relations that no longer seem dependent on simultaneous spatial co-presence? What then becomes of "distance"? Is it disappeared?

The study examines how characters define themselves in terms of the new and old spatial settings. Do they identify with the new? Do they insert the past into the new? Or do

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they assimilate into the new, forgetting the past? In attending to the concept of the diaspora, a primary reference is the discussion of Robin Cohen around the concept of diaspora and its meanings. Here Cohen proposes a redefinition of diaspora in the light of these changes:

> Nowadays, with the increased use of the term [diaspora] to describe many kinds of migrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, a more relaxed definition [of diaspora] seems appropriate. Moreover, transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination (26).

This study accepts that both place and space are important elements for understanding diaspora, dislocation, relocation, the processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation that characterise the real and the imagined diasporic experience. It is for this reason, ultimately – where the dispersed finally settles – that the fine line between integration and assimilation, and tension and rejection, are an essential part of this study. These particularities, which take root in the new space and place, undoubtedly relate to (dis)empowerment and inclusion and exclusion of the dispersed in the country of settlement. They also relate to the contestation of the political and the cultural conditions in the new spatial setting.

Where the establishment of identity is concerned, this study accepts that memory can rise above the territorial logic of dispersal and return, and emerge as a source of diasporic identity. Ashild Lappegard Hauge states that "“Identity” can be described as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual" (4). The traits that set an individual apart in order to construct an identity can alienate or cause one to belong within a larger

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community. At the same time, the particularities that make place can exclude or include an individual. So, depending on the particularities the new space and place present, identity can also be formed, or reformulated. As Hauge argues, "(t)he formation processes of identity are guided by different principles according to culture, and within a culture, these principles will vary over time and across situations" (6). What Hauge does here is to accept, like I do, that a spatial setting is and can be a source of (re)identity. However, owing to mobility, these distinctive forms of space have somewhat weakened. Because the inherent effect of mobility is the resultant effect of geographic change, the ways in which "home" as a concept is perceived and understood also changes. On the one hand, the perception and understanding of home deepens, and subjects find themselves longing and remembering home. Conversely, because of mobility, the perception and understanding of home tends to weaken, and subjects do not care to remember or to long for the homeland. The study will seek to expose if individual characters who find themselves deterritorialised in any way feel at home. Or, to put it differently, do the displaced feel and identify as transnational and at home everywhere? Further, does the new spatial setting make the displaced individual or group feel and identify as reterritorialised? And how is the construction of new "identity" cultivated and rooted? The study will also interrogate the extent to which mobility from the original home country to a foreign land has weakened the ties to the hometown, or how much of the rootedness has dissipated owing to mobility. This study holds that, because of the growing interconnection of spatial settings, there is an ever-increasing sense of globalised space. Departing from this assertion the study will examine how Agnew's "mobility and the increased similarity of everyday life from place to place" (8) shapes daily experiences of characters in the selected literature as they move from one spatial setting to the other. Also important are the diasporic realities that the dispersed encounter in hostlands. The study additionally makes the idea "microscopic" since it considers translocations from the rural countryside to the city as forms

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of diaspora also. The study also assumes that dispersal need not always carry overtones of the tragic.

Thus, I seek to engender a re-probing of shifts in the homeland–diaspora link, the ways in which diaspora is organised and how diaspora studies connect to post-colonial studies. The selection of Zimbabwean novels is especially apt since they direct the reconceptualisation of some accepted notions of diaspora studies in fictionally compelling ways. Guided by the novels, the thesis will seek to establish how a diasporic consciousness is cultivated and constructed. Theorists seem to agree on the etymology of the word "diaspora". Cohen for instance asserts that "the classical use of the term, usually capitalised as Diaspora and used only in the singular, was mainly confined to the study of the Jewish experience" (1). The connection to one's past, the homeland, the culture and traditions, the language, the music, the food – all of these form part of one's existence in a different spatial setting. These specificities tend to either dwindle into the background as intergration and assimilation take root, or actually become more pronounced as the diasporic refuse to break ties with the homeland. While accepting expulsion from the homeland as the main reason for movement, this study will further explore contexts where coercion was in fact *not* the cause of the displacement, but that settling elsewhere was a voluntary act aimed at willingly abandoning the "home" for good.

As Myria Georgiou attests, space and place can be an intersected and highly contested terrain:

> The domestic, the local, the public, the urban, the national and the transnational form an interconnected spatial matrix, where possibilities for belonging, for choosing not to belong and for combining belonging in multiple communities emerge. These are spaces where the struggles for inclusion and exclusion are not between two sides:

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> those of the powerful and the subordinate but between different powerful and subordinate actors. (22-23)

This study will explore the relationship between Georgiou's "struggles for inclusion and exclusion" and Kelly Baker's observation that the "dialogic relationship" (26) between space and place is constantly in motion, shaped by complicated networks and webs of power. Here we shall also explore what makes people feel they belong in one place and feel strange in another. Thus space as an element of the social construction of persons, belonging and identity, and inclusion/exclusion, as they relate to spatial settings will be examined.

The influence place has on identity is seen as an interaction between people and their physical environment; people affect places, and places influence how people see themselves, and therefore play a role in the construction of identity. Myria Georgiou makes an interesting and pertinent contribution to the discussion of space, place and identity:

> The domestic, the local, the public, the urban, the national and the transnational form an interconnected spatial matrix, where possibilities for belonging, for choosing not to belong and for combining belonging in multiple communities emerge. These are spaces where the struggles for inclusion and exclusion are not between two sides: these of the powerful and the subordinate but between different powerful and subordinate actors. (6-7)

Here Georgiou highlights the connection between space and identity and social constructions of the person. She foregrounds questions of power in thinking about how space is organised. This clarifies how, among others, belonging and identity and inclusion/exclusion as they relate to spatial settings are founded. The interplay and outcome of such interplay between

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these “different powerful and subordinate actors” in the selected texts will be examined. Here we shall also explore what makes people feel they “belong” in one place and feel “strange” in another. As soon as they have settled, explored in this study are the particularities which, on the one hand, cause people to stay in that one particular place or to reject it and feel “unhomed”, and on the other, what causes their disposition of longing and nostalgia towards the original spatial setting now that they have settled in a different place.

A significant factor in this study of how space becomes place is the impact of technology: cellphones, the internet, YouTube, television, etc. What becomes of communities and societies as we know them, and what becomes of the enduring spatial barriers as a consequence of the role of technology, especially digital technologies? The study will try to establish, through careful scrutiny of the selected texts, if technology serves to reconstitute and reorganise spatial relations such that places are remade and reconfigured. It will also seek to understand what becomes of distance as technology impacts human relations. Also, the physicality of things will be studied to see if technology serves to alter and reconstitute the nature of the world as we have known it.

It is clear from the experiences of the subjects in the texts studied that a direct physical experience creates a location in space. Clear too is the fact that the physical experience itself is responsible for the creation of place. This way, location births place. Space therefore can be accepted as abstract, lacking meaning, while place is alive with meaning. This study therefore accepts that space precedes place. This study aligns itself with this assertion because space, for this study, is an area where human meaning is not yet imbued, and place is a function, a meaning that is given through human interactions. To the extent that place announces itself through human experience, this study aligns itself with the phenomenon that place is acknowledged through experience, thoughts, and sensations. Space, then, has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning – as a “fact of life”

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which, like time, produces the basic coordinates for human life. When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way it becomes place. The focus in this thesis will move beyond thinking of generic cities and towns and villages as places, but will zero in on specific locales, examining the street corner, the bar, the church, the cinema, including, for example, that favourite corner in the bedroom where prayer takes place. The study seeks to make a global sense of these private and personal spaces. Do the experiences evoke a remembering of the homeland for those who find themselves away from "home"? Do we see evidence of an assimilation or rejection of the current spatial setting for or against the old?

As it will become clear in the discussion of selected texts, we see characters in these novels leaving "home", mainly because of struggles at home roaming onward to engage in "place-making" in new spatial settings in foreign lands. In certain cases, as we shall also see later, this does not necessarily mean a place outside the borders of one's country. Even in such cases mobility ensues, and new places are created out of new spaces. In diasporic writing, the home, which is a function of "place-making", is in one nation-space replaced by the home in another nation-space which is also simultaneously "not home". In the same way that the home in the native land comes to be constituted through its relationship with symbolic outside spaces, for example, the place of sustenance, the grocery store or the bakery, and the cemetery, the place of death rather than life, home in the new nation needs to be negotiated in relation to such similar outsides spaces.

While the constitutive networks will be focused on and explored in the selected texts, it is submitted here that these relationships, narratives and descriptions serve not only to demonstrate, but also have the power to establish place. Further, I concur with Baker when she asserts that:

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> place is understood as having a continued relevance for, and dialogic relationship with, individual and collective identity. And despite increasing mobility, our physical situatedness in time and space places us; our bodies locate us physically in place, which localizes at least some aspects of our lives and identities, as well as our searches for and senses of belonging. (24)

This is so because place is essentially made up of those things that cause its existence. So the "dialogic relationship" endures until the relationship ceases, a point at which place reverts to space until new occupation is realised, and new place comes into being. That is why I also accept Baker's thinking when she asserts that "it is within the interplay of the materiality of place and the imaginary sense of place that a sense of individual and collective belonging to place emerges" (26).

As we have seen earlier, space and place depend on each other and direct physical experience creates a location in space. Yi Fu Tuan has likened space to movement and place to pauses, to stops along the way:

> What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value ... The ideas "space" and "place" require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (6)

The study will examine Tuan's "pause" – with all its variations – to see if it morphs for a displaced person into "home", and if the new spatial setting is assimilated through knowledge of a place – the sights, the rhythms, the sounds, the smells, the general and

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personal experiences, and if indeed this atmosphere of new experiences normalises through constant echoing. So, ultimately the study will seek to explore if individual characters who find themselves deterritorilased in any way feel at home. Or, to put it differently, do the displaced feel and identify as transnational and at home everywhere? Further, does the new spatial setting make the displaced individual or group feel and identify as reterritorialised? And how is the construction of new "identity" cultivated and rooted? The study will also interrogate the extent to which movement from the original home country to foreign land has weakened the ties to the hometown, or how much of the rootedness has dissipated owing to mobility.

The thesis explores the concepts and ideas articulated above about homeliness and unhomeliness, place and identity, as well as the ways in which individual and social identity are constructed, and how they connect.

Mobility

The mobility of people across national frontiers is a highly relevant phenomenon in contemporary society. In the introduction of *On The Move: Mobility In The Modern Western World*, Tim Cresswell argues that mobility "is central to what it is to be human. It is a fundamental geographical facet of existence and, as such, provides a rich terrain from which narratives - and, indeed, ideologies - can be, and have been, constructed" (1). In the twenty-first century, mobility has become even more prominent than it has in the past. That mobility "is a fundamental geographical facet of existence" is correct simply because mobility is not just everything but also everywhere. It allows life to take shape, to assume meaning that would otherwise not manifest. Cresswell further argues that mobility "is a kind of blank space that stands as an alternative to place, boundedness, foundations, and stability" (2). Mobility is in actual fact life because without movement, there would not be life. For some

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characters in the texts under examination, mobility is supposed to result in freedom from that which is being left behind. But as the examination of these narratives progresses, we see that this is not always the case. We see that mobility involves a multifaceted assortment of movement, societal imaginaries and experiences that do not always provide the envisaged sanctuary from the hostile particularities that subjects are taking flight from. Ultimately, we see that mobility is not always liberating.

We see that mobility has become a primary characteristic of the modern globalised world. Unavoidably, this predominance has led to a new focus on transnational mobilities that deterritorialise identity. Ethnoscapes, a term suggested by globalisation scholar Arjun Appadurai, has privileged mobile groups and individuals, such as immigrants, exiles, tourists, and guest workers. This notion accepts that there is a moving about, constantly, that takes place through space and time. This moving about of people (and things) invites to mobile subjectivities particularities of new space and place, particularities which mainly have to do with resettlement and place-making. As summed up above, and as will be expanded on in the body of the thesis, this resettlement and place-making in foreign lands is fraught with struggles of inclusion and exlusion, of belonging and unbelonging, and struggles of (re)identity.

Most studies of diaspora focus on home and away. But they do not consider the question of mobility which is what is inescapable in the relocation from home to the host space and back, if there is ever a return. As we will see later, in some of the selected novels mobility is very consciously foregrounded. Vera's heroine Mazvita effects her escape to an elsewhere by taking a journey by bus, a journey that is foregrounded in the narrative. And Dangarembga's Tambu journeys in her uncle's car in highly symbolic drives from the homestead to the mission and, at the end of school terms, back to the homestead. This is also

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true for Lessing's Mary, who at some point finds herself taking an important journey in desperation by foot away from the farm back to her place of origin.

It is important to note that digital communication across borders also represents mobility because, suddenly, people realise that they do not need to be physically mobile to experience particularities present only in places away from their current space and place. In the opening lines of "Emailing/Skyping Africa: New Technologies and Communication Gaps in Contemporary African Women's Fiction", Anna-Leena Toivanen argues that

> [m]obility is an element that marks the fields of contemporary Africa and African diasporic literatures in a profound way. While the most obvious subject of inquiry in the mobility theme is physical travel of people and, more specifically, migration from the African continent towards Western metropolises, it should be emphasized that mobility is a concept whose meaning cannot be reduced to these phenomena […] Besides physical travel of people, these include physical movement of objects, imaginative travel (images and memories seen in texts, on TV, computer and so on), virtual travel (Internet), and finally, communicative travel as person-to-person messages through different media. (1)

What Toivanen does here is to show that migration can be experienced in forms both physical and digital. We see this a lot when migrants in texts to be examined engage in communication with people at home, and vice versa, because then technology collapses the physical borders, and people in different geographical spaces get to experience other spaces without engaging in movement. It can be argued, therefore, that literature is more prescient than diaspora studies where the connection between space, place, mobility and technology has been highlighted ahead of its study in diaspora studies. What we will also see clarified is

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the complex connection between space, place and mobility in the selected novels. Furthermore, it will become clear later in the study that in certain narratives, such as in Vera's Mazvita's case, mobility itself proves more homely as opposed to the place being escaped and the place being escaped to, though ultimately the vehicles that allow mobility do not become nomadic homes. So "home" can be found in the possibility of mobility; though not in specific forms of mobility themselves. Huchu's subjects, on the other hand, are associated with different forms of mobility in the hostland allowing different forms of place making or failure to create place – the one character walks, the other one runs, and the third uses a car to get around the host city of Edinburgh. Having cited just the few examples above, it is clear that mobility as it concerns space and place is as important as space and place.

The study of space and place requires as a necessity a process of travelling, a transition, a process of moving. This is even more so when one considers the component of (re)identity and remembering in a new spatial setting. One needs to have in the first place "moved" in order to be able to "look back", to remember and to long for the original space and place – or perhaps not, and this will make a great part of the study. In the process of characters having to escape from their home-place, the special identities and characteristics that make part of the process can be tied to or embedded within a locale, within a specific spatial setting – by way of example, one's place of origin – and through the ways spatial movements are structured.

As we shall see when the selected texts are examined, mobility can also take a different form, especially where digital technology is concerned. Where information and communication technologies are concerned, mobility is often less a matter of physical travel than one of interaction. Different people across the world interface digitally all the time. In cases where people interact digitally, we see a form of mobility which can be seen to be replacing physical travel. This is so because a virtual presence and proximity is enabled,

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regardless of geographical or social distance. The study theorises and analyses the diaspora and its use of cyberspace in order to breach the distance and collapse borders, and the ways through which human geographic mobility and new digital technologies are giving rise to new "places".

Texts: Zimbabwean and Rhodesian Novels – A Brief Overview

The novels selected for study are important because while they are all written by novelists who, born in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, are themselves expatriates, or wrote the novels while in exile. The narratives expansively address the questions of place, space, diaspora, identity, and belonging as characters meander between "home" and "away". The novel is an "irresistible" medium, as the novel theory of Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, because it basically observes no convention, and thus the narrative produced within the open form of the novel is a narrative without inhibition. This is what makes the novel the ideal genre for exploring conceptions of space, place, home, and belonging that increasingly being seen in the contemporary world as "open" concepts, concepts shaped as much by mobility as they are by the "pause", to use Tuan's term.

For the dispersed, preservation of identity can become exceedingly important, and the impact of realities such as displacement, fragmentation, and isolation, seem to lead inescapably to a reformulation of identity. Examined here will be the nexus between memory and place; how certain places/spaces in diaspora produce longing or encourage forgetting; how they influence identity and re-identification, and how they engender a sense of "unbelonging". I will focus also on realities indicative of "belonging" in the new spatial setting, and the more unexpected idea of the original home as unhomely – home may have been a place of alienation and "unbelonging".

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In the first two chapters, which study Dangarembga and then Vera, we see diasporic realities playing themselves out within the nation-space, and then a transition to diasporic realities manifesting in other countries in Bulawayo and Huchu. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name* both deal with the national dimension, where borders within the nation between the rural and the urban, the village and the city seem to open up in order to allow for mobility to take place, albeit fraught with strife and struggle. NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician* deal with the transnational dimension. The study will conclude with a novel that is somewhat anomalous, namely, Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. Here we see the colonial moment from the white settler point of view. Rather uniquely, white mobility across the world sees individuals characterised as "settlers", but the mobility of black people has been classed as migration. Because of skewed power relations, white "settlers" find themselves having no need to assimilate culturally in the hostland since they introduce their own dominant and/or hegemonic culture in the colonised country. This is not the case for black characters who find themselves in Anglo-American nations. I shall now proceed to do a brief overview of each of the novels selected.

In the first novel to be studied, *Nervous Conditions* – through a reference to Jean Paul Sartre's introduction to Frantz Fanon's 1963 book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Tsitsi Dangarembga introduces us to characters who grapple with nervous conditions from years of colonialism as well as discrimination under Shona patriarchy, which does not recognise the societal transformations brought about by colonialism, and the ways these have impacted women. *Nervous Conditions* illustrates how a subject who is strongly emplaced by her formative sense of place and identity has the capacity to re-settle in the new spatial setting, even if it is with the understanding that no place is fully homely. Here the diaspora is

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national, and the subject has the ability to find a self-reflexive, ironic sense of home as a consequence of her strong formative emplacement.

The next novel studied, which also explores national translocations is Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name.* Examined here is mobility from country to city, and power relations through space and place in the city, including matters of memory and trauma in the post-colonial era. *Without A Name* presents an "unhomeliness" which enjoins mobility from the countryside to the city space where particularities of rejection and (un)belonging persist as the subject finds herself alienated in the altered spatial setting, instead of successfully carving a "home" in the possibility of mobility.

The third novel to be studied is *We Need New Names* by expatriate Zimbabwean writer, NoViolet Bulawayo. Foregrounded in this novel are questions of belonging, assimilation, and home, pertinent to this study. Through its subjects, Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* lays bare the altering impact visited upon subjects by the hostile particularities at home – even as subjects seek a better elsewhere in neighbouring places, such as when their mobility leads them to cross the "border" into the nearby classy and cosmopolitan Budapest, and ultimately to the far-flung United States of America. Other than examining the diasporic conditions that obtain once subjects find themselves in a farway hostland, we also see the use of online and cyberspace communication beginning to collapse borders between hostland and home, placing people in multiple places at the same time.

The fourth novel studied is Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, the Magistrate & the Mathematician.* The novel delves into the personal lives and diasporic politics of Zimbabwean expatriates, and it explores the expatriation of "home" to the hostland and the consequent turning of space into place, including re-emplacement where the diasporic struggles to form "home" in a foreign city. To sum up, this novel is about finding home in another place, where the various techniques of place-making and home-finding are

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successful. There is great attention to and absolute precision in how the author describes streets and key locations in the host-city of Edinburgh, thereby decidedly foregrounding a sense of place. We see addressed here immigrant themes of belonging, of assimilation, of identity, of longing and loss, of family struggles and of love. We also see the impact of realities such as displacement, fragmentation, isolation, and assimilation on the reformulation of identity. There seems to be a concerted effort by all key characters, except incidental characters not to "forget" home. The need not to forget home is expressed quite remarkably by characters through language, and continued comparison between their experiences in the hostland and home. Their current space and place shape their homes and their families. Even though there is no question that they would want to go home, they at the same time seem ready to re-identify with the new environs, and to create new memories without necessarily forgetting. So, in the new city and the new nation space there seems for the expatriates in this novel to exist simultaneously a remembering and a construction of the new out of the memories of the old.

Finally, we consider Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. Here Lessing presents the ways in which the "diasporic" settler can exist and be dominant in the foreign but colonised spatial setting without needing to assimilate, and how mobility, (re)identity and the new spatial setting can re-traumatise. The settler is always unhomed, but so too is the native. Completely unlike the novels discussed to this point which describe people settled in a foreign land where power relations are ordinarily skewed in favour of the hosts, here we see a domination of the hosts by colonial settlers. This is extraordinary because settlers ought not to derive discomfort from the "circumstances" of the hostland, a place to which they have willingly expatriated. But "settlers" are compelled to co-exist with "indigenous people", the hosts, the ones they dominate and regard as "inferior". What emerges in this novel is a movement from the city space to the rural for the heroine, a character in whom all of the

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tensions of settler “placemaking” come to be concentrated. This book firmly establishes another layer of this study, namely that across diasporic communities, white disaporics are seen as settlers, whereas blacks are seen as refugees. This brings into sharp focus questions of identity and belonging, including the question of (un)rootedness as it relates to the formation and shaping of one’s identity. The struggle with assimilation and abandonment is pronounced in Mary, Lessing’s central character.

All these texts are read and examined through the theoretical lenses of space and place, diaspora, (re)identity, (un)belonging and remembering. This study is focused on the macroscopic analysis of the selected novels mainly through plot and setting and microanalysis of linguistic representations of place.

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CHAPTER ONE

There's No Place Like Home: Paradoxes of Location and Identity in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

> *It is usually assumed that a sense of place or belonging gives a person stability. But what makes a place home? Is it wherever your family is, where you have been brought up?…Where is home? Is it where our parents are buried? Is home from where you have been displaced, or where you are now?* (Sarup 95)

Born in 1959 in the small town of Mutoko in Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe, Tsitsi Dangarembga is one of the most prolific and eminent writers from Southern Africa. Dangarembga is a novelist, a filmmaker and playwright. She wrote a play called *She No Longer Weeps* (1987), and the following year her debut novel *Nervous Conditions* came out. *Nervous Conditions*, the novel this chapter focuses on, was the first novel published in English by a black Zimbabwean woman. This novel went on to win the African Regional Prize in the 1989 Commonwealth Writers' Prize awards. *The Book of Not* (2006) is the sequel to *Nervous Conditions* which has very recently been followed by a novel called *This Mournable Body* (2018). The innovative texture of Dangarembga's work that reinforces the kinds of themes she explores within the matrix of black African women's literature warrants attention, especially the unique ways in which she represents ideas about home and mobility in her novels.

Dangarembga's trilogy, *Nervous Conditions, The Book of Not*, and *This Mournable Body* chronicles the story of Tambu from teenage years to middle age. *The Book of Not* is a

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narrative that carries on the story in *Nervous Conditions*. Essentially, what *The Book of Not* does is to capture the historical moment characterising the independence of Zimbabwe, ending with Rhodesia becoming Zimbabwe. In it, Tambu discovers that this historical moment of transition does not bring about the “home” she was hoping for, an important point that leads to *This Mournable Body*, the third instalment of the trilogy. In *This Mournable Body,* Dangarembga shows unhappy specificities of unbelonging, rejection and lack of assimilation experienced by Tambu in a place that she thought would provide conditions of security and belonging, conditions of “home”. Tambu suffers so much that she is no longer emotionally stable. After being admitted into hospital, she is discharged into the care of Nyasha, who had just returned with her family from Germany. These particularities of belonging, rejection, assimilation, and, importantly, the making or finding of home, make the core of this chapter, analysed in the context of *Nervous Conditions*, the first novel of the trilogy.

Dangarembga’s personal experiences clearly impacted her first novel, but the novel is a fiction that explores questions well beyond autobiographical similarities. *Nervous Conditions* tells the story of Tambu, a teenage girl in Rhodesia in the late 1950s, and highlights her unfolding relationship with her cousin Nyasha, whom she meets when her uncle, known as Babamukuru, and his family return after completion of his degree in England. Raised in England, Nyasha is so much a stranger among her own people that she stands out at the homestead, especially since she can no longer speak Shona, her parents’ native language. Tambu can only watch as her cousin, caught between two cultures, pays the full cost of her displacement. Babamukuru, the head of the Sigauke family, returns to Rhodesia to assume the position of headmaster of the mission school at Umtali. Tambu, the first-person narrator of this novel is suspicious of her cousins, Nyasha and Chido, the younger brother because of their English manners, language, and style of dress. She thinks they seem

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like snobs. Irritated, she tries to remember what her relationship with her cousins used to be before they left for England, but she cannot really remember. She invites her cousins to dance, but soon realises that not only do they not possess a home language, but they also are not familiar with Shona culture generally.

However, at the same time that Tambu is critical of her cousins, she desires to acquire the formal education that gives her cousins privilege in colonial Rhodesia. Tambu yearns to be free of the constraints and hardships of her rural village; she thinks her dreams have come true when her well-off uncle offers to pay for her education. But she soon learns that the education she receives at the mission school comes at a price, the price of displacement, as experienced by her cousins. At the mission Tambu's relationship with Nyasha improves, despite her initial reservations about her "English" cousin. The girl cousins come to depend on each other in facing the patriarchal order that constrains women's lives both at the homestead and at the mission. When Tambu, through hard work and her natural intelligence, wins a scholarship to study further at Sacred Heart College, a prestigious white institution, Nyasha loses her support in Tambu. Cut loose as she is, Nyasha suffers a psychic collapse that sees her literally wasting away as a consequence of what may be anorexia nervosa or bulimia. Tambu goes on, however, to develop the strength of character and understanding of the transitions she has experienced to be able critically to write the story of her life.

The plot summary underlines an important idea. It seems that Nyasha was proleptically destined to fall apart since she never really had a home in the deep sense of being shaped by a place. Tambu, on the other hand, finally overcomes since, even though she is for a period in her life alienated from her home culture, she has a strength that comes from a powerful sense of place. Her sense of emplacement while growing up allows her to negotiate other spaces, even if it is an ironically distanced sense of place that finally develops. The analysis in this chapter will show how the novel links these questions of

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(re)identity and (un)belonging to the specifics of place which are represented with detailed particularity at each station in Tambu's life journey in the narrative.

Detailed descriptions of place form a contrast between rural and semi-urban spaces that undergird the plot of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. The mission is portrayed as a halfway house of colonial "urban" modernity, contrasted with the homestead in the countryside which represents Shona tradition and culture. So a spatial planning divergence between rural and urban homes constitutes the foundation of the plot of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, with the mission depicted as a halfway house of colonial urban modernity. However, if one looks closely at the space of the rural and the space of the colonial "urban," it is clear that the novel establishes a dichotomy, only to unsettle it in various ways. For example, one sees through the transformations created by the bus terminus at the homestead the penetration of a globalising world. Stalls spring up which sell Coca-Cola and Fanta. These iconic names representing global capital are also used to describe the mottled skin of women who use skin lighteners, indicating the deep imbrication of the global in the local. Despite the modern gloss of the mission, the young Tambu finds that there is almost no way to keep the red Zimbabwean dust out of the modern glamour and convenience of her uncle's house, showing how the "local" creeps into the colonial modern represented by the mission. In creating a strong sense of the place of the homestead and the place of the mission, it is clear throughout that these places are being described from the vantage point of women.

Rather than presenting an undifferentiated picture of "the African woman," *Nervous Conditions* uses the place of the homestead and the place of the mission to present a range of women with different positions and experiences. The plot develops to link peasant women like Ma'Shingayi, Tambu's mother, and highly (formally) educated women like Maiguru, Tambu's paternal aunt, who has a master's degree. The novel also presents women like

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Lucia, Tambu's maternal aunt, who occupies transitional spaces both at the homestead and at the mission. Since Lucia is not married, she is not fully at home at the homestead. Because she is not bound by place, she is also in a position to move to the mission to work as a cleaner at the school. At the mission, Lucia is also not deeply "located" or fully "emplaced" because of her lowly status. But it is clear from Lucia's confidence in who she is, and her strategic negotiation of both tradition and modernity, in the complex ways they are presented in the novel, that her pre-history incorporates a strong sense of locatedness. Lucia, for these reasons, appears to be freer to move than any of the other female characters. These are just some of the female subjectivities presented in a novel that, as scholar Lindsay Aegerter puts it, "represents multiple women's voices and subject positions as a way to subvert single and singular representations of African women and as a way to deconstruct oppositional hierarchies" (232). In addition to presenting female experience through place, the novel also presents the way Zimbabwean spaces are transformed through colonisation.

Nervous Conditions provides detailed representations of colonial experience under the governance of the British Empire in the second half of the twentieth century and alludes to the earlier period of colonial penetration through the stories of older characters like Tambu's grandmother. The narrative portrays the unsettling experiences of the era of colonisation and explores the insidious consequences of living in the midst of rapid historical change. The narrative portrays change and its consequences in many ways, but one of the most significant ways is through movement of the characters. In the pre-history related by Tambu's grandmother, the reader comes to know that the family finds itself on the infertile soil of the homestead because they had been moved in one of many colonial land expropriation projects. Because of the transformations created by colonial modernity, it also becomes clear that a subsistence mode of existence on the homestead is no longer possible. The old ways followed by Jeremiah, Tambu's father, can no longer sustain the family. Characters like Tambu's

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brother Nhamo, and the aunt, Lucia, are detached from the homestead and seem ready to face the challenges of moving. The novel highlights the homestead and the school in the countryside, but it also highlights the bus terminus, which literally is the driver of change. Some of the characters are able to cope with the rapid rate of transformation of the places they call home, but others are not.

For the female characters in this novel, the trauma is even more intense since they are faced also with Shona patriarchy that is unable to adapt to the new contexts. They are, furthermore, faced with a racialised colonial patriarchy, as Tambu discovers when she leaves the homestead. The novel, in addition, comes to enrich and challenge the discourse on (post)colonial trauma. Dangarembga explores questions of identity, trauma and resistance in the context of colonisation. Her approach queries traditional notions of identity formation and the common understanding of trauma and trauma healing, with the portrayal of unique means for resistance and survival. These are the "nervous conditions." There are striking similarities between Dangarembga's novel and Fanon's theory, which are both concerned with the psychopathology of colonisation. However, Dangarembga goes beyond the limits of Fanons's canonical "master narrative" of postcolonial psychiatric thought and presents patriarchal and colonial domination from a woman's point of view. Most crucially, in the context of this thesis, the novel shows how "nervous conditions" may also be tracked through place, space and movement.

Put in her Place: Patriarchy and Racism in Black Female Identity Formation

In order to properly contextualise the suffering of women at the hands of men and society at large, it is important to acknowledge the role played by the oppressive colonial structure that for centuries reigned over Africa. Colonialism impacted women in society even worse than it did men, so much so that they felt unwelcome in their own homes. When, for

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instance, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong`o was interviewed in 1986 about his novel, *Devil on the Cross*, and his autobiography, *Detained*, he described, as Carol Boyce-Davies (11) points out, women as the most exploited and oppressed section of the entire working class: exploited as workers; at home; and also by the backward elements in culture. If native men were reduced to heathens and savages, women were stereotyped either as virgins or whores in the colonialists' eyes. According to Oyewumi there was a hierarchy of four, not two categories in the colonial situation with the European man on top and the African woman at the bottom, categorised as the "Other" (256). By representing the disruptive influence of colonisation over local Rhodesians, Tsitsi Dangarembga unravels the status of women in a colonised society. She chooses a female as the protagonist of her novel in order to show that women are doubly colonised in a colonised African society. Black women are marginalised both by colonial patriarchy and colonial racism. If black women are doubly colonised, they are also doubly oppressed since, as the novel clearly shows; they are also subordinated to indigenous patriarchy. The complexity of these mutiple forms of subordination forces the movement of some of the female characters into spaces of colonial modernity in order to seek a more accommodating elsewhere. But, as we shall see, the new locations entered bring less than ideal positionalities.

The novel engages colonial transformations through a number of key areas, one of which is the role of formal, Western education, especially the role of Christian missionaries in the colonial education system. The passing of Nhamo, who is Tambu's brother, transforms Tambu's life in remarkable and meaningful ways. For instance, Nhamo's death causes Babamukuru, the patriarchal uncle, to decide that she is the one to ultimately shoulder the future and the prosperity of the family, and therefore she is the one who must be taken to the mission school to receive further education. Even though Tambu herself welcomes this development, it does not sit well with Tambu's mother, who is concerned that Tambu's

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acquiring of an education will result in her suffering the same fate suffered by her son, Nhamo. But this apprehension does not deter Tambu, who is exultant, finally, be able to escape what she all along thought was inescapable: the village environment and the rural school. She is unable to suppress her excitement about what the new, modern and urban setting with different people and cultures holds for her. She envisages the freedom that the new place promises.

Tambu's only knowledge about the missionaries are the stories told to her by Nhamo and her late grandmother, who points out that "[t]he Whites on the mission were a special kind of white person, special in the way that my grandmother had explained to me, for they were holy" (105). In "The Formation of a Hybrid Identity in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*", an essay addressing the role of mission schools as presented in *Nervous Conditions,* Peiman Amanolahi Baharvand and Bahman Zarrinjooee state that:

> The natives attend white schools and get familiar with the culture which is supposed to civilize them. The indigenous people learn the language of the colonizers and begin to speak it even at home. Some of them consider the new language as a sign of prestige. They adopt the manners of "beautiful" and "attractive" whites; hence, forget a great portion of their local practices which appear to have no value. (33)

Baharvand and Zarrinjooee capture neatly how the education regime was designed to create internal conflict among subjects in *Nervous Conditions* as they responded to "civilisation". Missionary schools opened in the Zimbabwean territories with the expansion of Cecil John Rhodes's British South Africa Company in 1890. From the passage above, it seems clear that the assimilation of the native into modern and westernised forms of life is not only intended to civilise them, but at the same time to give them reason to reject who they are. The new

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environment enjoins them to embrace the new and frown on the old. It is therefore an important observation to make that indeed some of the natives, consumed by the new realities introduced by the urban and colonial, tend to "consider [for example] the new language as a sign of prestige. They adopt the manners of "beautiful" and "attractive" whites", (re)identifying to fit in at the expense of their own history and past.

The idea of colonial superiority versus native inferiority is what is at the heart of *Nervous Conditions*. It is an idea that is completely accepted by Tambu's uncle, Babamukuru, and, in turn, by the young Tambu who models herself on her uncle. Although the young Tambu does not recognise the ways in which mission education is preparing her for a racially subservient role in colonial society, she does experience quite directly the prejudice in mission schools against educating girls. Even though mission education was understood to be an inherently racist and oppressive instrument ostensibly meant to "civilise" the natives, indigenous Zimbabweans nonetheless deemed acquiring missionary education important because it opened doors of advancement and personal development in the new colonial social and economic structures. This is the historical background against which Dangarembga is writing, and which provides the impetus for the protagonist Tambu's movement and the frustrations she encounters in all her locations.

Quests for Place: Mobility, Assimilation, and the Closing in of Space

The plot summary provided earlier underlines an important idea. It seems that Nyasha, Tambu's cousin, who returns from England, was proleptically destined to fall apart since she never really had a home in the deep sense of being shaped by a place. Tambu, on the other hand, finally overcomes since, even though she is for a period in her life alienated from her home culture, she has a strength that comes from a powerful sense of place. Her sense of emplacement while growing up allows her to negotiate other spaces, even if it is an

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ironically distanced sense of place that finally emerges. The analysis in this chapter will show how the novel links these questions of (re)identity and (un)belonging to the specifics of place which are represented with detailed particularity at each station in Tambu's life journey in the narrative.

Nervous Conditions tells the story of Tambu, a girl from rural Southern Rhodesia who, after the death of her brother, is given the opportunity to study at a mission school – an opportunity which transports her from the space of tradition to face the challenges dictated by new environs in modern society. She stays with her uncle, Babamukuru, who is the headmaster of the school and his family, who have recently returned from living in the United Kingdom. Through Tambu's formal education and her interactions with her anglicised cousin, Nyasha, she becomes aware of the contradictions between the culture she has left and the one she is experiencing, finding that particularities in altered space do not easily and uncomplicatedly constitute what she can call "home" in the new location.

Tambu's sense of unhomeliness at the homestead largely is created by her desire for a formal education which, as a girl, is granted to her only incidentally and provisionally. The family priority lies in educating the eldest son, who, in this patriarchally ordered society, enjoys the advantages of being male, but also shoulders the responsibility of providing for the family. Hope for the advancement of the family thus comes to rest in Nhamo, whose education is financed and whose mobility is unfettered. At the beginning of the novel we are told that Nhamo was sent to school so that he, "if given the chance ... would distinguish himself academically, at least sufficiently to enter a decent profession" (4), in order to support the family. Because Nhamo's education was seen to be a way out of the poverty of the family, the cost of his education was deemed worthwhile. The situation is very different for Tambu, who ends up having to fight for and finance her own education. For this reason, as Tambu explains "[t]he needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not

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considered a priority or even legitimate" (12). As we shall see, however, she is not literally trapped in the homestead, since she enjoys a deeply formative freedom to explore and interact with the greater homestead environment in many ways. However, her arc of movement as far as formal education is concerned is obstructed by the practical question of the family's state of penury, but, more importantly, by the conception of her role as a female in Shona society. Her father, Jeremiah, is the mouthpiece of this idea of Shona patriarchy.

Food is a crucially important trope in the presentation both of Tambu's limitation by Shona patriarchy, but it is also the resource that allows her the independence to pursue her own ambitions. Food is usually considered the symbolic domain of women, especially in the Zimbabwean context where women not only cook and serve food, but also produce and sell food. The novel presents women in all of these many relationships with food. Even though the production, sale and preparation of food represent significant labour, the control of food also gives women a degree of influence. Even though women have some power through the production and preparation of food, Shona patriarchy ironically also uses food to control women. Tambu's father, a patriarchal figure, makes the traditional point (against female academic advancement and against mobility) when he says to Tambu: "Can you cookbooks and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables" (15). Tambu takes his message to heart but turns his message against him when she grows and sells mealies to pay school fees for her continued education when it becomes apparent that the family can afford only to send Nhamo to school. Her potential for advancement through education is obstructed also by Nhamo, the younger representative of a less explicit, but as oppressive, form of patriarchy. Tambu's efforts are thwarted by her brother, who steals her crops and gives them to his girlfriends, and her father, who claims that her eventual profits should belong to him. Thus the father and the brother act as impediments

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to Tambu's freedom of movement through limiting the independence she has through being a producer of food.

But food is a double-edged sword which does not only allow Tambu to challenge patriarchy. Food is also presented as part of an exploitation that keeps women in their places, literally trapped in the kitchen. Tambu reflects on her imprisonment and suffering in the kitchen when she first travels to the mission with her uncle. She assumes that all of the constraints and labour expected of her will fall away in the almost miraculous new environment of the mission, having seen her brother Nhamo go as a dusty peasant and come back as a well-nourished, well-dressed, sophisticated young man:

> At Babamukuru's I would have the leisure, be encouraged to consider questions that had to do with survival of the spirit, the creation of consciousness, rather than mere sustenance of the body. This new me would not be enervated by smoky kitchens that left eyes smarting and chests permanently bronchitic. This new me would not be frustrated by wood fires that either flamed so furiously that the sadza burned, or so indifferently that it became mbodza. (59)

The costs borne by women in the production of food are made clear by Tambu's relief at what she is leaving behind. The homestead kitchen is a space frequented, as far as the reader can see, only by women. In fact, it is often the place even where women sleep. The kitchen is not a space that promotes women's well-being. It is presented as a place that deprives women of air to breathe in making their "chests permanently bronchitic." The primitive crudeness of the homestead kitchen with only wood fires and no electric cooker, further frustrates the creative efforts of women in their chores – the sadza burns or is so undercooked that it becomes something other than what they actually wish to prepare. We discover later – when

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Babamukuru and family return to the homestead at Christmas – other ways in which the kitchen and the tasks linked with it constrain and repress women. We see that at the homestead the women's inferior position is particularly visible during mealtimes. Babamukuru's homecoming is celebrated by the entire family with a feast prepared by the women who are not allowed to enjoy meals together with the men:

> In the kitchen we dished out what was left in the pots for ourselves and the children. My aunt Mavis, Shupikai's mother, in her joy over Babamukuru's return, had been unrestrained in dishing out the meat for the house so that there was not enough left in the pot to make a meal for those who were not dining there. As a result the youngest of us had only gravy and vegetables to go with our *sadza.* (41)

The women, after spending the day cooking and preparing dinner, must "dish out" the meal for the men, offering the food according to patriarchal status in the family. After the men have received their "great hunks of meat wallowing in gravy" (40), the women return to the kitchen, "dish[ing] out what was left in the pots for ourselves and the children [...] We, who rarely tasted meat, found no reason to complain" (41). Literally and metaphorically, food (particularly meat) is linked with power, with women fulfilling the role of nurturers who offer up the "sustenance" which nourishes men, only to be thrust back into the restricted space of the kitchen. It is thus especially through the production, preparation and serving of food that women's backbreaking labour, subordination and exclusion are focalised, in particular, through the constraining space of the kitchen. It is in order to escape the kitchen and everything it symbolically represents that Tambu invests in her education, with its promises of personal advancement and mobility to an elsewhere where she can escape oppression and exploitation.

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While the kitchen proves to be an oppressive, exploitative place for women, the fields and plots present the opposite, a welcome respite, spaces of openness and freedom, even though producing food requires significant labour. Having escaped the house and its oppressive patriarchy – once they get to work the land in the field and plots, women feel a sense of liberation, expressing themselves constructively through the production of produce. It is in this liberating space that a close relationship is formed between Tambu and her grandmother. This close association between Tambu and her grandmother, in turn, resulted in Tambu having a close connection with the land they worked. She was able to relate industriously with the soil, producing and selling mealies which, in turn, afforded her the possibility to move away from the homestead with its restrictions. The inculcation of a work ethic is inspired by Tambu's grandmother. This work ethic established in relation to the productivity of the land ensured that Tambu was a young woman of self-reliance to a point where it allows her to "escape", allowing the mobility to a new space which seems utopian. Tambu becomes enterprising and resorts to selling mealies; in this way Tambu is able to escape the entrapment presented by the homestead. Of the close relationship with her grandmother and the impact that bond had, Tambu says:

> I worked on the homestead, in the family fields and on my own plot. How I mumbled adoring, reverent prayers to my grandmother in those early days of my market gardening. My grandmother, who had been an inexorable cultivator of land, sower of seeds and reaper of rich harvest until, literally until, her very last moment. When I was too small to be anything more than a hindrance in the family fields, I used to spend many productive hours working with my grandmother on the plot of land she called her garden. We hoed side by side strips of land defined by the row of maize plants each carried, I obstinately insisting I could keep pace with her, she weeding

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> three strips to my one so that I could. Praising my predisposition towards working, she consolidated it in me as a desirable habit. (17)

Working "in the family fields and on [her] own plot", and spending "many productive hours working with [her] grandmother on the plot of land she called her garden", Tambu was able to equip herself to be resilient to withstand the many challenges that mobility and altering spatial settings presented. As will be discussed in more detail later, Tambu's cousin Nyasha is not similarly equipped with this character-building formation, and practical knowledge of independent survival since she clearly lacks the emplacement enjoyed by Tambu.

If subjection to constraining spaces is one of the most enduring obstacles facing Dangaremgba's female characters, Tambu's movement then is a gendered, challenging and celebratory escape. Tambu's aimed-for escape is to the mission which she associates with leisure, luxury and plenty, judging from her brother's style and appearance when he returns on visits to the homestead. But Tambu's formation in the wider environs of the homestead allows her other important movements also. When she finally successfully grows her mealies, she is taken by her teacher, Mr Matimba, in his truck to the town of Umtali to sell her produce. This journey, like all of the other journeys undertaken by Tambu, is presented with detailed particularity. It is clear from the questions she asks Mr Matimba that this is her first ride ever in a motor vehicle, enquiring, for example, whether the truck will "swim" (26) across the river. There is a clear focus on the infrastructure of progress, like roads and electricity that incorporates the Zimbabwean countryside into a globalising modern world. It is also clear how this modern world is a part of the formal colonial-mission education received by Tambu. Mr Matimba says to her that she will learn more about the traffic lights she sees in the town when she learns "about them in Standard One" when she will "read about Ben and Betty in Town and Country" (27). Again and again we see that Tambu's desire

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for escape, her potential for mobility and her resilience when she finds herself constrained are strengths permitted by her strong emplacement and formation in the space of the homestead.

Because Tambu was born and raised on a homestead in Rhodesia where her family lived in poverty, she is grounded by the struggle she and her family had to face. The struggle roots her in such a way that her sense of place is unmistakable, and where she is unavoidably attached to the different spaces in which she moves in the homestead milieu. It is this rooting, this spatial grounding that is etched lastingly in Tambu's mind when her final and irreversible mobility from the homestead finally takes place. She views the homestead ambivalently, with both attachment and disconnection. In her mind the homestead is a place characterised by hardship, as has been shown above, but it is also linked with a sense of enjoyment and belonging. It is clear that the homestead and its environment afford her a sense of community, a sense of home, a sense of individual pleasure, and a sense of the permeability of the homestead to the many forces of the outside world.

An example already mentioned above is Tambu's garden plot which represents both tradition and escape from that tradition. On the one hand, it is a direct link to her heritage, and the rich tradition that has guided her people, imparting the skills to live off the land. It is a direct connection to the legacy she inherits and the wisdom that is passed down from generation to generation. These skills, learnt from her grandmother, allow her to forge her own independence and give her mobility. As one who is shaped by and attached to the place she calls home, Tambu, for instance, finds it hard to understand why her brother was resentful about having to walk from the bus terminus to the homestead when he returned on vacation from the mission. So resentful was he that he would rather avoid [coming home] by staying at the mission after the end of a term. Tambu questions and wonders at his resentment since it does not make sense to her:

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> I, not having to make the journey regularly each end of term and each beginning of a new term, could not understand why my brother disliked walking so much, especially after being cramped in an airless bus for such a long time: the bus journey to the mission took nearly an hour. Besides the relief of being able to stretch your legs after such a long journey, the walk home from the bus terminus was not a long walk when you had nowhere to hurry to. The road wound down by the fields where there were always some people with whom to pass ten minutes of the day – enquiring about their health and the health of their family, admiring the broad-leafed abundance of the maize crop when it was good, predicting how many bags the field would yield or wondering whether the plants had tasselled too early or too late. And although the stretch of road between the fields and the terminus was exposed to the sun and was, from September to April, except when it rained, harsh and scorching so that the glare from the sand scratched at your eyes, there was always shade by the fields where clumps of trees were deliberately left standing to shelter us when we ate our meals or rested between cultivating strips of the land. (2)

The extract highlights a number of ideas. Firstly, it highlights Tambu's freedom to walk in safety in the wider environment of the homestead. It is easy to disregard the significance of this possibility for mobility within the landscape of Shona patriarchy. It becomes more apparent when we compare the presentation of Tambu's life at the homestead with her life at the mission. At the mission, Tambu is presented only within the confines of Babamukuru's home and her experiences at school are described. On the few occasions where we are told she does go out, it is to formal events and she's always escorted by someone else in the family. However, at the homestead, we are later told that "[as] children [their mobility was]

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not restricted. [They] could play where [they] pleased" (3). In this instance, mobility affords the opportunity for development through socialisation.

Mobility results in greater camaraderie between Tambu and her friends, and between Tambu and her neighbours in the homestead. Tambu's leisurely mobility through walking in the environs of the homestead allows her the opportunity to "[enquire] about [people's] health and the health of their family." It is clear that the boundary between homes and the outdoors is not as clearly demarcated as it is at the mission. Tambu's neighbours are to be found working in their garden plots and in the fields, providing many opportunities for the socialisation that also shapes Tambu's sense of self. The river, Nyamarira, in particular, where the women wash their laundry is a space of formative sociability. In this way, Tambu is able to appreciate a sense of community. Furthermore, the natural environment of the homestead in some ways is more homely than the patriarchally ordered homestead, which as we have seen above in the description of the kitchen, impacted negatively on the bodies of women. The natural environment is not at all hostile. When Tambu walks on the road and is "exposed to the sun …", for example, "there was always shade by the fields where clumps of trees were deliberately left standing to shelter us." These early passages articulate very clearly how Tambu's identity is shaped by the wider geographic and social environments of the homestead. It also makes clear that apart from the patriarchal restrictions of the homestead, Tambu enjoys extensive freedom of movement.

When Tambu explains how she remembers her beginnings, it becomes clear how the landscape, the fields and paths, and the natural and cultivated flora offer her a sense of who she is from her earliest memories. She says "[t]he river, the trees, the fruit, and the fields. This is how it was in the beginning. This is how I remember it in my earliest memories …" (3). She is able to name the shrubs and trees with detailed particularity, "[a]cacia, lantana, msasa, and mopani" and knows which fruits are edible. "[M]atamba" and "matunduru", we

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are informed are "[s]weet and sour" (2-3) However, Tambu's strongest relationship is with the river, Nyamarira. Not only is the river the place where women wash their laundry. It is also the place where they swim "in the deeper, cooler, more interesting pools" (3). The riverbanks are presented as being designed with the pleasure of the children in mind where "a river valley thoughtfully appointed along its floor with smooth, flat-topped boulders which made exciting equipment for all sorts of our childhood games" (3). For these reasons, Tambu comes to recognise the river when she leaves it for a life at the mission as her "flowing, tumbling, musical playground" (59).

A sense of place most often is described in terms that are static and unchanging. One comes to belong in and regard a place as home since it represents solidity, continuity and knowability. It is interesting therefore, that Tambu's sense of place is a sense that incorporates change. In other words, her formative sense of the homestead environment is a sense of place that acknowledges and is able to cope with change. Of the transformation at the homestead, Tambu indicates that:

> While I was still quite young, to enable administration of our area, the Government built its District Council Houses less than a mile away from the places where we washed. Thus it became necessary for all the inhabitants of the dozen or so homesteads that made up our village to cross Nyamarira … whenever we went on business to the Council Houses. It was not long before the entrepreneurial among us, noticing that there were always more people gathered at the Council Houses than anywhere else in the village, … built their little tuckshops that sold the groceries we needed … I do not remember the exact sequence of this development, whether the place became a bus terminus before or after the tuckshops were built, but soon buses were stopping there too. (3)

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The opening up of the homestead environment that occurs with the colonial institutions of the Council Houses that give way to the establishment of the bus terminus, connects the homestead environment with a national and international world as well as the commodities of global capitalism, symbolised by "Fanta and Coca-Cola" (3). The new networks of connection impact also on the culture at the homestead with the incorporation of new styles of music, for example. One of the tuck shop owners "introduces a gramaphone into his shop so that the youth could entertain themselves with music and dancing" (4). The youth favour the Latin American rhythms of the "new rumba," the lyrics of which also introduce new challenging social ideas. Thus we see that Tambu develops senses of identity and belonging in a homestead environment that has experienced transformations both positive and negative. The wider place of the homestead thus develops Tambu in such a way that she is "at home" with change.

A conflict of cultures is clear in *Nervous Conditions.* The influence of the colonial dominating culture on the natives manifests itself in all areas of the people's lives. Whereas some of the characters, like Babamukuru and Tambu in her early years, embrace "Englishness," as it is referred to in an economical "shorthand" by Tambu's mother, others strongly reject it. Even though Tambu's mother has no formal education and is the character whose movement is most curtailed, she has the insight at the beginning of the narrative that Tambu acquires only at the end. She says:

> "It's the Englishness," she said. "It'll kill them all if they aren't careful," and she snorted. "Look at them. That boy Chido can hardly speak a word of his own mother's tongue, and, you'll see, his children will be worse. Running around with that white one, isn't he, the missionary's daughter? His children will disgrace us.

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> You'll see. And himself, to look at him he may look all right, but there's no telling what's price he's paying". She wouldn't say much about Nyasha. "About that one we don't even speak. It's speaking for itself. Both of them, it's the Englishness." (207)

The children who grow up in between traditional and British culture – like Nyasha and Chido, as Tambu's mother makes clear, may be thought of as a (re)constituting and (re)production of identity in a foreign spatial setting where the new and the old cultures merge, or where one dominates the other. While in Bhabha's perspective the Third Space is effectively an open locality, in *Nervous Conditions*, the Third Space conjures up particularities of anxiety and tension.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha is a character who occupies the Third Space, struggling to find her identity as a young Rhodesian female: "'We shouldn't have gone [to England]', Nyasha was saying, looking disheartened. She continues: "The parents ought to have packed us off home. They should have, you know. Lots of people did that. Maybe that would have been the best. For them at least, because now they're stuck with hybrids for children'" (79). Born in Rhodesia and raised in England Nyasha is a child caught between two worlds who struggles to find her place when the family returns to Rhodesia. Having spent most of her childhood in England, Nyasha finds it hard to adjust to the homestead community and its expectations. She has become anglicised – understood best as a middle-class, urban, Western way of life that privileges the individual over the community. When she returns to the village near Umtali and is reunited with her cousins, she looks and feels awkward in her Western attire, having also forgotten her native Shona language and customs. Unable to communicate with her cousins, she is alienated from her familial cultural identity;

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she is alienated from herself and becomes the female "other." Loss of familiarity with local customs makes her feel like an outsider at family gatherings.

The stay in England has alienated Nyasha from her Shona culture which she considers to be old-fashioned and authoritarian. In particular, the second-class position the women hold annoys her. She does not want to be inferior to men and finds it unfair that her brother Chido is given all the privileges and freedom she cannot have since she is a girl. Often this resistance to authority and patriarchy comes across as disrespect, as Nyasha's mother explains in embarrassment:

> 'They are too Anglicised' explained Maiguru. 'They picked up all these disrespectful ways in England' she continued conversationally,' and it's taking them time to learn how to behave home again. It's difficult for them because things are so different. We keep trying to teach her the right manners, always telling her Nyasha do this; Nyasha why didn't you do that? But it's taking time. Ha Nyasha! That child of mine has her own thoughts about everything! (74)

Nyasha gradually becomes more self-conscious as she grows older but fails to learn Shona etiquette. Tambu, for example, observes that "Nyasha liked to avoid her parents and their friends … because they were bound to say something offensive, like complaining that her gym-slip was too short or grumbling that in three years she had still not learnt the correct way of greeting the elders" (100). Nyasha's relationship with her parents is tense. She is a strong-headed and intelligent girl who refuses to adjust to her father's expectations of her as an obedient and submissive daughter. She claims the right to decide for herself how to dress and behave which creates conflict between her and her father. For example, Nyasha smokes cigarettes and wears short, fashionable dresses "hardly enough of it to cover her thighs" (37).

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The text presents her as fundamentally having been stripped of the epistemological assumptions that constitute her parents' culture. She thinks of herself as a hybrid. She embodies the nervous conditions which Frantz Fanon ascribes to all colonised subjects. Through her relationship with Tambu, Nyasha tries to begin her tentative journey "home" toward her idea of her "former" self and to achieve an affinity with that self. She yearns, symbolically, to embrace her Shona heritage once again by later making traditional clay pots.

Thus we see that Nyasha as a character, unlike Tambu, is wholly disclocated wherever she finds herself. Because the story is Tambu's and not Nyasha's, Nyasha's formative years in England are not decribed at all. But, one can safely assume from Nyasha's desire for her parents to have left her in Rhodesia that the stay in England did not make England home for Nyasha. Given Nyasha's intimate knowledge of racism and its consequences, and her strong anti-colonial and anti-imperial politicisation, the text implies that Nyasha had first-hand experience of racism and British cultural superiority when she was a child in England. As readers we infer that she did not enjoy the familiar sense of place and sociability enjoyed by Tambu in the homestead environment, despite the injustices and restrictions of Shona patriarchy. As shown above, the text clearly describes Nyasha's unbelonging at both the homestead and the mission. The fact that Nyasha is not at home anywhere is indexed by the fact that most often she is presented being expelled from areas of the house at the mission. At the dinner where Babamukuru objects to her reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as being too risque for a young girl, Nyasha leaves the dining room. When Babamukuru strikes her for being on the street with a boy at night, she leaves the house to go smoke outside. Most significantly she is presented as not even being at home in her own body since she rejects or expels the food which should nourish her, making her body waste away. Because Nyasha does not have the formative sense of place Tambu enjoys, she lacks the resilience and strength shown by Tambu in her response to the places that disemplace her.

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For this reason, the story is Tambu's rather than Nyasha's with Nyasha effectively disappearing at the end of the narrative.

In spite of her young age Tambu becomes aware of the injustice between the genders within her society and realises that education is for her the only possibility to be able to influence and alter her status as a second-class female. She is determined and grasps the opportunity she is given without hesitation when her brother dies: "If you were clever, you slipped through any loophole you could find. I for one was going to take any opportunity that came my way. I was quite sure about that; I was determined…I would go" (182). Seeing her mother's obligation to perform hard labour with carrying water, growing the crops and being beaten on a regular basis by her husband convinces Tambu that the mission is her only chance to gain independence and liberty.

Tambu's mobility is driven by a struggle to enable her to continue her education, propelling her to leave the homestead, where she has spent her childhood, for the mission school headed by her uncle Babamukuru. As has been noted above, when one year the family's crops fail and there is no longer enough money for Tambu's or her brother Nhamo's school fees, their mother manages to raise enough money to keep only the son in school. The family can no longer afford to keep Tambu at school, and her father tries to "comfort" her by telling her that she cannot cook books and feed them to her husband. But mobility to a place where burdens are lightened is what Tambu is determined to achieve, and she thinks through a plan to grow her own maize and to make money for her fees. With the help of Mr Matimba, a teacher, Tambu manages to travel to town to sell her mealies, allowing her to complete her education at the homestead, whereafter she, in the absence of another son in the family, is allowed to continue her education at the mission school where her uncle Babamukuru is the headmaster.

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Tambu's journey to the mission is described in portentous terms and is highly symbolic:

> How can I describe the sensations that swamped me when Babamukuru started his car, with me in the front seat beside him, on the day I left my home? It was relief, but more than that. It was more than excitement and anticipation. What I experienced that day was a short cut, a rerouting of everything I had ever defined as me into fast lanes that would speedily lead me to my destination. My horizons were saturated with me, my leaving, my going. There was no room for what I left behind. (58)

Tambu experiences an unmistakeable sense of freedom and elation, linked with her mobility. She cannot wait to be reconciled with her envisioned future in the new environment. Her feelings are entirely focussed on her destination and the radical implications she believes this journey has for her future and her identity. She feels she is leaving behind the peasant self that has defined her up until the time she steps into the car. She believes that at Babamukuru's she will find: "another self, a clean, well-groomed self who could not have been bred, could not have survived on the homestead. At Babamukuru's I would have the leisure, be encouraged to consider questions that had to do with survival of the spirit, rather than mere sustenance of the body" (58-59). It is clear from the terms in which she describes the new self that will be cultivated at the mission, that Tambu believes she will be entering a new enlightened world. To a certain extent, her dream is reinforced by what she sees when she first comes to the mission. The drive up to the house, and the house itself, are presented through Tambu's eyes as representing a kind of earthly paradise. The initial view of Babamkuru's white house staggers her, and the inside of the house surprises her even more. It is clear from the modern conveniences she sees that the backbreaking labour women endured

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at the homestead is no longer a burden in the new environment. Tambu describes the taps with running water and the electric cooker at the mission with awe. She is bewildered by the variety and volume of food that is so easily procured, cooked and served.

However, once she has spent some time at the mission, she picks up some anomalies. Although the mission brings freedom from the labour women are forced to perform at the homestead, Tambu discovers that in a number of ways, the women at the mission are not free. Tambu describes the anomalies in detail. She learns that Nyasha does not enjoy the freedom of mobility that her brother, Chido, enjoys. While Chido is free to come and go and do as he pleases, including going away on vacation with the Baker boys, Nyasha is obliged always to be confined within the family circle. The sense of constriction experienced by Nyasha is foreshadowed early on in the narrative when Tambu first arrives at the mission. Nyasha's sense of entrapment is clear at the first family dinner where Babamukuru objects to his daughter's reading D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, for the sexual explicitness of its content. Nyasha is presented as trapped at the dinner table in a battle of wills with her father. As the argument escalates, she manages to break free to go to the bedroom, where she tells Tambu she will smoke. When Tambu anxiously objects, she then goes outside. It is clear that literally and metaphorically Nyasha wishes to break boundaries and be free to move. Nyasha's entrapment at the mission is brought to a head on an occasion where she stands outside on the road with boys late at night after a school dance. To fit Babamukuru's idea of a woman's place, Nyasha should be inside. On this occasion the battle of wills escalates to the point where Babamukuru strikes Nyasha. This incident awakens something in Tambu. She realises that the victimisation she saw was not limited to the homestead. Instead, it was universal and that "[m]en took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it" (118). In particular, she realises that the victimisation is directed at keeping women hemmed in, or constrained.

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This realisation is internalised by Tambu, and its effects are felt on another occasion. Babamukuru comes to believe that the misfortunes visited on the family like Nyasha's rebelliousness, the financial setbacks experienced at the homestead, the fact that two other nieces are pregnant outside of marriage, are the consequence of "something that we are doing that we should not be doing, or the result of something that we are not doing that we should be doing" (149). He decides that the family's misfortunes stem from the fact that Jeremiah and Ma'Shingayi are "living in sin" (149). He decides that they need to have a white church wedding. This idea is completely humiliating to Tambu: "The whole business reduced my parents to the level of the stars of a comic show, the entertainers. I did not want to see them brought down like that and I certainly did not want to be a part of it" (165). Even though consciously she wants to obey Babamukuru, her body responds to the emotional turmoil she experiences. Babamukuru's colonial patriarchy has the effect of completely paralysing Tambu: "The next morning, the morning of the wedding, I found I could not get out of bed. I tried several times but my muscles simply refused to obey the half-hearted commands I was issuing to them" (168). As we have seen, patriarchy at the mission operated to constrain women in small spaces, literally and metaphorically. In this instance we see Tambu trapped in one of the smallest spaces we have come across so far. She is trapped in the space of her bed, stripped of all mobility.

Despite Tambu's realisation of the ways in which the mission and everything it represents constrains women, she nevertheless ardently desires the mobility into modernity begun on the day she stepped into Babamururu's car and drove to the mission. When the opportunity comes for her to go to a prestigious private college, Sacred Heart, she again sets out with the elation at her mobility that we saw previously: "Excitement. Anticipation. Elation and exultation. It was all very much the same as it had been on that first day I went to the mission, the day that I began my new life" (195). Again, however, she discovers that

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instead of finding the freedom she desires, she is trapped, but in a different way. Instead of experiencing the constraints of patriarchy, she now experiences the constraints put on her by racism, which she feels viscerally for the first time. Racism is similarly experienced as a form of entrapment in a small space. Tambu's introduction to her "place" at Sacred Heart is presented thus:

> At the door a nun, smiling beatifically, made us welcome by shaking our hands and asking us "Which one is this? Before taking us up steps and down corridors to a room at the end of a long hallway.
>
> "All the first formers live on this corridor," she explained as she led the way. "And the Africans live in here," she announced triumphantly flinging the door to my new life wide open. The room was empty. I was, it seemed, the first black first-former to have arrived. It was not a small room, but then neither was it large. It certainly was not large enough for the six beds that stood in it, three along one wall and three along the other, all of necessity so closely arranged that there was barely space to walk between them. (198)

Thus we see that on every occasion that Tambu sets in motion her own mobility into what she believed is a newfound freedom, she discovers constraints that are both different and similar to the ones she previously experienced. But, on every occasion, she also manages to challenge the ways in which she is entrapped to find a place from which she can negotiate a new mobility. In this respect, she is enabled by her formative sense of place at the homestead which is denied to Nyasha.

Nervous Conditions thus underlines an important idea. It seems clear that Nyasha was destined to fall apart since she never really had a home in the deep sense of being shaped by a

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place. Tambu, on the other hand, finally overcomes, since even though she is for a period in her life alienated from her "home" culture, she has a strength that comes from a powerful sense of place. Her sense of emplacement while growing up allows her to negotiate other spaces, even if it is an ironically distanced sense of place that finally develops. Finally, it is Tambu's initial secure emplacement in the space of the homestead that allows her to negotiate her way out of subsequent constraining spaces, empowering her to find a sense of home wherever she is, even if it is an ironically distanced sense of home. This is what she means when she suggests at the end of the novel that her understanding comes from a "long and painful" process of "expansion" – a term that captures the mobility of her identity, and her physical movement away from the homestead, with, nevertheless, a secure sense of self created through her first emplacement in the homestead environment.

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CHAPTER TWO

Unhomely Homes: Resisting Place in Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name*

> *The field of postcolonial literary studies tends to reduce the concept of mobility to one specific phenomenon: migration. However, human physical travel is a diverse phenomenon that covers a wide variety of mobilities of which migration is only one possible manifestation.* (Toivanen,"Spaces of in-between-ness" 2)

Yvonne Vera, who died at the age of forty on April 7, 2005, remains one of the most important literary voices to have come out of Zimababwe. She wrote five novels, *Nehanda* (1993), *Without A Name* (1994), *Under the Tongue* (1996), *Butterfly Burning* (1998), and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). Vera also wrote a book of short stories called *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals* (1992). In all her work, Vera challenges the status quo and offers a different perspective which resists and seeks to expose the ills of society. In exposing the ills of society through written work, Vera primarily uses female protagonists, in that way allowing the oppressed, abused and violated women to speak for themselves in an antagonistic world that is a playing ground for patriarchal tendencies. Through using female voices in her writing, Vera is a voice for women who are suffering quietly in the places that are supposed to be their home.

Through the story of the violated Mazvita, whose rejection by her home leads her to escape to the city, Vera's *Without a Name* narrates the struggles of women and girls who found themselves constricted between a cruel colonial regime and sometimes blinkered and violent nationalist guerrilla armed forces. In the novel this forces the flight of oppressed and violated women to an elsewhere with the hope of achieving some respite. *Without a Name* is

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a novel that has its focus on the individual who is (dis)connected and (un)related to her place of origin. She undergoes a change from girlhood into womanhood, and then undertakes journeys from the village to the city and back again amid the uncertain shifts that conditions of war bring to bear.

In *Without a Name*, as it will become clear, Vera upends expectations since she presents the countryside not as a secure home, but as a space of violation from which the heroine needs to escape. The heroine identifies the modern city with freedom. She escapes to the city via the halfway house of a commercial farm. She finds that she is as unhomed in the urban setting as she is in the countryside. As a result, she returns to the countryside. This suggests that perhaps her only home is in mobility itself, but even that is excluded. Finally, we see that perhaps Mazvita's only home lies in the *possibility* of mobility, rather than in the space of the countryside or the city or the temporary home provided by forms of mobility such as the bus in which she is presented as travelling.

Mazvita escapes her "home" that is now in ruins. In her mobility away from the ruins she takes an alternate route through a commercial farm, heading to the city where she is determined to search for a safe space. At the tobacco farm she comes across a man, Nyenyedzi, and falls in love with him. While still on the tobacco farm Mazvita expresses an outsider's idealised view of the city of Harare as a "perfect place to begin" where one can "forget anything" (24). Mazvita, perhaps more than any other of Vera's fictional characters, obsesses about journeying in order to start all over again at a place that would hopefully not reject her.

In *Without a Name,* the land, as the possession of men, becomes implicated in women's violation. This is especially clear in the context of her home, the place where she is supposed to be rooted, where she is supposed to belong. Mazvita experiences her rape by a guerrilla soldier as an act enabled by a disloyal and violent landscape: "…she hated the land

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pressed against her back as the man moved impatiently above her, into her, past her […] she connected him only to the land […] the land had allowed the man to grow from itself into her body" (31). She tries to forget since it is evil and persecution that "home" has visited upon her. In the countryside of her home, she is raped, and this violation is so deep and brutal that it is presented using painful and traumatising imagery: "[h]er skin peeled off, parting from her body. She had suffered so much that her skin threatened to fall pitilessly to the ground. It hung from below her neck, from her arms, from her whole silent body" (8). This passage is important in that it describes a moment of violation that gave rise to the determination to move to another place. Mazvita's sense of self was shattered after the rape, since then, until she returned home, she was without a name (110). Mazvita's experience of the land thus is very different from Tambu's in *Nervous Conditions*. Mazvita links the land with brutal male violence, rather than with female solidarity and empowerment as Tambu does. For Mazvita, the land is destructive. For Tambu the land is enabling. Because Mazvita could not see nor identify who raped her, she resorted to transferring the hatred to various elements of the natural landscape. She wants to forget the rapist's "whispering carried in her ears" (25) and "how the sky exploded as the village beyond the river burnt" (25), aspects that subvert the narrative of ordeal associated with the land.

Mazvita runs off from Mubaira to a tobacco farm near Kadoma. There she builds relations and stays with a co-worker, even though the two were not married. So here we see *Without A Name* providing an account of Mazvita's exit away from her home, aiming for the city in search of freedom. Also, we see here how complicated her relationship with land was, and therefore the contradictory manner in which she and her lover, Nyenyedzi, saw the land's value. Mazvita acknowledges that what he says of the land is true, but she asks the pertinent question of whether the truth about the land belongs to all people, men and women equally (33). The land could not claim her undivided loyalty because

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> [s]he wanted something different from her truth. She wanted to conquer her reality then, and not endure the suspension of time. She felt a strong sense of her own power and authority, of her ability to influence and change definitions of her own reality, adjust boundaries to her vision. ... She possessed a strong desire for her liberty, and did not want to linger hopelessly between one vision and the next. She had loved the land, saw it through passionate and intense moments of freedom, but to her the land had no fixed loyalties. (34)

In her quest to seek "something different from her truth", and in her "strong desire for her liberty", Mazvita understood that she needed to escape her land, a place she can no longer call "home" because it has violated and rejected her. So she departs for the city, and in the process of her journey meets and builds a relationship with Nyenyedzi.

Vera, arguably one of the most important writers to emerge from the African continent in last two decades of the twentieth century, seeks in *Without A Name* to explore and establish diasporic particularities such as forgetting and remembering, (un)belonging, (re)identity, home and trauma through the real and imagined lenses of space and place. Here Vera portrays women as seeing the city as a sanctuary. They travel through a route that leads them to spaces that they hope would allow them the much-needed freedom against restrictions and violations imposed on them by colonialism and patriarchy as well as the cruel particularities that have turned their homes into spaces that reject them. But we see that when Mazvita arrives in the city, she experiences the new place, the very place she understood to mean a liberation from the things in the home space that violated her, as an outsider. Experiencing the city as an outsider, for Mazvita, can be compared to the experience that caused her to leave home, embarking on mobility in order to find a more humane elsewhere.

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To experience the city as an outsider, in a different sense but equally traumatising for Mazvita, is to be "raped" again.

In her attempt to dramatise the volatility of postcolonial space, and hence the prospect of the previously colonised people decolonising to regain that "space", Vera's work is very conscious of the vantage point from which her characters perceive their worlds. The term "space" is used in the broadest sense of the word, to encompass both physical and ideological space. Decolonising to regain "space" works to free the colonised from the physical spaces of confinement by colonising spatial orders, as well as from the ideological space that casts the native as intrinsically inferior to the settler, the European. Here one is reminded of the power relations that obtain in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* (1950), to be considered in the final chapter, where racist settlers dominate and oppress the natives in the countryside. In *Without A Name*, the oppression and victimisation especially of women is a function of patriarchal dynamics in the *Chimurenga* resistance. Vera's work also sees her female characters focusing on their own well-being and that of their children when they need to decide whether to stay on the land – which is their current unwelcoming "home" – or to leave for the city in search of a better life, in a quest to "belong".

Patriarchal *Chimurenga* and the Displacement of Women

It is not possible to reflect on Zimbabwean history without mentioning the *Chimurenga*. *Chimurenga*, which, according to scholar Maurice Vambe "expresses a political ideology articulated through the military [and] therefore it is a sui-generis expression of African nationalism in Zimbabwe" (169), was embarked upon by the nationalist movements in the 1960s and 1970s. This was in order to legitimise the indigenous claim for the restitution of stolen land and, with it, national sovereignty. Etymologically "*Chimurenga*" can be traced back to one of the country's "founding fathers", Murenga Sororenzou, who is

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celebrated for both his fighting spirit and prowess as well as the war-songs which, as Vambe argues, "he composed to encourage his soldiers to continue the fight against their enemies in pre-colonial Zimbabwe" (167). Crucially, he argues that "*Chimurenga*" has to be understood, therefore, not in the narrow paradigm "based only on visible and organized forms of struggle by African nationalists in the Zimbabwe of the 1890s, 1970s, and in 2002", but more widely "as a manifestation of the ideology of African liberation" (168). Thus "*Chimurenga* represents communal African memory harking back to the time of Munhumutapa's struggles against the Portuguese in the early 17th century, and the Shona's struggles with the Ndebeles in the 1830s" (168).

The guerrilla war that arose in the 1970s played itself out across the vast white-owned farmlands upon which the Rhodesian government depended for economic viability. It also reached the underdeveloped Tribal Trust Lands that provided their labour reserves: spaces where, as Jocelyn Alexander notes, customary authority and colonial governance were variously intertwined and contested (4). It was the second *Chimurenga*, as its leaders described it, which finally led to independence in 1980. It is this tumultuous moment that the narrative of *The Stone Virgins* straddles, which historically precedes the period covered by *Without a Name*, the novel considered in this chapter. To this day the narrative of uprising – of *Chimurenga* – is incorporated into a nationalist narrative continuum, as scholar Ian Scoones argues, to justify elite resource-grabbing in the context of "Africa's land rush"; a new phase of accumulation, "motivated by projections of rising food prices, by growing demand for 'green' energy, and by the allure of cheap land and water rights" (1).

Without a Name is a book which, together with Vera's *Under the Tongue*, is set in the seventies during the course of the guerrilla war against white colonial rule. A brief background to the social system of the Shona communities will clarify what Vera is doing in *Without a Name*, in relation to official history and to social practices in pre-colonial times.

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Shona communities were patriarchally organised even before the onset of European colonisation, and the social status of Shona women was much lower than that of their male counterparts. The status of a woman, like her voice in the public sphere, was, as pointed out by scholar Elizabeth Schmidt, mediated by men. Katrin Brendt concurs that the social status of Shona women was significantly lower than that of their male counterparts (10-11). In this social system where power was mainly concentrated in male figures, some women also helped to perpetuate the male-dominated system. There are cases of women who exerted authority over other women in ways that advantaged themselves and the patriarchal system as a whole.

These conditions of patriarchy, and violence and rejection "at home" literally and metaphorically lead to contemplations of "flight" by women, developing gendered questions of place and mobility. Vera remaps the rural and urban zones (interconnected by roads) as well as the individual's movements between them in her novels. Even though it is not the focus of this work, it can be argued that the primary spatial concerns would therefore revolve around resolving separation between the rural and the urban and the difficulties that rural women have in manoeuvring between them. So there comes into existence a cartography that maps the urban and the rural as separate locations, as well as the power geometry embedded in this separation. In *Space, Place, and Gender* Doreen Massey asserts that "different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to […] flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn't, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and the movement" (149). The distribution of power is connected to movement across space by individuals and social groups, and Massey reminds us that some groups with power have control over their movement across space while they exercise power to keep others immobile. In this matrix of geographical power, many people are imprisoned by their

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immobility and are denied freedom to move because of their social, ethnic or gender identity. In the novel under discussion, however, women are in a position to move, but we find that the idealised destination, and mobility itself are unhomely.

In *Without A Name*, the protagonist, Mazvita, takes flight from "home" only to return dragging her child tied to her back, a dead infant, strangled by its mother. Effecting mobility, Mazvita carries her child back to the village from where she fled after an attack by guerrilla fighters left her raped and homeless. Mazvita, in her determination to leave for the city, acknowledges just how appealing the city can be for those in the rural setting: "I cannot live here. We must go to the city and live there […] We must go to the city. It is said there is no war there. Freedom has already arrived" (30). We therefore see how history determines women's relationship with land and the transformations history brings with it. If land is central to male characters' sense of individual and social self, land for the women characters in Vera's novels is linked with a sense of dislocation. Tensions in the gendered relationship with land compels mobility away from the land, but conditions in the city oblige a return to the land. We see therefore that women's relationship with the land is problematic. Struggling and oppressed women hope and imagine that mobility will free them, that they will find freedom in the city. But they find that the city proves just as constraining as "home".

Women such as Vera's Mazvita, finding themselves suffering untold violations in spaces and places that are highly patriarchal, ordinarily find themselves suffering in silence. This silence, for some, is borne of fear and submission. But this silence should not be seen as inaction because even though not all those who need to take flight have the means to effect mobility, many wait patiently for an opportunity to escape to a different place, a place they believe is better than "home". Exilic passions therefore increase on a daily basis because violations are visited upon them on a daily basis. Women became the outsiders of a society that was still predominantly patriarchal, making it clear that women were mobilised during

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the war for instrumental reasons rather than for their own liberation. Many non-military women also suffered untold violations, both physically and psychologically during and after the war, but it is generally regarded as taboo for them to speak out about these violations in real life. This silence that particularities of exclusion and rejection at home enjoin can be suffocating because they are experienced in all spheres of life, be it at home, at school, and even in churches. Women became the outsiders of a society even at their places of employment because, in certain cases, patriarchy and sexism dictate that they earn less than their male counterparts. It is these particularities which serve the purpose of making mobility irresistible, compelling women and their children to take flight to an elsewhere which promises kinder living conditions.

It is therefore significant to understand, as pointed out before, that silence may be a form of self-organisation, a sort of preparation to escape, rather than acquiescence. Scholars like Rudo Gaidzanwa among others, do argue when referring to these silences that “home” can elicit women, that women can in fact organise themselves in these moments of silence. So we see that Vera’s narrative techniques present the productivity of silence and the resistance to oppression in women’s mobility. To support this view about “silence(s)”, Toivanen states in “Remembering the Nation’s Aching Spots: Yvonne Vera’s Authorial Position of Witness and Healer” that “In [Vera’s] texts, silence represents a problematic way of dealing with the past; the only possibility for viable communality is to create an atmosphere in which painful issues can be voiced” (1).

By way of flashbacks, the narration repeatedly comes back to that experience and inscribes different versions of it into the text. Nyenyedzi reacts to this first and only version in direct speech with silence, followed by his suggestion to Mazvita to stay with him in Kadoma. He does not want to go with her to Harare where she thinks she will find release. The notion and vista of living in a city overwhelmed him: “In a big place like that. We will be

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lost. We will even lose one another … I cannot leave the land and go to a strange unwelcoming place" (30). But Mazvita was steadfast. She had other ideas: "Do you see the people who come from the city … they have no fear in their eyes. Look at how frightened we are here. Can freedom arrive here like has arrived in the city? … It is the perfect place to begin. It is better than here. Harare" (30). Her determination was to escape, to find settlement in a different space and place where, she hoped, a better life awaited. To this end, Anna-Leena Toivanen makes the same point: "Escaping her painful memories, Mazvita tries to find a new beginning in the city" (7). Even though Mazvita "recognised Harare as the limitless place in which to dream, and to escape" (64), she also discovered that new space and place was not always welcoming, that it can reject, overwhelm, and even oppress.

Briefly to go back to a comparison of her novels, the temporal and spatial settings of Vera's novels are also significant since they recollect the history of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean literary and cultural critics, Robert Muponde and Mandi Taruvinga have observed that:

> [t]he consistent quest for the landmarks of Zimbabwean history and iconography to redefine its memory, its sense of place, underpins much of Vera's work. The years 1896-97 (*Nehanda*), 1977 (*Without a Name*), 1979 (*Under the Tongue*), 1946 (*Butterfly Burning*) and 1980-85(*The Stone Virgins*) recall not the historian's emphasis on dates, facts and occurrences, but certain imaginative and spiritual journeys of colonized and oppressed people. These dates mark sites for metamorphosis and resurrection.... The fact that her fiction is rooted in critical and decisive moments of Zimbabwean history reveals the value of an alternative psycho-social signage by which herstory of the nation may be told. (xi)

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As noted by Muponde and Taruvinga, the time in which Vera's novels are set is important and her rural settings are also important as this study has argued. The rural populace is usually relegated to the periphery but Vera puts them at the centres of her narratives as, to invoke Desiree Lewis, she "often turns to the peripheral places, experiences and people: to Zimbabwe's townships and rural areas, to the experiences of poor rural women, to violent, dehumanising and 'irrational' acts that expose deep layers of trauma" (2). It is therefore important to note that "trauma" and exclusion and rejection at "home" are powerful forces which compel women to seek "home" elsewhere, even though mobility itself can be equally traumatic and marginalising, resulting in a perpetuation of a sense of "unbelonging".

"Home", Mobility and (un)Belonging

Discourses on mobility and migration are closely linked to discourses of home. Generally, the notion of home is connected with belonging. Home has an intricate and poignant importance. It is symbolically used in multiple ways in discourses of diaspora literature. Literary texts, such as Vera's *Without A Name*, highlight how the notion of home often becomes one with notions of tradition, of culture, and of belonging. Home, through experience, has the capacity to define the subject, just as the subject has the capacity to define it. This is why one's identity is connected to one's home as it – home, is a key factor in the development of an individual's identity. Sociologist of diaspora, Avtar Brah, illustrates "home" as the place of our everyday lived experience: This 'home' is a place with which we remain intimate even in moments of intense alienation from it. It is a sense of 'feeling at home'" (4).

Tensions in the relationship with land, which can also be understood to function as a place that ideally should provide a "home", forces women to move, and, as we shall see in the detailed analysis of the novel which follows, suggests that women's relationship with land

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cannot be considered outside of the context of mobility – which in itself is both complex and ambiguous. The particular ways in which the space of the city is conceptualised also exerts a pull factor, making women desire to move. Thus we see that mobility is foisted upon Vera's Mazvita because of tensions in her relationship with the land. Vera disrupts the identification of native women with the earth. Space in the Shona rural context, symbolised by land and everything it means, and space in the city context symbolised by progress, and freedom, cannot be considered outside of the consideration of mobility or migration.

Writing seventeen years after the liberation struggle and with the advantage of hindsight, Vera draws her readers to the question of what freedom people have gained since they attained "freedom". The narrator emphasises that in the city:

> [n]ewspaper headings covered the dark alley, promised no freedom to the agitated people. But there were ample signs of freedom the people had already claimed for themselves - empty shells of Ambi, green and red. The world promised a lighter skin, greater freedom. It was 1977, freedom was skin deep but joyous and tantalizing. *Ambi* ... Freedom spoke from behind a mask, but no one understood what freedom truly was ... Freedom was, after all purchasable ... procured even if the cost was nothing less than one's soul. (26-27)

Vera seems to be aspirational, exploring the "dream" about freedom at a national level, not just as Mazvita's personal dilemma. She seems to be highlighting the fact that people are deceiving themselves into thinking that they are "free" and yet they are languishing in poverty and "were known to die amazing deaths" (76). As the narrator puts it, their "freedom was only skin-deep" (26). Travel is used metaphorically to symbolise escape into this ambivalent freedom. It is evident in the narrative that just as Mazvita's running away to the

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city is not a solution to her experience of being unhomed in the countryside, travelling itself is a great risk as "travelling was a suspension of all pretence to freedom ... A road was not for pursuing destinations: a road was another manifestation of death" (76). Literally, travelling is risky because of the raging war and the landmines that are planted on the roads by the warring parties. Thus, whilst it offers temporary freedom to the people moving from their rural homes to the city, mobility's complexities and ambiguity can plunge one into unwelcoming experiences both on the road and in the new space and place.

The story in historical time starts with a turning point, the actual starting point of the story, namely, the attack on Mazvita's home village and her encounter with a Shona freedom fighter who rapes her, as recounted in the introduction to this chapter. This event is addressed for the first time in a dialogue between Mazvita and Nyenyedzi, her lover, whom she meets in Kadoma later in the narrative, but it is the spur that sets the narrative in motion. The version presented to Nyenyedzi in direct speech is scant, highly metaphorical and seems strangely indifferent to the violence of the moment it recounts:

> [I]t is hard to find words for certain things. I really must go to the city. One day I woke up in a mist, you know, the kind you enter with your shoulders. [...] My arms were heavy as I walked in that early morning to carry water from the river. I only had my arms, because my legs were buried in the mist, but I felt the mist moving upward, toward my face. It was strange to walk separated like that. Then I felt something pulling me down into the grass. This something pulled hard at my legs, till I fell down. I saw nothing into the grass. I had forgotten about my legs. It was a man that pulled me into that grass. He held a gun. I felt the gun, though I did not see it. After that experience, I decided to leave. (30)

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What this passage does is to demonstrate that conditions of physical violence and abuse can force mobility. From the passage, as Mazvita wakes up "in a mist" and feels something "pulling me down into the grass", it is clear that even the environment conspires against her in her time of trauma, and ends up playing a role in her mobility away from the land that has turned against her. The land, a place Mazvita should call home, has not proven to be a safe haven for her but a threat – to her and to Zimbabwean women in general. It is not surprising then that Mazvita looks to another place in order to escape, in order to find safety, in order to find home undergoing mobility, to reach that home. Not only did "Mazvita [recognise] Harare as the limitless place in which to dream, and to escape" (64), but she effectively sought to escape the trauma she links with the countryside. Mazvita's spatial experience shows that indeed place – whether welcoming or not, is such that it is unavoidable. Whether one is praying in a corner of her bedroom, whether one is in a classroom or prison cell, whether one is a plane or train or ship, one is always "placed". In Vera's novel, the heroine we see is never, however, fully "emplaced."

At Odds with Place – a Journey to the City

This study accepts that the term "place" is central to geography, but that its meaning extends much further in the context of other disciplines. As Tim Cresswell points out, "'place' is, of course, many other things but it is, on an intuitive level, a discipline which has place as one of its principle objects of study" (2). The study of place is in fact a process of human geography, but is also a concern in the study of literature, sociology, philosophy and other disciplines. Place is often thought of as a location of a town, of a city, or of a region. More specifically, place can define the unique characteristics, both tangible and intangible, of a location. This means that it not only includes the visual characteristics and features of a location, but also the associations and feelings that we have when we see or hear about a

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particular place. These intangible components may be evoked, as is the case in fellow Zimbabwean Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, by photographs, symbols, stories, and songs or music, which will be considered further in a later chapter. Often, we first become aware of our own sense of place and identity when we travel, like Vera's Mazvita, to unfamiliar places and begin to realise that our surroundings are different and that we do not feel "at home" there. The landscape is different; the weather may be different; houses and towns are different; people are not the same; even things such as sounds, and smells are not those that we are familiar with. On the other hand, the common understanding that if one moves to a new place all of these things will gradually become familiar, that one will develop a new sense of place which then will become part of one's identity. These observations do not, however, seem to hold in the case of Vera's Mazvita. Harare is emotionally cold for her. It is unwelcoming. It does not appreciate that she took flight from her "home", hoping that the city, Harare, will provide her with the sense of belonging and freedom that she needs.

Mazvita's mobility to the urban is presented as not secure and welcoming. She laments: "The buildings were so high they made her want to crouch, or bury herself in the ground, anything but to walk up straight" (54). It can reject, overwhelm, even oppress. Mazita's new environs were so uncomfortable that she asserts that "[t]he city was a place which hid its old. Perhaps no one ever lived here long enough to be toothless" (54). Comparing her past and present, the rural and the urban, Mazvita accepts that "Harare was a pestilence. Feet swished past. The city was unapologetic. The city was on time. Harare was festive. Roads were four-wheeled, black-tarred and moving" (54). But, like many dispersed to faraway foreign lands, she has hope: "Mazvita had a profound belief in her own reality, in the transformation new geographies released and encouraged" (64). Also, "She had faith in untried realities because she trusted her own power of change, of adaptation" (64). So in

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executing mobility, what Mazvita goes through as her relocation takes root is to seek to "belong" wherever she is in order mainly to survive and to carve a new home for herself, even though it is clear through the text that she in fact does not succeed. In the introduction of "Identity, Space and the Media: Thinking through Diaspora", Myria Georgiou posits a few questions that are pertinent to the work now studied. She asserts: "How can we understand culture and identity at present, if not through mobility, immediate and mediated intersections and juxtapositions of difference? How can we understand situated identities if not through the practices that interconnect or interrupt human action in and across places?" (16). Georgiou suggests the inevitable transformation that subjects, through mobility, would necessarily have to undergo. Farough Fakhimi Anbaran also points out that "the close connection among place, culture, and identity in a way that a special place has a culture of its own which creates the special identity of its residents …" (48). This is the "transformation" that Georgiou speaks about – that the link between "place, culture and identity" is bound to constitute for the residents a special "place" which has its own culture and identity. *Without A Name* suggests that the journey to the city presents Mazvita with a disconnected identity that cannot be reconnected even with a return to the countryside from which in the first place she was disconnected, uprooted by patriarchy, since in her absence, the home in the countryside would have changed.

Anna-Leena Toivanen makes the point that "Yvonne Vera's novels *Without A Name* and *The Stone Virgins* offer particularly interesting insights into issues of trauma and memory in the context of decolonization and nation-building" (1). She characterises *Without A Name* as "a poetics of despair (which) focuses on the traumatised condition" (1): "The novel can be read as a trauma narrative in which no obvious healing process is in sight. *Without A Name* is shaded by the weight of consecutive traumatic events – rape, killing of the family, and later infanticide – that the protagonist wishes to banish to oblivion" (7). Toivanen's intervention is

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important in that it confirms a place for this novel in the study of intra-national diaspora, identity, remembering and trauma. Especially trauma, which often gives rise to involuntary mobility. In the contemporary period these ideas are more often linked with transnational movement rather than intranational movement. However, intranational movement could also be considered through the paradigm of diaspora. Vera presents the character, Mazvita, who hopes to start afresh in a new spatiality of human life, and she selects the big city of Harare, the one she recognises as the place in which she can dream. This could be seen as her way of being cast out into oblivion because the city is cold and strange, just as she is strange to it.

Vera intentionally uses the colour red and dust, as we can see right at the beginning of *Without A Name* – "[t]he bus was fierce red […] black wheels were yellow with gathered dust" (5), not only to indicate the struggles her characters are going through, but also to indicate to how resilient they can be in spite of them facing what can be characterised as overwhelming, life and death challenges. In *Without a Name,* Mazvita exudes resilience and refuses to give up on life even after a series of victimisations that were so comprehensive that she suffers from a kind of psychic disintegration. Her strength and tenacity, and her determination to escape are indicated when she boards a bus that was "so stunningly red it was living" (1) in order to bury the baby she killed in her home village. Even though in some of Vera's work we see people who have been severely dispossessed and disempowered often turn inward and transform their most personal reflections into loci of resistance, it is clear that *Without a Name* is a novel that shows how Mazvita's "passion for escape" (37) propels her to the city. Jessica Murray points out that in Vera's work "it is the female characters who take the active, often very courageous, steps to improve their lives as well as the lives of their children" (141). In Mazvita's case we see a female character who takes the active and courageous step to seek a better elsewhere, away from the rejecting "home".

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I align the discussion with what Edward Soja suggests in introducing *Thirdspace*. Soja refers to place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography as related concepts that compose and comprise the inherent spatiality of human life. In her new environs Mazvita assumes a nameless existence, but because she seems incapable of a clean break and forgetting all that took place in the countryside, she remains in the host-city alone and an outsider. Effectively, we see here the very phenomenon of remembering itself being traumatic or triggering a re-trauma. As William Safran – a scholar who has contributed substantially to the body of knowledge regarding immigration and migration explains below, Mazvita, like some expatriates in the diaspora, does not want to go home, electing to stay in "foreign land" because "home" has become cold and unwelcoming.

The actual story line in *Without A Name* is a journey, which loosely means an act of travelling from one place to another. In the context of Vera's Mazvita, it can be understood to mean a quest for freedom which takes the shape of a trip between the rural and the urban and back to the rural. Michelle Ramlagan argues that "[j]ourneying presents an opportunity for those undertaking the journey to change their position as well as circumstances" (132). This is true about Vera's Mazvita. She embarks on and depends on mobility to see a change in her life through settling in a different place. Ramlagan further states that "journeys enable travellers to leave behind one set of cultural and political circumstances in order to access a different set" (132). In the case of Mazvita, through spatial and temporal movement between the rural and the urban, it is hoped by the heroine that mobility will enable a favourable transformation in circumstances. Ramlagan also asserts that "[i]n traditional pastorals individuals suffused with the corruption of urban and political life journey to rural landscapes where they can be transformed and renewed" (132). This is interesting because in the case of Vera's Mazvita, mobility is embarked upon in order to escape rejection and violation

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experienced in a rural setting to an urban setting, where "transformation" and "renewal" are believed to be possible. We see a similar trend in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*, which is explored later in this work. Lessing's Mary seems to be enjoying life in town until she is married to Dick Turner, who then takes her along to her new place in the rural farm, where she experiences unwelcoming conditions to a point where she decides to escape by running away back to town where, unfortunately for her, she finds that she is no longer welcome, that the town has moved on without her. Both the cases of Vera's Mazvita and Lessing's Mary are indicative of the fact that mobility itself does not always provide "home", neither does a different elsewhere always provide the answers to the questions that have caused mobility in the first place.

Journeying, in Mazvita's case, articulates a permanent desire for women to escape oppressive patriarchy. But because patriarchy finds expression in every sphere of life, these women seem to experience it everywhere – home and away. So mobility is foregrounded in the entire narrative, and is ambiguously presented since it allows escape but only to another oppressive place. Again, Anna-Leena Toivanen clarifies in respect of two other novels by female writers that mobility is a direct function of a longing: "This longing for an elsewhere, accompanied by a sense of disillusionment, is closely connected to mobility; it is longing that motivates mobility" (5). The narrative of *Without A Name* presents a scene from everyday life: a bus station, a woman waiting for the bus, surrounded by other passengers and playing children.

At the early stage as Mazvita's mobility begins to take root, we see the next moment that the image in fact crumbles: The woman loses her skin. It falls in shreds to the ground. Her neck twists as if it was broken, and she screams. But nobody else apart from the reader seems to have noticed anything, as if nothing actually happened. As if it had happened elsewhere. The moment contains a different space and time element, the everyday setting

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includes an entirely different horizon of experience which we cannot but look at in amazement without understanding. Closely reading *Without A Name*, one is reminded of Tambu, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, whose journey is, in many respects, a representation of the odyssey from the rural to the urban.

A Mobile Home?

This other drift in the narrative, providing a setting for the plot, has little external action: a bus drive, some conversation among the passengers, stoppages along the way by soldiers, a passenger playing the mbira and some sleeping travellers. Yet just as the image of the woman at the bus station disintegrates right at the beginning, each of these seemingly unspectacular moments contains images of an invisible inner suffering that make the borders between inner and outer reality crumble. Martina Kopf claims that "[*Under The Tongue*'s] actual story line is, similar to *Without A Name*, a journey. It follows Muroyiwa's path from his birthplace Njanja to Umtali, where he meets Runyararo and starts a family with her" (95). This is a view I agree with. By way of "a journey", mobility constitutes, and in fact cuts across both stories, a fact that can be seen to illustrate how dependent Vera's subjects are on mobility to escape the traumas of place, but also to find themselves in places and "diasporic" particularities that perpetuate their state of unhomeliness. The "journey" also constitutes a mobility which can be seen by subjects as a state in which a "home", transient as it may be, may be sought. But, as we have seen, mobility itself is fraught with unhoming particularities, especially for Mazvita. One can think of a bus as home, a physical enclosure within which, for the time being, subjects are located, placed, and homed. As a form of public transport, even if is only for the time of the journey, it is a collective home for the community that occupies it. But because it is occupied by different people with different backgrounds and characters, particularities in the bus are bound to visit unto the escaping and the weak

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unhoming and hostile conditions. Even though mobility is meant to distinguish between freedom and enslavement, the bus as a public transport "unhomes" because it is unlike, for example, a family car driven by someone one knows, and shared by other people familiar to one. The bus, other than the threat it presents to some passengers because it is occupied by a larger group of people who are not necessarily known nor related to one another, tends to stop and start a lot along the way, picking up even more people who then complicate the make-up of the occupants, increasing danger to everyone inside this transient place. I therefore contend also that the "journey" by bus itself connotes neither material comfort nor recreation for travellers.

The importance of mobility is indicated by the ways in which modes of transport are foregrounded in Vera's narrative. We are presented with Mazvita travelling in the bus, but we are also presented with the motifs of walking in the city and riding a bicycle – modes of mobility that even more than the bus could be seen as liberatory. But, if Vera reveals the rural landscape as one of trauma, her depiction of urban Harare of the late 1970s is also unsettling. It is in her consideration of Mazvita's experiences in Harare that Vera further expresses the impossibility of sustaining the imagined freedom that Mazvita seeks. In *Without A Name*, Vera stages the self-conscious definition of urban freedom as a kind of somewhat extravagant behaviour that seeks to attract attention to oneself. Joel, Mazvita's township lover referred to above, is described in the narrative using the vocabulary of freedom and ease:

> The man walked up to her in easy loitering footsteps on the side of the road where she sat. He swung efficiently toward her. She noticed his arm swing forward. He swung his arms in obvious and deliberate motions of liberty. He did not keep still even as he asked her if she needed a place to stay. He had such a look. [...] It suited her to consider he was being thoroughly helpful. That is how naive she was about his freedom. (56)

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Worth noting here is the "freedom" a man, Joel, enjoys, the very freedom that the woman, Mazvita, does not enjoy. Joel walking up to her "in easy loitering footsteps on the side of the road" suggests his freedom in relation to the cityscape and therefore in relation to his spatial setting. Historically, it can be argued that the exercise of mobility such as in "walking" in cities is as old as cities themselves. Walking naturally pre-exists metropolitan settings. It has always been a significant form of mobility in urban space, for both the poor and for the privileged, for different social and economic reasons. What is a common thread among "urban dwellers" is that they engage in walking in order to move from one place to another. Referring to the "ordinary practitioners of the city", Michel de Certeau attests in "Walking in the City" that "[t]hey walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers …" (93). Walking is therefore more than just a way of getting around. It is as a social activity was that expresses freedom to move between places. However, Joel's "walking" also magnifies how privileged men are, and how free urban life is compared to rural life as experienced by Mazvita back at home.

In her first great act of "freedom" Mazvita accepts a ride on the back of Joel's bicycle. The narrative suggests that the "decision was easy": "The whole exercise was free, pleasurable, careless, and uncaring. A public display. She was so involved with her particular version of freedom she did not see that no one noticed her" (57). The movement of adjectives, from "free" to "uncaring" captures the ambiguous pleasures of the anonymity of the city, as does the misrecognition that characterises her encounter with another woman on the back of another man's bicycle: "Then she turned a corner and met another woman sitting just like her, and she wanted to wave at their mutual freedom. But she needed both hands to hold on to the seat if she was to remain stable, so she hesitated, and in any case, when she looked at the woman, there was no sign of recognition or sharing" (58). It is important to note

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that the regeneration of inner cities such as Harare and attention to well-functioning public space has created a window of opportunity for cycling, and therefore bicycling becomes intrinsically intertwined with the physical environment. Jennifer Dill and Theresa Carr state in their paper called "Bicycle Commuting and Facilities in Major U.S. Cities: If You Build Them, Commuters Will Use Them – Another Look" that in the United States, "[b]icycling is predominantly a recreational activity" (2). We see the same in *Without A Name*, but we also see that this type of mobility can be used to realise social imperatives such as going to grocery stores or going to work, or visiting friends and relatives in other parts of town. The bicycle offers one the freedom that makes place and what place offers accessible. The bicycle is also a mode of transport which enables people to travel at relatively low cost. Deep levels of poverty ordinarily prevalent in most African cities result in one finding a diversity of transport modes including walking, bicycles, handcarts, tricycles, animal drawn carts, cars and buses. This "freedom", however, cannot be said to be complete. *Without A Name* presents this "freedom" as being dependent on the male. Since they are passengers on these bicycle journeys, it would not be incorrect to argue that the freedom that Mazvita and other women enjoy can only be realised once men make it possible. So whatever sense of belonging made possible by riding the bicycle is dependent on the "generosity" of patriarchy, and therein lies another form of women violation and oppression – they can only enjoy their environment because men allow them to. Yet another indication of how this "freedom" that comes with being a passenger in a bicycle ride is that because Mazvita needs both her hands to balance, the interaction she can have with other women as they pass each along the way is severely limited. She is therefore denied, in this "freedom" expressed through the mobility of the bicycle in the city, the power to connect, to interact, and to be in solidarity with other women. It is clear then that through this trip on a bicycle, Mazvita undergoes a sharing of Joel's freedom, but not a sharing of the "freedom" with the other woman who also a pillion

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passenger of a male driver. Through this mobility Mazvita gets to enjoy the limited freedom that the spatial setting of the city affords, albeit fleetingly.

Mazvita's journey back to her home was motivated mainly by her determination to bury her child in Mubaira, the "home" she took off from in order to seek solace elsewhere. However, that "[s]he would bury her child in Mubaira, then she would die" (111) neatly captures the complicated relationship she had with her place of birth. She believed she needed to take her child to be buried at "home", but she did not want to live – at least not "there" any more. Mazvita's journey back home indicates the ways in which mobility has failed her because it took her to destinations that she could not call home, destinations that allowed her no sense of belonging. In the end, Mazvita's journey back home takes her back to where she started, but also takes her back there the very way she came – by bus. We see again in her "return" that she could not say the bus, in her mobility, was homely. That "[t]he bus was crowded" (113) is indicative of the lack freedom and comfort throughout the journey. But the intensity of her unbelonging is illustrated by the fact that while "[s]he heard everything in that crowded bus" (113), there was "something larger than her [that] listened to her, heard her, scorned her suffering" (113). In that "crowded bus" Mazvita was alone, so alone that she thought "[i]t was not possible that she had just suffered like that, without an audience" (113). It is clear that Mazvita's trip back home was alienating and traumatising. The "crowd" was unwelcoming, and the bus was not "home". All over the place, inside the bus and outside, Mazvita remains homeless.

Owing to the displacing patriarchal violence visited on Mazvita, she becomes "unhomed" in the countryside, forcing her to look to mobility to escape the suffocating particularities in her place of origin. Because of this alienation, Mazvita is denied the opportunity to belong and identify because senses of belonging and identity are inseparable with the land, the land which provides the bases for a home, for a sense of place. Her

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mobility, which takes place through a bus and is fraught with particularities of unbelonging, is as unhomely as her stay in the city. She is unhomed at home, unhomed in mobility, unhomed at her new place in the city. Ultimately, she returns back to "home" to bury her child who was conceived of violence in the countryside and born and dies in the city. The intriguing thing is that Mazvita has to escape again. This time, her mobility must take her back to the site where she was raped, her original home, and bury her child there. This return home is intriguing because it might, on the one hand, be a movement that re-traumatises and unhomes Mazvita all over again while, on the other hand, it might be a lasting home for her child whose burial at home will locate her in the land of her ancestors. But the narrative denies Mazvita an unambiguous homecoming in the land of her ancenstors. Whether mobility is ultimately successful or not, *Without A Name* is a narrative that certainly seeks self-actualisation through mobility. Fearing rejecting conditions at home, Vera's subjects move from one locale to the other often to experience unhoming conditions everywhere they go.

Mazvita's mobility from home to an elsewhere and back home articulates clearly the constant connection and bond between space, place, and mobility. It has shown clearly that the influence place has on remembrance and identity is a result of a holistic and mutual interface between people and their physical environment. As we have seen in Mazvita's case, this connection and bond between space, place, and mobility is often fraught with unwelcoming conditions. A sense of place – which would have derived from the occupation of space, or the affective bond or link between people and specific places – is the expressive and sentimental connectedness people have with a particular area. Yet Vera's Mazvita cannot stay at home, wherever she tries to carve it. She achieves no attachment to place, even in a fleeting environment such as a bus. She is rejected. Constantly. Thus, she keeps moving. She enters spaces that force her into multiple struggles to alter them into place but does not succeed. In her mobility Mazvita finds no place to which she can connect, no place she can

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ultimately depend on for existence. She does not live to realise space, as Cresswell defines it, as a "meaningful location" (7). No place is home for her. Mazvita is unhomed everywhere.

The primary function of "place" is to gather a sense of belonging and identity. Place attachment is strongest in relation to a person's own home. Ever mindful of place being a series of intersections of individuals connected through a set of contingent relationships, and that place itself is simply a spatial location which has attached to itself such a set of individuals, it is the relationships engendered in the new spatial setting, the relationship between the people and their new environs, and how that relationship alters or even sustains the one that existed between the people and their old spatial setting that we see Vera's Mazvita negotiating, albeit unsuccessfully. Even in the sense in which Cresswell defines space, a "meaningful location" (7), we see Mazvita failing. Although she inescapably exists in different spatial setting as her mobility ensues, as affirmed by scholars Jorgenson and Nickerson when they assert that "space is an area where human meaning is not yet imbued. Places have meaning that is given through human interactions" (3), Mazvita does exert herself in spaces she encounters, trying to make home out of them. However, she is excluded, violated, and rejected.

It is important, ultimately, to note that as we have seen, mobility is not only related to the concept of migration. As Toivanen points out in the epigraph of this chapter, "human physical travel is a diverse phenomenon that covers a wide variety of mobilities of which migration is only one possible manifestation." Vera's Mazvita did not have to cross the borders of her country to another in order to seek to escape troubles visited upon her by her original space and place, her home, in order to effect mobility. Hers was mobility from one town to the other, from the rural to the urban back to the rural.

Mazvita comes across many of Massey's "meeting places" (154). But because place-making depends on the things that constitute it, for Mazvita, those things that constitute place

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are unwelcoming, and she finds place is where she is met with rejection. Even in cases where, as Cresswell explains, a "place" is usually but not always fixed, Mazvita does not find place even in mobility because particularities, such as in her bus trip, are unwelcoming, violating, and rejecting. Mazvita's experience goes neatly against Cresswell's sense of place when he explains that "[a] ship, for instance, may become a special kind of place for people who share it on a long voyage, even though its location is constantly changing" (7). Essentially, Mazvita carried herself into multiple spatial settings which are never her home, even fleetingly.

In Vera's *Without a Name*, we have seen that both the countryside – where Vera's Mazvita's own "home" visits untold violence and abuse on her – and the city, to which Mazvita escapes but is unwelcome, reject Mazvita and render her homeless. Mazvita moves from unhomely homes because in its very nature, mobility promises freedom. It is a mechanism through which an escape can be executed. But, paradoxically, even mobility itself betrays her because it seems fraught with unhomely particularities. This is traumatising for Mazvita, and Zimbabwean women in general, because the promise of freedom that comes with it is denied. It becomes clear to Mazvita that movement elsewhere does not necessarily lead to a home as a destination. Having survived the traumas visited upon her by her journey to the city, Mazvita finds that even the city, to which she was fleeing, was not welcoming.

In Mazvita's case, it is my submission that her departure to the city might have visited unto her inescapable transformation. This is so because the effect of mobility and new place and place is bound to transform the subject. Through mobility, she would have undergone subtle and nebulous changes, the effect of which would have caused her, as she returns "home" with her dead baby, to have a different view of that which was once her "home". Her return is complicated and seems, in my view, a paradox through the strong possibility that even though she knows she's returning "home" – a place she had earlier escaped, she would

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in fact be returning to "homelessness." She might be "home", but without protection or shelter.

Even though it is clear that mobility is important in *Without a Name* since the narrative starts with a journey by bus, we realise as the narrative progresses that even that mobility itself, just like the countryside and the city or any place in between, does not offer Mazvita the freedom and the home she so desperately seeks. In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, we saw Tambu's initial secure emplacement in the space of the homestead "allowing" her to negotiate her way out of suffocating spaces, empowering her to find a sense of home wherever she is, even if it is an ironically distanced sense of home. In *Without a Name* we see no such empowering particularities for Mazvita. In her mobility, Tambu is confronted by struggles that are both different and similar to the ones she previously experienced. On every occasion we see Tambu managing to challenge the ways in which she is entrapped to find a place from which she can negotiate a new mobility. The mere possibility to move, to escape from all the hardships that different places visit upon her, presents particularities of a home, but it does not happen for Mazvita. Ultimately, we see that Mazvita is always "away", never "home". She leaves her violating birthplace to seek home elsewhere but returns to face the very particularities that caused her to embark on the journey in the first place. Maybe the "home" she hopes for as she travels forth is in fact the hope she carries within herself of the *possibilities* presented by mobility, since the outer environment whether "home" or "away" remains cold and hostile.

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CHAPTER THREE

Transnational Dis-locations and Re-emplacements: Finding Home in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

> *This is an era - it is often said - when things are speeding up, and spreading out. Capital is going through a new phase of internationalization, especially in its financial parts. More people travel more frequently and for longer distances. Your clothes have probably been made in a range of countries from Latin America to South-East Asia. Dinner consists of food shipped in from all over the world. And if you have a screen in your office, instead of opening a letter which - care of Her Majesty's Post Office – has taken some days to wend its way across the country, you now get interrupted by e-mail.* (Doreen Massey 146)

NoViolet Bulawayo, born Elizabeth Zandile Tshele, is an internationally known Zimbabwean author. She was born on 12 October 1981 in Tsholotsho, Zimbabwe. She was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University and was awarded a Truman Capote Fellowship. *We Need New Names* was published in May 2013, and is the winner of numerous awards, including the Hemingway Foundation Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction, and the Etisalat Prize for Literature. The opening chapter, "Hitting Budapest", is the short story that won Bulawayo the 2011 Caine Prize for African Writing. With this prize, a new literary star was born. Bulawayo grew up in Zimbabwe and moved to the United States shortly after high school and studied Creative Writing at Cornell University funded by a Truman Capote Fellowship.

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We Need New Names is a coming-of-age narrative narrated by the 10-year-old Darling, and is divided into two parts. The first part – which represents an unhomely and poverty stricken "home" and the nearby affluent suburb of Budapest – is about Darling's childhood in Zimbabwe. The second part of the novel is about her life after moving to the United States, where she lives in Detroit, Michigan, and then relocates to Kalamazoo, also in Michigan. Darling and her friends – Chipo, Godknows, Sbho, Stina and Bastard – learn to navigate traumatic life paths in Zimbabwe. To indicate the struggles they go through at "home", in what can be argued is their initial form of mobility enjoined by hostile and unhomely conditions, Darling and her friends cross over to Budapest – "[w]e are on our way to Budapest" (1). Budapest is a strange place for the children since there they come across "big, big houses with satellite dishes on the roofs" (4) and music that is not "kwaito", nor "dance-hall", nor "house" (5). Thus, crossing over to Budapest, they encounter an affluence they do not enjoy at home and a culture that is unfamiliar to them. And it is clear that the children are fully aware of the disparities between Paradise, the ironically named shanty town from which they come, and Budapest. They say that "Budapest is not a kaka toilet for anybody to just walk in, it's not like Paradise" (12). Mobility to escape the hardships and deprivations of home thus is part of the "DNA" of this novel, with a minor migration foreshadowing the major migration to the United States of America.

The children's movement to Budapest is not their only move. All of them suffered a prior dislocation when they and their families were forced to find refuge on the piece of land which then became the shanty town of Paradise. Darling and the community face their first displacement when they are forcefully removed to the informal settlement. The state-sanctioned forced eviction and demolition of houses alludes to the historical Operation Murambatsvina. Sociologist Busani Mpofu states that "Murambatsvina is a Shona word

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meaning 'discarding the filth'" (178). Mpofu further explains that this demolition and mass displacement targeted poor individuals, which resulted in worsened urban poverty. Operation Murambatsvina was carried out "without proper legal procedures, resettlement, relocation and/or compensation" (178). This is one of the historical episodes to which Bulawayo's novel fictionally alludes. It is in Darling's dream that recounts the reality of the pre-history of the community of Paradise that we as readers become privy to the first relocation:

> The men driving the bulldozers are laughing. I hear the adults saying, why why why, what have we done, what have we done, what have we done? Then the lorries come carrying the police with those guns and baton sticks and we run inside the houses, but it's no use hiding because the bulldozers start bulldozing and bulldozing and we are screaming and screaming. The fathers are throwing hands in the air like women and saying angry things and kicking stones. The women are screaming the names of the children to see where we are and they are grabbing things from the houses: plates, clothes, a Bible, food, just grabbing whatever they can grab. And there is dust all over from the crumbling walls; it gets into our hair and mouths and noses and makes us cough and cough. (66)

The excerpt above shows the dislocating violence and hostility unleashed by a government on its own people. There is the loss of their possessions and a community left bewildered and crushed. The scene depicts the citizens as objects who are discarded. They are not even in a position to articulate their horror since the dust from the demolition makes them "cough and cough". In the passage quoted, "[t]he men driving the bulldozers are laughing", including the gripping depiction that "the lorries come carrying the police with those guns and baton sticks and we run inside the houses, but it's no use hiding because the bulldozers start bulldozing

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and bulldozing and we are screaming and screaming". Both these descriptions represent a strong illustration of an unfeeling regime hell-bent on exercising untold, brute force on its own people, displacing them. This sense of insecurity and fear of one's own government is part of the reason why for the subjects, an elsewhere is a far better, safer option than to stay at home. In a traditional sense, men are always looked up to and need to be seen to be the main protectors of families and communities they live in. But here we see the opposite because we are told that the "fathers are throwing hands in the air like women and saying angry things and kicking stones." This is indicative of helplessness in the face of dehuminising force exercised by a government on its own people. Instead we see the women attempting to play this vital role traditionally sealed and preserved for men (who, in the face of danger, are called forth by their own patriarchal disposition not to be throwing hands in the air "like women"). In a quest to save the children, the women, who are supposed to be less than men, scream "the names of the children" in order to get a sense of where their loved ones could be. Further, they show the resolve that is known to be the preserve of men when "they [grab] things from the houses: plates, clothes, a Bible, food", essentially standing up for their families. The children all along watch and notice things. They see the mayhem and destruction through the image of "dust all over from the crumbling walls." Everything crumbles around them, even their health as the dust enters their "mouths and noses" and "makes us cough and cough." So the sense of family, the sense of community, and, ultimately, the sense of home and belonging is no longer afforded to them by the homeland. Prevalent is a sense where a man is no longer a man, a woman has to be more than a woman (in a context of a patriarchal society), and children are traumatised by brutal scenes unfolding right in front of their eyes, and so many contemplate and in fact look to mobility to an elsewhere to find refuge and everything that the homeland fails to provide. There remains after all nothing, as the excerpt above shows, but pain and suffocation at home.

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The above foregrounds and spells out the existential difficulties – brutalised families, hunger, rejection, unbelonging, that obtain in the space and place of origin, and therefore clarifies the particularities that render an elsewehere irresistible for individuals who could not take the suffocation any longer. It demonstrates why, for some, the only choice to escape tumultuous social and political conditions at home is by heading for the border, thereby relying on mobility in order to swop suffocating "home" for what an elsewhere represents: hope.

Moving Forward, Looking Back: Paradoxes of Home and Away

Bearing in mind the experience above, it is easy to see why mobility, such as is the case with Darling, is the only option for those who can find a way out of the deeply inhumane and unbearable particularities with which the original space and place is fraught. Because their sense of home is completely upended, they become a people without a place to call home, becoming homeless at home, and therefore giving in to the strong urge to move, a seeking of a home elsewhere. That home first is Paradise. But since Paradise remains part of the state that repeatedly makes impossible the securities and necessities of a settled, humane existence for the community it regards as "filth," Paradise is a place from which most of the characters anticipate moving again.

Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* is a story about its main character, the young girl Darling. In telling the story, Bulawayo introduces Bastard, Godknows, Sbho, Stina, and Chipo, who are Darling's friends. Darling moves away from home to live with her aunt in the far flung United States of America. *We Need New Names* is a story that presents migration and mobility for the subjects as the only way to escape unkind conditions existing at home. But Bastard, for example, says to Darling who boasts about going to live in the USA: "Well, go, go to America and work in nursing homes. That's what aunt Fostalina is doing as we

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speak. Right now she is busy cleaning kaka off some wrinkled old man who can't do anything for himself, you think we've never heard the stories? Bastard screams to my back but I just keep walking" (15). It is therefore important, when Bastard's words to Darling are examined, to note that mobility to an elsewhere does not necessarily and readily mean the absence of the suffocating particularities one flees from. It could be to mean "work in nursing homes", or worse.

We Need New Names is about the question of cultural identity and (un)belonging in altering space and place. This work, just like the work of fellow Zimbabwean Tendai Huchu, can be included under the category of Zimbabwean diaspora literature, narrowly construed. Ivan Bachisi and Barbara Manyarara state that Bulawayo's work "speaks of and delves into the experiences that the diaspora undergoes resulting from geographical displacement, alien customs, the problems of adjustment and adaptation, longing for the homeland, the burden of rejection and xenophobia, myths and heritage" (14). This is exactly what we see in Bulawayo's character, Darling. Darling's journey to the USA does not lead her to the utopia she imagines America to be. She and other immigrants are alienated by the different climate and customs she experiences there. Her life in America is overdetermined by the deep longing she has for home. We discover also that she is as trapped in unequal relationships and spaces in America, as she is in Paradise.

Through Darling's journey in this novel, we realise that she is unknowingly trapped in her new spatial setting. Her identity is now complicated by the fact that she has moved away from her country, and her childhood friends are now scattered all over the world – in America, in Dubai and in South Africa. Thus, we see that the relationships that provided safety and a sense of "home" amid the difficulties of struggle were dissolved. Chipo is the only one who remains at home. It is important to note that when Darling thinks of

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"migrating" to live with her Aunt Fostalina in Detroit, Michigan, she thinks she will secure herself from poverty and hunger, and will spare herself from the need to steal:

> Bastard says when we grow up we'll stop stealing guavas and move on to bigger things inside the houses. I'm not really worried about that because when that time comes, I'll not even be here; I'll be living in America with Aunt Fostalina, eating real food and doing better things than stealing. But for now the guavas. (10)

Darling sees herself projected into a future and an elsewhere that will free her forever from struggling to procure the bare necessities of survival. But as noted above, when she tells that to her friends, they respond with a less idealised perspective, based on what they often hear from adults. The other children have a much more realistic view of migration, they are aware of the disparities that exist in the host countries of the emigrants' dreams.

Migrant subjects are all characterised by living in-between worlds, and their identities are formed across frontiers that pervade every aspect of their being; to live between worlds is to be caught on a frontier that runs through your language, your belief system, the food you eat, your music and dress preference. Migration, whether local or translocal, is therefore connected to an incomplete abandonment of old places and the search for new ones; it is tied to the house/home trope in the imaginings of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Migration is the movement of people from one place to live in another. Migration impacts on both the place left behind, and on the place where migrants settle. People have many reasons why they might want to move from one place to another. These reasons may be economic, social, political or environmental. So migration and diaspora are closely interlinked.

To come from elsewhere, from away and not "here", is for the diasporic to live at the intersection of history and memory, experiencing as estranging both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, unfamiliar arrangements in an altered

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spatial setting. As we will see in the case of Darling, individuals who migrate because they are dislocated experience multiple stresses that can impact their mental well-being, including the loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems, adjustment to a new culture and changes in identity and concept of self. Identity is not a constant. While identity can be understood to mean how we as individuals view or perceive ourselves as unique from others, Dinesh Bhugra asserts that “[r]acial, ethnic and cultural identities form part of one’s identity, and the development of identity and the resulting changes owing to migration and acculturation will change the construction of identity” (135). So identity is something that is negotiated and renegotiated regularly individually or by the group concerned.

Because, as Doreen Massey claims in the epigraph, this is an era “when things are speeding up, and spreading out”, many countries in the developed world hold a great attraction for those from countries suffering from political insecurity, oppression, starvation, poverty and seemingly endless hostilities and wars. And so, citizens in these countries migrate to far-away lands in search of a better life, a life where they may feel secure from the longstanding troubles afflicting their nations. Normally, they risk their lives to cross the perilous seas to reach the far-away shores. In the novel under discussion, we see a movement away from a homeland that sees its people suffering from political insecurity, oppression, starvation, poverty and seemingly endless violence. *We Need New Names* concerns itself with the struggles experienced by the dispersed living in foreign land, thereby highlighting the plight of people who find themselves having to carve a home in a place that is modern and urban, but who are still attached to a place of origin that is generally rural. These dislocated, transnational migrants strive to find themselves in affluent societies but, as Massey points out, because they come from the parts of the world from which resources come and where the consumer goods enjoyed in the global north have probably been made, they never fully belong in the hostland.

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Anna-Leena Toivanen makes the following interesting observations about *We Need New Names*:

> Still, *We Need New Names* is not a migrant novel in the traditional sense of the term: instead of focusing uniquely on the dislocated condition, the novel intertwines specific Southern African localities with the American diaspora. The novel's treatment of mobility is not restricted to migration, but can be understood in a broader manner as pertaining to locality in terms of people's dreams and hopes of an elsewhere … (4)

Thus, the concern of *We Need New Names* is much broader than a focused migrant novel, since it more widely explores the anticipation that one will find a more welcoming home elsewhere. This is what Darling hopes for in America but, when she finally finds herself there, it becomes a site of her struggle to belong. It is telling, as Toivanen further notes, that the word "kaka" is often associated with the state of the characters' home country: "Defining one's home country, a failed postcolonial nation-state, in such foul terms (as kaka, which means human feaces) lies at the core of abjection in *We Need New Names*. It is symptomatic of the abject notion of "kaka country" that those who refer to it as such are citizens of that failed state" (4). This, perhaps unintentionally, further embeds the idea among the people in the hostland that what Darling regards as home, Africa, is in fact a backward and derelict place that deserves to be deserted.

The concept of home is blurred in the text as Darling explains that in her own house, in Paradise, she follows her friends, "like it's their shack and I'm just visiting" (100). This feeling that she is "just visiting" in her own home when her friends are around is indicative of the communal system that dictates that one's home is also another's. But, importantly, it also

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explains how displacing conditions at home make her feel. The house is important when it comes to the carving of identity and home in a particular spatial setting because the house is our first place in the world, from which we will develop our identity. Avtar Brah, describes "home" as the place of our everyday lived experience:

> [The discourse of home is] a discourse of locality, the place where feelings of rootedness ensue from the mundane and the unexpected of daily practice. Home here connotes our networks of family, kin, friends, colleagues and various "significant others". It signifies the social and psychic geography of space that is experienced in terms of a neighbourhood or a home town. That is, a community "imagined" in most part through daily encounter. This "home" is a place with which we remain intimate even in moments of intense alienation from it. It is a sense of "feeling at home." (4)

Throughout *We Need New Names*, especially at "home" in Zimbabwe but also later in foreign lands, we consistently observe Brah's connotation of "home" through the visible bond and "networks" that exist among the group of young people growing up together. Together, Darling and her friends, feel at "at home", in spite of all the dreadful conditions they had to contend with on a daily basis.

For Darling, even before her mobility to the far-flung foreign land of the United States, there is already mobility within her own place of origin. She is forced to move to an informal settlement from a brick and mortar structure where she lived with her father. After the destruction of their dwelling at the informal settlement, she moves, yet again, to Paradise. In every case of their movement, and wherever they try to settle, Darling finds that they become unhomed by the unwelcoming and hostile conditions visited upon them. So even if they move and find a place to call home, the unhomeliness in each of these places persists. It

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is important to mention that as they grapple with the unsettling sense of home and belonging, Darling and her people are already suffering diasporic particularities – even though they are "at home" in Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, we see that *We Need New Names* is also a story of a people that experience feelings of nostalgia, a longing to return in thought, or in fact, to one's home of origin. Svetlana Boym describes this state of longing for the past as seen through the struggles of Bulawayo's subjects thus:

> more oriented towards an individual narrative that savors detail and memorial signs, perpetually deferring homecoming itself. … reflective nostalgia [is] ironic and humorous. It reveals the longing and critical thinking that are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgement or critical reflection. Reflective nostalgia does not pretend to rebuild the mythical place called home. [In this case] the "cure" comes from accepting that the past will exist and that it might act and will act by inserting itself into a present sensation from which it borrows vitality. (49-50)

In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo's Darling and her Aunt Fostalina are nostalgic because they have accepted that Zimbabwe has changed forever and that they may never return home. Their survival as exiles depends on the reconstitution of their identities, which unavoidably requires integrating into American culture. For them, nostalgia brings the idea of "home" into the present when friends and relatives meet in their new spatial setting. The gathering of friends under one roof to talk, eat and dance and reminisce demonstrates the power of nostalgia as a uniting force. Boym asserts further that "perhaps what is most missed during historical cataclysms and exile is not the past and the homeland exactly, but rather this

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potential space of cultural experience that one has shared with one's friends and compatriots that is based neither on nation nor religion but on elective affinities" (53).

The manner in which space and place has been examined here thus far, makes it clear that the making of "home" is preceeded by the imbuing of place with human activity in order to enable the production of place which, depending on the (un)welcoming/(un)belonging particularities present in this new spatial setting, a "home" may be created. When Darling leaves home for foreign land, she stays in a "home", which is her aunt Fostalina's home. This is where Darling is able to look back to her past, to take stock of her present, and look forward to the future. She needs to answer for herself whether it was all worth it – what she lost for having engaged in mobility, how mobility has benefited or stands to benefit her. In order to "go back home while away", diasporic people engage in activities that remind them of home. They among other things sing together the songs from back home, they cook and eat together the food from home, and they speak their home language. These activities enable them, like they enabled Bulawayo's Darling, to feel good about their new circumstances. Even if her determination was to leave and forget about her past, it would be difficult for Darling because she finds out during a phone call with subjects back at home that Chipo's daughter is named after her. Thus, even while the child is not hers, the child nonetheless represents her, and so the past will stay with her and she with it in spite of what she feels about it. Even though they are away, some in the diaspora do not feel like all is lost. They still have something they can call an identity, and they feel like they belong. At a personal level, migrants can do things to their own immediate environments that assist them to feel, again, like not all is lost. Bulawayo's Darling is no exception. In her room, for instance, there is a copper clock. Because a clock has an everyday purpose of providing time, it is bound to enjoy regular attention. Thus when such a clock is designed in the form of a Zimbabwean map, it is easy to work out that through it, Darling wants to be reminded (perhaps as

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constantly as she needs the time) about home. Darling also has her living area embellished with a fabric that bears a resemblance to a Zimbabwean open market where people from different backgrounds meet to buy and sell articles useful to them. It is thus clear, even as she is carving a home for herself elsewhere, that Darling is firmly emotionally involved and connected to the homeland, and has no intention of "forgetting" or moving on without it. Still, we can see that she does not intend to remain stagnant or "placed" at home even when she is away in a hostland from which she is determined to construct a new home for herself. Against the wall of her room is a mask which combines two colours – black and white. It is important to pause here and reflect on what the colours could signify. Darling comes from what is genereally regarded as a Black environment, Africa, but finds herself in what is generally regarded as a White environment. Put differently, Darling is presently a black person staying in a white world. Thus, the mask can in a way be seen to be signifying a combination of the two worlds. It highlights the new Darling who wants to identify as a product of the two contrasting backgrounds. In this way it could be said that Darling has moved on. She has transformed to become something different and unique as a result of her mobility.

The transformation that Darling seems to have undergone is an important aspect of this study. On the one hand, we are made aware that she is fully conscious of where she comes from, that she fully appreciates her place of origin. The fabric that bears a resemblance to a Zimbabwean open market, the clock designed in the form of a Zimbabwean map, including an ivory slab on her wall that depicts an African map, all tell a narrative of a person who, in spite of the new identity forming in foreign land, is deeply rooted in Africa. All these artifacts point to a person who carries with herself her Africanness into the world, and adopts other cultures and traditions in order not to replace her earlier self but to become one with the world. This has to do with her identity. It is no wonder, therefore, that a small community of

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people from back home - Uncle Themba, Uncle Charley, Aunt Welcome, Aunt Chenai and others pay Aunt Fostalina a vist - gather together to remember home and, arguably, to feel home when they play and dance to music from Zimbabwe and Africa, when they speak their language, cook and sit as a family to enjoy traditional Zimbabwean treats and each others' company, "chant[ing] and sing[ing] louder and loudest" (143).

Given the untold suffocation that they suffer in their country of birth, coupled with desire for a better elsewhere, it is unsurprising that people in Zimbabwe, at least to extent that the novel is concerned, show determination to leave. This is so because they find Zimbabwe unhomely, and are somehow persuaded that a foreign place is a better proposition. This idea, as argued earlier, becomes problematic for others because not all elsewheres are places of honey and milk. This is aptly illustrated by the occasion involving Makhosi, who is Darling's cousin. He, Makhosi, had gone away to Madante to try his hand at mining. "When Makhosi came back" (23), explains Darling,

> his hands were like decaying logs. He told us about Madante between bad bouts of raw, painful coughs, how when he was under the earth he forgot everything. He said all he knew inside that mine was the terrible pounding of the hammer around him, sometimes even inside him, like he had swallowed it. After a while, he too went to South Africa, like father. (23)

That Makhosi's "hands were like decaying logs" upon his return is indicative of how physically punishing his new environment was. It took its toll on his health too, this new environment, if the "bad bouts of raw, painful coughs" are considered. Considered in totality, Makhosi's mobility to seek a better life in a different spatial setting has according to Darling not resulted in what he had hoped for. This particular experience gives further credence to the

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argument that not all elsewheres are places they are imagined to be. Mobility can re-traumatise; it can affect one negatively both physically and mentally. It is also important to mention that Darling's own experience while at home was impacted by diaspora. She says, regarding her father who had left them for the neighbouring South Africa - mobility that has left a big void in her life because it effectively denied her a father, that "[h]e never writes, never sends [them] money, never nothing" (22). It is as if the new environment was a big hole within which he is consumed, cutting off all that makes his past: his daughter, his wife, his family. This new environment does not even recognise his academic achievements, relegating to him to jobs suited for people who are unskilled, in spite of him having a degree. Darling's father "disappears" into the new elsewhere and stops all contact with his past, showing no attachment nor longing for his origins. Later in his life, this big hole within which Darling's father had been consumed spews him out and back to his country of origin, back to his family. At that time he is "unable to move, unable to talk properly, unable to anything, vomiting and […] defecating on himself" (89). Contextually, and looked at in isolation, it is difficult to see why mobility to South Africa, or any other land that promises better, is such a great idea if it only serves to destroy. Darling's father and Makhosi both return home spent to a point of being a lot less than what they were when they left to seek a better life in the lands of "opportunity". Thus, it cannot be argued to be farfetched the idea that mobility is not always the answer for the people who feel rejected and suffocated by their own place of origin.

However, the fact that "[w]hen things fall apart, the children of the land scurry and scatter like birds escaping a burning sky" (145) perfectly illustrates the consequence of suffocation, of oppression, and rejection. The image of "a burning sky" is indicative of the intensity of the displacing disquiet among the people. And so they are left with no choice but to keep "moving, running, emigrating, going, deserting, walking, quitting, flying and fleeing"

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(145) to spaces and places that promise better. But, as we have seen with Makhosi and Darling's father, the combination of disenchantment that leads to mobility to another country and the actual migration and settling elsewhere does not always represent a solution to the reason(s) for fleeing in the first place.

We have seen thus far that for subjects in *We Need New Names,* the preoccupation is not only to leave but to leave for the United States of America, a place that is percieved to hold all the answers to their existential problems. They see their homeland as the "wretched land" (146) from which they must flee. They believe that "their hunger may be pacified in foreign lands" (146). Almost naively (and perhaps understandably, given the rejection they suffer at home), they believe that "their tears [will be] wiped away in strange lands, the wounds of the despair bandaged in foreign lands, their blistered prayers muttered in the darkness of queer lands" (146). They believe this naively because when they finally arrive in the United States, they undergo phases of re-traumatisation. They are made to feel less than equal to the hosts. Their story serves to illuminate the struggles the dispersed encounter in a place that they thought would be the answer to the ills their own country of origin visited unto them. They left in their numbers to escape economic hopelessness only to arrive in America to suffer a different form of economic hopelessness. There they are excluded and pushed to the periphery. Arguably not dissimilar to what Makhosi and Darling's father's experiences, they discover in the United States of America that they suffer physical, emotional and mental oppression simply because they are "different" from the hosts, and for the reason that they are from Africa.

The displaced in *We Need New Names* are faced with the burden of adapting to the demands of their new environment. They are seen by their hosts as outcasts deserving of subhuman conditions and treatment. The unavoidable process of adapting and acculturisation, if the subjects succeed in it, comes on the one hand with the possibility of a better chance of

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acceptance, of belonging; but it also comes at an unavoidable price of losing one's own identity and rootedness. The process creates a new person in a new environment. Often, the most likely outcome of this process is a combination of what one was before and what they find existing in their new spatial setting. But it can also mean that the "old" is done away with in order to belong and carve a home for oneself in foreign land. Obvious too is the "nervous condition" that characterises the lives of migrants in the foreign land. Movement is essentially unfree. There are times when it could be fatal for the subjects just to run or walk suspiciously in the presence of the police because, as Darling puts it, "the police will shoot you for doing a little thing like that if you are black" (219). The fact that Darling and her countrymen are almost exclusively engaged in "low-paying jobs, doing backbreaking jobs that gnaws at the bones of their dignity, devours the meat and tongues the marrow" (244) affords the reader a chilling realisation, and that this America is in fact not Darling's America. Life in general is unfree for the migrant. Menial, degrading jobs are the preserve of the migrants. They work gardens and clean houses, doing lowly jobs at grocery stores. Albeit grudgingly (because they believe they deserve better), migrants accept these conditions. They are exposed to greater exploitation by the hosts because often when their documentation expire, they are faced with the option to stay on illegally.

To further illustrate that an elsewhere is not always the place to be when the home country proves rejecting and hostile, nature itself can be a key consideration. When one looks at the weather like Darling does when she says the "coldness that makes like it wants to kill you, like it's telling you, with its snow, that you should go back to where you came from" (148), it becomes even clearer that unwelcoming conditions of seclusion and estrangement can result in unbelonging, and that nature itself, such as "coldness" and "snow", can cause subjects in the foreign land to feel like they "should go back to where [they] came from." The reference to the punishing weather by Darling serves also to show how, once in foreign land,

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immigrants tend to miss "home" where there exists no "coldness that makes like it wants to kill you." The "coldness", of course, exists metaphorically in their home country, hence their need for mobility. It is unsettling for Darling that there seems to exist in the hostland "too much whiteness, as if somebody told the snow the other colours don't even count" (157). Darling speaks from a place of "blackness", a place which is subjugated and does not "even count" in the hostland.

Immigrants, as we have seen in *We Need New Names,* often face hostile conditions at "home", enjoining them to rely on mobility – itself at times fraught with unwelcoming particularities, to seek solace and relief elsewhere. In their struggle to carve a home for themselves and belong in the new space and place, some of the immigrants often find themselves caught in a situation that leaves them nostalgic because they miss home. So immigrants face a conundrum – at "home" they find they must leave, while in their new space and place some find that they wish to reconnect with the very place that has rejected them. But, unlike the difficulties we see encountered by key subjects in other novels studied in this work, Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* appears to be providing a resolution to this difficulty through the engagement of digital information and communication technologies.

Space and Place - Collapsing Borders through Digital Technology

It is clear that every time a migrant, Darling in this case, engages digital communication to be in contact with folks back at home, she actually engages in mobility, albeit a digital, "going" back home. Similarly, whomever Darling engages with via online communication such as Skype is also engaged in mobility. So, by the fact of contact through digital communication engagement, all people involved in it are located in more that one place at the same time. This is the type of new mobility that digital technology engenders.

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In reading *We Need New Names*, it becomes plain that new space and place, migration and transnational mobility, all bring to the fore aspects of and the exploitation of digital media and commucation technology. We see that new spatial particularities and mobility give rise to the need to exploit technology in order to bridge the distance between two or more geographic points, in order to bring together, even though just temporarily, home and away. We see too that the use of digital media and communication technology in order to "belong" to a place or places, in order to connect, and in order to collapse borders actually complicates the relationship between identity, place and mobility. This is so because, as we see in the case of Darling, the act of communicating with people whose spatial particularities are different from yours actually transfers in both ways some of those particularities. In other words, digital communication allows for the possibility to belong to more than just one spatial setting during that digital connection. Further, this type of communication allows for a conflation or reconstruction of identity for those involved because identity creating particularities from the participants become fluid and "mobile". This employment of technology shows how this type of technology is always socially and culturally rooted. For Darling, as we will later see in the case of Tendai Huchu's character, the Mathematician, the effect of digital media and communication technology can result in a "connected migrant" because it can give rise to a large transnational network, which leads the subjects networked feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness. So for the subjects in foreign land, digital media and commucation technology can be an everyday life dimension that contructs a homely environment.

The latter half of Bulawayo's novel alludes to a Darling who is an Americanised teenager. She has at her disposal all sorts of online communication technologies such as smartphones and social media. The people in communication become aware of each other's environments, and for the time of the communication, can "see" themselves in those places.

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Digital technology can therefore forge a bridge between distances. It is often used by subjects such as Bulawayo's Darling to belong and to create new relations in the new space and place. Because it recognises no borders, subjects also use digital communication in order to become one with the world. Also, subjects exploit the usefulness of digital technology in order to keep in touch with homeland, either through contact with loved ones or by acquiring knowledge and keeping updated with the happenings at home.

Migration, and the mobility that brings it into being, involve a separation, a moving away. However, as it will be argued below, the point of the use of the internet and digital technology involve and is aimed at achieving a unified form of life for those who are home and those who are away. Also, it is meant to allow the world to connect without the burden of traditional mobility and the physical crossing of geographical borders. It is for this reason that engaging internet and digital communication can be argued to be a type of mobility. As already pointed out, this form of communication serves to bridge the divide and breaks up of the borders that separate people geographically. Importantly, because it makes things "easier" for the migrant and people at home, the engagement of this form of communication serves also to impact of the preservation of identity and engenders rootedness. In *We Need Need New Names*, we see that this form of communication is Darling's way of keeping connected with her country of origin. It also helps her to nurture relations with her American links who are already everyday users of online communication on their hi-tech gardgets. Thus, this form of communication can be seen as an instrument to maintain contact and connectedness between the exiles and their homelands. It also creates a complex form of community in a sense that at the time when online communication takes place, such as during a Skype call, the exile "travels" home, and people at home get to "experience" exile. It therefore has the capacity to produce unexpected forms of community.

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As mentioned above, we see in certain cases the use of digital technology used by the subjects as an instrument to connect broadly with the world. We see this when TK updates his status and tells his Facebook friends about a humourous conversation in which they heard Uncle Kojo using the word "motherfucker" (193) for the first time. Darling remarks that "[l]ater when I got onto Facebook, he had told the story there and there were so many likes and LOLs on his wall" (193). Even though the text does not say so specifically, it can be argued that those at "home" who have access to the internet and Facebook can "see" how their fellow countrymen in the US are transforming, forming identities and assuming spatial particularities peculiar to hostland people.

Even though online and cyberspace communication serves to break barriers and collapse borders for those using it, for the immigrant in the foreign land it could expose the cultural particularities that, on the one hand, weaken the sense of belonging and, on the other, exacerbate unhomely conditions. The struggles that immigrants experience show even when they seek to simplify their lives through the use of communications technology. Aunt Fostalina, for example, uses the phone in order to buy a pushup bra. She calls the customer service number to place the order, but the fact that she cannot express herself in a way that people in the hostland can understand her serves as a barrier:

> When Aunt Fostalina gets off the phone with the Victoria's Secret lady, she dials a number that must be busy because she quickly hangs up. She immediately dials another, and she has to hold for a little while before I hear her leave a message, in our language, for the other person to call her back. (197)

As we have seen through the use of technology, the hostland language becomes a border between immigrants and the environment within which they seek to belong. It frustrates their

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attempts to turn space into a place they can call home. The fact that Aunt Fostalina resorts to leaving a message "in our language" as Darling puts it is indicative of how she misses home, and how she remains, through language, connected to the homeland.

Cyberspace, according to Victoria Bernal, is an instrument employed "to bridge distance or at least render it invisible, making physical location irrelevant" (168). Bernal's assertion serves to amplify the earlier argument about the significant impact of online communication where migrants are concerned. It is to "travel" home when Darling reaches out to her mother through digital communication, but it is also to "travel" away for her mother. Bernal, like this study, argues that the moment one connects with the other in a different land, both (or more) participants come into each other's presence, and therefore the distance is "bridge[d]" and "physical location [becomes] irrelevant".

Not America's Darling: Nostalgia in the Land of Plenty

The conclusion of the novel, in spite of the border-collapsing benefit that cyberspace and online communication make available, depicts important moments of remembering and memory. This is made clear by Darling's nostalgic behaviour that led her, it can be argued, to her posture of repeatedly rejecting particularities that the new spatial setting in Detroit and Kalamazoo presents. In spite of her being away in a foreign land, Paradise, which is the original place where Darling hails from, dominates the manner in which she fashions her life, especially through the opportunities to mix with other diasporic Zimbabweans. The continued struggles and conditions of exclusion and alienation compel Darling to rely on memory and remembrance to navigate diasporic life. At the end of the novel, the narrative winds back to the past in Paradise. Her Uncle Kojo breaks the news that American intelligence has found Bin Laden in Pakistan. This takes her back to the game of "Finding Bin Laden" played with her friends in Paradise.

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In analysing the end of the novel, it is clear that Darling is drawn back to the past, back to her hometown of Paradise. Equally, it is clear that at the time of her going back in memory, Darling is in fact located in far-away Kalamazoo. It is clear too that in this foreign place of Kalamazoo, the struggle to carve a "home" for herself and to belong seem insurmountable. She is rejected, unwelcomed, and depressed. Memories of "her Paradise" do not seem to help her settle. More interestingly, it seems clear that while she is not at home in the foreign land, the particularities that caused her mobility from home render the homeland itself unwelcoming and unhomely. It was these conditions that visited unto her and others the lack of freedom and the suffocation that forced them to engage in mobility to foreign lands. Thus, Darling remains unhomed both in the homeland setting and in the hostland. She is a stranger at home just as she is a stranger when away. No matter how hard she tries to belong in America, she fails, and is therefore left with nothing but hopelessness and, indeed, homelessness. The only place she can call home, perhaps, is in the actual reminiscence, the actual past she remembers and longs for about Paradise. But that itself is problematic because this "place" exists in her memories, which is to say that were she to stay in this "place", it would be the same as to stay in her own mind. The end seems hopeless: America is not hers, neither is Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, Darling looks forward. She lives in the future. In America, Darling is an illegal immigrant who spends time remembering and longing. She lives in the past. In spite of the struggles in both places she finds a way to "belong." In spite of the struggles she indeed finds there are moments of identification in both places. So for Darling, "home" is never fully homely and the "promised-land" does not fulfil its promises. Her experience is that it is easier in some ways to be Zimbabwean in America than in the homeland since Zimbabwe has proven entirely hostile and unhomely. So even though the connectedness of online and cyberspace communication presents possibilities for interconnectedness and

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contact with people within the hostland and outside, especially people back in the homeland, in *We Need Names* the ending is bleak and takes us back to the hostility of the home. Away in Kalamazoo, we see that it is as if Darling has not left her “home” in Paradise because the one spatial setting seems to overlay the other throughout the narrative. Therefore, even though America provides some material comforts absent in the homeland, Bulawayo’s Darling remains fundamentally unhomed, despite the possibilities presented by information technologies.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Longing and Belonging: Home and Away in Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*

> *Diaspora people hold memories about their homeland. They share a longing for their identity, culture and traditions. In their host land, they become victims of alienation, identity crises, cultural shock etc. Memories about their homeland give them the strength to challenge their atrocities in their host land. They are living in a "mediated tension" between their homeland and host land.* (Ardhana 478)

Originally from Zimbabwe and a long-term resident of Edinburgh, Scotland, Tendai Huchu is a contemporary man of letters from Zimbabwe and an award-winning author who is best known for his novels *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2010) and *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* (2014). *The Hairdresser of Harare* and *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* were published worldwide and translated into multiple languages including German, French, Italian and Spanish. Huchu has also written extensively in the short form, with stories appearing in the *Manchester Review, Interzone, AfroSF, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* and *Gutter*, among other journals and magazines. Having received a Hawthornden Fellowship and a Sacatar Fellowship in 2013, and having been shortlisted for the Caine Prize in 2014, Huchu has written narratives focused on and rooted in his African origins. This focus and rootedness are made clear through the diasporic subjects who populate his novel, *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*. His first novel, *The Hairdresser of Harare,* which is set in Harare, is not very "diasporic" in its themes, even

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though it was written in "foreign" Edinburgh, a place which, as for Huchu's characters, serves as his hostland.

While Huchu's much acclaimed *The Hairdresser of Harare* is essentially a chronicling of modern-day Zimbabwe through the eyes of the eponymous character of the novel, a hairdresser working in the capital city of Harare, *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, which is the subject of this chapter, addresses immigrant themes of belonging, of assimilation, of identity, of longing and loss, of family struggles and of love. It is a diasporic novel that reveals the impact of realities such as displacement, fragmentation, isolation, and assimilation on the reconfiguration of identity. *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* is a novel of shared struggles in a foreign land; it is a story of subjects trying to belong, and struggling for (re)identity in an environment fraught with particularities that are unhomely. It is a story about longing and nostalgia. It is essentially an exile experience that is premised upon the characters' movement from their homeland, Zimbabwe, which they view as a disabling space, to a foreign locale, Edinburgh, Britain, where they had hoped for a welcoming space and a space that would become home. The movement of characters occurs across disparate physical and social spaces, from a once-familiar environment which had become inhospitable due to various forms of turmoil, to a completely unfamiliar environment where they struggle with identity, loss, and belonging. The angst precipitated by the unfamiliar and unwelcoming space that the Zimbabwean home had become is what they are running away from. The new spaces, however, have their own perils, because belonging in a foreign place is fraught with many struggles. The "exiles" find themselves contending with issues of cultural identity and belonging in an environment that "others" them from itself, an environment that also "others" them from themselves. Since belonging is negotiated, since it is rarely conferred naturally and easily, the characters find themselves mobilising various strategies in an attempt to make themselves belong. Belonging

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is here understood as fitting into the new space without being made to feel like an outsider. They, therefore, try to adapt to their new environment, but there are risks and difficulties incumbent upon this process of trying to adopt new norms, symbols and values that, according to scholar Uzoechi Nwagbara, "constitute the cultural currency that is shared" (161) apparently by everyone in the new environment. (The character of the Mathematician does not quite fit this general mould as will be shown in the ensuing dicussion.)

In an interview with Geosi Gyasi, Tendai Huchu explains that he came to write *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* because *"*I wanted to tell a story about the time and the city I live in." (Gyasi, 2015: n.p.) This explanation makes the novel ripe for scrutiny using the lens of space and place. This notion is brought into sharper focus when one considers what Huchu himself had to say in the same Gyasi interview: *"*It's about three men living in Edinburgh, trying to find a place for themselves in the city. It's a novel about ideas, music, memory, love, that kind of shit." So *The Maestro, The Magistrate, and The Mathematician* is essentially an interweaving of three different Zimbabwean diaspora novellas across the shared terrain of Edinburgh. Even if it is still a land of origin, a homeland for the black diaspora, notions of Africa have shifted conceptually. Africa has become an ambiguous space, a continent that has been let down by its postcolonial leadership, and that presents fertile conditions for expatriation.

What we shall see in Huchu's novel, as in Bulawayo's examined earlier, is that some of the "distance" that comes with dispersal is traversed by information technologies, but more successfully than was the case in *We Need New Names*. The frequent use of technology and its border-collapsing benefits have resulted in different, enhanced forms of communications between home and away and with other parts of the world. Television allows access to the world through news, current affairs and other programmes. Skype and other forms of digital communications platforms connect those who are disconnected and scattered around the

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world with those who matter to them. Because of the expatriation of the home to the hostland, and because of the breaking down of boundaries - owing to advancing technology, there is an increasing need for a theoretical call to re-examine the intersection between space, place, and (be)longing, exclusion, identity, memory and home in a diasporic setting. *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* is set in the United Kingdom, and the only glimpses of life in Zimbabwe are afforded through mainly the experience of the Magistrate, one of the triumvirate of key characters mentioned in the novel title. Because migrant literature is constructed on the idea of the differences between home and host countries, digital technologies serve to construct "bridges", collapsing borders and conjoining home and host spaces. Victoria Bernal argues that cyberspace offers the possibility "to bridge distance or at least render it invisible, making physical location irrelevant" (168). Focusing on the Eritrean diaspora, Bernal found that the internet has created a venue for Eritreans abroad to produce and debate narratives of history, culture, democracy and identity. So media and digital technologies have altered transnational communication practices in the last couple of decades to such an extent, as depicted by Huchu's subjects in the novel, as to allow daily and vast transnational exchanges online and a sharing of cultures through television and other screens.

In a sense, this type of constant communication using various forms of information technology, including cyberspace, makes everyone, those who leave and those who remain in the homeland, effectively part of the diaspora. To this extent, Robin Cohen proposes that "in the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination" (35). This may be contrasted with previous technological advancements in transport which collapsed time and space but did not have the same impact on socialities. The previous rounds in the diffusion of technological innovation, for example, improved roads, railways and air transport, but did not have the same effect as developments in information and communication technology. What

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they did do was help reconstitute and reorganise spatial relations such that places were remade and reconfigured. Distance had not died as a result of this reconfiguration; instead, through increasing mobility its forms and effects were reformulated. In the case of information and communication technologies, mobility becomes less a matter of physical travel than one of interaction, that is, the way in which people interact with each other in their social lives. In the final analysis, what we see in Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* is the exploring of expatriation of the "home" to the hostland and the connections between the home and hostland created by communication technologies. Through the transferances thus created it becomes possible to find a home in another place, to expatriate the "home" to the hostland and the hostland to the homeland.

Hostland: Space of Diasporic Re(identy), (Un)belonging, and Home-making

Huchu's *The Magistrate, the Maestro & the Mathematician* is a narrative about Zimbabweans trying to belong and carve a home for themselves in Scotland while creating new memories and re-rooting, but still hanging on to linkages with the homeland. The novel tracks the struggles and uncertainties characterising the lives of three Zimbabwean men in Scotland who experience various forms of exilic experience. Their struggles have to do with the complexities of (un)belonging, (re)identity, assimilation, longing and remembering as they try to find a space for themselves in Britain. The three characters try various avenues until their paths finally collide melodramatically, and tragically. The novel depicts the social and cultural particularities that the new space and place thrust on the subjects in Edinburgh. They belong to different layers of the social order but two of them share a common feeling of uprootedness in their Edinburgh life and, as the epigraph of this chapter points out, "[i]n their hostland, they become victims of alienation, identity crises, cultural shock etc. Memories

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about their homeland gives one of the characters the strength to challenge the unfamiliar and the unwelcoming in their hostland. But all three charactes are living in a "mediated tension" between their homeland and hostland."

As Avtar Brah claims, we see in Huchu's novel that questions of home and belonging are thoroughly contested among diasporic communities, and that the issue of identity is never really settled, even for those who consider themselves more or less "at home" in their new environment (2). In this novel, Huchu's subjects struggle with thoughts of belonging, loss, identity and love as they attempt to find a place for themselves in Britain. The Magistrate – he was a Magistrate back in his home country – tries to create new memories and roots, fusing a wandering exploration of Edinburgh with music from Zimababwe. The Maestro, a depressed, quixotic, solitary character, and a serious reader who ironically has a lowly job at a supermarket, sinks out of the real world into a world made up of the great works of world literature and philosophy. The Mathematician, a youthful graduate student in economics, follows a carefree, hedonistic lifestyle. Later in the story their three universes collide. *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* reveals the crises of Zimbabweans who are in search of a self fully at home in their hostland, Edinburgh.

Shying away neither from the political nor the personal, Huchu creates a humorous but increasingly sombre picture of love, loss, belonging, and of politics in the Zimbabwean diaspora. Huchu also makes it clear, at least through the Magistrate, that by focusing on diaspora as a meditation, the analysis of their existential experiences helps one to think about the completeness they felt in the past, and the incompleteness they feel in their present condition. Works such as Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* – which is about Zimbabwean expatriates in London, and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* - which effectively carries the reader to encounter Zimbabwean expatriates in the United States, also seek to display the sustained, day after day struggle by characters "to make home" in the hostland.

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Like these novels, *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* reveals the predicaments of Zimbabweans who are in search of "complete" identity in their hostlands.

In the modern-day, globalisng world with everything from finance, technology, commerce, education, food, tobacco, entertainment, and other aspects of life constantly on the move, and people always on the move to find spaces and places that are more conducive to their survival, for their growth and advancement, it would be wrong to see place as an object that stands there, immovable and permanent. Indeed the reality is the opposite. There is increasing impermanence and a fleeting nature about place because people, and things keep moving and changing. While ordinary, run-of-the-mill existence is typically transitory, the life of the immigrant and the diasporic is a lot more fragile since they often cannot speak of particularities of belonging and home. The immigrant and diasporic often (but not always) find themselves in foreign lands simply because places from which they originate have traumatised and suffocated them so much that they had no option but to flee in order to settle in places they believe would be more amenable to their thirst for a better life. However, the idea of belonging and successfully carving a home for themselves is not a guaranteed phenomenon, as we have seen in Darling's case. Black subjects across the world, and like many other groups of people, are pushed into movement through poverty and violence in their home countries, and, as migrants or exiles or transnationals, they seek a better life in the hostland. An important dimension of establishing a new life in the hostland is the establishment of new relationships. This is so because a better elsewhere, for the migrants, becomes both a point to flee to, but also a point at which new relationships are carved in order to make the new space and place bearable. If we consider Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, it becomes immediately clear that what enjoins subjects to flee their places of origin and travel to hostlands does not necessarily create a life they had envisaged, a life free of all the suffocating particularities existing at home. Instead, it is a

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different set of conditions and particularities that plague them, resulting in new experiences of struggle in their new spatial setting. Regarding mobility and space, Robert Tally comments thus: “Certainly the massive movements of populations – exiles, émigrés, refugees, soldiers, administrators, entrepreneurs, and explorers – disclosed a hitherto unthinkable level of mobility in the world, and such movement emphasized geographical difference; that is, one’s place could not simply be taken for granted any longer” (13). True to Tally’s observation, on a daily basis we see refugees, members of diasporas, international students, business people, armed forces, and so on, giving effect to that “movement.” “Mobility in the world” makes the world a different place for different people all the time, and therefore people tend to experience the same place – which is never really the same, in different ways. The many things that make the world what it is are always placed somewhere. These places may be fixed, such as in the case of buildings, or impermanent, such as in the case of mobile subjects who are forever searching for place, and who are forever attempting to make “home” out of these places. The making of “home” out of these places is not only struggled for in the form people moving about, but can also be a function of online, cyberspace communication, where mobility and the breaking of borders is achieved without physical, bodily movement.

The diasporic often capitalises on the advantages of technology to bridge the distance between home and away, such that in Huchu’s *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, it can be argued that geographic spaces that are physically apart are brought together to form a place where all can interact. Online communication is shown to have the power to subvert distance and geography, defining them differently to mean a new “place”, a meeting point where the world forgets that it is divided, impersonal and not intimate. Digital communication, as we see in Huchu’s work, makes it is not enough to say that digital communication blurs boundaries. Digital communication is revolutionary in that it engenders a spatial sense that makes everybody concerned simultaneously present and absent. On the

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screen of a smart phone Edingburgh and Zimbabwe morph to form a new location where the diasporic and their relations link up to be together. Thus, mobility is not just physical and bodily, concerning movement of things and people in public and private spaces and places. It is also achievable through modern-day technology.

Digital technology plays a facilitating role where the everyday life of the diasporic is concerned. It helps in the formation of new relations in the hostland and elsewhere. It makes important particularities of assimilation, homeliness, belonging, of adapting in the hostland possible because it allows for access to the necessary information about the new locale, which makes it possible for subjects to act in ways which ease the struggle to settle. Digital communication also makes it possible to foster new relations in the hostland, especially since it is modernised and highly dependent on the internet. We see through Huchu's diasporic subjects that digital technology also allows for much needed contact with their country of birth, while also allowing for globalised, transnational networking and interactions. All these possibilities go far beyond merely collapsing the borders. They bring people together to a new place which defies geography as we know it. Digital technology, as Huchu's subjects show, succeeds in creating a new place by merging all the places that we know and bringing people together to be inhabitants of this new place, albeit fleetingly. Today, for instance, many scholars agree that the internet plays manifold roles in the diaspora: on the one hand, the internet will create further opportunities for diasporics in their everyday life in their host countries thereby facilitating integration, belonging, even assimilation in the hostland; on the other hand, the possibilities to stay in intensive contact with their home country through the internet can assist in the creation of a transnational way of living. I argue, as it will become clear, the same considerations apply in the case of the characters in Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician.*

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In order properly to place the struggles that each of the characters go through in the foreign land, and the transformation they undergo in their quest to belong and carve a home for themselves in the new, altered spatial setting, I will focus on them individually and separately, focusing on aspects that separate and unite them as their struggle to carve a home for themselves in a distant, new spatial settings continues. I will focus on what the new environs do to their (un)rootedness and identity, as well as how they assimilate in order to survive in foreign spaces.

The Magistrate – Ethnomusicology, Landscapes and Remembering

Together with his his wife, Mai Chenai, and his daughter, Chenai, The Magistrate migrates from his home country, Zimbabwe, to settle in Scotland. Upon moving to Scotland, he stops practicing professionally but this mobility to and settlement in a different country does not stop his compatriots, such as Alfonso, referring to him by that title. This title and the fact that he continues to be reminded of it even though he does not practice anymore is something that causes him sadness. It is this condition of sadness that is one of the most pronounced indicators of his unbelonging and trauma in the new space and place. He has fallen out of the middle class where he was firmly esconced while in Zimbabwe, now having to face the abject spaces of British care homes where he is a menial worker, a caregiver. The Magistrate's troubles of belonging and homeliness do not end there. Since his new spatial setting does not afford him a decent job, at least one equivalent to the job he had at home, he finds himself charged with roles that, were he in Zimbabwe, would be regarded as feminine. He is a proud and traditional Shona man who comes from a social schema in which men hold principal control and influence, and predominate in all important societal roles like political, economic, moral, and educational leadership and authority. He comes from a background which privileges him so much that to him roles like cooking and cleaning would be belittling

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and feminising since they are "chores for women": "The house was a woman's domain. Now he found himself questioning the conditions under which the maid worked for him. The first time this had occurred was when he was bent over, brush in hand, cleaning the toilet bowl. In his entire life, he had never imagined himself carrying out such a humiliating task" (8). The Magistrate therefore feels out of place, displaced from his position of power by his lack of meaningful employment and social rejection in his new environment refusing to recognise him the way he believes he deserves. In this new spatial setting that denies him the benefits his old setting offered him, the Magistrate refuses to adapt and move on. In a foreign place that does not recognise his previous employment nor his academic record, the Magistrate refuses to adapt. He is thus responsible, at least to a degree, for his dislocation and estrangement. He is not ready to accept that for the fact he is in foreign land, everything is materially different – the language, customs, culture, and aesthetics. Even the change in weather is a difficulty for him:

> He was mowing the lawn when John, from number seventeen, popped his head over the fence.
>
> "Alright pal," John called above the roar of mower.
>
> "Morning." The Magistrate turned the mower off.
>
> "Great day for a barbeque."
>
> "The sun isn't even out."
>
> "Don't jinx it now. This might be the only decent day we have this summer."
>
> The Magistrate nodded, then shook his head. He didn't have a suitable reply.
>
> He had yet to fully master that most subtle of British arts, talking about the weather in great detail. The nuance and dull observation required completely escaped him. (113)

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That the Magistrate "had yet to fully master that most subtle of British arts, talking about the weather in great detail" is indicative of how unconnected he is to his hostland. The Magistrate struggles to adapt, and therefore struggles to belong. T.A. Ardhana, quoted in the epigraph, is thus correct in claiming that the Magistrate "cannot identify himself with his fellow beings and their customs and manners. He finds himself as an 'other' among them" (480).

Chenai, the Magistrate's daughter, unlike her father, holds neither the trauma nor recollection of refugee flight. She seems unaware, perhaps even neglectful, of the effect of suffocating particularities that can be so intense that the only option is to flee one's own country in a quest for a better elsewhere. The Magistrate, a man solidly connected and rooted to the motherland, seems quite concerned that television (the very tool they use to connect with the homeland through watching the news and hoping to see developments back at home) is likely to negatively shape his daughter's identity. He worries that "Chenai's memories would be formed by this soulless, commercial music" (5) she is exposed to through music videos. He, for example, objects emphatically when she addresses Alfonso as "pal" (5), lamenting that his daughter had been away from the homeland for "too long" (5). These are some of the contradictions that exist between father and daughter, playing themselves out in a foreign place (that actually seems foreign only to the father but not to his daughter). The father is concerned with rootedness and connection to the motherland, while the daughter does not seem interested in the family customs and origins, including what the motherland represents.

Judging by her behaviour, Chenai is either unaware of, or is not interested in the "collective memories of flight and homeland", nor the unsettling particularities which in the first place resulted in the dislocation of her family and their compatriots from their homeland to the current spatial setting. It is clear that life and what Edinburgh as a hostland seems to be offering has laid claim on Chenai. The connection she has with Edingburgh seems so real and

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full of meaning that, unlike her father, she feels like she belongs and is at home with the place. This relationship between Chenai and the hostland is so entrenched that her identity as a Zimbabwean is taken over by her identity as one with her hostland. She is not interested in what being Zimbabwean means. The Shona culture, norms and traditions mean nothing to her. This fact, which further builds a rift between herself and her father, is when seen in totality a key reason why the hostland is fraught with unwelcoming difficulties for her unsettled father, while the opposite is true for Chenai.

The Magistrate's experience is very different from his daughter's. But it is worsened by the fact that even his relationship with his wife makes him a stranger in his "home" in foreign land. Because she "provides", she is forced to spend most of her time away from home, working long hours. This has caused their marriage to be so impersonal that it exacerbates his feeling of loss, a feeling of unhomeliness. The "absence" of his wife from home does not only see them growing apart and denying each other of the pleasures that married couples enjoy, but it sees the Magistrate having to take over the chores he would not be involved in, were he in Zimbabwe. In the hostland, because his wife Mai Chenai is never home, he is now turned into a household servant. This is humiliating and unsettling for him because his background as a Shona man is very different. The fact that he needs to depend on his wife for almost everything, since she is the one who works, has emasculated the Magistrate. This is a source of frustration for the Magistrate, especially if one considers that back "home" he was gainfully employed as a magistrate, taking care of his family (as any self-respecting African man would expect to). But in the hostland things have changed. There is tension in the household. He does not lead but is led by his wife. Their communication is characterised by unending squabbles which serve to further render the Magistrate impotent:

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> The Magistrate was so lost in the moment, drifting in the interstices between the chords, that he did not see Mai Chenai standing in her dressing gown by the doorway.
> "Nhai, Baba Chenai," she said startling him. Her eyes were red. She was tired from her shift.
> "I'm sorry, I didn't see you."
> "Turn that stupid music off. Some of us have to work, you know."
> She turned her back on him and went back up the stairs. The house fell back into silence. He knew her words would play over in his mind all day. He picked up his keys and left the house, slamming the door on his way out. (37-38)

In the passage it is clear that power relations in the household are not in the Magistrate's favour. Mai Chenai's voice carries more weight. It is clear that the Magistrate does not know how to handle this, rather opting to leave, "slamming the door on his way out." It may well be that Mai Chenai is tired after a long day, and that the music caused her further stress, but it is clear that the Magistrate, a man of traditional Shona origins, would deem disrespectful the fact that his wife "turn[s] her back on him and [goes] back up the stairs" while they are still talking. It is unsettling for the Magistrate that a man of his calibre cannot claim to be leading and providing for his family. It is unsettling too that a proud Shona man like him is not able to rear a child who is rooted in the customs and traditions of his beloved Zimbabwe. He is stunned and almost disoriented by what is happening before him. To him this is not how rural, often patriarchal, families from which he hails are structured. All these incidents conspire to cause the Magistrate to feel less of a man, to "indignify" him, and thus he feels deeply unhappy for having moved to Scotland, so much so that he found himself saying: "I never wanted to come here in the first place" (38). He understands all these humiliations as a consequence of the new diasporic location where he is exiled not only from his Zimbabwean

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home, but where he is also exiled from his wife and daughter. They both seem to belong more in their surroundings than he does. They are more a part of the new Scottish home, whereas he, the Magistrate, is always out of place.

One can consider in more detail the case of Chenai. Comparatively, one can see that, spatially, the Magistrate and his daughter Chenai are leading a life that can be described as a paradox. The Magistrate is traditional and is rooted in his Zimbabweanness, and he would like this to be case for his family, even though it is based in the hostland that does not recognise their background. Chenai on the other hand is fully an "Edinburgher". She easily belongs and understands the culture and fuses easily into the landscape that the Magistate struggles with. Worse, in spite of her father's attempts to the contrary, Chenai is not interested in Zimbabwe. This fosters deep alienation between the two, but because Chenai is comfortable, it is the Magistrate who feels "out" and does not belong even in his "home" in a foreign place. The nervous conditions between father and daughter become even more pronounced when they engage in simple dialogue:

> The Magistrate: Can you print the news for me from the computer?"
>
> Chenai: From the internet (94).

Under different circumstances a conversation of this nature might mean nothing serious, but here the sharp correction by Chenai can be read to make it clear to the Magistrate that this is not Zimbabwe, where technological advancement is so slow that a lot of citizens are not too informed or bothered with it. The tone that can be discerned from the answer might mean that Chenai believes that her father is ignorant and thus needs to be schooled about the difference between a computer and the internet. This is condescending for the Magistrate, and serves to further alienate the two. We also see the tension through the occasion when the Magistrate

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cautions his daughter to show good manners to visitors: “The Magistrate felt his daughter had been here too long. Already her speech had a slight Scottish inflexion, those rolling Rs, the coarse tongue, guttural Gs” (5). The terrifying idea of Chenai, forgetting or having no regard for her Zimbabwean ethos and beliefs causes the Magistrate great concern. In order to assist her and to point her in the direction of her roots, the Magistrate makes the effort to make her aware of her cultural tradition by providing a thorough address of the significance of family relations in their Shona culture:

> Baba – Father. Baba – mudiki – Little – father. Baba – mukuru – Older – father. That was on the paternal side. The uncles on the maternal side all held the title Sekuru, equivalent to grandfather, indicating an elevated status. So many fine intricacies woven in these blood ties that the young did not care to learn. In Shona culture, relationships were everything. The Magistrate held a register, of relations, far and near, in his mind. (5)

The traits that Chenai exhibits are both good and bad. They stand her in good stead in terms of belonging and making a home for herself in a foreign land, but this very advantage does not seem to accord with the imperative of remaining rooted in the way that one who is deeply traditional like the Magistrate expects and envisages.

Especially through the Magistrate, Huchu is giving life to an “authentic” diasporic who misses his homeland every moment he spends in his hostland. But, ironically, in showing how the Magistrate longs for home, the Magistrate, through the performance of nostalgia, comes to create a new home. It is through nostalgia for the places and the music of his Zimbabwean home that the magistrate inadvertently creates in Edinburgh a new home.

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There is, for instance, great attention to detail in how the author describes streets and key locations in the host-city of Edinburgh, focalised through the Magistrate, thereby distinctly foregrounding a newly-forged sense of place. To illustrate how a sense of place is constructed, Huchu, through the Magistrate, combines two key experiences: music from the homeland, and the streets traversed in the hostland. In this narrative, the Magistrate "wishes" his homeland onto his new space and place by infusing the music from home onto his new scenery in Scotland:

> He got on the bus, switched on his Walkman and caught a song halfway through. He laughed at the irony of Chimombe singing, 'Zvikarambazvakadaro, ndinotsikamafuta, ndiende Bindura, handinazvinoera.' Now this song would fix his memory to the 14 going past the Craigmillar high rises, which stood at the edge of the estate, a stone's throw from Peffermill. (89)

It is worth noting that from the excerpt, it can be argued that from the struggles the Magistrate faces at "home" with his family, him getting "on the bus" is an escape. He is seeking or even hoping for a home in mobility. The switching on of his Walkman to listen to music is clear sign of him getting into a state of relaxation, which makes him feel more of a sense of belonging on the bus. Because he plays music from home, he relies on his past to create a home for himself. He brings his past into the present in order to convert some of Edinburgh into Zimbabwe so that his environment can be homely. This could be fleeting, if achieved, but this home on the bus would offer him consolation for the troubles his family life presents. This sense of home on the bus could mean that he is not completely without home in foreign land.

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He leads life on a day-to-day basis, never knowing what to expect since he does not seem to succeed in creating a "home" for himself in foreign land. In order to locate himself in Edinburgh, the Magistrate draws on a piece of paper a map of the route the bus takes to his place of work. In order to memorialise, along each line, he writes the bus number and the artist he had listened to. Through this practice, despite the difficulties observed, the Magistrate is creating new practices that form part of new memories. Another important aspect of this practice is that he is able to fuse the present – bus number, streets through which it travels, and the past – the music from back "home". This has the unique capacity to locate him in two places at the same time. This has the effect of (re)rooting him and contributes towards his altered identity. In *Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship*, Steven Hoelscher and Derek Alderman suggest in respect of a strong sense of identity and rootedness as well as place-formation that "[o]ne of the most intriguing avenues to explore the means by which memory and place are woven into the fabric of everyday life follows the widespread commemorative practice of street naming" (350). Even though The Magistrate is not at all involved in "street naming", he does use the names and routes of his daily journeys as effective instruments to create a new sense of rootedness and identity.

Because the Magistrate is attached to his home back in Zimbabwe, his strongest sense of place is linked with his "home" town of Bindura. The Magistrate works out a map in his mind and creates a sense of place through walking the streets of his new locale. He does this assisted by clinging to what Bindura, his home, meant and continues to mean to him. He plays the music of Bindura to create a sense of place, a sense of home for himself in hostile, foreign land. Thus it becomes clear that his sense of hearing assists him in creating a feeling of belonging in foreign land. This is not strange. Mary Hufford confirms this when she asserts that a "[s]ense of place literally begins with the senses" (16). In a foreign land, the auditory affords the Magistrate two things. He is accompanied by the music from home in

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foreign land in order to further entrench his rootedness and connection to the motherland. At the same time, the music from home helps in making the struggle to belong in the new spatial setting bearable. The Magistrate uses the experience he gets from the music to make the new landscape and environment his home away from home. But his ability to use the senses to belong also extends to touching things around him in order to connect and belong in the environment he lives in. In exploring the city especially through walking but aslo through travelling by bus, the Magistrate attempts to find something(s) to touch and connect with, things which will make the city welcoming for him. The above shows that through mobility, the Magistrate hopes to find what he cannot find in his "home" in foreign place, which is to belong and be welcome and actually have what he calls "home". He relies more on walking than he does on travelling by bus because walking allows him the freedom to explore the city more:

> Travelling on the bus, he did not feel quite the same intensity traversing the city as he did while walking. It altered his perception of space at a mental and physical level. On his morning walks, he felt tiredness in his muscles, the full topographical awareness of how he was oriented on a gradient, a connectedness not possible at the same level of consciousness on the bus (62).

The extract demonstrates how the Magistrate's "perception of space" is impacted on by mobility, even though he feels more connected when he walks than when travelling on the bus. What is unmistakeable, however, is that mobility "connects" him with his new spatial setting. It offers him a sense of place.

Thus, in carving a place for himself through walking and riding on a bus, something which is essentially just an ordinary human exercise, the Magistrate engages in a quest that is

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in his case extraordinary in the sense that he is now able to lay claim to the spaces and places he traverses. He exercises individual power that converts foreign and hostile environments into something spatially more meaningful, and more welcoming. He exercises power of place by "imposing" his Zimbabweaness over the new spatial setting through music and what he remembers of Bindura, and therefore achieves a certain degree of emotional attachment to his new environment. In the process he creates an identity of his own in foreign land, and his estrangement is no longer as punishing. This assertion of power and authority over place is important, according to D. Williams. Williams asserts, with reference to attachment and belonging, that

> [i]deas like place attachment (feelings of affiliation and identification) and related notions such as sense of place (more inclusively, the meanings people ascribe to a place), are necessarily political because (a) place meanings create and structure social difference (serve to define us and them, locals and outsiders) and (b) claims of what belongs to a place (what kinds of meaning and practices are deemed authentic to the place) are often invoked to assert power and authority over place. (354)

His participation is, however, not communal but private. Of interest is the psychological process through which the Magistrate ascribes meaning to a place that is a source of his estrangement "[T]o assert power and authority over place" as the Magistrate does is essentially to triumph over it, to exert himself and claim the place (as his, too). In the process, he defines himself in relation to place and simultaneously defines place in relation to him. This is political in the sense that through walking and listening to music from the homeland and touching objects, the Magistrates disrupts power relations because he forms a sense of place incidentally through day-to-day activities. The effect of it all is that there is a

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connection and an attachment created. We therefore see that the Magistrate, through mobility and through emplacing himself, creates a new identity and achieves a sense of belonging, a sense of fitting in Edinburgh, because the place he creates for himself in Edinburgh is less hostile and more welcoming.

Thus, we see that the link between the places, such as the Craigmillar highrise, and the music from the homeland - the music that the Magistrate plays as he walks through the city, has been endowed with greater powers of creating a sense of place and belonging in the foreign land. We see too that this activity serves to emplace the Magistrate. According to Thomas Solomon, "[t]o say a place is an affecting presence is thus to recognize that…to name a place is to call it into being by identifying it as an entity separate from the surrounding space – in a sense, to create the place" (274). The Magistrate, through infusing the new environment with particularities from his past, calls the place "into being by identifying it as an entity separate from the surrounding space." Through listening and hearing the sounds the music makes the Magistrate is empowered, as Solomon puts it, "to create the place." So in the foreign land, music is not only entertainment. Its significance is far greater for the Magistrate.

Listening to Chimombe's music while living in a faraway hostland, the Magistrate, on the one hand, remembers and emplaces Bindura in his new spatial setting in order to "belong" and make the longing bearable, while on the other hand, it meant that he could not take the devastating impact of being away from home, and therefore used the music to be at "home" while spatially away in Edinburgh. But whichever way one looks at the impact the music from "home" has on the Magistrate, it is inescapable that information and communication technology, in this case by means of the audiotape through which Chimombe's music plays, assumes a significant role in either bringing Bindura to Edinburgh through music in order to help create a home for the Magistrate, or to transport the Magistrate across time and space to

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be in Bindura, at "home", while spatially in foreign land. From the Magistrate's experiences it is clear that digital communication technology is an important instrument in facilitating "home" everywhere, even though, in this case, it is a signally outdated technology as the younger generation keep reminding him.

The Mathematician: Digital Diaspora and Virtual Spaces and Places

A.T Ardhana notes that Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* is a novel of "social observations of the people who are yearning for their identity in a foreign land" (479). Subjects in this novel struggle in different ways to make a place for themselves in an alien land. One of Huchu's key characters is Farai. He too, like the walking Magistrate, is an immigrant from Zimbabwe. They are different, the Magistrate and Farai. Farai is an international student migrant, whose intuitive familiarity with the most advanced forms of information and communication technology makes his adaptation to place much less intense and a lot easier than the Magistrate's. To a significant extent, Farai rewrites the familiar tropes of the diasporic character that have been outlined in the greater part of this chapter and the thesis as a whole. The story about Farai encapsulates his experiences as a student in foreign land. It entails snapshots of how he nogitiates space and place, detailing how he carves a home for himself in an environment that is not his original place of birth. We see that he is socially mobile – both physically and technologically. The ease through which he connects to places that may be regarded as strange is illustrated by his white girlfriend, Stacey. She asserts, in one of their conversations, that: "It's like, won't it be awkward for you going places with me, when you're Doctor Farai PhD, and I'm just the girl who works in a shoe shop?" (105). Here Stacey makes the point that Farai is a man who cannot be "bordered" within a single place, and that since he will hopefully soon get his PhD, it may become akward for her, an assistant in a shoe shop, to "belong" in the places that Farai might

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find himself moving in. Here we also see the sophistication of Huchu's diaspora novel that points out the ways in which class sometimes counteracts the impacts of race since the immigrant black man may be accepted in some circles better than the indigenous white woman. Through reading the text, it is clear that Farai's geographical place cannot be regarded as fixed. His disposition towards new places and cultures and traditions is to embrace them, to be one with them. This is a distinct contrast to the image the character of the Magistrate potrays. In the new spatial setting, Farai is not struggling with a sense of place. He is a cosmopolitan who does not suffer estrangement and rejection like his fellow countryman, the Magistrate. He is free of the "baggage" that keeps the Magistrate "stuck" in the past. He finds a way to fit in wherever he finds himself, and does not allow strange cultures and traditions of strange locations to deny him the comfort of home away from home. Farai defies the stereotypical position in that he fits in and is not out of place in the foreign land. Farai is different because he assimilates readily in order to become one with the hostland. Unlike most immigrants, he does not seem to be seeking the mercy of the hostland to carve a home for himself. His allegiance to the motherland, unlike the Magistrate's, does not stand in the way of him starting over wherever he finds himself. A cosmopolitan academic, he is not impeded by solitude or rejection or a sense of unbelonging in different spatial settings. Farai is connected to the homeland and its cultures and traditions, but also finds no difficulty in fusing and becoming one with others and their cultures and traditions. Put differently, he is at home with himself just as he is home with others. The changing spatial realities, unlike their impact on his countryman the Magistrate, do not trouble him. Thus, we see that he is at ease with technology because for him it is a tool to allow him to be cosmopolitan, and to be in as many places and to interact with as many people as he pleases.

For the diasporic communities, communication through digital technology presents opportunities for connection, networks and linkages among members of the diaspora. It

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allows for the possibility to ease the struggle to belong, and to cultivate relations that have the potential to convert spaces in the hostland into homes that offer security, comfort and a friendly environment for the dispersed. Digital communication enables exchange of information among the diasporic that may allow for trade and other empowering commercial interactions. In the context of communication between the disporic and those in the homeland, including those who are elsewhere in the world, digital communication presents an opportunity for transnational relations, breaking barriers that geographical borders present. The above is important to highlight, even though for the Maestro, who is the final character to be considered, it is also important to recognise that, unlike his fellow Zimbabweans in exile in Edingburgh, he does not engage in the use of digital communication to seek to belong. For instance, the Maestro seems to have no "home" and therefore has no need to exploit digital technology to communicate with anyone "back home."

The negotiation between the new locale and the home space is on-going and not a singular moment. This is the essence of trans-locality. It is a fictive representation of, as Naluwende Binaisa puts it, "the long road to Britain [that] has been taken by students, migrants, asylum seekers and spouses, creating visible and invisible diasporas of exploitation, conflict and exile, as well as communities of settlement" (51). The "long road to Britain", or general mobility of people across geographical borders, is an especially important observable fact in humanity and modern communities. The entrenchment of digital communication is for people who have access to it an important instrument that serves to make less burdensome the duty of the making of place and home in foreign lands by migrants. Thus, it is clear that Farai, the cosmopolitan, cannot be said to be attached to a single home. He is at home with different people, in different cultures, and in different places. Unlike his fellow countryman the Magistrate, his attachment to the homeland cannot be argued to be as solid because he attaches easily to different localities, and does not allow the new culture particularities to

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stand in the way of making a home wherever his mobility might lead him to. That he is at home and comfortable in different and altering places is largely made possible and facilitated by the ways in which he exploits information technology. Because he is in command of the use of digital technology, it is unmistakeable that Farai belongs everywhere. The manner in which he exploits this technology presents him as a man who, unlike the Magistrate, is amenable to what the modernising world offers. Undoutedly, Farai represents what Dick Pels refers to as a "privileged nomad". Again, compared to compatriots based in Edingburgh, it can be argued that he is a lot more privileged than the others. Pels explains:

> It has become a cliché for connoisseurs of postmodern sensibility to say that we live in a world of flux, where mobility, experimentation and transgression have turned into core signifiers of the daily management of lifestyles. To seek adventure, to live the experimental life, to probe the limits of one's identity, has become a singularly powerful motif in popular and elite culture alike, ranging all the way from 'low' transgressions and kicks such as bungy-jumping, drug use and sexually promiscuous holidays towards more costly and rarefied pursuits such as surfing the internet, high-tech mountain climbing, mobile phoning, continuous cosmopolitan travel, transgenderism and intellectual 'nomadism'. (63)

In seeking as we have seen Farai do "to probe the limits of one's identity" by readily being willing to live side by side with people of different persuasions, different cultures and traditions in different spatial environments, and in being prepared to leverage and exploit the technology at his disposal to achieve a sense of place, a sense of home, we see that Farai belongs – everywhere. He assimilates almost effortlessly to the altering and fast-advancing forms of life in the hostland. His determination is not to become a Zimbabwean in a land that

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does not even recognise his place of origin. It is instead to fuse in, to connect, to build networks, and to become one with spaces and places in which he is determined to belong.

The price Farai pays for being easily emplaced and belonging more readily than his compatriots, especially the Magistrate, is that he has not found it difficult to disconnect with the motherland, Zimbabwe. In his ever-changing environments, he is not consumed by what would otherwise be restricting and even suffocating cultural and traditional imperatives of the homeland. He disconnects with Zimbabwe, and does not entertain, as Scott his friend does, the hope for the improvement of things in the homeland. The following passage demonstrates that Farai is disconnected to the point of being disaffected by the motherland:

> 'The MDC is having a meeting at St John's in a couple of weeks and I want you guys to come with me so we can do something', Scott says.
> 'You wanna do something from 10000Ks away?' Farai stifles a laugh.
> 'At least we're trying. What about you, Farai? You are so quick to sneer and dismiss people who are doing their best. What have you done for your country, motherfucker?'
> 'Language please, dude. The difference between you and me is, I'm going home after my PhD to run a business. *You*, on the other end, are stuck here working your dead-end job in a call centre, so forgive me if I don't agree with you on sanctions and bullshit that might harm my ability to run a business, employ people, and make a *real* business on the ground.'
> 'Cheap shot', says Brian.
> Scott leaps up from the sofa, points to the screen, veins strained on his neck and temples. His eyes look like they are going to pop out. Spittle flies out of his mouth when he speaks.

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> 'You're full of shit, man. Just because you come from money doesn't mean you have to look down on the rest of us to make a difference—'
>
> 'The only difference you fuckers make is how you start acting all brave when you get here. If you wanna make a real difference, I will buy you a 1 way ticket home.' (108-109)

In examining the above excerpt it becomes clear that Farai is "removed" from his troubled country of birth.

Upon close reading of the text it becomes obvious that in Edinburgh, Farai is clearly tolerant of a multicultural society and its constantly altering particularities. Farai is an immigrant, but he does not – like the Magistrate does, allow altering space and its attendant conditions – both hostile and welcoming, to discourage him from constructing a home for himself in a foreign land. He is what the Magistrate is not, a modern, global migrant. He intergrates and assimilates easily into the cosmopolitan life. Unlike the Magistrate, he is not disadvantaged by the fact of clinging to the motherland and what it represents. Importantly, whenever he connects online, that is where his home is. He is free to belong - anywhere. He is home – everywhere.

The Maestro: Failed Belonging of a Settler Come Home

The Maestro, a white character in Tendai Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, is yet another subject whose encounters with altering space and place is problematic. Unlike the Magistrate, whom we know leads a middle-class life as a magistrate in Zimbabwe before moving to Edinburgh, the Maestro's history is unclear. After working "seventy-two hours solid" (263), he is given the name "Maestro" at the place of his work, the supermarket. The Maestro is regarded as a foreigner in Zimbabwe because there he is seen as

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a white settler, but he experiences a sense of unbelonging in Britain also, which ostensibly is his home as a descendant of colonials.

The Maestro's discomfort with the world, whether in Zimbabwe or in Britain, is a discomfort that can be compared to that experienced by Mary, a key character in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*, which will be studied in the next chapter. Mary struggles and fails to find home in her marital home on a farm and also in town where she worked before she got married. Both at home and away she is alienated and feels unwelcome. This alienation takes the Maestro through a journey that leads to the world of books – a "place" where the Maestro tries to find home. For the Maestro, attempting to find a home in books is to suggest a different form of symbolic place, a home which is not made of bricks and mortar, one which is not determined by geographic confines, but rather by thoughts and ideas. The intellectual exercise of reading, "travelling" to places that are traversed by subjects in books, is the type of "mobility" he undertakes in his journey to belong, to carve a home for himself, and indeed to find a sanctuary from the rejecting particularities of his actual physical space and place:

> Almost without thinking, he ran his fingers along the cold spine of a book. Of late, he found himself preferring the company of his books to the companionship of people. Tatyana was virtually his only friend, if he could call her that. Everyone else has forgotten him or given up on him once he'd withdrawn, almost as though he'd quietly sunk into quicksand that no one else could see…There was something safe in the white pages of a book. A book could be opened and set aside. It could be read and reread, each time a new, deeper meaning deciphered. People, well, people were harder to read. So much was hidden in the twitch of the brow, a sweaty palm, the tenor of the

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> voice, subtle gestures, and the things left unsaid. People were moving, dynamic, inconsistent in a million ways. (57)

The finding of a sanctuary from rejecting the particularities of his actual physical space and place and instead running "his fingers along the cold spine of a book" depicts his solitude and a state of unbelonging where his physical environment – except for books, is concerned. He seems to be prepared to shut the real world out, living instead in a world and in spaces and places provided by books. The Maestro's uneasiness with his space and place in Zimbabwean or in his new and foreign place far away from Zimbabwe, leads him to seek solace in the world of books. This is the Maestro's way of finding place. It becomes clear, however, that even in the pages of his many books he does not find the solace he so desperately needs. He finds no home. Discomfort and alienation persist, with him reading two or three books simultaneously. This image of him being all over the place reading multiple books at the same time demonstrates that he not emplaced, and that he does not succeed, in spite of his efforts, to find home where he had hoped. So the Maestro is condemned to solitude. He is homeless. He does not belong to Zimbabwe, neither does he belong to his new physical space and place, nor does he "belong" to the pages of his books, which simply represented words lacking the capacity to provide a home he so desperately needed. In the same way as he rejected his physical spatial setting, he ultimately "rejects" the books that have rejected him by burning them, ultimately curling "up on the carpet and [crying] himself to sleep" (213). Having failed to belong anywhere, his ultimate death can be argued to be where he belongs – his final home. We see that the Magistrate and the Mathematician are a lot more comfortable in the foreign environment of Edinburgh than the Maestro. The Maestro's spatial environment is one that gets condensed constantly, and gets to a point of suffocation as it contracts further. He takes refuge in his small flat in a tall building and then

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carries on to seek "home", companionship and shelter in his "house" of books. But even the seeking of home from books as opposed to interacting with human and geographical particularities provided by foreign space does not end well for the Maestro because his house of books crumbles and falls down, disintegratating.

The Maestro's experience of the world demonstrates particularities of alienation and (un)belonging, and his attempt to overcome this through reading further only serves to damage him more.

Conclusion: Contested Belonging and the Making of Home in the Hostland

Through the examination of key characters in Huchu's *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician*, we have seen the examination of the expatriation of the "home" to the hostland and the consequent turning of space into place, including re-emplacement and the diasporic's struggles to form "home" in a foreign city. Huchu shows different strategies for belonging and different degrees of emplacement among different diasporics. This is a work of fiction that, for the individuals who have left their own place of origin, is about finding a home in another place, where various "techniques" of place-making and home-finding are successful.

Unlike the novel that will be examined in the next chapter, Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing* - which presents the ways in which the "diasporic" settler can exist and be dominant in the foreign but colonised spatial setting without needing to assimilate, we saw in *The Maestro, The Magistrate & The Mathematician* that the magnification of mobility and thus of diasporic scattering, the development of communication technologies and networks across the world and the relocation of diasporic populations in global cities where capitalism thrives are all key conditions of a globalising, cosmopolitan condition which has a direct bearing on the formation of diasporic communities.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Unsettled Settlers and Unbelonging Locals in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*

In this decayed hole among the mountains

In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing

Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel

There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.

It has no windows, and the door swings,

Dry bones can harm no one.

T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*

Doris Lessing takes her title from T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*, published in 1922. *The Wasteland* is celebrated as one of the most important poems of the 20th century and a significant work of modernist poetry, which highlights ideas of fragmentation and existential homelessness. In this poem, Eliot, who was also an essayist, playwright and literary critic, blends antique myths and representations of contemporary space and place, which finally result in a sombre and pessimistic vision, conditions completely apt to symbolise the situation of the Turners in *The Grass Is Singing* (1950). Eliot, through tracking journeys in the poem, shows a mobility which is often fraught with difficulties of struggle as space and place alter. Another point is made in the same poem from which the epigraph is taken:

Here is no water but only rock

Rock no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

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> Which are mountains of rock without water
>
> If there were water we should stop and drink
>
> Amongst the rock one cannot stop or drink
>
> Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand. (V. 10-15)

These lines emphasise how Eliot's *The Wasteland* is a poem about displacement and unbelonging, about a place where there "is no water but only rock" and a place fraught with unwelcoming particularities that make it impossible to "stop and drink." It is therefore irresistibly a poem which enjoins mobility away from "mountains of rock without water" to a more welcoming elsewhere. Here Eliot uses images of contention, images of want, of thirst and hardship to illustrate what mobility from one spatial setting to another can mean. It is unsurprising then that we find that the main character in Lessing's novel journeys to create a home for herself in a new spatial setting, trying to escape a hostile "home", a home that is like Eliot's "mountains of rock without water." In her "home" the main character is unable to belong, to "stop and drink" because as Eliot points out "[a]mongst the rock one cannot stop or drink." The poet establishes a juxtaposition between the arid landscape and an enclosed space. The horizon is already limited and full of images that reflect on physical and intellectual decline; but it is with the appearance of the chapel in the middle of the barren countryside that the poem assumes its most bleak tone, a tone as bleak as Mary's and Dick's plight on the farm in the Rhodesian landscape. Lessing uses a technique similar to Eliot's where open space is contrasted with enclosures. Thus, parallel to the wide, open African landscape, she also presents the main characters' cottage – a home that is cramped and unhomely. The confines of the cottage form the central place for the acting out of key events.

Cry of the Fish Eagle (1993), written by Peter Rimmer, is another Zimbabwean account that embraces the bush as an African place in which whites "belong". This place, the

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bush, is given characteristics which renders it a place at once unoccupiable and critically perilous. But whites conquer the peril and assume residence in the bush, constructing conditions of "home" for themselves, resulting in great affinity with the place. Also, in Douglas Rogers' *The Last Resort* (2009), the questions of white belonging in Zimbabwe are foregrounded in this narrative that seeks to address how white Zimbabweans struggled to find "home" in an environment where Zimbabwean land reform was taking place. In *The Last Resort*, as opposed to Rimmer's "bush", the "farm" is the place in which the white man believes he has earned a right to settle, where he belongs, and where he carves a home for himself, However, in Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, the bush plagues whites, certainly Dick Turner and his wife, Mary. Their struggle to belong in the bush results in unhoming emotional and physical destruction. Lessing shows that not all whites were at home in the bush. Dick Turner and, particularly, Mary Turner, are not welcomed by it.

Lessing's Literary Diasporas

The Grass is Singing was Doris Lessing's first novel, and the novel that catapulted her onto an international literary stage. In a 2007 interview with John Mullan, Lessing states that *The Grass is Singing* was all "based on a little newspaper cutting which I kept because it said so much about what I had been brought up in" (Mullan n.p.). She says about Southern Rhodesia that "what the whites couldn't stand, ever, was somebody who didn't think they were wonderful, who didn't fit in". Upon examining it, it becomes clear that the idea of belonging lies at the heart of the conception of the novel. Thinking of someone as "wonderful" is dependent on whether or not they fit in and has a direct bearing on whether one is able to convert one's space into a place one can call home. Linked with the idea of "fitting in" and belonging, which in the novel is explored in relation to both social space and environmental space, is the idea of mobility. The novel considers in some detail the possibility of movement

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for characters who do not find homes. Lessing continues in the same interview to point out that "among the things that went into that book was a woman on the next farm, a new one, who had all the farmers scandalised, a farmer's wife, because she let her cook boy button her dress up to the back and brush her hair" (Mullan n.p.). It is clear from the anecdote related by Lessing that the natives are unsettled in their own place of birth, and the settlers never find home in the new spatial setting. The settler woman attempts to make the new environment homely by introducing the norms and conventions of mid-twentieth-century upper class England to the Rhodesian countryside. But there is a forced distortion of these norms in the new context where the "lady-in-waiting" is actually a black man. The black man is also unsettled since he has to labour in a space that is not his home, and he is socially unsettled since he has to perform a labour that violates the gender norms of his culture, where women dress other women's hair in homosocial spaces, not men. The anecdote alludes to these questions but is also open to being interpreted in other ways. It can be seen as an example of a breaking down of racial barriers where the white woman allows the black man into her intimate space. But it is also a reinforcement of racism where the white woman completely dominates and humiliates the black man by making him do work traditionally gendered female.

Writing from the space of the colonial periphery, in addition to her natural talents as a writer positioned Lessing for literary success. Her representation of colonial Africa spoke to London as imperial centre since it highlighted the social and racial tensions that impressed the urgency of ending formal colonial control. Lessing went on to be a prolific and successful novelist, short-story writer and the recipient of more than twenty literary prizes and awards. Lessing's experience was more widely postcolonial having been born in Iran on 22 October 1919 to British parents who then relocated to a farm in Southern Rhodesia. Lessing lived in Southern Rhodesia for 25 years, from 1924 to 1949, before settling in England where her

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writing career was established. Lessing passed on when she was 94 years old, on 17 November 2013.

In her novels set in Africa, Lessing, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2007, works both within and beyond the colonial experience. She clearly understands the rigorous boundaries of the colonial environment, which relies, for identity and cohesion, on the attempt at maintaining its own narrow borders. She imaginatively steps outside those enclosed spaces. This extended vision enables her to see beyond the false colonial myth of white superiority, to see beyond the "necessity" that blacks and whites should always be kept apart. She breaks the mould of conventional white writing on Africa of the mid-twentieth century by criticising the legacy of colonial discourse, and by confronting the alienation of the colonial gaze as an aspect of her own identity. As Dennis Walder points out, "what is perhaps not so well appreciated is the extent to which what she refers to as her 'myth country' remains colonial Southern Africa, and in particular Rhodesia" (100). Walder further asserts that this "myth country" of hers is "where the profound inadequacies of white settler culture led [Lessing] to develop a more general sense of the inadequacies of the dominant civilizations of the world" (100). One of her important works which shines the light on Africa is *Children of Violence* (1952), but *The Golden Notebook* (1962) came to be read much more widely. She also wrote *Under My Skin* (1994) and *Walking in the Shade* (1998), and collections of essays, including *Time Bites* (2005).

The years spent in Africa influenced Lessing profoundly, especially as a writer. "Africa belongs to the Africans", she wrote in 1956, "[t]he sooner they take it back, the better. But a country also belongs to those who feel at home in it" (*Going Home* 11). Undoubtedly she is one of "those" who felt at home in it, to the extent that ever since she left Africa, she has regarded herself as an exile. She is, after all, an expert in unsettlement, or, in Judith Gardiner's words, "a colonial in exile", whose work is characterised by "a fruitful

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unsettledness that makes… [an] inheritor…and [an] antagonist…to imperialism… The English literary tradition is the reassuring heritage of a mother tongue, but it is also somewhat alien" (13). Doris Lessing's writing career was forged by Africa. Her main, haunting theme is definitely grounded in the problem of how, as a white settler, she can deal with oppression: the inner and outer dimensions of her condition as an exile in Africa where she is British; contrasted with "her" country, Britain, where she longs for African experience. The tensions in Lessing's stories clearly rely on the coexistence of a romanticised response to the African bush and the author's awareness that the capitalism of the settlers was responsible for the oppression and exploitation of the natives as it sought to transform their territories into profitable settlements. The landscape, its people – both black and white – Africa's recent history and present society, which informed most of her writing career, are the subject matter of a major part of her writing.

Settling Rhodesia/Zimbabwe

Encounters with the African continent have been a popular topic in postcolonial literature, of which Lessing's novel forms a part. Colonisation was one of the bitterest phenomena during the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century. Western cultural domination resulted in the formation of a new hybrid identity in the colonised natives. Before the arrival of British commissioners in the 1880s, Rhodesia was called South Zambezia, which essentially explains the geographical location relative to the river Zambezi. South Zambezia was a country with fertile land and the promise of gold, and so it presented itself as an alluring site to be pillaged by the European powers. Portugal was the first European country to raid South Zambezia, but it was not until 1888 that South Zambezia faced the real invasion. Cecil John Rhodes, a British diamond magnate signed a contract with Lobengula and began his profitable trade in South Zambezia. Based on this treaty, the indigenous rulers

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agreed to avoid entering into negotiations with other European countries without the approval of the British. The various forms that rationalisation of the colonial enterprise took has been expanded on by a number of scholars. For example, according to Preben Kaarsholm, Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company supported the elaboration of the mythology that white settlers belonged to the land and that through the capitalist economy local cultures would be uplifted. This mythology was supported by other myths, for example, "the idea of an earlier white civilization in the Rhodesian territory" which "together with the assertion of black African primitivity and barbarism served well to justify the return of the Europeans" (Kaarsholm 157). Cecil Rhodes was not merely a trader and miner. He also performed a role as the agent of the British Empire in Southern Africa. Cecil Rhodes was so powerful that Rhodesia was named after him. He obtained a concession for mineral rights from Lobengula, the king, in 1888, and established The British South African Company.

Colonial land policies have shaped and continue to shape the visions of land in modern Zimbabwe. According to Jocelyn Alexander, and following the approach of many historians and political commentators, the starting point or the beginning of the "history of land" (1) in Zimbabwe is the advent of colonialism. Such an approach is understandable as it restricts itself to explaining events unleashed by the advent of colonialism. Alexander's approach uses the oft-cited metaphor of the "unsettled land" in an attempt to re-read the land in Zimbabwe. For her, the metaphor of the unsettled land conjures settler fantasies of an empty, unproductive land, ripe for exploitation. It foreshadows the harsh disruptions of colonial conquest, eviction and agrarian intervention. In the territory that was to become Southern Rhodesia, the violence of military subjugation was followed by the displacements of territorial segregation. Half of the country's agricultural land, and much of the most fertile, was designated for European occupation, while Africans were forced into reserves. Once there, policies of agricultural and social development ensured that they had to move and

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move again. In the 1950s, many were denied land in the reserves altogether, a measure that vastly expanded the burgeoning ranks of African nationalism because the settler system, in denying Africans land, aided the political unification of the landless Africans. Land was central once again in provoking the brutal conflict of the liberation war, and in ultimately bringing about the demise of the settler state. Alexander outlines how history has shaped conceptions of the Zimbabwean terrain. Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* shows how white settlers battle to tame the African landscape. Land is seen from an economic point of view with some "making it", while others like Dick and Mary Turner in Lessing's novel are destroyed by it. The specificities of the form of diaspora represented by the settler, as opposed to the migrant, will be considered next.

Paradoxes of Settler Colonialism

In the most simplistic rendition, *The Grass is Singing* is the story of the murder of a white woman by her black houseboy. But this summary effaces the multiple and complex tensions that throw into question many of the certainties of British colonisation of Zimbabwe. Mary, the protagonist of the novel who grew up and has lived her whole life in an urban space, marries Dick Turner, a farmer who is in perpetual combat with nature, from which he struggles to eke out a living. She moves into his cottage which is situated in the middle of the "savage" terrain of the African bush. The Turners share the suffering of all African farmers but, since they are members of the class of "poor whites" (10), they are forced to feel it even more profoundly because of their assumed racial superiority. Being white in colonial Rhodesia, they are supposed to be superior to the indigenous people, but their failures bring them down to the level of black people. When Mary marries and leaves the qualified comfort of her "home" in town to lead a life on the farm with her husband Dick Turner, she is stupefied to discover their standard of living is not much higher than that of the indigenous

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Rhodesians; but she stays optimistic for a while. However, what makes her plight more difficult is the fact that she is closed up in an "unhomely" home, a suffocating cottage where it often becomes excruciatingly unbearable to live. This is a place where Mary feels completely unwelcome, where she has no sense of belonging at all. This occurs not only as a result of the infinity (and impossibility) of the African landscape, which is presented like Eliot's wasteland as a vast cemetery full of "tumbled graves" located in the middle of the "vast, harsh country" (19), but also because of the inhospitability of the cottage which never becomes a home or refuge against the wide, threatening external natural spaces.

But it is not just the landscape and the environment that make the settlers feel unwelcome. It is clear in the novel that for settlers to feel safe and comfortable in the space they claim as their own, they also need to be assured of their racial superiority. So, racism for settler-colonialism was integral to place-making. In order to create place out of African space, settlers had to expropriate land from the indigenous inhabitants creating a legacy of homelessness for indigenous people also, who for this reason are also unsettled. Natives were displaced and rendered homeless in their own land. These ideas will later be fully explored through the examination of Mary's escape to the town where the exclusion of the black population makes the environment easier for her to deal with. However, on her return to the urban, she no longer has a place in town life, only to return back to the farm when her husband, Dick, fetches her. The ideas that Lessing explores here are partially drawn from her autobiographical experience, as noted above, making the story more persuasive and compelling.

Even though ordinarily settlers would not be unsettled in the hostland, which is a place from which they, in fact seek refuge, we see that the "settlers" are accordingly compelled to co-exist with "indigenous people", the hosts, the very ones they ultimately dominate and regard as "inferior." The motive for this state of affairs is clear, namely,

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political and socio-economic domination of settlers over hosts. However, this domination is coupled with the most extreme anxiety about whether settlers are ever secure in the hostland, secure in particular from their hosts, whom they have unhomed in their own lands. This is an idea which I will now explore through the heroine, Mary.

Moses and the Promised Land: The Ironies of the Unhoming of Settler Colonialism

Curiously, even though she has never been to England, the main protagonist, the settler Mary, seems to think of that country as "home." The idea of England as home is foregrounded in her life as a single person in town especially by her visits to the store, a site of trade, but also where letters from England are collected: "For Mary, the word 'Home', spoken nostalgically, meant England, although both her parents were South Africans and had never been to England. It meant 'England' because of those mail-days, when she slipped up to the store to watch the cars come in, and drive away again laden with stores and letters and magazines from overseas" (32).The longing for England as "home" by Mary is indicative of how white settler colonialists saw themselves – as a people who are culturally rooted elsewhere to the territories they were colonising. This observation is complicated, as we shall see later, when one considers the sort of white settler colonialist that Mary is. She is poor. She struggles. She does not associate well with other white settler colonialists. She does not fully appreciate the system and therefore cannot or chooses not to assimilate. She does not belong within the system, and does not ever form a part of the settler community in the district where the farm is located. Thus, in the same way that the settler community rejects her, England, the mother country, would reject her since she does not meet the civilisational ideals of colonial imperialist culture. The novel implies that Mary would be an out-of-place stranger in England, even though she has been acculturated to regard it as home.

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The novel makes it clear that Mary has never had a sense of home, even in her childhood. Her father was unsteady in his job and the family "moved three times before Mary went to school" (34). This persistent movement ultimately causes Mary to be unable to "distinguish between the various stations she had lived in" (34). For a young woman such drifting and wandering to various spatial settings over time can only fuel confusion, and engenders a condition that can at best be viewed as un-homed. Their family life was mainly impacted by poverty, which finally drives the father to become an alcoholic: "when she thought of marriage she remembered her father coming home red-eyed and fuddled" (39). The poverty and instability of the home comes to be symbolised by one of the houses in which the family lived. When Mary thinks of this home, close to the railway line, as the homes of most poor whites were, "she remembered a wooden box shaken by passing trains" (39). This demonstrates just how difficult the environment was within which she grew up. The "shaking" of a wooden box which was home to Mary also illustrates just how unsteady her place was, especially if one considers that her parents were preoccupied with squabbles generated by her father's alcoholism, and how this led to relief on her part as she moved to town on her own in order start afresh in a different spatial setting that provided a temporary sense of home.

Mary seems to have had a sense of home when she establishes an independent life for herself. Ironically, this occurs when she moves away from her parents' home when "[s]he chose to live in a girl's club, which had been started, really, to help women who could not earn much money" (37). It is interesting that the place where Mary comes closest to feeling at home is not even referred to as a hostel or a dormitory. It is referred to as a "club" suggesting the temporariness of the meeting of strangers that it enables. Mary chooses this space in which to live since it "reminded her of school, and she had hated leaving school. She liked the crowds of girls, and eating in a big dining-room, and coming home after the pictures to

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find a friend in her room waiting for a little gossip" (37). Even at the club, however, Mary is presented as not fully fitting in since she moved among all those young women with a faint aloofness that said clearly: "I will not be drawn in." (37). Her unbelonging at the club is clear from the fact that she seems to have overstayed her welcome. The club is a temporary space for girls between their family homes and the homes of their husbands. Mary stays there beyond the usual period "but she had been there so long no one thought of asking her to leave" (37). It is revealing that the closest Mary comes to feeling at home is in a transitory space where she does not fit and eventually is no longer even welcomed. The fact that this is the place where she is happiest is underscored when she flees to the club from the hardships and disorientation of the farm.

Mary marries Dick Turner because it seems the inevitable thing for her to do, and moves with him to his farm. At the farm Mary finds the farmhouse enclosed and constraining. She feels trapped and suffocated. This occurs from her first arrival at the farm. Her first encounter with her new "home" as the "car stopped at last and she roused herself" (53) after the long travel from town is characterised thus: "There was a small square building whose corrugated roof began to gleam whitely as the moon slowly slid out from behind the cloud and drenched the clearing with brilliance" (53). Already, even before she takes residence in her new "home", she finds the structure "small", internally rejecting it. She predicts the impending imprisonment that awaits her. As she glances at the house she observes that "it looked shut and dark and stuffy, under that wide streaming moonlight" (53). Thus a clear contrast is shown between the expansiveness of the landscape under the moonlight and the closed, claustrophobic space of the house. Furthermore, the borders and boundaries that cut the house off from the rest of the terrain gets foregrounded:"[a] border of stones glinted whitely in front of her, and she walked along them, away from the house and towards the trees, seeing them grow large and soft as she approached" (53). Thus it is clear

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that the farmhouse is not a part of the landscape but has been constructed in an attempt to separate it from the landscape.

Mary reads the house as representing the security of civilisation opposed to the savagery of the African bush. Paradoxically, despite the attempts to separate it from the terrain, Mary discovers when she goes inside the house that what she has perceived is just a façade. The wild African bush has penetrated the secure inner space, symbolised by the animal skins she discovers when she steps into the house. These animal skins are not the hunting trophies one encounters in many colonial interiors, proclaiming the domination of the wild. This is what Mary sees: "[n]ow she could see the skins of animals on the red brick floor: some kind of wildcat, or perhaps a small leopard, and a big fawn-coloured skin of some buck. She sat down, bewildered by the strangeness of it all" (54). The skins are the skins of random small animals that do not attest the manliness of the hunter who killed them. Furthermore, they do not show colonial domination of the land, but rather the ways that poverty forced a dependence on the land. In place of expensive rugs imported from the colonial centre, Dick Turner has to make do with what he can scavenge from the natural environment.

It is obvious to the reader that Mary dislikes her new "home", and because of this she feels unwelcome in it. She does not belong here. She belongs in town. She tries to change her new spatial setting, to make it homely, to make it a place where she would feel comfortable and belong. Mary tries to transform the house modelling it on the sophisticated aspirations of the town: So, "[w]ith her own saved money Mary bought flowered materials, and covered cushions and made curtains; bought a little linen, crockery, and some dress lengths. The house gradually lost its air of black poverty, and put on an inexpensive prettiness, with bright hangings and some pictures" (63). But however much Mary tries to cover the poverty and

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harshness of the farmhouse with the civilised veneer of the colonial town, her attempts finally fail.

In the eyes of their white neighbours the Turners are seen to distance themselves from British ways and traditions despite Mary's efforts at maintaining an English front. Keeping a connection to one's heritage was of great importance to colonisers and their descendants. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin point out, for the British settlers this connection was maintained, in part, by distancing themselves from the black population (86) through, for example, engaging in activities which were seen as particularly British and by making sure that their houses were built and decorated according to British standards.

The idea that the homes of the white population had to be better than and differ from the homes of the black population is also brought up by Victoria Rosner. Rosner studies Southern Rhodesian settler guidebooks. In these guidebooks it is said that settler houses should cultivate a British style (Rosner 65) and "that the house should provide a solid barrier between the settler family and the unfamiliar landscape" (67). It is clear from descriptions of the house throughout the novel that the Turner abode does not act as a barrier to the African landscape. Tony Marston, the would-be caretaker of the farm, is horrified at the "bare crackling tin of the roof, that was warped with the sun, at the faded gimcrack furniture, at the dusty brick floors covered with ragged animal skins…" (28). Marston wondered how Mary and Dick Turner "could have borne to live in such a place, year in year out, for so long. […] Why did they go on without even so much as putting in ceilings? It was enough to drive anyone mad, the heat in this place" (28). It is the way in which the farmhouse lets in the heat, in particular, that shows how the attempts to separate it from the surrounding bush have not been successful. The relentless heat under the corrugated tin roof makes Mary irritated to a point where she feels imprisoned and suffocated, unable to live normally in the space that is supposed to be her home. We are told that "[Mary] had never imagined it could be so hot…so

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bad she should wear a hat even in the house" (66). The house is as hot as the exterior making it evident that it in no way is distinguished from the savage, brutal surroundings. The house thus does not represent the superiorities of modern, colonial civilisation. Instead, it shows up the inadequacies and contradictions of the colonial project.

Marston makes it clear that the settlers of the district have strong feelings of hate when it comes to the Turners because their house and mode of existence in it made their living environment no different from that of the poor, unsettled natives. The house is a slap in the face of the other white settlers as it sends the signal that the Turners do not care to uphold the difference between the British colonisers and the black population. Because of the narrative structure which relies on flashbacks, we are told the following about the Turners at the beginning: "Long before the murder marked them out, people spoke of the Turners in the hard careless voices reserved for misfits, outlaws and the self-exiled" (10). The Turners are self-exiled since they are perceived to have allowed their colonial space to be unhomely through their lack of will. In this failure, they have not maintained the necessary hierarchy between themselves and the indigenous population. According to the discourse of colonial society the Turners are traitors as they are too close to the black population since they languish at the same level of lifestyle as the indigenous people. Equality of poverty ironically creates the conditions for challenge and resistance, which is what we see in the black servant, Moses.

Their situation at the farm, uninhabitable as it is, is clearly temporary. So while Mary is unsettled and displaced at the farm, the same is true for the natives, specifically Moses. This existential tension between the settlers and the natives within the boundaries fraught with settler racism and native oppression and exploitation, leads to the "nervous condition" that unsettles both the settler and the native. In order to preserve the settler colonial "boundary" of superiority over the natives, it seems important for the settler to express racism

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not only in ways which dominate and oppress the natives in their own home but also separates them spatially so that master and the servant do not share a home. In spite of Mary's poverty and her struggles to belong, to turn her suffocating space into a home, a settler colonialist and racist attitude enjoined her to build a wall – both in the sense of viewing the natives as sub-humans only good for labour, and in the sense of creating physical boundaries between herself and the natives, that made certain her superiority over the natives. Katherine Fishburn argues that Mary finally comes "face to face with the African labourers whose sweat has made possible the privileges all colonisers enjoy," and the realisation that "no matter how poor . . . [she] becomes, she is always better off than the Africans" (3). Even though the Turners were poor whites, they still benefitted from "African labourers whose sweat" makes their life easier, and for the fact that they are white, they held sway over Africans in spite of their poverty. Fishburn's assertion therefore seeks to demonstrate the notion that racism can be instrumental in defining people spatially. That is why the spatial divide is clear when white settlers interact with their "boys" and "girls", as can be seen when Mary has to cross over from her house, walking to the compound where the natives resided. The boundary that kept the white settlers and the natives apart was also accentuated by the distance that needed to be traversed from one end to arrive at the other. When Mary went to the fields and discovered that the boys were not there, she took the car along the rough and rutted road as near as she could get to the compound, and then walked towards it along the native path that was trodden hard smooth, but with a soft littering of glinting slippery grass over it, so that she had to move carefully to save herself from sliding. "The long pale grass left sharp needles in her skirts, and the bushes shook red dust into her face" (109). The fact that she had to take the car to drive as near as she could to the compound and still had to walk meant there was considerable distance between settler and native, between the superior and the inferior. Discussing the significance of the creation of boundaries between settler and the

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native, James Graham (2007) explains that "[o]n the settler farm this patriarchal and fiercely racist projection of a national subjectivity demanded a fastidious regime of self-discipline. A supposedly inviolable boundary was drawn between the farmhouse and the surrounding land" (60).

But Mary and Dick's state of poverty encloses and erects a boundary between themselves and their own social world also. The Slatters, who appear to have settled and had a greater sense of belonging than the Turners because their farming enterprise was more successful, "made repeated attempts" (168) to socialise with the Turners outside of their home but failed. Mrs Slatter, during Dick's illness, "tried to make Mary break her isolation" (168) but Mary rejected her overtures, preferring instead to exclude herself from the others. It is therefore unsurprising that "the Turners had not had a telephone installed when everyone else did" (168) because, barring the fact that they were too poor to install it, the absence of a telephone strengthened, literally and figuratively, the "wall" between the Turners and the outside world.

The isolation of the Turners at every turn is increased by their poverty. Things worsen for Dick to a point where he has to sell his car because it "cost too much to run" (173). This curtailed their mobility to such an extent that if he needed something from the station he would send a "wagon" (173). Nature asserts itself to cover over the traces of the Turner's presence: "[t]he grass was growing back over the roads now that Dick had no car" (173). The Turner's decreased mobility with the sale of their car means that they become more and more alienated from colonial society. The slide of their fortunes and their deepening isolation comes to be reflected in the sorry state of their home, where even the sense of cheerful optimism brought by Mary's efforts at interior decoration is negated. Their poverty influences the space in which they live so that it comes to be lower than that of other settlers and in some respects equal to that of the natives. Charlie Slatter, who "[u]ntil World War 1

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had been poor (but thereafter had) found himself rich" (170), upon visiting them, came face to face with the Turner's poverty. "He looked round the place, frowning. The curtains were torn; a windowpane had been broken and patched with paper; another had cracked and not been mended at all; the room was indescribably broken down and faded" (176). This is the type of life, the type of poverty that characterised "home" for the oppressed natives, certainly not a place that could be called home by a settler family.

After losing their previous houseboys, through the general mismanagement and dereliction of the household, the intriguing character Moses gets roped in to undertake domestic duties in the Turner household. Historically, "houseboy" was a term that originated in the outposts of the British empire for a male housecleaner. He was usually, but not always, a native person who worked for a British family living in a British colony. Moses is relocated from the fields to the house as Mary's servant, a servant whom Mary struck with a whip two years previously. The fear of retaliation by Moses has remained in Mary from that time: she is "unable to treat this boy as she had treated all the others, for always, at the back of her mind, was that moment of fear she had known just after she had hit him and thought he would attack her. She felt uneasy in his presence" (142). This feeling of unease in Moses's presence unhomed Mary even further because her space in the house is now shared with someone who could be a danger to her. Furthermore, in the house and in the context of the intimate labour Moses needs to do, Mary could not build a wall, literal or metaphorical. Sheila Roberts stresses that "… male servants [in the Rhodesian colonial context] are neither physically small nor mentally subservient. Mary's servant, Moses, is a huge man with a proud bearing and a missionary-school education" (74). So Moses, unlike other "boys", has acquired some form of education. Mary first encounters Moses while supervising the black men at work in the fields; as she watches them at work, she feels an outpouring of hatred that is like a cleansing of her misery: "In spite of the hard work and her hatred of the natives, all

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her apathy and discontent had been pushed into the background" (116). Perpetually plagued by a crisis of authority as a woman, Mary is struck by a strange and unspeakable feeling that Moses's speaking to her in English connotes a bold sense of disrespect. When she protests, breathless with anger, "Don't speak English to me," he looks at her with derision and contempt. Finding this unbearable, and clearly sensing that the barrier that separates the inferior native from the superior settler is collapsing, Mary recovers her authority by whipping him instinctively across the face. In that moment, Moses suddenly reveals to Mary the full extent of his physical power.

The fact that Moses touches Mary is significant. Touching is spatially significant since it illustrates how the boundaries that separated the house boy and the racist madam are collapsed. She is alarmed at the sensation and feels certain that it is a prelude to rape. Instead, he pushes her gently on the bed, and covers her feet with her nightgown. The physicality of "touching" and "pushing gently" would not be possible if the metaphorical spatial partition between "madam" and "boy" was kept intact. Even in the later scene in which Moses is caught pulling a dress over her head with "indulgent uxoriousness" (185), the spatial boundaries between the two seem to be giving way.

Escaping Unbelonging: Mobility and its Barriers

As explained above, Mary's marital home ends up being as unhomely as the home in which she grew up with her parents. An opportunity presents itself for Mary to escape the marital home through returning to the town and the freedoms and potential of her youth at the clubhouse. A newspaper advert about her old job rekindled her desire to return to town with the hope of occupying her old job. Mary, in her quest to escape the farm to go back to town with the hope of restarting her old life, "walk[s] five miles between their homestead and the Slatters' farm in just over an hour. She was running half the way, her suitcase swinging

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heavily in her hand and bumping against her legs, her shoes filling with the soft gritty dust, sometimes stumbling over her sharp ruts" (102). Thus, although the farmhouse is presented as a closed space that entraps and entombs Mary, she nevertheless can exercise a mobility, albeit a difficult one. Since they no longer have a car, Mary has to effect her escape on foot. Her flight is not presented as a liberating release but as a difficult negotiation of the tough African terrain. Her shoes fill with dust and there are ruts in the path. But this challenging mobility nevertheless is Mary's only resistance to her patriarchally and racially determined position. The patriarchal problem is neatly captured by Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya and Pedram Lalbakhsh who state that Mary, in marrying Dick, "enters into the boundary of marriage, loses her economic independence, suffers a bitter life in the intolerably hot dwelling amidst the bush and among natives she hates" (2).

As she walks away from "the boundary of marriage" and the "intolerably hot dwelling amidst the bush" to the freedom that she believes awaits her in town, she comes across their neighbour, Charlie Slatter, who asks questions of his own but ends up transporting her to the train station where Mary continues her journey back to town. Her arrival in town is presented as an overwhelming experience, where her excitement in her sense of freedom is palpable:

> It was such a lovely, lovely day, with its gusts of perfumed wind, and its gay glittering sunshine. Even the sky looked different, seen from between the well-known building that seemed so fresh and clean with their white walls and red roofs. It was not the implacable blue dome that arched over the farm, enclosing it in a cycle of unalterable seasons; it was a soft flower-blue, and she felt, in her exaltation, that she could run off the pavement into the blue substance and float there, at ease and peaceful at last. The street she walked along was lined with bauhinia trees, with their pink and white blossoms perched on the branches like butterflies among leaves. It was an avenue of

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> pink and white, with the fresh blue sky above. It was a different world! It was her world. (103-104)

The fact that being in this place for Mary engenders exhilaration as well as ease and peace means that Steve Taylor is correct in asserting that "wherever it is located, home is often represented as offering complete familiarity and comfort, a place that we either leave and long for, or we move towards, for ontological security" (5). The fact that she appears so attached to the environment she just reconnected with means this place is indeed "her world." The above passage captures Mary's deep and desperate "homing desire", a desire to feel at home in the context of the "unhomed" and "unsettled" colonial settler. It is telling that Mary, now finding herself in a place she used to call home, a place which is other than the farm which is her marital home, she finds the sunshine "glittering" and the sky looking "different". These observations by Mary, including the freedom she feels to a point where she believes "she could run off the pavement into the blue substance and float there, at ease and peaceful at last" are significant because they juxtapose two places which are supposed both to be homes to her. On the one hand, they reveal by implication that the farm is suffocating and unwelcoming, fraught with particularities of unbelonging. But they also reveal that the town, is welcoming and homely. She prefers the town, not Dick's farm. The town is her world, the farm Dick's.

Running away from her suffocating marital home, Mary thinks of resuming her life as a single woman in town. But then Mary discovers that her old world, the town, to which she "belonged" and felt at "home", did not wait for her. Her old place at the club was no longer available for her because the new matron there "told her they did not take married women" (104), a fact that seemed to have escaped Mary. What she used to call home is no longer hospitable. Even her old job, which was advertised "had been filled" (104) and is no longer

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available for her. "Back at the hotel she looked at herself in the glass … And her hair was not very smart. But then did he (the man who told her old job was already filled) think one had hairdressers on farms? … What did they expect? That she should have gone through all those sufferings and disappointments and yet remain unchanged?" (104). She feels out of place as she discovers that she no longer has the sophistication that urban space requires, that she has lost the graces and attractiveness which are a professional necessity. What she previously regarded as her home now rejects her. This means that she has no place to call home except her husband's house and the farm. She desperately wants to belong again, but nobody seems interested. She is a foreigner in the very place from which she came. This is interesting when compared with Tambu's position in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Dangarembga's Tambu returns "home" from the colonial modern to the homestead and she is alienated because she prefers the modern as opposed to the rural. But Mary's situation is even more complicated than Tambu's since Tambu enjoys the certainties created by a secure sense of original place, namely the homestead and its environs, despite her alienation by people like her father. A secure sense of place is denied to Mary wherever she finds herself. Mary, especially after her marriage to Dick, finds home nowhere. Finally, Dick shows up in town, at her hotel, at a point when Mary realised "she would not be able to pay her hotel bill" (101) to take her back home to the farm, back to a place she escaped from to find her old home in the town, but a place Dick regarded as home. Mary's return to the farm is important because even though "their marriage was all wrong" (105), Dick "could not imagine returning to a house where there was no Mary" (105). Contrary to what his position was before, Dick "even began to think of putting in ceilings" (106). So, in spite of all the difficulties their marriage presented, Mary's presence in his life was important if he was going to make a home out of his house. But tragically the house never becomes Mary's home.

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Unsettled Settler and the Unhomed Native – Finding Home in Death

Mary, on the last day of her life, walks off the paths around the house into the bush for the first time since she has been living in the district. Suddenly she becomes aware of the beauty of nature that morning: "with a mind as clear as the sky" she stands there "watching the sunrise, as if the world were being created afresh for her, feeling this wonderful rooted joy" and she feels herself "inside a bubble of fresh light and color, of brilliant sound and birdsong" (192). Her attitude towards nature, seeing the pastoral beauty and vitality of the wild bush for the first time in her life, can be regarded as the sign of her deeper awareness, acknowledging the vital "other" within and "out there" in the bush. Standing in the bush, she knows that somewhere among the trees, Moses is waiting for her. She sees herself as "an angular, ugly, pitiful woman, with nothing left of the life" that can do nothing in front of the "fatal night" (194). She sees herself as "that foolish girl travelling unknowingly to this end" who is waiting "for the night to come that would finish her" (195), then she walks straight into the bush "thinking: "I will come across *him*" and it will all be over" (197). She does not seek help from her husband who is "a torturing reminder of what she has to forget in order to remain herself" (191).

Mary, through her fear of Moses, can be said to be instinctively afraid of her locality and its suffocating constraints: "She stood rigid with fear, the chill sweat running down her body, waiting. He approached slowly, obscene and powerful, and it was not only he, but her father who was threatening her" (165). This sentiment is once again reminiscent of Mary's general attitude towards the natives of Africa, an attitude that unsettles her as a settler and simultaneously unsettles the natives, resulting in unease and conflict: the natives represent that part of the European which she rejects due to fear or disgust, and which will eventually lead to violent actions. Moses initially works on the farm, which is his "home". He is a domestic worker in the Turners' home. He is there, present to see as Mary's state of health,

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both physically and mentally, deteriorates. She is no longer strong, but she still has a sense of superiority about her which leads her to look down on Moses and others like him. But because Mary has become weak, the "master-servant" role is somewhat altered because Moses now assumes a degree of control over Mary. At this point Moses's role changes from that of a mere servant in a traditional sense of a domestic servant to something more. But this scene also unsettles Moses's identity as a Shona man who would ordinarily frown upon duties that feminise him. However, it is not until the very end of the story, when Moses kills Mary, his mistress, that violence actually emerges in him. Until this tragic moment he wins all his battles with patience. One has to note that Mary's murder, even if it is a profoundly violent act, is also a liberating one whose aim is to deliver this woman from her earthly sufferings. What we see in *The Grass Is Singing* is the actual subversion of the status quo as we know it between the coloniser and colonised, the oppressor and the oppressed. The coloniser-oppressor is spatially rejected and is left unhomed in a spatial setting in which she should be superior and controlling. Having engaged in a protracted struggle against her environment, constantly rejecting the idea of belonging at the farm, it could be said that death, perhaps, is ultimately her home.

At the end of the novel, when Mary steps out of the house – which represented her bondage, onto the veranda, which represented an escape from bondage and her final resting place, "the trees stood still and waited" until finally Moses appears, and "at the sight of him, her emotions unexpectedly shifted, to create in her an extraordinary feeling of guilt; but towards him, to whom she had been disloyal, and at the bidding of the Englishman" (204). As she opens her mouth to apologise, Moses clasps one hand over her mouth to silence her and with the other hacks her head with a blunt instrument: "And then the bush avenged itself: that was her last thought" (205). Eve Bertelsen, referring to Moses, suggests that "Lessing is fully engaged in her representation of Africa in the European tradition" (650) with Moses as

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Africa's chief representative. Moses, by returning on the eve of her departure from the farm to murder her dramatically on the front terrace of her house, can be seen to be liberating her from the suffocating "home" to which she does not belong, to the liberty that the "outside" provides, so that it can be argued that at last she is "home" and "free" in her death, with death being her new home. But the murder of Mary also triggers a sort of returning to home for Moses, when, as he walks "through the soaking bush" (206), he stops and turns aside to lean "against a tree on an ant-heap", a place where he "would remain" (206) until he is discovered.

Thus, in *The Grass Is Singing*, it is the coloniser's turn to become subjugated and powerless. So Moses, through his violent act, frees Mary from her suffocating space from "her earthly sufferings." Through this very violent act, Moses himself generates conditions for his own final liberation from the unhomely space within which he has had to suffer oppression and indignity. Moses stands on an ant-heap, waiting for colonial justice, perhaps finding solace in sharing a final home with the community of ants. His violent act complicates matters such that it is unmistakeable that Mary is a white woman who is dominated by Moses' masculinity (while simultaneously being oppressed by her patriarchal culture) and Moses is a black man with "superior" masculinity but who is racially inferior and oppressed. In fact, both of them are oppressed in the dominant white male British culture, and both of them are freed by death. Moses finally surrenders himself at the end of his journey. Under Lobengula, the powerful Matebele king mentioned above, native criminals surrendered themselves willingly as there was no escape and it was in accordance with their notion of courage and honour. "Over an ant-heap" is the place where Moses stands at the end of the story. This ant-heap, a place where he would in a sense be unhomed because it is a place foreign to him and a place of abode for ants, becomes his home. On the ant-heap he takes his place. He does not run off. He does not hide. He is at peace in this place because the ant-heap serves to represent both his honour and his final home.

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As we have seen, set in Southern Rhodesia, the area which was dominated by white settlers prior to its independence in 1980, *The Grass Is Singing* is a novel which not only reflects a psychological portrait of its black and white characters, but also illustrates the idea of colonial settlement to be a violent form of unsettlement. This idea is clarified spatially and through the mobility of the central female character, but it can also be traced in the prevailing particularities of (un)belonging and of place-making in the lives of other characters, black and white. What this chapter argues is that *The Grass is Singing* shows how colonialism and racism ensured that both settlers, and indigenous people dispossessed of their land, are fundamentally dis-placed, and for that reason homeless. The novel implies that this is the case even for settler characters who, on the face of it, appear comfortable in the land they have violently "settled". The novel implies that hidden at the dark heart of colonial settlement lies a fundamental "unsettlement." The novel does so primarily through the central female character, Mary Turner, and her black alter ego, Moses. The natives are unsettled in their own place of birth, and the settlers never find home in the new spatial setting.

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CONCLUSION

> *During the last 20 years or so, a "spatial turn" has made its way across the social sciences and humanities. It has arisen from all kinds of theoretical and practical impulses, but its effect has been clear enough: the identification of what seems like a constantly expanding universe of spaces and territories, each of which provides different kinds of inhabitation – from the bordering provided by the womb, through all the things in the home that are just out of reach, through the corporeal traces of buildings and landscapes that provide a kind of half-remembered poetics, through the ways in which vast political and commercial empires – and the resultant wealth and misery – can be fashioned from the mundane comings and goings of ships and trains and now planes, through all of the billions of invisible messages that fleetingly inhabit the radio spectrum and each another dimension on to life.* (Thrift 139)

The epigraph by Nigel Thrift, who is one of the world's leading human geographers, is quoted here in full, as it is at the beginning of the thesis, because it is meant to help take us back to where we began, and to summarise the key observations of the thesis. What Thrift is saying is an appreciation of the common thread that runs through the thesis, namely that of contemporary constant mobility from one space and place to another, which he characterises as "comings and goings". Thrift acknowledges too that at the heart of these comings and goings is a significant facilitation which happens as a result of the application of digital communication, or, as he puts it, "billions of invisible messages that fleetingly inhabit the radio spectrum." Following Thrift's exploration, it is important to make the point that these "ships and trains and now planes" do not engage in mobility by themselves. They are filled

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by people. As this thesis has argued, these very modes of transport are responsible for the formation, and the resultant dynamism, of the diaspora. In some cases, as the thesis has shown, the mode of transport itself may become a home, welcoming or not, for people on the move, even if they are homes for only a short time.

Most studies of diaspora focus on home and away. But they do not consider the question of mobility, which is what is inescapable in the relocation from home to the host space and back, if there is ever a return. As we have seen, mobility and the ways in which Thrift explores it in the epigraph is very consciously foregrounded in the novels that have been examined. In Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name*, for instance, the heroine, Mazvita, effects her escape to an elsewhere by taking a journey by bus and ends up finding herself riding on a bicycle in the city. Tsitsi Dangarembga's Tambu journeys in her uncle's car from the homestead to the mission and, at the end of school term, back to the homestead. This is also true for Lessing's Mary, who at some point finds herself taking an important journey in desperation by foot, and then by car, and then by train, away from her suffocating spatial setting that the farm had become, back to her place of origin in the town.

Mobility and the resultant diaspora created by mobility, results in the emplacement of characters who nonetheless in one way or another hanker after "home". In the twenty-first century, advanced forms of information and digital communication technology do not in and of themselves bridge space and collapse borders between host and homelands. Throughout this work we have seen subjects rely on digital technology like Skype, email, television, telephone, the walkman, etc., all in order to collapse borders between, firstly, the hostland and the homeland; secondly, between the hostland and the world, thirdly, between themselves and people in the hostland (in order to create homely and welcoming conditions), and lastly, and perhaps inadvertently, in order to locate everyone everywhere, so that to speak of host- and homelands becomes meaningless.

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As our journey to identify the“constantly expanding universe of spaces and territories” inhabited by the characters of the novels studied has progressed, we have seen as subjects seek to carve a home for themselves in the new space, transforming it into place, reconfiguration of identity has been unavoidable. We have seen that it is not possible to engage in mobility in a quest to find a new home in an elsewhere without bringing some of your “home” identity to the altering identity created by the new place.

We have seen that spatial thinking today hinges around the ontological spatiality of being because we are all spatial as well as social and temporal beings; and also around the social production of spatiality because space is socially produced and can therefore be socially changed. We have also seen that spatial thinking depends on the socio-spatial dialectic because this study accepts that the spatial shapes the social as much as the social shapes the spatial. This study also aimed to show that space and place are two related concepts which are used to explain the ways in which people experience the natural world. Space is defined as a dimension within which matter is located, or a grid within which substantive items are contained. In other words, space is an area where human meaning is not yet imbued. Places have meaning that is given through human interactions. In the novels studied, we have seen varying degrees of success in creating meaningful emplacement.

This thesis has also shown that space is not singular; that it – space, in fact brings together into meaningful relations and formations places and practices. We have seen that space also carries social meanings, and that these meanings of space are shaped in contexts of continuities, links and conflicts. We have seen that the home, the city, and the nation, in their interconnections with transnational space form layers of zones of belonging; together they form the context where social relations, communication and action take place and shape the meanings of identity and community. Importantly, we have seen that each of these elements of space is an independent node and each has its own social and cultural meanings.

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This examination of selected texts and theory has shown that home is not only defined in relation to the meanings of identity; home also plays multiple roles in the broader economic and cultural contexts of the local, the national and the transnational context. It has become clear, following this study, that home – both in its real shape as a place, as well as in its figurative, imagined form – provides the expressive "structure" for individuality. In the context of this study, home seeks to explain both the prospectively imagined and physical location, which in turn becomes homely because in it people sometimes find refuge, closeness, safety and a sense of belonging. But sometimes they do not and the host place may remain foreign and hostile. And so for people scattered in foreign land seeking to carve a home for themselves, the existential imperatives of home are almost always uncertain and imperfect. As opposed to their hosts, people in the diaspora live under conditions that are always open to change. The home that they carve for themselves in the hostland is therefore impermanent and fraught with unpredictability.

We have seen Zimbabwean authors write about displacing particularities at home, particularities that see subjects engage in mobility in order to seek to create for themselves a "home" away from home. Throughout this study, we have seen that, for the dispersed, preservation of identity can become exceedingly important, and the impact of realities such as displacement, fragmentation, and isolation, seem inescapably to lead to a reformulation of identity.

Throughout the study I have examined and reflected on the important questions of space, place, mobility, diasporic identity, home, and (un)belonging. But, as mentioned earlier, as part of an afterword for this work I would like to interact with the same themes through a reflective essay which will show why I found this research topic thought-provoking and pertinent. The essay is accompanied by a creative writing experiment of my own. Other than to cover the themes already referred to, this creative piece will attempt to look at these very

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themes from an angle, or angles, not present in the selected focal texts studied in this research.

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Afterword

Reflective Essay

The Cross-Fertilisation of Research and Creative Writing: Exploring Intra-African Diaspora

My interest in Zimbabwean literature strictly speaking follows a curiosity that was a function of the deteriorating humanitarian crisis that began in 2000, a time when a great number of Zimbabweans, fleeing economic and political suffocation, left their country of birth to assume new belongings in different places, in foreign lands, where they sought to carve a home for themselves and their loved ones. This exodus of a great part of the nation drew my attention to the existence and emergence of a body of fictional works produced on Zimbabwe's diaspora. This body of work – I touch briefly on the selected focal texts later – sought to lay bare the particularities within which people inside and outside of Zimbabwe live(d). Written by Zimbabweans who themselves are or were once diasporic, the selected focal literature represented an emerging category within the general canon of Zimbabwean literature. This is a sub-genre of Zimbabwean literary works that is maturing with time. It is slowly revealing itself – its unmistakeable messages, varying techniques and its unique identity as it grows. Indeed I could have done my research on any other subject, but the compelling diasporic and human geography specificities that make up this literature, as seen in the selected focal texts, and the closeness of the subject matter to my heart (which is an interest that intensified as the research continued) are the reasons why I elected to focus on Zimbabwean diaspora literature.

In the beginning when I took up this journey of the study of space and place, of mobility, of diasporic identity, and (un)belonging, I was a "Creative Writing graduate", published poet, short story writer and novelist. The research journey has been a personal challenge, a walk through a path I had to create for myself. It is a journey which involved traversing a field for

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which I had no specific training. In my own past fiction writing, except for movement inside and around a setting – ordinarily a town and its surrounding environment, my previous work did not involve a specific focus on mobility, migration, exile, or any of the other terms by which diaspora has come to be known. This is important because it rendered a study on human geography and (Zimbabwean) diaspora a new field that was pregnant with the capacity to enrich me in many different and new ways. The possibility to cross the threshold, to "collapse the borders" and allow myself to be affected by new theories and texts, and to traverse terrains previously foreign was irresistible. That possibility was the main reason why I elected to pursue this study. I feel as though I have challenged myself in ways that have empowered me further as a creative writer, so that it is possible, now, to boldly look beyond the scope of the fascinating research and try to write a Zimbabwean diasporic fiction of my own.

Writing in *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, poet, short-story writer and novelist Edward Archibald Markham states that "[a]s you write you'll be pleased (or alarmed) to discover that there are no rules about where to start. Anything – a memory, a smell, a sound and, of course, an incident – might trigger a story" (97). Indeed in my journey to express my thinking about the ways in which the research and especially the focal texts have influenced me, I have discovered the themes of space and place, of mobility and the resultant diasporic identity can be externalised through anything and everything because, as Tim Cresswell puts it, "place is everywhere" (2). "Bond and Transient Musings", a short story of my own, which follows hereafter, explores memories – of smells, of sounds and of incidents – that give specificity to the experience of home and away. "Bond and Transient Musings" is a function of an appreciation that human geography – which explores in great detail the intersection(s) between people and their environments, their ideas and customs and social behaviour, and

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their interfaces with their environs across locations – in itself carries immense possibility for creative writing inspired not only by imagination, but by real, breathed experiences too.

Once in the hostland, we see in the novels that have been studied in the thesis that the diasporic apply various means to carve "home" for themselves. In the focal texts traversed, it was clear that the diasporic recreates "home" through many different ways, such as music, various forms of digital technology, food, music, language and culture, etc. Diasporic characters in the contemporary novels that have been studied also use digital technology such as Skype and television to keep in touch with the motherland and the world at large. They meet to speak their languages and eat their indigenous cuisine and dance to music from the motherland. The key characters in these novels try to recreate "home."

It was a different challenge I set myself in writing the accompanying short story. It was the challenge of writing a story where the link between home and away, and the recreation of home is shaped not through food or music, but through the sense of smell. The sense of smell, the appreciation of fragrances or the revulsion at odours, is a neglected sense which often triggers vivid memories. In the case of diaspora experience, smell may be the sense that most keenly links a subject with home, and it may be the thing that most powerfully creates memories of home. Smell may also help a subject adapt to the hostland which thereby becomes a new home. Through smell, I aimed, like Tendai Huchu points out in an interview with Jeanne-Marie Jackson, "to capture something universal about the human condition" (Bookslut Interview, np). Also, mulling over the novels studied, I realised that all of the diaspora stories are stories about human beings. I wanted to try to explore something different – a different species of subjectivity. I have intentionally used a diasporic character that is not human to accentuate questions of remembering and forgetting, in the making of "home". In writing the short story "Bond and Transient Musings", I found Bond, the dog, almost in the same way as Noviolet Bulawayo found Darling. Bulawayo, in an interview with

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Claire Cameron of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, states that "I think with children, description, at least for me, is simpler and direct and tangible. Things are alive, because that is how children see the world" (lareviewofbooks.org, np). Memory and everything that happens around Bond and his owner are readily and easily made available to the reader by Bond himself. He speaks in a way that brings the past alive while carrying the reader through the present to the future. It is clear that Bond appreciates his existential circumstances a little more profoundly than the human, if his interaction with his owner is to be considered. Also, this is so because he has experienced and continues to experience whatever it is that the owner experiences, both at home and in the hostland. But he also carries the added responsibility to help his human companion with weathering the trauma of remembering, including the responsibility to make her feel the love and warmth of his companionship, which he carries out admirably.

It is worth mentioning that the prominence of the bond between animals and humans has been recognised since time immemorial. According to K. Kling, "[n]ative peoples say that a long time ago on the earth a chasm opened up separating animals and humans. As the chasm got wider and wider, the dogs jumped across to be with the humans" (National Public Radio, np). As it is clear between Bond and the woman with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth, humans and dogs share a long, entwined past. In "Bond and Transient Musings", the mutually beneficial co-existence of the woman and the dog is self-evident. But the relationship is far greater than that. In the story, Bond is more than a pet. He is a friend, a sanctuary. In difficult times he is there to lend an ear, and to comfort. Perhaps a lot more than human characters in the story, Bond seems effectively to rely on his sense of smell in order to create a powerful sense of home. If there is another point that Bond the character makes, it is that dogs, as opposed to humans, possess superior olfactory acuity. They have the ability to locate an extremely wide range of scents. The "bond" both Bond and the woman with a scar

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on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth have with their country of origin, even though fraught with struggle, is also clear. The dog is such an important character that his name is in the title of the story.

"Bond and Transient Musings" is a short story about subjects fleeing their country of origin, in this case Zimbabwe, in order to settle in neighbouring South Africa. This mobility sets the story apart from the selected novels for study in the research component of the thesis because, as opposed to moving to places overseas, or to places within the borders of Zimbabwe – either from the rural to the urban or the reverse, in this story subjects migrate to South Africa in order to find home. As mentioned earlier, what sets "Bond and Transient Musings" apart from other texts in this study is the fact that it is in part narrated by a dog, Bond, who, importantly, is also diasporic because he was part of the few "things" that one of the key characters fled with from Zimbabwe to South Africa during the one night when her family was annihilated by men from the military. Bond, in this story, seems to be aware of everything that took place since he was close to one of the main characters. It is also the role of the sense of smell that separates this story from the rest because it is mainly through olfaction that places are not only remembered but also reproduced. It is a sense of smell that takes subjects back to places they have been, to the places they would like to be.

Set in both a village in Zimbabwe and in South Africa, "Bond and Transient Musings" is a transnational story with themes of altering space and place, of mobility, and diasporic (re)identity and (un)belonging. One of the key characters is a certain nameless man who throughout the story spends his time trapped in a structure that is about to collapse. This man has moved from Zimbabwe to South Africa to follow his mother, who was determined to carve out a better life for herself in a foreign country. "The man who is now trapped inside this shack that is already demolished" is used in the story almost as refrain for a number of reasons. The first is that a "shack", other than what it literally means, is used contextually to

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speak of a place much larger that he finds himself in. The "shack" speaks to and of the homeland. The fact that this shack "is already demolished" and that it "might come apart at any time" is a reflection of the suffocating state of affairs in the homeland. He feels "trapped" here because his experience of his new home across the border has endowed him with freedom – trapped inside this shack he knows what it is and how it feels to be free. The man settles in South Africa but is called back to Zimbabwe by his ailing father. He arrives in Zimbabwe to find his village of birth under siege by a terrorising group called "The A Team", which, as he discovers, was destroying the village, and doing his very own father's bidding. He is trapped in this structure that is about to collapse with a woman called Grace. Reversing the trend in Zimbabwean migration, we discover, ironically, that Grace is a young woman who goes to Zimbabwe on the promise of personal prosperity and a way out of her difficulties at home in South Africa. But she discovers that she and other South African women have been trafficked into Zimbabwe in order to become sex-slaves used by the father of the central male character.

There is another nameless man in the story. Hunted down because the military has flagged him as an "instigator", he escapes his homeland of Zimbabwe. For political and safety reasons, he crosses the border in a quest to find "home" in the neighbouring South Africa, where he meets another key character, a woman with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth. Instead of a name, this woman is identified through a description. The idea is to explain, without going into detail, the plight of immigrants, especially female ones who do not have proper documentation to be in the hostland. The violence they suffer from some in the community and from elements within the "system", especially the police, is represented by the "scar on her upper lip", while the "full set of beautiful teeth" serves to make plain that this particular woman – like many others, is a warm, wonderful person whose only objective, having fled her country of origin, is simply to realise a better life for herself,

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and for her Bond. She fled Zimbabwe in the middle of the night, this woman with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth, because the military killed both her mother and her two-week old baby. After digging a hole in the middle of the night and burying both her daughter and mother, she flees Zimbabwe with her dog called Bond for South Africa where, just as Cresswell points out, she turns her new space into "[her] place" (2) and tries to "add [her] possessions, [to] rearrange" (2) a backroom shack into a home, her home away from home. Other than the fact that he knows everything because he can hear and speak, and other than the fact that he seems to be everywhere all the time, Bond is unique as a character and narrator in the story because he is a diasporic dog. From the struggles they suffered back at "home", one thing that stands out for both the woman and the dog is a voice. It is fixed in their minds, this voice, and whenever the story about the night they left their country of origin is told, they remember one of the assailants simply as "the man whose voice was as crass and demonic as he looked." Other than the fact that the man was in fact crass and demonic, this refrain signifies, in a nutshell but in a forceful way too, the conditions that exist at home: they are crass and demonic. For the nameless man who returns to Zimbabwe in response to his ailing father's call, the point of return occurs right inside that structure that's about to collapse when Grace tells him how devious his father and his dear friend Algebra are. For the woman with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth (and her dog) the turning point is when she is finally, and unexpectedly, reunited with her father in a foreign land.

As I was writing "Bond and Transient Musings", I found myself absorbed with the sequence of words, with varying feelings, and I was thinking not only about my subjects but about a reader who longs for new meetings and experiences. Like Yvonne Vera opined about writing *Without a Name*, I found myself starting "with a moment – visual, mental – that I can see, and I place it on my table, as though it were a photograph" (weaverpresszimbabwe.com interview, np). "Bond and Transient Musings", ultimately, is for

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a reader who is willing to walk across borders and share a bond not only with the people and animals who make up stories, but with where they come from, and where they are going.

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Bond and Transient Musings

So he sits there, trapped inside this shack that is already demolished, in a section that had collapsed together to form another smaller shelter that might come apart at any time. He sits there with the woman, Grace, the woman who has shown him what his father is, the woman who has shown him what his family is, what he is – the beneficiary of a thief of women's souls. Together they sit there quietly, very quietly; since to make any sound would bring them back – perhaps Algebra and all those who were instructed not to take any prisoners. Crouched here, he is close to the earth. He smells its smells, clayey, cloying and rich – the smell of blood. And he smells Grace. She is near to him under the sheet of zinc, balanced precariously on two mounds of rubble. Her smell is the smell of vegetation when the sun sets – when the heat of the day exudes the fragrances of the plants and their flowers. But it is the heat of her fear that he mainly smells. Has anyone ever told you that smells can tell stories? Well, they can. Smells tell you stories of memories, of memories of people and places. Smells tell you stories of home. Smells tell you stories of your homes, and also how you lose them. Smells, if we are patient with them, can be home, our home. So bent double here under this sheet of zinc with the smell of the earth and the smell of plants, we'll tell you stories – stories of homes and leaving homes.

To leave your home, the place that you have lived in and loved, and where all your yesteryears are buried deep, can be painful. To leave your home involuntarily can be particularly traumatising. But maybe it is not always to be homeless - to leave. Many people wandering the length and breadth of the globe do so while carrying with them their memories, good and bad. In order to survive, they not only create new memories and realities, but they also either intentionally forget or summon the past, and, in doing so, find that, in spite of what is happening outside in their present environment, wherever that may be, it is within themselves that they find home. Perhaps home is a condition in which you find yourself when you run out of homes. Maybe home is always somewhere, some place we are going to, a place we have never been before. Yet it can be argued that some among us are born to leave. They are in love with arriving. They concern themselves with no starting point nor journey's end but wandering and scattering. I, on the other hand, am carried around to places I must call home. Or so I think.

So he sits there, trapped inside this shack that is already demolished.

He arrived in this place he used to call home seventeen hours and thirty-seven minutes ago. We can be precise because, in spite of the blood that's splattered across its glass, he could see the time on his wristwatch as he hugs his legs in this cramped space, which is now serving as his temporary home. He came here grudgingly, more out of a sense of duty to the man he calls his father, a man who, as it turns out, has fooled and betrayed him as he has many, many others. He was tricked into coming here by Al, the person he thought was his friend.

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Smelling the rising fragrances of the warm earth, the man trapped inside this shack that is already demolished thinks of the hard grey-black, sooty smells of the stuff that comes out of the earth – coal. When he thinks of that smell of acrid greyness, he thinks of his other home. He arrived in that place he now calls home a few years ago. It is a place situated across the border to the South. It is a place he had always dreamt of – a place of his freedom. This place that they all longed for was a place that promised what his old home denied them: peace, jobs, education, healthcare, prosperity, safety – all of the trappings of freedom. It was a place they all dreamt of as they grew up. They wished their own country could be like this place. If it was not this place, it would be the neighbouring places of Gaborone that they longed for, or the distant London, or Edinburgh, or some city in some state in America. Some of their friends and relations had found themselves in those places. Whenever they called home, the lucky ones among them with access to the internet would see their happy faces and some of their shiny new belongings, which one could see in the background of the screens during Skype calls. They would tell them – often looking obviously happy and somehow brighter, almost always with the motherland flag hoisted behind them – just how advanced and up-to-the-minute things were where they found themselves; and that one day they would come take them along and free them from the burdens of violence and hunger and captivity and rejection that their land subjected them to.

It is a cultural heartland, this place across the border that this man who is trapped inside this shack that is already demolished, now calls home. It is famous for its pitch-black coal mines and the many grey coal-fired stations. One thing you will notice if you do explore the place he calls home is the absence of tall buildings. This is because a great part of the city was built over land under which there stretched kilometres and kilometres of underground mining operations. This has resulted in its unique cityscape – a flat city, a city without skyscrapers. The place he calls home is also known to be an area that has the world's dirtiest air. Besides the grey coal-fired stations, it could be that the many vehicles that pass through the city pollute the air with their emissions. One thing that is certain is that no nostrils deserve to come into contact with such air. The irony is that, for him, the dirty air is a stark reminder that he has reached home again from wherever he would have been, and its absence often rings the bell of his away-ness. The dirty air was a death-trap, obviously, but it reminded him constantly of what is absent from the place of his birth: the dirty engine of an economy that can feed a nation – sort of.

The grey coal-smell, like the smell of vegetation at the end of a long, hot day, also seemed to get stronger as dusk fell. One memory of the coal-smell that lingers in the open is of one evening when he was walking with his friend Algebra, who followed his journey to this place. Him and Al - his mother once told him that his friend was named Algebra in memory of his deceased uncle who was passionate about this branch of Mathematics – he and Al were walking unhurriedly as the smell of grey intensified in the fading daylight. They both liked walking in order to take in all there is to take in about a place, to be one with a place. Back in the days when they were students, Al was passionate, just like his deceased uncle, not only about working out the distance between two points with coordinates, but as much as possible

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to walk these distances. Perhaps that is why Al is so fond of travelling the world and noting the distances he has travelled, bringing together through his travels various points and locations that were at some point distant from each other. They walked through a busy part of the city where clusters of eateries and bars gathered clusters of people. He remembers, this man who is now trapped inside this shack that is already demolished, watching through the windows and noticing thick clouds of cigarette smoke hanging comfortably in the air, as if to announce to the coal-smell outside "we too belong here." Inside there was also a mixture of smells of evaporating spirits and beer, as well as trails of perfume in the seating areas outside bars; the nose-numbing bitter ambiances of traffic fumes next to a busy road, with the wafts hitting the back of the throat. Al would remark: "it is an affront to one's health and that of the environment, these fumes and dust and smells." However, Al would add: "But this is what keeps me alive. This is what is lacking at home. Here I feel I am a part of something moving forward fast, fast-forwarding."

After the walk, they sat in a café. They found it particularly busy, with waitresses walking briskly among the tables, some receiving orders and others delivering them. They realised it would take quite long before they would be served but were fine with it. No haste. The night was young, plus they could speak about things while waiting to be assisted.

"When last were you back home?" Al asked, finally taking his wandering eye off a waif-like girl, dressed like a woman much older, who was walking in by herself.

"A while ago. A little while ago," he dismissed him. He detested the question because he did not want to talk about that place. Besides, it always ended up having to do with his father.

"You mean years ago? Come on, man. Don't you have a father there? What's wrong with you?"

"You know my father and I are better off far away from each other. You know that. You also know that going back there might mean never coming back here - they will either kill me, or lock me up in jail forever without a trial. You know that all too well, yet you insist."

"I know that, but still, I don't understand. I mean, things are bad there but you know there are ways of getting in and out without attracting the attention of those thugs in the military. You should at least try to go home to see your father. I mean really, who has beef with his cleric father? A pastor? What can a man of the cloth do that is so appalling and unforgivable that his only son does not want to be near him?" Al was never going to let the matter rest. "You know, I wish I had a father like yours," he once told him, "a father who makes a plan, who makes things happen, giving his family the lifestyle, and the opportunities they deserve." They looked at each other, in silence. Among the reasons why Al held his friend's father in high regard was that a great part of his university education was funded by him.

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"I have told you many times," he broke the silence, immediately stopping to clear his throat before continuing, "and I will tell you again, perhaps for the last time: something spooks me about the old man. He is a good man; I will not take that away from him - lots of benevolence to those in need. But I just cannot seem to shake the feeling that he is using the pulpit and his philanthropy to cover up his failings."

"Your feelings about your father will take you nowhere, especially since you have nothing to base it on."

"I know."

There was silence, again, which was made bearable by the sound of other people speaking and laughing loudly.

"How are you, really, and when are *you* going back home?" he said, looking at Al's face after taking a sip of the coffee that was given to them for free because of the long time they had to wait to be served. "Oh I'm alright, mate. It's been hectic, but one lives. About going home, it will not be anytime soon," Al replied. "My exams are near, and with my plate being so full of late I have fallen behind in my preparations. Next year, maybe."

"You and I are not too different then," he said. "You probably last went back there many months ago."

"It's been eighteen months, almost. As I said, I have been really busy."

He was a success, Al, the envy of many. He had adapted well to the coal-city, enjoying life free of all the ills and wants that the motherland presented to its suffocated citizenry. He had become a true cosmopolitan, having travelled and stayed in a few cities around the world. He lived in a stylish upmarket house that was the envy of his fellow varsity students, who struggled to pay the rent for their tiny flats. One day one would see him in a luxury German sedan, the other on the latest motor cycle. His taste for clothes was simply superior. Watching Al sitting across the table now one could see him settled quite comfortably in his casual but lavish clothes and Havaianas. As Al would say, "only a few garments boast a cultural reach as wide as that of the tracksuit. It was designed to give me comfort as I cruise through the streets, but the tracksuit," he would playfully add, "has also become a status symbol." Plus, to top all, Al had a white girlfriend. When Al told his friend – the man who is now trapped inside this shack that is already demolished, that his girlfriend was indeed white, he did not immediately understand it. His expression read "glad for you." That expression succeeded in concealing the shudder he felt. His smile cloaked an inner bite, noiseless like a mosquito under a summer dress. Was he jealous? Maybe.

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Al liked the finer things life offered. He did not always go out to spoil himself but when he did, he was brazen about it. It had to be spectacular when he was spoiling himself. Last year, on his birthday, Al came to his friend's place unannounced and insisted he drop everything he was doing "because we are going to take a short trip, right now." He picked his girlfriend up along the way and they ended up arriving at the nearby riverside, where he introduced them to his brand-new pleasure boat, standing ready to be commanded across the waiting waters of the river. Emblazoned against the white paint, in bold and black letters on both sides of the boat, was Al's name – Algebra.

"Come on now," he said to them, "don't just stand there! Let's go spend some Algebra."

Stunned by the sight of arresting beauty awaiting them, the man, who is now trapped inside this shack that is already demolished, and Al's girlfriend both walked quietly behind him. "What's life if we did not create memories?" Al said when they were having their first drinks in the speeding boat. "Mind you," he continued, "we left that suffocating place not to suffer all over again here." Inside, everything from upholstery to electronics to flooring looked exquisite. Personalised accessories, such as unbreakable glasses, pitchers and other drink-ware engraved with the boat's name and design added flair to the boat's decor. It was clear that the boat was designed to be a home away from home. The smell and the sound of the water and the flapping of the sails in the wind completed the sense of home inside this majestic craft. He wondered if the presence of a small Zimbabwean flag on top of the grocery cupboard in the small kitchen meant the food stored and prepared there was Zimbabwean, or that Al simply missed and did not want to forget about the homeland.

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The evening was pleasant as they settled down in this eatery. He looked around. The place was abuzz – black and white men and women and children sat there, eating and drinking and chatting and laughing loudly, looking like they had no want at all. Normally they sat to eat at his or Al's place in order to watch soccer or to talk politics. "Where is Mnangagwa taking Zim? I don't trust that one," Al would say. To which he would say "I really don't know, hey. What bothers me is what form Ramaphosa's intervention would take, if any. Would it be more effective than Mbeki's quiet diplomacy?" They were salivating. The smell of food made them even hungrier. He was growing impatient, but one of the waitresses came and reassured them that they would be attended to in no time. "This type of service is the reason why I keep coming here. I wish my country could learn just how great service is everything," Al said. He liked linking almost everything he experienced here with deficiencies the idea of "home" presented. The good times had the effect of reminding him of the bad times that home presented. His attachment to the motherland was not hard to see. On the other hand the man, who is now trapped inside this shack that is already demolished, was not so inclined to keep up any contact with home – real or imagined. On the odd occasion that he thought of the place, the first and dominant thing in his mind would be the smell of the land – a humid, earthy smell that fills one with a sense of life. He recalls the smell of the people and the dry,

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dusty scent of the dirt roads, the musty and fishy smells of the nearby river. The smell ... it made bearable the idea of that place that he wants to hear nothing about. But it remains a home, his home.

“Good evening, gentlemen. What would you like to order today?” said the waitress, interrupting their conversation. Her smile revealed a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth. They could immediately pick up from her accent that she was Shona. But, to the relief of this man, who is now trapped inside this shack that is already demolished, it was Al who broke the ice with the waitress. Al could always be trusted to break the ice with the ladies and get them to hang on his every word.

“Mhoro, my sister, wakadini zvako?”

“Ndiri mushe,” replied the waitress, almost stuttering. You could see that she had turned a bit shy and uneasy; but when she spoke again, her voice had regained some degree of steadiness. “Can I have your order, please?”

They ordered, and in a few minutes she came back with two large frothy cups of cappuccino. But over the smell of coffee, I got her smell as she bent over to place the cups. It was the scent that plants would exude at the end of a hot, hot day.

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I am Bond, and, unlike most humans who know only one, I have lived in two countries. The conditions in which I have crossed borders are not happy, as will be made clear later. I am not two years old yet so you can call me a puppy. The many people I have overhead speaking to her about me seem to agree that I carry a naïve facial expression. I find that naïve, but humans are humans. I am black and white, mostly black, just like her. I am well-chiselled, petite, strong, shrewd, and spotless. I am friendly to everyone, but I am loyal to her alone. I listen to humans and sometimes say things, but I don’t think there exists – shall there ever be? – a sophistication for humans to understand that not only do I listen to them, but I speak sometimes, and that I love alluring smells. When she goes to work, I watch through the window and listen to her speak. The other day she spoke to two men sitting at a table at the restaurant. I remember this day, this conversation, because of the two men one had an appearance of a man I last saw back at home across the border.

Residing on her soft skin is a scent they call Savannah Spice. It is almost permanent, the scent. I speak for myself, and those who heap praise on her, when I say the scent is simply irresistible. It is a potent fragrance of sultry savannah. It is not too delicate, not too floral, but, as many say when they come into contact with the woman on whose skin Savannah Spice resides, it is warm and sensuous. Earlier, the one you now know as the woman with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth took a bath and applied the scent. It settled nicely

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on her soft skin, just the way I like it. I could almost sense the confidence it inspired in her as the scent subtly filled the room, massaging nostrils. Like most of the immigrants, she was a backroom dweller who was placed on the list of people awaiting the building and allocation of RDP houses by the local councillor. Two thousand five hundred - hear me when I tell you that's what an illegal immigrant pays a corrupt councillor here to be on the list.

In the meantime, in order to make the backroom that she had just secured a place she could call home, the one you now know as the woman with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth – having disposed of a small cupboard and a table that were the only items she found in there, started by putting her Methodist hymn book on top a blue and white paint tin that was going to serve as her bedside table. She was – as she continued to place a black rag meant to serve as an eiderdown across the makeshift bed, which was simply a flat and sufficiently broad wooden board that carried a threadbare sponge – humming her favourite song from the hymn book. She always had something to sing, *especially* when she put on Savannah Spice and allowed me to lean on her, licking her. Even as a puppy I could always sense the praise and admiration for the scent in her voice when she hummed like that. She had a beautiful voice, just like her teeth. I loved her voice when she shyly whispered "thank you" to those who praised her for wearing some "really fantastic perfume." OK. I must confess that I loved that voice even more when she replied: "that's my lovely Bond" when people said "what a really pleasant puppy you have." In spite of the obvious hardship she faced, she appeared happy, content, because no matter how difficult things might turn out for her in her new place, she was determined never to go back home to face what she escaped: hunger, joblessness, disease, violence and abuse, deeply scarring abuse by those drunk with political power. She was a patriot. In spite of the rejection and the torment her country had come to represent to its people, she carried in her heart the feeling of deep love for the homeland and a sense of attachment to it. Next to the hymn book she carefully placed her small green, gold, red, black and white flag. She took a long look at it and smiled a prayer, dropping a tear as she did. Just like me, she loved her land of birth but hated the vicious police and the military, and the politicians who allowed themselves to be a law unto themselves.

One day, in a moment I could sense was of quiet, controlled emotional outburst – amid tears and sneezing and disorientation and sorrow, she spoke freely to me about a matter she sure must know I knew about. I mean, I was there. I saw it all. I suffered it all with the family. But she certainly is not aware that I know these things. She confides in me like this because she must find me a good listener. It must be that it is therapeutic for her to speak about these things – to me, with me. Anticipating a lengthy monologue, I moved closer to her, licking her soft skin not only in a quest to comfort her but to come into contact with the scent, the very thing that simultaneously bonded us together and took me back to our home, the one we left hurriedly in the middle of the night, puffing and panting as we approached the border. I heard her saying she remembered the night when the military came to her village, to her house. The big men clad in oversized guerrilla trappings arrived, shouting: "Where is he?!" They said they were looking for a man making trouble in the village, an instigator of sorts. I understood

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them to be looking for someone who stood up for his rights and those of the people in his village. I heard her say they had reason to believe, totally false, of course, that her father was hiding this wanted instigator in their home. As soon as they walked in they started breaking everything they came across – the gate itself, the little fence that partitions the family from the livestock, the lavatory which stood outside, the laundry hanger, the kennel - my warm little house, the pigsty; they flattened everything. There was nothing that they came across that they did not wreck. Poor humans would probably find fault with me but hell, I panicked, was traumatised, actually, that the little off-white, eggshell horn that contained that irristible, potent, sultry scent called Savannah Spice would be smashed and brought to the ground by the marauding thugs. And now, having broken the door down, they stood there. I was there too, hiding and keeping silent under mother's kitchen apron. I could hear everything. "Where is he!" the men kept shouting, their voices getting louder and louder. His voice, the one standing right in the middle of the door wearing dark specs and a soft, visor-less cap with a flag at its centre, was one I can never forget. It rings in my head whenever there is complete silence. The panic and the trauma return whenever the voice rings in my head. It is crass and demonic, the voice, and the bastard looked just like it sounded - crass and demonic.

She lifted me up, pressing me against her homely chest, gently rubbing me behind the ears. The soft winter wind is blowing some of the scent away into the distance as she continues the monologue. He was there earlier, the "instigator", as she recalls, but he left, and the evil ones must have been told that he came here, hence their visit. About four of them walked in and started searching, knocking things down as they went on - her mother's pots, buckets of water that were filled just a little while ago, throwing open her father's toolbox and taking some of the small tools he kept and, when they came into the room she was in, one of them slapped her across the face. She speaks to me now in the softest voice, pulling me closer. She tells me as if I had not seen: "I fell down to the floor. He followed me to the ground, the man, loosening his trousers and lifting my dress. Quiet and scared and not really shocked because every woman in our village expects it, he touched me, roughly, and entered me, roughly, while the other, as I looked away from my rapist, stepped with his huge military boots over my sick little child." She stopped to sneeze. It was cold, and she was hurting, and it made me sad. "She was born premature, my little child, and was only two weeks old," she continued. "In spite of the heavy breathing of the beast on top of me I could still hear my little baby's bones giving in, making a sound the kind a hyena's head makes when a furious male lion crashes it, leaving it all bloody and dead in order to send a message to a troublesome cackle of hyenas." She stopped to sneeze again, and to stop tears from rolling down her face. I licked her gently on her neck, and she continued: "My baby did not cry as she took her last breath. I did, and my mother, crying with me upon realising what just happened, could not come close enough to me and my dead child because the soldier, whose voice was as crass and demonic as he looked, slapped her across the face with the butt of his gun and followed that up with a few kicks to the ribcage. My mother was weak. Her immune system was not the strongest. She suffered a number of illnesses for which she received no treatment because we did not have a health facility nearby, and because to access the one in the city one needed to walk for over twelve kilometres in order to get a lift. We did not bother," she cried, "because many

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women who tried going to the city returned raped by the very same soldiers and state police who were supposed to be protecting them. So when the bastard whose voice was as unforgettably crass and demonic as he looked kicked my mother, she released a high-pitched scream, in the midst of it calling my name, and then suddenly going quiet. The man whose voice was as crass and demonic as he looked then said something in a loud voice, and all of a sudden the men left. I tried to stand up as quickly as I could to check on my mother and assist her so that she could in turn assist me with my child, but it took me too long to get to her because when I finally touched her, saying 'Mother! Mother!' There was no reply. She too, like my little daughter, was dead."

I was beginning to feel stressed but could not afford to show her because my sadness would only increase hers. This was the time for me to be there for her. So I moved my body a little to rest more comfortably on her chest in order to offer comfort; warmth. The closer I felt against her, the more of the scent I inhaled, and the safer and at home I felt. I hoped that she felt my presence to mean safety and home for her too.

In reply to my manoeuvres to "console" her, she rubbed my ears again, hanging on to them while speaking further. "Earlier," she said, "my father had escaped just before the military arrived. He was not a coward, my father, but he knew that they would have simply killed him, whether he helped them with the instigator or not. We knew that in spite of his deep love for us, father would never again return to the village because in order for other villagers to live without worrying about being harassed, they had to be spies for the military, and he knew they had no option but to report him when they saw him. So he left. I dug, that night," she said, and I know this because I saw her digging and, standing there watching her digging I inhaled the evocative whiff of freshly dug soil, which remains one of my clearest memories of home. She was speaking: "I dug one hole at the back of the yard - I don't know how deep it was, but I dug it and, alone, held a funeral in the middle of the night - that of my daughter and my mother. Without waiting for the sun to come out, I grabbed a few items and threw them inside a small bag before walking through the bushes until I came to the border, and there I paid with my body to pass through to South Africa."

She omits, all the time when she shares this story that gets told all the time to our friends in the informal settlement, to mention that she put me too inside that little bag and crossed the border with me.

And now here we are, in this shack. It is where we are going to stay. And so she continues to sing her favourite Methodist hymn while clasping a little blanket that she brought from home. It was the last garment that her daughter used before that heartless, unfeeling prick stepped on her with heavy military boots. The scent of the baby powder in the blanket was still strong. The blanket smelled also of mamaearth dusting powder. "It feels like I am holding her," she says, "like she is here with me in this place." She was crying again. "I swear, Bond. Whenever I hold this blanket it feels like I am holding her, talking to her, asking her to stop crying for we have now found a new place where she is safe, where we are both safe, but then

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I quickly realise that it is only the little blanket I am holding.” I too shed a tear. The smell of the dusting powder on the blanket took me back to our house, and it makes me miss everybody. The smell of the dusting powder takes me back to the little room where she was supposed to stay, alone with the baby, until she was strong enough to be seen by other family members and friends from the village. Like her, I wondered as we stood there amidst tears if I was mad to miss a home I have no intention of returning to. She gave me one long hug and let me down, and I stood there, close to her, with my mouth slightly open, my tongue relaxed and lolling. Her story had ended.

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A few days after the escape over the border the woman we now know as the one with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth was standing in a queue, waiting along with some thirty six men and women, all black, to be interviewed for a waitressing job at one of the new eateries in town. She recognised a couple of the ladies, having seen them at the informal settlement where some of the people from home stay. The radio on the secretary’s table was playing softly but was still audible. “We encourage all our countrymen wherever they are, to come back home and let us together join hands to build a new Zimbabwe,” said the voice on the news. It was Mnangagwa’s. Dreaming, obviously. Who would return home? To what? Anyway, she got the job, and, at the end of that day, wearing black and white uniform and attending tables for tips, she came across the man she last saw that fateful day when she lost everything. Here and now, in this foreign place, sitting right in front of her was the man the military men were looking for. Looking down as if reading a text message on his cell phone which was placed flat on the table, the man was wearing round tortoise shell glasses and a freshly pressed white shirt. From the bottom of the table, what came into sight was the end of blue jeans resting on a pair of pure white sneakers. He appeared both comfortable and cosmopolitan, but it was him alright.

The excitement in her voice when she told me about this occasion came only second to her glowing face. She spoke. Fast. I was there. Listening. Alone. The only member of the audience. But she did not have to tell me. I had seen it all, watching from the window, where I waited till she finished work.

“For the first time since we have been in this place” she started, “I could, I actually flashed a genuine smile, and it felt like all the troubles of this world had disappeared.” She stopped for a moment, to smile. It was indeed a happy day. “I wished I could hug him,” she said, “and hold on to him to go back to that day when he went to see my father, when everyone was there as a family, before those vicious men came to destroy everything. He must have seen a lonely tear racing down my left cheek because the next thing that happened was him standing up, offering me a piece of tissue. I tried to compose myself but I could not help it. I just sobbed and sobbed. Still standing up, he held me, and covered me with that smell, saying: ‘It’s OK, my sister. It’s OK.’ Like never before I felt home. I remembered the good times. In my mind I could see, I could feel the warmth that I felt when my father used to hold me,

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when I was sad, and when I was happy, back in my place of birth.” At that point I released a low, guttural sound, grunting. I was happy.

She continued: “The manager came up and immediately admonished me, right in front of the customers: ‘What’s going on here? This is not the time to be all emotional. This is a workplace. Here we work. We serve the customers, not the other away around. Understood?’ His eyes, red and round with a grey ring around the edge of the cornea, looked like they were designed to scare. I trembled. I was lucky he did not fire me there and then.”

She was speaking again.

“I struggled to say something but kept quiet because that soft, calming voice spoke again, only this time it was surprisingly firm: ‘Where is your compassion, mister? Why are you not cordial in your intrusion? You don’t even know what’s happening here, do you? Of course you don’t. You speak to her in a way that leaves no room for her to explain what is happening.’

‘Sorry …’ my boss spoke, but he was not allowed to finish his statement.

‘Sorry for what? Is this how you treat your workers? With such disdain and disgust? Is that it?’

‘No sir.’

‘I don’t believe you, mister. Please leave us. This lady is serving me.’

After my boss had left, the man from my hometown reverted to his initial soft, calming voice and told me to stop crying, and not to worry about what just happened. He passed me his card and asked me to call him in the morning.

The next day, I placed a call to the guy who was hunted by the military back at home.

‘It’s me.’

‘Where are you?’

And in fifteen minutes I was with the man I met the night before at the restaurant. He was not alone. Besides him stood a man who had his big arms wide open, willing me forth, waiting for me to fall into their safety. He was only a few meters away from me but I found myself running towards him, towards the safety his presence meant.

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‘I know. I know,’ he said, holding me tight. ‘I am here now, and I am not going anywhere without you. Everything will be alright,’ said my father.”

I squatted, with my entire body on the ground, my ears and tail down. I was happy. Her father, *our* father, was here. Here. He loved us and we loved him too, and seeing him again was one of the greatest moments I ever experienced since we crossed the border. We were together, and for that fleeting moment there was nothing foreign about this place. It felt like home.

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I am stuck here, in this place.

It is late in the night when I arrived here. A few minutes later as I walk into the vast expanse of the familiar land of my forefathers, I realise I am not only received by the smell of the land and the vast night sky, but by a pre-dawn raid too, a pre-dawn raid of a smaller scale but of the same kind as Operation Murambatsvina. The irony today, as it was then, is that there was never really any order to restore. Right before my eyes people in police and military uniform are knocking down makeshift homes, making scores of people homeless. There was a brief struggle. Not too far off from where I had taken cover I could see one of the raiders. He was on top of a screaming woman. She was resisting, not making it easy for the assailant, but he was clearly overpowering her. I quickly looked around and picked up a piece of metal next to one of the demolished shacks, moved quietly in order not to attract attention, and pounced on the man. I do not know if he died, but he screamed briefly after I pierced him deep through the left shoulder blade. He fell down next to the woman he was attacking, but one of his men came running to help him. It so happened that the woman who was under attack moments ago had a knife. I knew about the knife only when the second man fell down just like the first. She stabbed him just when he was about to land his machete on my neck. It all happened too quickly. Blood-stained all over, I was suddenly looking at two huge men lying in a pool of blood. One of them looked familiar. I was not sure, but he reminded me of one of those thugs in the police force who chased me down, and out of village, and, ultimately, out of my country. I turned around to see if that brave woman was fine, but she was nowhere to be seen. Gone, just like that.

In order to ensure my safety I dashed into an already demolished shack that was falling apart, already deserted by its owners, living behind fading cries of women and children, and shouts of commands by the assailants: “Take no prisoners! Finish them off!”

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It all started with a call I did not want to take.

“You really need to come home, son,” he had said during our brief video call.

I had to this point avoided many of his calls because I wanted nothing to do with my father. I had taken this call reluctantly because Al had arrived at my place, placed the call to my

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father, and made us talk. "Why should I come over?" I asked. Obviously finding the tone of my voice objectionable, Al looked at me like he was dying to strangle me. "As you probably can see, I am lying on a hospital bed as we speak." He paused for a second. I thought he was stopping a tear from falling. "I am waiting," he continued. "I have been waiting for days now for an ambulance to take me to Harare where I will receive better care, but it does not seem like that ambulance will end up arriving." He paused again to move his big frame in order to sit more comfortably. Creaks of a bed that might give in at any time could be heard. "My enemies, who are powerful, evil men in the State, and I suspect here in this sorry place called hospital ... they will not allow that I get help. It is clear that they are stalling the arrival of the ambulance so that I remain imprisoned here. Their hope is that I will die in this filthy, ill-equipped death-trap." I could hear a cough. The old man sounded frail. He tried to say something but coughed again, this time with a lot more difficulty. I could hear the nurses speaking frantically in the background. "I will come back today," I said, and father could only murmur a weak "thank you, son." I took one last look at him and handed the phone back to Al and told him to leave. "I will leave, but you must know that I think you are bewitched, thoroughly. What type of a man rejects his very own father? You don't even use his surname anymore. Bewitched!"

And so it was my father who was the reason why I carried the night on my shoulders, at one point following my own shadow and at another my shadow following me from the town across the border, ending up in the place within which I am now confined. It was a relatively quiet drive of about five hundred kilometres to Musina, the northernmost town in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The Beitbridge border post, a point through which I aimed to cross over to Zimbabwe, is the busiest border post in Southern Africa, and is best avoided during busy border-crossing seasons. The Limpopo River is a dry river bank which flows annually in the rainy season when the desert plants of the region come alive. I fled from my home because it was not safe anymore for me to be there. My paltry resistance, which had no effect, was considered to be a threat to the regime. I felt rejected and unwanted. My other incentive for leaving was to join my mother, who was already staying here, near the city of coal which I have made my home. She left my father because she could not take his continued absence from home anymore – either because he must be at one farm or the other, or travelling across the length and breadth of the country, or doing clerical work, including additional humanitarian duties. Also, as she once told me when we were having dinner: "It is hard to be a woman in these times, my son. I had to leave your father because I needed to make something of my life. As you can see, here I am able to start and run my own small business. I am free to trade, and to build a life for myself, for us, without worrying about how your father will react. I also can't stand the constant threat of violence from people who claim to be soldiers defending our country." I looked at her, and, as if reading my mind, she continued: "I know most of us are not treated right by the people here, or by the system itself, but look at us. We are certainly better here than back there." When my mother said "it is hard to be a woman in these times" I understood her to want to be a human being in her own right, and that father, like most fathers in most families, would not let her be herself. She moved to a South African city once named after a white sandstone outcrop where – way back before

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urbanisation took root, wagon transport drivers took a break from their trips on the way to and from the city of gold on their way to or from neighbouring Mozambique's Maputo, or to or from one of Africa's largest game reserves situated in north-eastern South Africa.

I arrived back in the place I had tried to escape mostly by walking through the veld because, one, I had to part ways – against my will, of course – with my noisy old car to the rogue military operatives at the very second road block I encountered, having already parted ways with one of my cell phones at the first. Two, I have had to ride on a bicycle that I bought at a huge price in one of the villages. I at once cried and laughed as I rode freely through the dark, greedily inhaling the cool, soothing air of the night. The air that smelled of goat skin and dung and scents of wild fruits always calmed me down. It made me forget, albeit momentarily, the terrifying moments that I just suffered. I belonged to the air, and it to me. And three, I arrived after having lost the bicycle and shoes to another gang of thugs who told me I was very lucky to be having something to offer. Barring a lift on a donkey wagon here and farm cart there, I walked barefoot the whole way to this village, having lost everything, except for the clothes I was wearing and a cell phone I had firmly attached to my inner thigh.

So from the shack that had already collapsed I watch through a small hole through which I could almost taste the terror and the gore that occupied the land. I was confined in this space. Any movement on my part was likely to make me one of the bodies lying dead outside, where the moon kept appearing and disappearing through the scattered clouds. As it appears, I see standing outside eroded soil upon which there lies bodies - dead and injured. I sit in my hiding hole and shake my head in despair. This village is not even a shadow of its past. The whole place where even the indigenous people are displaced is as oppressing and suffocating as the little confinement I find myself in. Even my fellow countrymen who stay in that informal settlement near my city have things going far better for them.

Inside the shack I look at my hands again and I resist the temptation to cry. Whose blood is this? Is it mine? Theirs? Hers? They were drenched in blood that had turned into thick dirt. I thought about it for a moment. The weight of the night resting on my shoulders was as heavy as the task of breathing was to me as I sat there, bewildered. Dry as it was, I could smell the blood when I place my hands close to my nose, and, even in the midst of what could probably be the darkest – or was it the last? – day of my life I could remember my grandfather's words clearly: "We are able to track down wounded prey or tribe members because, among others, we are able to smell blood." Not only did the scent remind me of the words of my ancestor, but I realised that the scent of blood actually conjures up recollections of a childhood picnic where I, overzealous to serve everyone with my favourite mango juice, dropped one of the glass jugs and suffered a cut to my left foot. As she normally did, mother hurried to my rescue, smoothly pulling the small glass out of my gentle flesh and using one of my socks to wipe off, first my blood, and then my tears. I stopped crying, and she gave me a hug so tight and lingering that I will never forget that moment. I simultaneously smiled and I wondered, as I sat there, about the type of frenzy the sharks outside would be sent into by the smell of my blood. I wondered if I will be able to leave this place in one piece. I wondered if I will get

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a second chance to go back to my new place across the border, my new home where I belong, where I feel safe, where my heart is, and be comfortable and at peace one more time. I knew at that time that my home in the coal city was what I made it. It was not because it was the place where I was born. It was not the place of my family and ancestral attachments. It was in my memories of the earlier home that I could embrace in the new place, the laughter and warmth of my loved ones.

I do not know why, but as I was contained and trapped in that place, lost in thought, I had a picture in my mind, a set of memories. The men and women lying dead outside. The children. Many have now stopped crying. The children and the sounds of grief, their tears and the chirps and shrieks birds made have stopped. The children. I remembered how the children used to spend joyous time in the nearby land covered with trees, by the plots of land used for grazing, worried about nothing and soaking and skating in the nearby stream. In spite of the clouds of hopelessness and hunger the river provided solace for them, for the villagers. It was their home, where they belonged, where they could be free. The river provided the freedom that those in power denied them. I am watching out, and I see them leaving, the bloody militia, kicking out of their way whatever there remained of the ruins. I saw one of them kicking a doll. A doll? Such unpleasant characters. As I sat there, a fading, blurring memory of my own childhood sped through my mind. It must be because I had resolved to never entertain matters relating to this place that I now find myself unable to remember things. I found myself sitting there, longing for certain moments I could simply not remember. It appeared like the retrieval of events from the past that concerned me was not as easy as the memory of the pleasure that the children enjoyed in the homely waters of the river. It was as if the trip to this place was an experiment to see if I could still call this place home. But I did not feel like this was home, where I was born. I identified with nothing here. Nothing made me believe that having a sense of allegiance and belonging to my new place across the border was an error. In fact, being here now made me realise that home is not always where one is born. In the little corner of the shack where I was confined, I felt like a stranger with no warm memories to make me belong. Not here.

In spite of the mayhem and maiming that took place outside the smell of the promise of rain combined with that of *makwakwa* fruits simultaneously gave me a sense of comfort and took me to some place from before, even though the effort to remember proved cumbersome. I was scared, but memories of this place, mostly incomplete and puzzling memories of wild fruits eaten on childhood foraging expeditions kept coming back.

He is based here, my father, in a village situated in a district in a province located in the north-eastern part of Zimbabwe. One of the things standing out in my mind even as I remain trapped in this place is the white-domed majestic building at the end of the main street. This is where there once was a small house in which my grandparents stayed. My father turned that place into a huge, grey cathedral. Here, in this cathedral, the destitute were fed and the abandoned children received care. In this exalted station my father not only created a place of worship for the community, but also a home for the homeless. The people here, just like me, knew my father to be a man of compassion, an altruist, a man who works the land mainly to benefit the locals. He employs many and takes care of the needy children and elders. Other

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than feeding the community, he was always the good Samaritan who took over the problems of others, making them his. So he was not just a person of authority in the community, but he was also much liked, and respected. But, as I was told, it appears as if the respect he enjoyed from the community has elicited only envy, hate and anger of the local politicians. They claim, the devious ones holding political office, that they have been directed by Harare to force my father to vacate the farm because, so goes the claim, my father grabbed it from a white farmer. Now lying in hospital, my father's property was besieged by "The A Team", an outfit of notoriety I will talk about later, the intention being to forcefully push him out to make way for one of the devious ones who had links with the powerful and ruthless governing elite.

Anyway, it turned out, after enquiring, that my father was demonised in the way he was because he was one of the whistle-blowers, some of whom were now living in fear or have left town, for having exposed a plot to shield a suspended town council secretary from prosecution. Most of the fraud and corruption claims levelled against the town secretary appeared credible, I was told, and were of such a nature that there were reasonable grounds to charge him with serious acts of transgression. Those in the community who saw it say the whistle-blowers, tired of being ignored by the authorities, resorted to social media to release video recording incriminating the town secretary and "The A Team", including powerful beneficiaries of the secretary's shenanigans in acts of intimidation and corruption in order to shield him from prosecution. But whistleblowers ... who really listens to them? The corrupt have inserted themselves everywhere in the system, it seems. The difficulty for all involved was that they knew that the secretary will not go down quietly, and they feared the consequences of this prosecution more than the secretary himself. There were powerful people who were benefiting through him and they understood that eventually, getting the secretary arrested and prosecuted will lead back at them, ushering their demise. Initially having thought to engage "The A Team" in terminating him - the secretary, that is - permanently in order to bury him with all he knew, they decided against it because they were not satisfied that they could rely on "The A Team" to carry out the hit without compromising them or, worse, without instead turning on them by informing the secretary of their intentions. They instead decided to delay the termination and rather engage "The A Team" to disrupt any council activity that threatened to resolve to lay criminal charges against the secretary, and so at every turn they threaten council workers, so that the secretary remained shielded from prosecution.

Whenever one's nostrils noted the distinct, rancid smell with skunky properties or the flowery character of the classic five blade leaf of marijuana, one would accept that they are in the wrong place because that smell, in most cases, meant one is in the same area as the vicious outfit called "The A Team." Flowing through the veins of its members was a penchant to terrorise, to maim and to kill opposition supporters in this village and neighbouring areas. That was their business. They were untouchable and had the unfettered power to, for instance, allocate vending sites to the locals and collect rental. Nobody would dare question them. Its leader, Judge Nzari, who was once close to my father, is infamous locally, having gained notoriety for his brutality while serving a vigilante political gang with a bloody history

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of terrorising political opponents. “You need to smell like men. Here in this community we have men, not boys. The strong smell, our strong smell of marijuana is how we mark our territory. This is our place. Everybody else here can call this place, *our* place, their home only because we say so. So smell strong, and be strong, and run this place!” Judge Nzari was famous to have said. The gang was virtually untouchable at its peak. It operated with impunity and reported directly to one known simply as the godfather of Manicaland province. During quiet conversations in the villages the godfather was referred to simply as GOM. I believed the stories that I was told, that my father was a victim of vicious hatred and that he was an innocent whistle-blower whose determination was to have good triumph over evil. It was easy for me to believe the stories because, in spite of my feelings of anger and dislike towards him mainly for the way he treated my mother, I knew that he was a good man based on the things I know he did for the needy in the community.

It was a smell – the scent that plants would exude at the end of a hot, hot day, that gave away the fact that there was a woman near to me, trying to get into my accidental shelter, created when the shack caved in. Sitting beside me in my area of confinement was a frightened young woman whose faint scent, an aroma of sultry savannah, reminded me of the waitress, the waitress Al and I met, who had made such an impression on us both. Sitting there, confined and frightened in this place, you could hear our breathing, soft and discreet as we hoped it was. We had to keep absolute silence because they were still out there, the thugs. Even though it was clear through their fading voices that they were moving away, we still kept silent, afraid to give away our presence. I focused my eyes on her. The smell, and now, amazingly, the scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth! Am I going mad, or is this woman the waitress from the city across the border? Is it her twin? She looked at me, and I looked away. Twins? No. They are not twins – her complexion was certainly lighter, and she seemed a lot taller, but still, the resemblance was remarkable. Outside the thugs seemed to have gone away. Even the birds that received me earlier had also gone quiet. It was as if they were also watching, the birds, determined to find out what will be said next, if anything.

“I, together with the other girls …”

“Woman, hold on. What is your name?” I interrupted, really curious. We were speaking softly. The danger outside was still real. As if to prove that she knows who she was speaking to, she had earlier produced a picture, my picture, that she had stolen from my father’s house in order to trace me.

“Grace. My name is Grace.” After her miraculous flight from the violent incident with “The A Team” she told me a story that made me doubt my sanity. “Is this a dream? Am I imagining things?” I wondered.

“As I was saying,” she continued, bringing back to the present. “I, together with the other girls, am a modern-day slave, more accurately a sex slave. Your father’s sex slave.”

“What? Sex slave? My father?”

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“Yes, and please keep your voice down,” she cautioned, looking outside to see if we have not attracted attention. “I have been his sex slave for the last three years,” she continued, “myself, together with the girls now lying dead outside. He has been helping himself to our bodies. Against our will. Each and every weekend.”

“Lies!”

“Quiet, please. Quiet,” she whispered.

“But you are horribly mistaken,” I pressed. “My father … my father is a respected. He’s a respected pastor. Your ... your wild accusations ... my father is incapable of that.” The devastating effect of her words caused me to stutter.

“All I am telling you is the truth. I have lived that painful truth. Right now I feel so filthy I don’t know myself anymore. The girls outside, those poor girls who are now dead, have lived that painful truth too.” She cried. Freely. I wanted to hug her, to console her, but I could not because any movement by any of us could invite trouble. So I just watched her.

I wanted to say something but at that time we heard voices outside and immediately went quiet. It appeared as if the ruffians where satisfied of their night’s work, readying themselves to call it a day. “Let’s go. We have finished them all. GOM will be happy with our report,” said one of them. “But we cannot account for the other two,” we heard the second man say, to which the first replied: “They are gone, those two, probably heading for the border now. No need to worry about them. No one will in any case believe them if they dared to open their mouths to squeal. Besides, we can always organise that they be received by two graves when they cross the border. No need to worry about them.” There was a moment of silence. It appeared like they were not sure what to do next. “I still feel unsure about those two having slipped away. They could still be here,” said the second man. “I smell something, sort of a perfume,” continued the second man. “I’ve smelt it before. I am not sure where; but I have smelt it before.” There was silence, again. It was brief, yet it was the type of silence that felt like it was eternity. The first man’s voice could be heard again: “Alright. I’ll go call back the men and instruct them to search the rubble again.” And away they went. Inside our little space of confinement Grace and I waited quietly, listening to the orders being given outside, and in the end footsteps fading away into the fading light.

The second man’s voice was barely audible but struck me as familiar, very familiar. Where did I hear that voice before? Who was this man?

“You see those ...” It was Grace. Even though she was whispering, it was easy to discern the relief in her voice as she spoke, now that the men seem to have walked away.

“Huh?” I found myself speaking. I did not show it, but I was upset that she had interrupted my thoughts like that. Had she afforded me a few more seconds of peace maybe I would have worked out whose familiar voice that was.

“I was speaking about those evil guys outside spilling blood like it is nothing.”

“Yes? What about them?” I matched the softness of her voice, at least so I thought.

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"They belong … they report to GOM, as you know."

"I know. What is your point?"

"My point, simply, is that GOM is the reason you came back here."

"Stop with the madness!"

"I am telling you the truth. GOM is lying in hospital as we speak. GOM, the man responsible for our abuse and all the brutality that took place outside, is your father."

For a moment we were both silent.

"Yes," she pressed, "GOM *is* in fact your father."

I kept quiet, not because I had nothing to say. The shock overwhelmed me into silence.

"He seems unhinged, your father, just in case you were wondering why he would want to destroy the whole village," she continued. "He feels betrayed by the people close to him, suspecting that they will expose him. He's furious with the villagers too for not supporting him in his protracted fight for his land with the local council. He has lost it, completely deranged."

For the first time since I got holed up in that shack I stood up, slowly, involuntarily, only to hit my head against the roof that was already coming loose after the commotion that ensued earlier. A small amount of blood trickled down my left side of the face. I quickly wiped it off with my hand and, at the smell of it I missed home again. Will I live to return back home, or is this the end of my journey? Outside, I could hear that the birds that received me earlier where singing again, forcing my thoughts back to the present.

Grace presented a handwritten note to me. Reaching inside of her top and retrieving a piece of paper, just like she did with the picture earlier, she stretched out her bruised hand to give me the note and said: "I was planning to send this out to you through one of the maids. I was not sure if it would reach you, ever, but I was going to take that chance since my only other opportunity to reach you via Facebook or Twitter was lost when they took away all our phones to deny us contact with the outside world."

The air in the house was always full of smoke as they paced around the room, these big, hairy men with their big things, staring at us, smiling mockingly, the bloody sadists, while we screamed and begged. I remember the smoke. There was always smoke in the air. They smoked, non-stop. The smell of the smoke, the unmistakeable lemon-like smell came out of their noses and those pipes. It filled the air, and our lungs. We knew it was time, whenever we sensed that smell. They drifted quickly as they always did toward the most beautiful girls first, asking, "What's your name? How old are you?" and examining their hair and mouths. "Hey Al, they are virgins these ones, right?" they asked the guy who brought the girls, to which the guy nodded and said, "Of course!" like a storekeeper taking pride in his merchandise. They touched us anywhere they wanted, running their hands over our breasts and our legs, as if we were animals. Some of the girls said nothing. Terrified, shocked, they

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just did what they were told. While all the defilement and abuse were taking place, we would be photographed, and videos were taken. Because we are all a carefully selected small group of girls who were famous pastors' children, we would be threatened that our pictures and videos would be sent back home to our parents, or, worse, they would be loaded on to the internet and we and our families would be humiliated and destroyed forever.

I had to stop reading. My eyes filled up and tears ran down my face. Outside, amid all the chaos that ensued earlier, still the smell of the land – a humid, earthy smell, and the smell of the people and the dry, dusty scent of the dirt roads, the musty and fishy smells of the nearby river, were all unmistakable. It all reminded me of my exact location. But even all that could not make him forget what he was facing. "How could this be? How could my own father, a pastor, be capable of such vile acts?" I asked myself. I was not too keen to follow the happenings back at that place, but there were reports in the newspapers and television of paedophilia and of young women being turned into sex slaves in this village. It was known that although women and girls, even men and boys, can be victims of violence and abuse based on their gender, young women, in certain cases girl-children who just started walking, have been discovered to be more vulnerable and the primary victims because of their subordinate status of gender and age in the society. "But how could my own father perpetrate such demonic acts?" Grace's note, among others, revealed another startling matter: "Some of the girls used as objects to pleasure GOM and his friends sexually were brought here by someone that I think you might know. Those girls, myself included, were brought over from different parts of South Africa, under false pretences of well-paying jobs. We were all brought here by GOM's right hand man. He recruited us, trafficked us, and groomed us to be your father's sex slaves. Here, in this dreadful place, he goes by the name Al."

I took a deep breath and struggled to exhale as I realised then that the barely audible but familiar voice that I heard outside when the thugs were debating whether to leave or not was nobody else's by Algebra's.

"Oh my God!"

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So I sit here, inside this shack that is already demolished, the remainder of which was threatening to fall apart any time.

Outside, as I look through the hole in the corrugated sheet that made the wall of this place, the village bares its soul through broken shutters. There, outside, a river that once was a playground of boys and girls and a home to the mothers wears a frown and flows nowhere. It has been complicated, the river, by the fact that it has now become a site populated by feelings of pensive sadness. What is referred to as "The A Team", commanded by my own father, filled it up with bodies. Of humans and animals. The miserable waters of the nearby river have gone away with the boys and girls and mothers and animals alike, morphing into a burial site. But it is to leave this place that I need desperately. To do that I must remain alive, something which will not happen if Grace and I dared to move one bit.

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So I am stuck here, in this place, hanging on for dear life. I smell the potent fragrance of sultry hot earth and the succulent plants it sustains in its deep dark places. I smell blood – clayey, cloying and rich. And I smell Grace. She sits there too, terrified, and as her smell - that of vegetation when the sun sets … when the heat of the day exudes the fragrances of the plants and their flowers, makes me think of home, of the restaurant, and of the woman with a scar on her upper lip and a full set of beautiful teeth.

Helplessly, I look at Grace, whose gaze is away to the South. I can see that she misses home. I do, too.