

Zimbabwe Ruins:

Claims of responsibility within speculations on psycho-social experiences of exile and  
diaspora

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## ABSTRACT

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‘The Crisis’ in Zimbabwe, which in significant part began in 2000 with the appropriation of white owned commercial farms, is political, economic and psycho-social, and has resulted in major upheavals and catastrophic changes to Zimbabwean society. The researcher investigates from an autobiographical and speculative point of view what it means to live in and after such a crisis by considering the experiences of loss, mourning and melancholia as they relate to the kind of exilic existence experienced by many Zimbabweans as a result of ‘the Crisis’. This kind of exile has been called “internal” and “external” (2007) exile by the Zimbabwean poet Chenjerai Hove, by which he means that those still living in the country under the Mugabe regime are living in conditions of exile emotionally, psychically and psychologically just as those in the diaspora, numbering three million or a quarter of the population, are living in conditions of physical and geographic exile. The researcher uses ‘the Crisis’ as a site of inquiry into considerations of individual and collective responsibility as a possible response to the emotional, geographic, and existential rupture caused by crisis.

This study, which is partly autobiographical, but also historical and political, takes a speculative and conceptual approach to understanding effects of ‘the Crisis’. The

hybridized methods of writing as inquiry (Richardson, 2000), speculative essay as philosophical inquiry (Schubert, 1991), and autobiography as a form of narrative research, allow the researcher to articulate, meditate and speculate on questions regarding loss, temporality, mourning, melancholia and nostalgia, community, and responsibility from a position of personal interpretation, while accepting that those interpretations are fractured, partial and biased.

The study proposes responsibility as one possible response to ‘the Crisis’ and suggests five claims of responsibility as avenues to open up considerations of how one possibly could respond to such formative experiences. The five claims are: return, melancholia and reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001), art, learning, and community. These claims are drawn directly in relation to the researcher’s interpretations of ‘The Crisis’ and so are not meant to be seen as normative but rather as suggestive. The recent scholarship that has been produced in response to ‘the Crisis’ has predominantly focused on logistical and practical concerns; this researcher establishes that psycho-social considerations of how one experiences crisis and could live with/in it are of equal importance to the scholarship of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe.

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## Chapter I

### **Introduction**

‘The Crisis’ in Zimbabwe, which is political, psycho-social, and economic, has resulted in major upheavals and catastrophic changes to Zimbabwean society. As I write in early 2011, my home country is dramatically different from what it was eleven years ago. In many ways it is no longer recognizable. The lives of most Zimbabweans have been disrupted by emigration and exile, crippled by economic imprisonment, or devastated by violence and atrocity. The trajectory of our lives has been interrupted and many now flounder in the gap between what went before and what has come after. The home we knew in a literal and figurative sense is not the home we now inhabit, whether we live there still or not.

While it is difficult to exactly date the start of ‘the Crisis’, generally it is thought to have begun around 1999 with the emergence of Zimbabwe’s first viable opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. Sensing the threat to its power, Zanu-PF, the ruling party since Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, orchestrated the chaotic and violent appropriation of white-owned commercial farms in 2000. Without revenue from commercial agriculture, which provided the most significant portion of the country’s GDP, as well as various other economically irresponsible acts, the country suffered historically high levels of hyperinflation, which eventually resulted in the currency becoming worthless. All aspects of Zimbabwe’s social and political life were



drastically impacted and as life became increasingly unbearable, citizens started voting ‘with their feet’ and left the country for the diaspora.

‘The Crisis’ is on-going. In this study, I theorize the idea that the time I am considering is *after* the ruptures caused by ‘the Crisis’ but such ruptures are so dramatic that they change the trajectories lived by nations, people, and communities. In this way, there is no *after* as the aftermath is never over or finished. I also wish to stress, however, that ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe literally isn’t over and so I feel that there is a sense of urgency to the work. These are not merely theoretical speculations on time and loss and crisis; these are urgent and topical speculations on time and loss and crisis. Therefore, when I speak of speculating on what it means to live *after* ‘the Crisis’, I do not mean to suggest that the crisis is over, but rather that the afterwards is active and continual and as much a part of ‘the Crisis’ as any of the actual events that caused ‘the Crisis’.

In this study, I investigate what it means to live within and through and after such a crisis by considering the experiences of loss and mourning and melancholia as they relate to the kind of exilic existence experienced by many Zimbabweans as a result of ‘the Crisis’. This kind of exile has been called both “internal” and “external” (2007) exile by the Zimbabwean poet Chenjerai Hove, by which he means that those still living in the country under the Mugabe regime, can be in a state of exile just as much as the three million Zimbabweans who have left and now live in the diaspora.

Diaspora is described as the collective experience to the exile’s individual experience. “Diaspora,” which means, “to scatter about, to disperse,” historically describes the “the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands” (Safran, 1991, p. 83). The experiences of the diaspora, as

defined by William Safran (1991), are: the communal memory of the homeland; feelings of (self-imposed?) alienation in the host country; belief in the possibility of an eventual return home; a collective commitment to the restoration of the homeland; and continued relations, in some form, with the homeland (p. 83 – 84). As a means to think about the tensions and ambivalences experienced by many of those living in exile in the diaspora, I here focus on a specific event that occurred in London in June 2009 involving a group of Zimbabwean exiles. This analysis simultaneously allows me to raise questions that are more directly related to notions of responsibility and the Zimbabwean situation, and is a means of framing the final chapter in which I propose five claims of responsibility as possible responses to the Zimbabwean context and experiences of political crises at large. In this way, I use ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe as a site of inquiry into questions of responsibility as they relate to what happens after the rupture caused by political, economic and psycho-social catastrophe.

The root of my concern began and resides with the question: How does one live with/in and after such a crisis? (In other more poetic words, Mrs. Curren, J. M. Coetzee’s protagonist from his novel *Age of Iron* (1990), speaks of trying “to keep a soul alive in times not hospitable to the soul” (Coetzee, p. 130).) In response to this, I propose particular conceptions of responsibility. Thomas Keenan writes in *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics* (1997) that responsibility arises precisely when we don’t know how we ought to act: “It is when we do not know exactly what we should do, when the effects and conditions of our actions can no longer be calculated, and, when we have nowhere else to turn, not even back onto our “self,”—that we encounter something like responsibility” (p. 2). In Zimbabwe, the

proliferation of corruption, ‘informalisation’ of the economy, violent abuse of power, kleptocracy, corrosion of the rule of law, and blatant disregard for human rights have ruptured in part or in whole the norms, standards and codes of conduct through which we normally live our lives. Responsibility, as I first theorize and then claim, could be a possible response to this crisis. I propose five claims of responsibility, which are: return, melancholia and reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2001), art, learning, and community. These claims are drawn directly in relation to my interpretations of ‘The Crisis’ and so are not meant to be seen as normative but rather suggestive of various avenues that could be used to open up considerations of how one could respond to such formative experiences.

The recent outpouring of scholarship with regard ‘the Crisis’ has predominantly focused on logistical and practical concerns; I believe that psycho-social concerns related to how one experiences crisis and could try to live with/in and after it are of equal importance to the scholarship of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe. In so arguing, I draw from a wide range of theory that would be broadly classified as or situated within the Humanities, writ large. I am an English literature teacher by profession and you will see the influence of literature on my thinking and writing. Being a teacher I am also interested in questions of learning, but in the context of this dissertation, I am interested in learning in its broader sense in that we learn from our contexts and environments and experiences and relationships as much as we learn, if not more so, from our books and teachers. Therefore I try throughout this dissertation to think about what has and could be learnt from this experience of crisis. I therefore regard this dissertation as interdisciplinary in nature in that it requires a broad reading within a range of expertise from more than one discipline (Kitch, 2007) and is necessarily flexible and fluid (Kitch,

2007) in its design, research methodologies, and its eclectic but pertinent use of a range of readings that I bring to bear on the topic.

‘The Crisis’ has ruptured our sense of linear temporality in that the progression of our lives has been disrupted and many of us are not living the lives we thought we’d be living. (“Our” refers to the collective of Zimbabwean born people who live or have lived in the country within the last ten to fifteen years and are not connected to or part of Zanu-PF’s regime.) It is for this reason that I structure the study around notions that attempt to represent markers of time that stress a sense of coming after, of “belatedness” (p. 468) as Judith Butler (2003) describes it. The trope of the journey is important to the literature of exile (offhand, one need only think of Homer’s *The Odyssey* and Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*). In light of this, I also see the structure of this study as mapping the journey of my interpretations of certain experiences of ‘the Crisis’.

T. S. Eliot, in the *Four Quartets*, writes persuasively of journeying. In “Dry Salvages”, we voyagers are told to “Fare forward”; we “are not those who saw the harbor / Receding, or those who will disembark”, rather “Here between the hither and the farther shore / While time is withdrawn” we must “consider the future / And the past with an equal mind” (Eliot, 1936, p. 197). Guided by Eliot, I consider what has gone before and what has come and could still come afterwards. This journey begins in the second chapter, *Afterbirth*, in which I recount my interpretation of various historians’ and social theorists’ interpretations of a history of my home country. The chapter serves to situate and contextualize the current crisis. From there, the journey moves me on to Chapter III, *After words*, which starts just after the catastrophe with the naming of the event and goes on to theorize notions of rupture and loss and how those affect temporality. In this

chapter I draw on an eclectic array of thinkers and writers to delve into the historical, political and psychic dimensions of the effects of ‘the Crisis’. In Chapter IV, *Afterlife*, I take loss with me as I move on to think about the psycho-social effects of the conditions of “internal” and “external” exile (Hove, 2007). I draw predominantly from Sigmund Freud’s (1957) theories of mourning and melancholia (1917), as well as Judith Butler’s (2003; 2004) work on loss, mourning and the precariousness of life and Edward Said’s (2000) meditation on the condition of exile. Exile leads me to the diaspora in Chapter V, *Aftermath*, where I am guided by James Clifford (1994) and William Safran (1991) and again by Judith Butler (2003; 2004), who help me to think about the experiences of those living in the diaspora. Lastly, I arrive at Chapter VI, *Afterwards*, which offers a proposal of five possible claims of responsibility in response to ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe. In this chapter, I am guided by Butler (2003; 2004; 2005; 2010) and Gayatri Spivak (1998) in thinking about responsibility.

### **Motivation**

One of the results of ‘the Crisis’ has been an “extraordinary exodus” (McGregor, 2010, pg. 3) of up to a quarter of the population, or 3 million people, (McGregor, 2010, pg. 3) who have left the country for South Africa and other neighboring African countries; the U.K and some other European countries; the United States and Canada; and Australia and New Zealand. As Jonathan Crush and Daniel Tevera state in the introduction to their edited collection of essays on the mass migration from Zimbabwe, *Zimbabwe’s Exodus*, “When modern day states go into terminal decline

or fail altogether, the predictable response of ordinary people is to get out, as soon as they can, to wherever they can go” (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 1). The region that makes up Zimbabwe has a long history of migration and population movements. These movements were predominantly movements of in-migration; it is Zimbabwe’s recent and rapid transformation that in contrast “is particularly stark and dramatic” (Crush and Tevera, 2010, p. 22) as it is only in the last two decades of massive and chaotic decline that the country has become a place of almost exclusive out-migration (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 2).

‘Crisis-driven’ migration, the experts call it, but to others it is known more poetically by the name “exile”. Those who have left are positioned and position themselves under a variety of identities—immigrants (both legal and illegal), asylum-seekers, exiles (both self-imposed and forced), migrants—differently mediated by class, education, race, gender, and sexuality. Many of these people collectively make up the Zimbabwean diaspora. It must also be stated that some, for various reasons involving choice, class, situation and experience, would not consider themselves part of the diaspora. I, for example, do not consider myself a ‘diasporan’ for the reason that I never considered my move to study in the States a permanent move. This justification can be contested though as many who left Zimbabwe and do consider themselves part of the diaspora would not think of their leaving as being permanent either. I came to study only in part motivated by the dire situation in the country but I always intended to return. Again, I hear you ask, how is that different from others in the diaspora? I suppose the simplest way to describe the distinction as I see it, is that it is very likely that I would have come overseas to do postgraduate study if there had not been a crisis. The crisis

situations certainly added to my justifications of why I should go when I did but I maintain that the desire to study would have been felt had the country been stable.

“One of the most notable features of the recent exodus is the entry of the term ‘diaspora’ into Zimbabwean popular discourse, both as a self ascription on the part of those living beyond the country’s borders and as a label for Zimbabweans abroad” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 265). Joanne McGregor makes the point in the introduction to *Zimbabwe’s New Diaspora: Displacement and the Cultural Politics of Survival* (2010) that the idea of a community of ‘diasporans’ and the proliferation of the term itself (in all three national languages: *madiaspora* in Shona, or *amadiaspora* in Ndebele) has only been a part of popular discourse since 2000 (p. 6). This is, McGregor explains, “a novel development as the 1970s generation of Zimbabwean political exiles and students who moved to other African countries and Britain during the protracted struggle for independence did not use the term diaspora to describe themselves or their relationship with home” (McGregor, 2010, p. 6). McGregor believes that the term ‘diaspora’ makes the binaries that divide ‘economic migrants’ from ‘political refugees’ irrelevant, instead it describes a group who share a connection to a distant homeland. In this way, “diasporic campaigns can incorporate labour migrants, professionals and others who left primarily to meet socio-economic goals alongside political exiles (though, as conditions deteriorated in Zimbabwe from 2000, there is a sense in which everyone experienced their move as forced)” (McGregor, 2010, p. 10). The term “diasporan” is also used by Zimbabweans to position themselves and each other according to who is inside and who is outside (McGregor, p. 10).

Many of those who have remained in the country live in a condition that the Zimbabwean poet-in-exile Chenjerai Hove calls “internal exile” (2007). Those who remain and are not part of or connected to the political elite and the patronage system suffer a state of “internal exile” as a result of a spectrum of deliberate and overt state-authorized abuses, such as internal displacements due to political violence; politically motivated expulsions from and appropriations of homes, businesses and livelihoods; abject poverty as a result of the collapse of the economy and hyperinflation; and systematic and politically-motivated intimidation and fear-mongering. These experiences too are differently mediated by class, gender, race, sexuality, and political affiliation. The condition of “internal exile” (Hove, 2007) though is also as a result of more indirect and psycho-social means in that your home can cease to feel like the home you once knew, and it can also cease to feel like what a home *should* feel like. This displacement can come about when your concept of ‘home’ is disrupted because the country doesn’t recognize you as you wish to be recognized and because the country you live in is no longer recognizable as the same country you grew up in.

In “A Journey Without Maps” (2007), Chenjerai Hove, who fled Zimbabwe in 2001 in fear for his life, recounts an incident, when still living in the country, which made him realize that he was in a state of “internal exile.” Increasingly considered an ‘enemy of the state’ for speaking out about Zanu-PF’s political abuses of power, Hove found his movements and activities curtailed by increasingly draconian laws. When a local high school was studying his seminal 1986 anti-colonial novel *Bones*, he agreed to come in and talk to the students, having been asked to do so by their teacher who was an old teaching colleague. Upon leaving the classroom, Hove and the teacher were approached



by an irate school director who wanted to know what Hove was doing in his school without his permission and without government clearance. Hove responded, "But Sir, how can I need clearance to come and talk to my local school about my book? It is my novel which should have sought government clearance" (2007). The Headmaster, deeply offended and in no doubt afraid of government backlash, suspended the teacher, who during suspension found new employment and never went back to teaching.

'Exile' denotes banishment from a particular place, usually one's home. In ancient times, it was a form of severe punishment metered out by the state against the individual, who must go on to live displaced from home for a significant period of time, if not forever. Hove's example of "internal exile" speaks to this idea of banishment as being a form of punishment and as a result he and his colleague must live a state of displacement. The concept of displacement can provide a revealing lens through which to explore different aspects of the Zimbabwe crisis and in this particular case "internal exile". Hammar, McGregor and Landau (2010) in their introductory essay, "Displacing Zimbabwe: Crisis and Construction in Southern Africa" to the June 2010 Special Issue of *Journal of Southern African Studies*, see "displacement" as a metaphor which is broad and evocative in many ways and can thus act as a revealing prism through which to understand the personal, political, and cultural transformations brought about by crisis conditions. Through its implication of 'matter out of place', the term displacement allows existential meanings to be discussed in combination with and in relation to, strategies of control. (p. 266)

Hove's experience in the classroom of his colleague is such an example of being 'out of place'. His novel *Bones* is part of Zimbabwe's literary canon; it has been and will continue to be studied in many schools for many years to come. In this sense his novel is securely 'in place' but he is not. He has been banished from that place because he is considered an 'enemy of the state' and unpatriotic because he refuses to support the ruling party. He, the state declares, no longer belongs; he has been dispossessed of his home. That is his condition of "internal exile" (Hove, 2007).

My experiences of the events of Operation *Murambatsvina* provide a further example and clarification of the condition of "internal exile" (Hove, 2007) and displacement. From 2003 till 2006, I was a teacher of Cambridge 'A' Level English Literature, an advanced and intensive two year course for students in their last two years of high school, at a private, all girls' school in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. During these particularly tumultuous times, we teachers struggled to retain the high standard of education that Zimbabwe is known for while hyperinflation eroded the worth of our currency; power and water cuts periodically forced us to send our pupils home; the police temporarily closed our school and arrested our headmistress on trumped-up charges of profiteering; and opposition-organized industrial action kept our students from their classrooms. These dark, dark times seemed to culminate in the winter of 2005 when Mugabe's government decided to destroy the homes of hundreds of thousands of people living in the shanty towns and informal settlements in and around all the major urban areas. It was called Operation *Murambatsvina*, which means 'clean out the filth'. People woke to a winter morning ("the winter of broken promises" (Gappah, 2009, p. 42)) and the sound of bulldozers - they scrambled to claim any possessions that they could carry

with them, and then watched as their homes were demolished or burnt to the ground. In my classroom, on the other side of town in the Northern suburbs, we were studying Ngugi wa Thiongo's novel, *A Grain of Wheat*, which is set in Kenya and tells a story of the fight for independence and the cost of freedom. I remember standing in my classroom, in front of my students, wondering what point there was in sitting around and reading books. And I felt, not the first time, that words were not enough. I remember my students looking at me and wanting me to say something, to put it in context, to help them understand how their government could do such a terrible thing. How could I explain it to them when I couldn't even explain it to myself?

*Murambatsvina* carried on for several weeks. In the middle of winter, all these people were left with nothing more than what they could salvage from the rubble and carry with them. Part of the government's policy also involved getting rid of the informal sector. With, at that time, only 20% of the population formally employed, the rest relied on informal employment—selling flowers and vegetables on the side of the road, or firewood, or handmade crafts. The police roved the cities and arrested anyone involved in informal sector trading. 700 000 people were left homeless and/or lost their means of employment (McGregor, 2010, pg. 7). *Murambatsvina* is another example, more literal perhaps, of “internal exile”. These hundreds of thousands of people were banished from their homes; they were dispossessed of their belongings, livelihoods and houses because the government deemed them ‘out of place’.

Hammar, McGregor and Landau (2010) see displacement and dispossession as being intimately related to statecraft and redefinitions of nation, citizenship and belonging. In everyday discourse, ‘on the street’, people came to refer to *Murambatsvina*

as “the tsunami” (the South Asian Tsunami had occurred five months earlier) as whole settlements and communities were ‘washed’ away and everything was destroyed, except that this destruction was not wrought by the random naturalness of an earthquake offshore and resulting wave (of historic and horrific proportions), this was caused by these people’s own government. (As Said reminds us in *Reflections on Exile*, in this case of “internal exile”, “exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical... it is produced by human beings for other human beings” (2001, p. 174).) And while displacement is undeniably destructive and traumatic in so many ways, these processes also always have beneficiaries who create new configurations and practices of power and accumulation. Mass displacement, such as *Murambatsvina*, an example of “internal exile”, as well as the “extraordinary exodus” from Zimbabwe to the diaspora, an example of “external exile”, is characterized, Hammar, McGregor and Landau, (2010) believe, by simultaneous “mobility and confinement; dispossession and accumulation; impoverishment and wealth; destruction and transformation; loss and liberation” and it is these awkward juxtapositions that “help us see beyond simplified versions of cause-and-effect, and beyond static dichotomies or linear trajectories of victors and victims” (p. 267).

In my classroom, I remained wordless on the subject of *Murambatsvina*: you can be arrested in Zimbabwe for saying the wrong thing to the wrong person. Literally speechless but also forbidden to speak, I would ask myself, how can I prepare my students to face the many faces of the world? Or, rather, how can I prepare them to face *this* world? And what does the teaching of English have to do with all of this? It is one thing to be willing to take on the responsibility that teaching at any time, in any place,

entails; it is an entirely different thing to take it on in such conflicted ethical and hostile socio-economic and political times. Would it not make more sense, I wondered, to close our books and put down our pens, rise up out of our chairs and take to the streets in protest? Because how do you learn ‘official school knowledge’ with this going on around you?

After several years of graduate schooling in New York, attempting to navigate my way around this and similar questions, I realized that the first question I must ask is not how do you learn ‘official’ school knowledge in such a context but rather how do you learn to live with this going on around you? And how do you live and learn? Gayatri Spivak in an essay entitled, “Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (1998) writes, “we must learn to learn” (p. 343) and to ask ethical questions of political situations because “history is larger than personal goodwill, and we must learn to be responsible as we must study to be political” (p. 337).<sup>1</sup>

In this study, then, I’m interested in considering some of the effects of ‘the Crisis’ from political, historical, and psycho-social perspectives as they relate to Hove’s two states of exile. I will also consider my understandings of the concept of responsibility in the context of proposing a possible response to ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe. My research questions are:

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<sup>1</sup> I am most persuaded by Spivak’s call to “learn to learn” and especially by the stress she puts on the ethical stance of responsibility in the face of history and politics. I will return to these issues in depth in Chapter VI: *Afterwards*.

1. What happens when I use Chenjerai Hove's concept of "internal and external exile" to consider:
  - a). my interpretations of the political and historical factors that have lead to the current 'Zimbabwean Crisis';
  - b). my interpretations of my own experiences with/in 'the Crisis';
  - c). the theorized, documented and generalized psycho-social effects of the experiences of exile and diaspora.
2. What happens when I grapple with conceptions of responsibility as they relate to my understandings of the effects of 'the Crisis' in Zimbabwe?

### **Methodology**

As a result of various aspects of 'the Crisis', many of us Zimbabweans have experienced a dramatic shift in the trajectory of our lives. The story we were originally living has become obsolete, that plot is no longer viable because our grand narrative of 'Home' has been over-shadowed by doubt and uncertainty. The home we knew in a literal and figurative sense is not the home we now inhabit, whether we live there still or not. I have experienced this crisis, in part, as a time when my life story was drastically altered. I have wondered: What happens when the story you're living changes direction? What happens to the characters in that story? If we make sense of our reality by constructing narratives of our past experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Krog, 1999), even knowing that these are constructed and framed by available discourses and prevalent norms within certain historical, social and cultural contexts, while also projecting that

narrative into the life not yet lived, how do we reconcile ourselves to a dramatic rupture to that narrative sequence? If things you took for granted were no longer certain, how do you move forward into that void? “All these are crushing questions,” George Eliot writes in *Middlemarch* (1871/2) about Dorothea Casaubon’s awakening to the depressing realization that the man she has married is not at all who she thought he was, “but whatever else remained the same, the light had changed, and you cannot find the pearly dawn at noonday” (1994, p. 195). There are no easy answers to such “crushing questions” (Eliot, 1994, p. 195) but through this study I will attempt to represent, negotiate and conceptualize (while simultaneously troubling these attempts) my experiences and understandings of this “noonday” (Eliot, 1994, p. 195). Using a hybridized form of “writing as a method of inquiry” (Richardson, 2000, p. 923), I employ the speculative essay as a form of philosophical inquiry (Schubert, 1991) as well as autobiography to write “evocative narratives” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744) as a form of narrative research, which are positioned as Afterwords at the end of each chapter.

Laurel Richardson explains that writing is a method of inquiry because it is “a way of ‘knowing’—a method of discovery and analysis”; a method that “provides a research practice through which we can investigate how we construct the world, ourselves and others” (2000, p. 923). Accepting that “no textual staging is ever innocent” (Richardson, 2000, p. 925) and that “having partial, local, historical knowledge is still knowledge” (p. 928), I use my own experiences and interpretations of certain aspects of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe as a site for speculation about the experience of exile, the existence of the diaspora and the stance of responsibility in the face of such crises. This study, which is partly autobiographical but also historical and political, takes a

philosophical and conceptual approach to some of the “crushing questions” (Eliot, 1994, p. 195) posed in relation to ‘the Crisis’.

William Schubert, in “Philosophical Inquiry: The Speculative Essay” (1991), characterizes the essay as “a form of rhetoric embodying speculative or personal knowledge” (p. 61). Drawing from a 1982 study that looked at the most influential essays on curriculum theory, Schubert analyses the results from the position that “the philosophical essay is a form of inquiry” (p. 63) and concludes that these seminal essays share an important characteristic, which is an “analytic, interpretive, and/or critical literary style rather than rigorous data-based or other highly rule-bound systematic form of inquiry” (1991, p. 63). The philosophical essay, he explains, allows for “integrative, imaginative, and speculative leaps of interpretation that are still soundly grounded in a variety of other research traditions” (p. 64), which in my study is a form of narrative research, as espoused by Laurel Richardson’s (2000) notion of “writing as a form of inquiry” (p. 923). The essay’s strength, Schubert explains, lies in the fact that it defies classification. By definition, it is “almost any kind of writing” (1991, p. 65), but this variety is its strength in that rather than being classified by length and formal structure, the essay is “a search for a way to reflect about an issue of significance to the writer” (1991, p. 65). For Schubert, the essay is “a record of the author speculating or theorizing” much like how “writing as a method of inquiry” (2000, p. 923) is for Richardson an attempt to find something out, to learn something that was not known before the writing (2000, p. 924). The essay portrays the author’s way of reflecting on a topic: “it is, thus, a form of philosophical inquiry put into writing” (Schubert, 1991, p. 66).



Schubert maintains that no formula can teach such a method; instead it evolves “within a given context and moment of history in the lived experience of the writer and the issue being discussed” (1991, p. 65), which is not to say that there are no standards for the form. Schubert outlines these standards as: “prerequisite connoisseurship”, “referential adequacy”, and “structural corroboration” (1991, p. 66).

Considering the personal nature of the speculative essay, an obvious prerequisite is that the writer be a connoisseur of the topic. The reader must get a sense that the writer knows the topic well and there must be no doubt about the writer’s expertise on and experience with the subject discussed. Richardson, as a poststructuralist thinker, would argue that “expertise” and “experience” are never self-evident or innocent; they are rather interpretations influenced by the various discourses that are available at any given time. I would agree that we cannot take connoisseurship at face value. Being a connoisseur must not be thought of as being similar to the humanist’s notion of the expert, unemotional and unbiased, doling out ‘expertise’ from a position of unquestioned security. The attainment of the title ‘connoisseur’ implies that a great deal of personal endeavor went into knowing as much as possible about one’s topic of speculation and in this way it implies passion and keen interest. It is these understandings of ‘connoisseur’ to which I am drawn but I acknowledge that such passions never come to us fully formed or disinterested. They are constantly discursively mediated and in construction. Schubert goes on to expand his conception of the ‘connoisseur’ by explaining that readers should feel as if they have been taken on a journey with an experienced guide who knows well the terrain (1991, p. 66). While I find this metaphor helpful, I do think it necessary to also emphasize that according to my understanding of the speculative essay and writing

as a method of inquiry, the guide must know the terrain well and will of course lead the journey but at the start, she does not necessarily know where that journey will take her. She may start her journey on familiar, experienced ground but the journey of philosophical inquiry is a wandering from a known point to an unknown one; an exploration, as T. S. Eliot (1963) describes in “Little Gidding”, where “the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time” (p.212).

I believe that Schubert’s two other standards will insure that the journey is not aimless or wasted. “Referential adequacy” (1991, p. 66) must be used so that the reader can judge the author’s interpretation by being able to check to see if critical observations are grounded in the situation or issue that is discussed. Enabling the reader to refer back and forth between the reference points and the writer’s speculations will hopefully result in the reader seeing the issue in new light (1991, p. 66), if not always in ‘the light’ the writer intends. The final standard is “structural corroboration” which is a continuous inquiry by the reader as to whether the different parts of the essay fit together (p. 66). Schubert is part structuralist and part constructivist in his theoretical orientations so he would like things to fit together as if it were a puzzle of sorts, although he does stress that the “internal fit of an essay should not be expected to be as cohesive as more refined forms of art” (p. 66).

While I appreciate Schubert’s acknowledgement that the philosophical essay as a form of inquiry will lack ‘cohesion’, I do feel that his structuralist approach is ‘too clean’ for what I am trying to do. Rather, I foresee disjunctures, and anticipate areas where there are no smooth and easy answers; areas where things don’t fit together; areas where

perhaps only more questions remain, which I see as being more in line with Richardson's poststructuralist perspectives. This kind of philosophical inquiry is, I believe, about writing oneself into corners, where there are no answers, because there will be much that is unresolvable. If anything, it will be about opening up questions related to psycho-social aspects of 'the Crisis.'

In this sense, I am persuaded by Wanda Pillow's discussion of reflexivity, in her essay "Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research" (2003), in which she advocates for the incorporation of reflexivity that "accounts for multiplicity without making it singular and that acknowledges the unknowable without making it familiar" (p. 181). She calls it "uncomfortable reflexivity", which is "a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous" (Pillow, 2003, p. 188). While I am not doing ethnographic work, I find valuable and persuasive Pillow's (2003) enticement to set ourselves "the difficult and often uncomfortable task of leaving what is unfamiliar, unfamiliar" (p. 177). Her concern is that despite the 'interpretative turn' in the social sciences, whereby "the objectivity of research is brought under question and issues of power in research relations is being acknowledged" (Pillow, 2003, p. 178), researchers attempting reflexive work are still dependent on a modernist subject that is "a subject that is singular, knowable, and fixable" (p. 180). Methodologically, the work she encourages is messy and uneasy with "unfamiliar – and likely uncomfortable – tellings" (Pillow, 2003, p. 192) so that there can be no "simple story of subjects, subjectivity, and transcendence" (p. 192).

Schubert (1991), as already noted, sees the essayist as leading a journey and he believes that the writing as “a special way of thinking” (p. 69) “is a method of inquiry, that allows the reader to follow along the often convoluted journey that leads to greater illumination” (p. 69). For me, this is a far too linear conceptualization of writing and thinking, and of what they do together. He sees the essay as “a portrayal of the author’s way of reflecting” (1991, p. 66) but the reflection that I experience is hardly linear and very rarely ends in an epiphanic moment of illumination! The reader, according to Schubert, is allowed to wander off from the essayist’s charted journey to “embark on his or her own byways and even pursue other journeys at the same time” (p. 70) but the writer it would appear is not afforded the same luxury; she, according to Schubert, needs to stick to the route and not get lost!

I however have no doubt that “getting lost” (Lather, 2001) is a very good idea when it comes to thinking and writing, and writing about what you’ve been thinking, and writing as a representation of thinking! In this I am encouraged by Patti Lather’s (2001) stance on “getting lost” in one’s research. She asks what research can be made to mean considering that we are “Situated within and against Enlightenment categories of voice, identity, agency and experience, we live amidst incommensurability, historical trauma and the crisis of representation” (Lather, 2001, p. 157). She warns against “compelling understanding too quickly”, encouraging instead a practice that enacts “a stammering relationship toward the incompletely thinkable conditions and potential of given arrangements where we are all a little lost, caught in enabling aporias that move us toward practices that are responsible to what is arising out of both becoming and passing away” (Lather, 2001, p. 159). Schubert stresses the importance of a Western humanist

conception of narrative structure but I fear that this will not suffice for work that is voyaging through incomprehensible experience; there are aspects of ‘the Crisis’ that resist comprehension let alone answers. The idea of “getting lost” is a stance that I find particularly compelling, especially considering that this project is a journey, and as the cartographer and explorer, writing (and un-writing) the maps as I go, I have no doubt I will get lost!

Schubert believes that the philosophical essay is eclectic: the chosen topic gains meaning when related to extant knowledge and because it would be impossible for personal experience and external perspectives to provide a comprehensive context, interpretation and explanation of the topic, “the inquirer must tailor, adapt, and combine extant knowledge to fit and illuminate the problem under inquiry” (Schubert, 1991, p. 69). “This weaving and re-weaving”, he tells us, “is at the heart of the essayist’s art” (Schubert, 1991, p. 69). Finally, because existing knowledge simply does not speak to the needs of every topic, the writer must use “speculative or imaginative projection as a method” (Schubert, 1991, p. 69) for this is the philosophical essay’s strength—it is a representation of a way of thinking. In this way, Schubert believes, “The essay, a fluid and less formal form, retains the vitality of lived experience by creating a method of inquiry within its presentation” (p. 70). This aspect of the essay is, I believe, crucial to the nature and scope of my study, especially as I seek to ponder the psycho-social experiences at the heart of ‘the Crisis’. I wish to represent through my study the journey of my thinking with regard what has happened to my ‘home’. In this, the topic is also personal and therefore I believe I hold the “requisite connoisseurship” (1991, p. 66).

I believe I qualify as a connoisseur of my research topic in that I hold multiple privileged vantage points. My view point is mediated by the following realities: I am the youngest child of middle class, white Zimbabweans. I was born in 1979, the year that The Second Chimurenga, or what was then called the Rhodesian Bush War, came to an end. The following year Zimbabwe came into being through its first democratic elections. My parents, Zimbabwean-born of British parents<sup>2</sup>, started their own earth moving company that same year. Over the next twenty-six years, they built the company up into one of the biggest and most successful, privately-owned civil construction companies in the region. I have benefited from their success and have enjoyed a life of comfort and security that neither my mother nor my father enjoyed growing up. I attended an all-girls, private, multiracial school, and my brother and I were the first of our family to go to university. After completing university and qualifying as a high school English and History teacher in South Africa, I returned to Zimbabwe to teach for four years, before moving to New York to attend graduate school.

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<sup>2</sup>Both pairs of my grandparents came out to Rhodesia after the Second World War. There was nothing much left for the troops, job wise, so many of them left Britain and came to Zimbabwe, South Africa etc. My mother told me recently how her mother always referred to England as home. When people asked her where she was going on holiday she always said, "We are going home." She never said, "We are going to England." My Mum said that her mother missed her family terribly and she speculated that so too must have many of the other women (especially when they were having babies) whose men insisted there were better chances in Africa.

Both my parents grew up without any extended family, whereas my brother and I grew up with an overwhelming number of extended family members as both my parents had three siblings each and all those siblings got married and had a couple of kids. (My whole extended family have now left Zimbabwe and live all over the place: South Africa, the U.K., Ireland and Australia. This is not such a bad thing!) For my parents and their siblings, England was never home but it did feature, I suppose, more in their thoughts than it ever did in my generation because their parents were English. But despite their parents being English, they would never think to support England during the World Cup Rugby or Cricket for example! (The only reason they follow English Cricket at all is because the coach is a Zimbabwean guy they know!) What I'm saying is that there is no sense in which we think of ourselves as English or English-Zimbabweans. There are no hyphenated identities amongst the whites in Zimbabwe. To us, England is a completely foreign country to which we feel no ties or attachments.

There were thriving cultural and sporting clubs in Zimbabwe started by and run for immigrants of Italian, Greek, Portuguese, Irish, and even Swiss origins but there wasn't an English Club. Rhodesia itself was their club, I suppose.

In this study, I see from my vantage point as a ‘semi-displaced’ Zimbabwean. Having lived for the last four and a half years both inside and outside of the country, I have been afforded a privileged position in that I can look in while being out and look out while being in. For those Zimbabweans who live fully or in greater part outside of the country, notions of centers and peripheries, fundamental to some postcolonial discourses, seem to be reversed as Zimbabwe is the center and the diaspora, where exiles end up, is the periphery. I am white, comfortably middle class and Zimbabwean. I draw from the experiences that my class, race and situation have provided. I choose not to make the focus of my study issues of post-colonialism not because those issues are not important but because those are not overtly important to the perspectives and scope of this study. Mugabe and Zanu-PF’s use of “patriotic history” (Ranger, 2005, p. 220) and their vitriolic attacks against the U.K. and U.S. leadership is nothing more than an attempt to use Zimbabwe’s colonial past as a screen to hide their abuses of power, corruption and theft. This does not mean to say that the colonial and settler history of this country was not unjust and still in need of serious scholarship; the Independence War especially, I think, needs to be the focus of much more attention. I, however, have chosen to draw my attention to the most recent crisis in a long history of crises in this country.

In drawing from my interpretations of my experiences, I am cognizant of the fact that my view is partial, limited, subjective, raced, classed and gendered, and inevitably blind spotted. In writing autobiographically, I draw from my store of personal memories and observations but as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2002) explain in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, for narrators of life narratives,

the usefulness of such evidence for their stories lies in the ways in which they employ that evidence to support, supplement, or offer commentary on their idiosyncratic remembering. In autobiographical narratives, imaginative acts of remembering always intersect with such rhetorical acts as assertion, justification, judgment, conviction, and interrogation. That is, life narrators address readers whom they want to persuade of their version of experience. (p. 6)

Smith and Watson (2002) outline from their poststructuralist stance the five constitutive processes of autobiographical subjectivity, which are memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency, to show the complexities of life narratives. These constitutive processes remind us that not simply are memories recalled and stories related of them but they are 'created' and mediated through complex and opaque processes and discursive practices. In attempts to represent experience, speaking from taken for granted and assumed coherent, singular subjectivities, traditionally we would say with conviction, "This is what happened. Do you see how it makes sense; how one thing leads on from another in such a seamless order?" because we desire an orderly narrative that has a beginning, middle and end. In truth, we do not speak from singular, knowable subjectivities and life lived is much messier than how we try to recount and represent it after the event. "The unified story and the coherent self are myths of identity" (p. 47)

Smith and Watson (2002) remind us. Instead "We are always fragmented in time, taking a particular or provisional perspective on the moving target of our pasts, addressing multiple and disparate audiences" (p. 47).



The reality of the fragmentary and messy nature of the stories we tell is especially and poignantly apparent when the events being related are emotional or traumatic and yet within the Western tradition the construction of a coherent, orderly narrative of experience is the assumed sign of mental health and recovery.

Within some psychoanalytic circles, doctrines, and practices, one of the stated aims of psychoanalysis is to offer the client the chance to put together a story about herself, to recollect the past, to interweave the events or, rather, the wishes of childhood with later events, to try to make sense through narrative means of what this life has been, the impasses it encounters time and again, and what it might yet become. (Butler, 2005, p. 51)

Successful recovery and mental health is considered to have taken place if the stories people tell about their traumatic experience/s are, “if not transcendent, at least resolved and integrated” (Carney, 2004, p. 205). Sarah Carney’s research in “Transcendent Stories and Counternarratives in Holocaust Survivor Life Histories” (2004) critiques the often “unscrutinized” (p. 202) Western assumptions about what constitutes healthy recovery from trauma. The “survivor narrative” in Western psycho-clinical understanding must show evidence of transcendence and resilience. Transcendent stories “are stories structured by a linear progression of events” (Carney, 2004, p. 206). There should be no loose ends, or recursive movements, and definitely no questions. They should start at the beginning and work their ways to the end, all the themes integrated and plot lines resolved. But Carney (2004) wonders that “If transcendence means the linear structuring of a narrative, how do we evaluate the fragmented, jumpy, scattered nature of

many life story interviews?” (p. 211). How do we account for the “counternarratives” that do not meet the assumed standards for healthy recovery?

I wonder too, though, whether the production of a coherent, linear narrative is ever possible, with or without trauma because I believe that in some instances we are born into stories and for this reason, “My account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story” (Butler, 2005, p. 40). These stories that we are born into, are stories over which we have no authority. They come to us already written, already perceived and we are tied to them because to reject them would be to reject who we think we are, which we can do but only at great cost. It is often the experience of crisis that makes us realize this double bind. In trying to make sense of traumatic experience we are forced to assess why we were present in the first place. How did this happen, we ask? How did I get here? And the paradox is this: our realization that we are tied to stories and events over which we have absolutely no control is simultaneously the loosening of the ties that bind. It is a letting go, which more often than not is experienced as a “radical rupture in the way [we give meaning to what has happened in our lives]” (Michielsens, 2000, p. 195). Patti Lather reminds us of this:

People make sense of their lives via story lines or narratives that are available at particular cultural moments. No life neatly fits into any one “plot” line and narratives are multiple, contradictory, changing and differently available depending on the social forces that shape our lives. Some cultural stories are easily available to us, some not. Some help us tell our lives well; some break down in the face of the complications of our lives and times. (Lather, 1995, p. 98 – 99)

Both Lather and Butler would agree that this rupturing and breaking down of our stories, this loss of faith in narrative reasoning, cannot stop us telling stories, because, as Antjie Krog knows, “We tell stories not to die of life” (1999, p. 64) but I do wonder if it frees us up to tell our stories differently? In the *Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (2001), Leigh Gilmore, who looks at four self-representational texts about trauma, which she classifies as “limit-cases” in that they reveal and test the limits of autobiography, is most surprised by the productivity discovered at the limits of autobiography, where boundaries are pushed and difficult questions asked.

In their complex self-representational engagements, limit-cases point to persistent and constitutive issues in autobiography itself: What is the self that it can be represented in writing? Who am I and how did I become who I am? What is the relationship between the self and others? What sort of muse, guide, or judge is memory? (Gilmore, 2001, p. 15)

All provocative questions that remind us that autobiography is never simply a case of ‘representing’ experience as ‘it happened’. Autobiography is always an incomplete interpretation of already interpreted and mediated events that have been composed by “historically situated and discursively inflected practice[s]” (Miller, 2005, p. 47).

For the *Afterwords*, which are positioned at the end of each chapter, I use autobiography as “both genre and method” (Miller, 2005, p. 49) to write “evocative narratives” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744) as a form of narrative research. My use of autobiography stresses my situatedness. Using autobiography I wish to challenge “the normative, the ordinary, the taken-for-granted” (Miller, 2005, p. 54) as I attempt to contextualize, mediate and trouble my interpretations of my experiences of certain

aspects of ‘the Crisis’, which has been a formative experience in my life. But in doing this I am aware that the narratives say as much about my conception of my ‘selves’ as they do about my conceptions of events and experiences. Always we live in relation to our historically situated and discursively mediated contexts. We write for our ‘selves’ but also always we are aware that we are writing for an audience, therefore the tales we tell are never innocent but are politically motivated and rhetorically dependent.

“Evocative narratives” (p. 744) as described by Ellis and Bochner (2000) are a form of narrative inquiry in that they are “stories that create the effect of reality, showing characters embedded in the complexities of lived moments of struggle” (p. 744). Richardson (2000) explains that “writing as a method of inquiry” (p. 923) is a departure from standard social science practices and as such offers “additional—or alternative—research practice” (p.923). The ‘turn’ away from traditional social science methodology, as a consequence of poststructuralist and postmodernist theories of language, power, discourses, and subjectivities (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), resulted in an opening up and appreciation of narrative as a viable form of research in the social sciences. Such research practice, Richardson (2000) believes, allows narrative researchers to “investigate how we construct the world, ourselves and others” (p. 924) and how we have been ‘constructed’ through the discursive practices as they permeate social norms (Miller, 2005).

“Evocative narratives” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744) are “usually” (p. 744) written in the first person; the story is often focused on a single case; the mode of telling is similar to that of a novel and as such employs literary devices; and the text “refuses the impulse to abstract and explain, stressing the journey over the destination...thus eclipsing

the scientific illusion of control and mastery” (p. 744), and, I would argue, agency. Through this they activate subjectivities and compel emotional responses (p. 744). In writing these narratives from an autobiographical standpoint, I appreciate that, constructions of “selves” in narrative as “never-ending, complex, culturally and linguistically conditioned processes” (Miller, 2005, p. 56). What I am not persuaded by in Ellis and Bochner’s (2000) interpretation of narrative inquiry is their insistence on coherence. They stress that personal narrative “is a response to the human problem of authorship, the desire to make sense and preserve coherence over the course of our lives” (2000, p. 746). We work as narrators, they explain, to “produce [a] sense of continuity: to make a life that sometimes seems to be falling apart come together again, by retelling and restorying the event’s of one’s life” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 746). As previously argued, I do not think that a coherent narrative should or even can be our goal for narrative inquiry, rather we must accept and acknowledge that our narratives are socially, historically and politically situated and discursively mediated. Therefore we cannot hope for coherence when so much of what we tell and how we tell it is dependent on that which is out of our control and/or opaque to our ‘selves’.

Taking this into account, I see the *Afterwords* not as attempts to summarize or exemplify all that has been covered in the chapter. They are not conclusions but rather, other kinds of beginnings. They are, in their particular mode of telling, other ways of saying the same thing, a detour of sorts. I hope that they are also seen as sticking points, or perhaps potholes would be the better metaphor—areas in my experiences of ‘the Crisis’ that made me stumble, stop and look back and meditate on what has been formative in my life and research.

The narratives are placed at end of chapter as they are meant to point to the recursive nature of this journey. They are where this research started for me; they are the ‘inspirations’ for the academic work, for the speculations, but I choose to place them at the end of the chapter rather than at the beginning because even though the work starts with them, I wish to emphasize that it does and it must come back to them, as the journey is to “arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time” (Eliot, 1963, p.212). My interpretations of these experiences are read anew through the academic and theoretical work. This work has been an attempt to think through and do something with these experiences and to be able to articulate them with/in the frameworks that I establish. And so the narratives placed at the end remind me that this is urgent and topical and not over.

The *Afterwords* are also an attempt to write into the disconnect between the cleanness of telling in the academic prose of the philosophical essay, and the messiness of living. They do, in this way, come after different kinds of words. This disconnect is more easily understood if we accept the paradox at the heart of the experience of loss: “loss must be marked and it cannot be represented; loss fractures representation itself and loss precipitates its own mode of expression” (Butler, 2003, p. 467). Given this paradox, how do you represent the experience of loss if loss itself undermines representational forms? Lather’s poststructuralist musings that encourages “getting lost” allow me to allow myself to not worry about all that will get lost and not expressed because it can’t/won’t be expressed. We must appreciate, Lather tells us, that “texts that do justice to the complexity of what we try to know and understand include the tales not told, the words not written or transcribed, the words thought but not uttered, the unconscious: all

that gets lost in the telling and the representing” (p. 157). Perhaps, in this context, the *Afterwords* are best understood as attempts at getting lost while on my journey.

## Chapter II

### *Afterbirth:*

*A (brief) history of Zimbabwe's pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial past.*

Home is where one starts from.

(Eliot, 1963, p. 203)

And if home is the start, then where do we finish?

“The pre-colonial history of Zimbabwe is usually explained in terms of the rise and fall of empires – the Great Zimbabwe, the Mutapa, the Torwa, the Rozzwi and Ndebele states. These large states are interesting... but it is misleading to think that nothing of significance happened before or afterwards, or outside their frontiers” (Mazarire, 2009, p. 1). And with these empires, according to historians, came distinct ethnic blocs, such as the Shona<sup>3</sup>, the Ndebele, the Tonga, the Venda etc. Most of what is thought of as the pre-colonial history of Zimbabwe was a product of the independence struggle in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century when it was necessary to unify the black population behind the nationalist movement and also to counter the limited and limiting, as well as often overtly racist historiography produced by colonial academics. For those

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<sup>3</sup> “The ‘Shona’ – a term signifying linguistic, cultural and political characteristics of a people – did not even know themselves by that name until the late nineteenth century” (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. xix).



reasons academics have tended to depict pre-colonial Zimbabwe in fairly monolithic terms, most popular is the linear trajectory of states rising, falling, and rising again. It does still read that way to an extent but it is important to appreciate that historically, the people of the region were much more fluid in their movements and loose in their arrangements. This knowledge will also help us to contextualise the “patriotic history” (Ranger, 2004) created and espoused by the overtly political and nationalistic agenda of the ruling party in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Most recent historiography debunks the ‘Great Empires’ idea, instead claiming that “most autochthons lived in smaller units and that the famous Shona empires “were not really states but loose systems of over-rule”; much more important were a multitude of smaller units of clan and chieftaincy (Mazarire, 2009; Ranger, 2010). Rather, the region’s pre-colonial history is one of occupation of Zimbabwe’s difficult landscape by many pioneering groups. “Small societies never existed in isolation, pioneers came from and maintained links with ‘parent’ societies; people left small societies to trade or hunt or make pilgrimages to major rain shrines or oracular caves and when larger states emerged, the small societies had to come to terms with them” (Mazarire, 2009, p. 1). Zimbabwe’s pre-colonial history was such that “a broadly similar political and religious culture, constantly renewed by borrowings and interactions, adapted to many different environments and absorbed many different in-migrations” (Ranger, 2010, p. 508).

For much of its history, this region, which came to be known as Zimbabwe in 1980, after being Southern Rhodesia from 1895, was a destination country for migrants.

Population migration into and out of present day Zimbabwe long predates European conquest and the imposition of artificial colonial borders. Not

only did people move from one area to another as need arose, ethnic boundaries were fluid enough to allow individuals or groups to move in or out of population clusters and ethnic groupings with relative ease.

(Mlambo, 2010, p. 52)

Population movement began with the peopling of an area defined by environment and topography as the 'Zimbabwe Plateau' (Mazarire, 2009). The hunter-gathering, stone-age people, who populated this region from 100,000 years ago, were eventually displaced by the Bantu, an iron-age people skilled in mining and iron smelting, who arrived from the north (Mlambo, 2010). A cattle-keeping culture, referred to as the Leopard Kopje people, had established themselves in this region by the year 1000 and their culture peaked by 1100 with the establishment of Mapungubwe in south-western Zimbabwe. This farming and cattle-keeping community also traded in ivory and gold with traders from as far afield as China, but eventually this culture went into decline after 1300 with the rise of the Great Zimbabwe culture, with their capital at the Great Zimbabwe complex, built between 1200 and 1450 (Mlambo, 2010). ('Zimbabwe' means 'great house of stone' and the name of the country is taken from this culture and the famous ruins that remain.) The Great Zimbabwe also kept cattle and farmed, as well as traded in gold with the Swahili coast. This culture started to break apart around 1450, with some smaller factions moving westward and founding the Torwa state, with their capital at Khami, near modern-day Bulawayo, and other groups moving north and forming the Munhumutapa Kingdom, which by 1500 had expanded as far as the Indian Ocean. The Munhumutapa's economy was based in gold mining and trade but it eventually went into decline in the face of Portuguese expansion along the coast (Mlambo, 2010). By the end

of 1600, the Rozvi Changamire state had emerged as powerful and remained so until the Nguni invasion from the South during the Mfecane.

The Mfecane was a series of political and demographic upheavals in the eastern part of South Africa starting in the 1800s (Mlambo, 2010). There are two surmised reasons for this upheaval, one being that aggressive nation-building campaigns by the Zulu under Shaka forced these migrations, and the second reason being white expansion and settlement in the interior of South Africa. Whatever the motive, the extensive population dispersal greatly impacted the demographic profile of the region north of the Limpopo and subsequently the history of Zimbabwe. The Mfecane brought five waves of Nguni migrants into and through the region between 1826 and 1838. Only two of these groups settled in the Zimbabwe plateau while the others destroyed the prevailing power structures before settling in other regions, such as the first wave that destroyed the Rozvi Changamire state before moving north and eventually settling by Lake Tanganyika. It was only the Gaza and Ndebele groups that permanently settled in the region. The Gaza first moved east, devastating the region around modern day Maputo in Mozambique, before establishing their kingdom in north-eastern Zimbabwe where they incorporated various Shona-speaking groups. The last and possibly most significant wave brought the Ndebele under the leadership of Mzilikazi. They moved north of the Limpopo River in 1837, settling in south-western Zimbabwe, in time establishing their kingdom at Bulawayo. “In the case of the Ndebele... what began as the movement of a small Khumalo clan from the Zulu kingdom as a result of the nineteenth-century Mfecane in South Africa, developed into a more heterogeneous nation composed of Rozwi, Kalanga, Birwa, Tonga, Nyubi, Venda and Sotho, brought together through a combination of

conquest, assimilation and incorporation” (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. xix).

Ndebele hegemony over south-western Zimbabwe remained unbroken until the arrival of European colonialists at the turn of the century when white migration changed the political and demographic profile of the region even further (Mlambo, 2010).

Christian missionaries were the earliest representatives of imperialism in the region. The London Missionary Society was active from as early as the 1820s (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009) as were white hunters, explorers, traders and, later in the century, mining concession-seekers. Bismarck’s Berlin Conference in 1884-1885, which saw the Europeans carve out spheres of influence for expansion in Africa, along with the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 and the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley a few years later, all set the stage for aggressive expansion north of the Limpopo where it was hoped that gold fields of equal wealth were to be found. The colonization of Zimbabwe therefore was part of the closing scenes of the European partition of Africa as well as “a complex affair that involved the capitalist interests of the Cape, Natal, the Rand and London, the British Foreign Office, the Colonial Office and the Governors and High Commissioners of the Cape, as well as missionary interests and those of the Afrikaners and Portuguese” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009, p. 40-41). Afrikaner and Portuguese interests were thwarted and the British emerged as the colonizers in the 1890s in the form of Cecil John Rhodes’ newly-formed British South Africa Company (BSAC).

In 1890, approximately 200 white settlers, ‘the Pioneer Column’, armed and sponsored by the BSAC, arrived in Mashonaland (north-eastern Zimbabwe), claiming the territory and planting the Union Jack at Fort Salisbury (Harare). In 1893, following the

pioneers' failure to find the rich gold deposits of a 'Second Rand', the Company expanded into Matabeleland, where they met Ndebele resistance resulting in the Anglo-Ndebele War/*Imfazo I* of 1893. The British South Africa Company won the war and claimed the land between the Limpopo and Zambezi Rivers, calling it Southern Rhodesia. The Company granted each settler 1,210 hectares (2990 acres) of land and 15 mining claims each. Ten years after the arrival of the pioneer column, one sixth of the entire land area had been seized by whites (Meredith, 2003, p. 113). In 1896 and 1897, the First Chimurenga, (Shona for 'revolutionary struggle') and *Imfazo II* (Ndebele Uprising) was fought by the Shona and Ndebele against the British. The causes of these uprisings are agreed to be a result of the brutality of colonial rule: forced labour, rape, looting and the 1894 hut tax, as well as the outbreak of natural disasters, such as rinderpest, drought and locusts, which all could be blamed on the presence of whites. These uprisings, though unsuccessful, "eventually formed the basis of a mass nationalism and future imaginings of an independent Zimbabwe" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009, p. 49).

The white population grew as a result of incentivized opportunities for British or English-speaking South African whites, especially farmers, after realizing that there were not comparable gold deposits in the region and that the colony's economy would have to be based on commercial agriculture. A variety of means were used to entice farmers to the region, such as offering reduced land prices and an expansion of the foreign and contract labour supply system (Mlambo, 2010, p. 56). In 1923, Britain granted the BSAC Responsible government of Southern Rhodesia allowing it to become a self-governing colony, specifically a settler colony "whose major characteristics, as in Australia and Canada, were land seizures, the arrival of a settler population, segregated internal

colonial governance, and political and economic privileges for the white community” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009, p. 58). The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 formally set aside over half the country’s total land area for whites (Copson, 2006, p. 3). White migration, which had steadily grown in the inter war years, declined significantly during the Second World war, only to see its most marked increase after the Second World War when hundreds of demobilized British soldiers immigrated to the country as part of the Rhodesian government’s post-war settlement scheme (Mlambo, 2010, p. 56). “In 1948, a record 17,000 immigrants arrived. Over 100,000 Africans were moved from their lands to accommodate the new arrivals” (Mlambo, 2010, p. 56). Not all immigrants came to farm; they were attracted by other economic opportunities that the rapidly developing Rhodesia could offer and that they couldn’t be assured of back in post-war Britain. The numbers of whites peaked in 1970 at 270,000 but Mlambo argues, this number would have been even higher if not for a restrictive immigration policy towards whites from anywhere other than the United Kingdom (2010, p. 61). Because of such selective immigration policies and because natural population growth was slow—throughout the twentieth century foreign-born whites outnumbered those born in the country (Mlambo, 2010, p. 57)—the white population was increasingly outstripped by the black population. Added to this, a prominent feature of the white population was its relatively high turnover rate, which steadily rose as tensions between the white minority government and black nationalists increased.

The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was formed in 1963, under the leadership of Ndabaningi Sithole, as a break-away movement from the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), which was lead by Joshua Nkomo, and had been

banned by the Rhodesian government in 1962. ZANU's mandate was to agitate for black majority rule from the white minority government (Matshazi, 2007, p. 19–20). The slogan, “the land is ours” was used in the early 1960s by the nationalist movements to gain support and ferment nationalistic sentiment among the black population (Matshazi, 2007, p. 20). Robert Mugabe, born in 1924, was raised and educated at the Jesuit “Christian village” of Kutama Mission in the Zvimba district (Meredith, 2003, p. 20). He trained as a school teacher under the tutelage of Father O’Hea, who told him stories of Ireland’s Struggles against the British. After working at various schools in Southern and Northern Rhodesia, Mugabe took a teaching job in Ghana, where he met his wife, Sally Heyfron (Meredith, 2003, p. 21-24). In May 1960, while visiting Rhodesia so as to introduce his fiancé to his mother, Mugabe joined a protest march against the government’s security forces after the arrest of three nationalist leaders. This marked Mugabe’s entrance into politics. He spent eleven years imprisoned for his political activism. In December 1966, his only son, three-year old Nhamodzenyika (“Suffering Country”) died of encephalitis in Ghana and the Rhodesian authorities refused his petition to attend the funeral. Eventually he escaped in 1975 to Mozambique where ZANU’s armed wing was based. By 1977, he had gained control of the party (Meredith, 2003, p. 37).

Ian Smith, the Rhodesian Prime Minister since 1964 and leader of the right-wing Rhodesian Front, signed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Great Britain in 1965, which sought to entrench white rule. Isolated attacks began in 1966 but full-scale guerrilla war began in 1972 (Copson, 2006, p.3-4) and was fought on two fronts by both the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANU’s armed wing), trained and

supported by China and based in Mozambique (after that country gained its independence in 1975), and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZAPU's forces), based in Zambia and trained and supported by the Soviet Union. This was the Second Chimurenga.

Superficially it appeared that ZANU mostly enjoyed the support of the Shona population while ZAPU enjoyed the support of the Ndebele but this notion of a "a pre-existing unified ideological or political subject that could quickly be mobilised against colonial rule" inevitably came up against "complex processes of historical agency in which nationalist 'unity' and hegemony were always contingent, and were founded on the interplay of different identities, social forces and strategic alliances" (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. xvii). The struggle to form a cohesive national identity from such diverse and disparate groups with starkly competitive agendas was experienced by both the black and white communities. The black population was dissected by various ethnicities with attendant historical grudges; by rural vs. urban lifestyles; by the emerging labour movement which stood in opposition to the nationalist politicians as they sought to entrench a singular national unity while undermining the autonomy of other African associations; and by the small black elite which clung to some hope of a multiracial political landscape.

The whites were equally divided. While the community was unified by race and a sense of a national identity "founded on racialism and an idea of the nation that excluded the black majority" (Alexander, 2004, p. 195), their struggle to find cohesion was affected by class and different national origins so as to make "the emergence of such a Rhodesian identity an uneven and contingent construction" (Raftopoulos & Mlambo,



2009, p. xxiii). The arrogance and cultural chauvinism of the settlers of British stock meant that white society was highly stratified and hierarchical—for example, settlers from Continental Europe and those of Afrikaans origin were considered second class citizens—as well as being divided along political lines as the more liberal members of the white community came up against the elitist right wing. “In the face of such tenuous white unity and the exclusive sense of Rhodesian identity that emerged, Ian Smith’s Rhodesian Front sought what it perceived to be a more universal reference for its racist policies” (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. xxiv) which was the Cold War and the fight against Communism. In the face of this affront, African nationalist movements attempted to build an alternative unified vision of the nation that would subsume all identities and politics below the national level. While this remained a hope,

the discourse and politics of nationalism and ethnicity did not reside at opposite ends of the spectrum but overlapped, contradicted and drew their mobilisation resources from common historical ground. Pre-colonial elements of culture, community and belonging were incorporated, reinterpreted and inscribed in the modernist vision of nationalist politics, and the instrumental manipulation of ethnic politics took place not on the basis of some primordial identity, but on the reconfiguration of past memories, symbols and moral economies. (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. xxiv)

This use of such a limited and limiting idea of nationalism proved to be a pre-cursor to the absurd but powerful use of nationalism in the 2000s. Similarly, the use of violence by the nationalists against perceived ‘stooges’ and ‘sell-outs’ would also become

characteristic of the post-colonial state as violence has been used to suppress dissent. “Such violent confrontation within nationalist parties took place within the context of long-term enmity and struggles between the major liberation parties of ZANU and ZAPU” (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. xxvi). By the end of the 1970s, the legacies of the liberation struggle were broadly ambiguous: “The enormous hopes of building a postcolonial nation had to contend with these divisions and differences, as well as with the formidable challenge of transforming the colonial legacies of structural inequality” (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. xxvii).

Zimbabwe gained its independence on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1980. This first democratic election came after the British mediated a peace agreement at Lancaster House between the white Rhodesian government and the black nationalists who had been fighting for seven years. A new constitution emerged from the mediation process along with the agreement to a ceasefire and democratic elections within three months to elect a majority government. The one area that remained unsatisfactorily resolved was the issue of land. The nationalists wanted the majority government to be able to expropriate unused white-owned commercial farmland to be given to land-hungry blacks but the Lancaster House Constitution stated that land would have to be bought on a willing-seller-willing-buyer basis. Acknowledging that the new government, already inheriting a war-debt of Z\$200 million, would never have the financial means to afford the land, the British and American governments agreed to buy and develop the white-owned lands, without, however disclosing how much money they would provide for the compensation exercise (Mtisi, Nyakudya, Barnes, 2009, p. 165). Under pressure from the leaders of Zambia (Kenneth Kaunda) and Mozambique (Samora Machel), whose countries had been hosting

the political and armed wings of the two nationalist parties for the duration of the war as well as accommodating the spill-over of refugees fleeing the violence, the nationalists agreed to these hastily ‘settled’ issues, which would come “to provide material for contest in the post-colonial era” (Mtisi, Nyakudya, Barnes, 2009, p. 165).

Zanu-PF won the majority in the election with 57 of the 100 seats to ZAPU’s 20. Mugabe kept his guerrillas in the field so they could spread the message: Vote for Mugabe or “the war goes on” (Copson, 2006, p. 5); a handy piece of persuasion that Zanu-PF has used since. Mugabe became Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, promising that

If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interests, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must stand forgiven and forgotten.

(1984)

These words of reconciliation were not, it turned out, intended for the Ndebele. In December 1982, Mugabe deployed the North Korean trained militia, known as the Fifth Brigade, to execute what he coined ‘Gukurahundi’ against Ndebele civilians living in Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces. (‘Gukurahundi’ is the Shona word for the first summer rain that washes away the chaff left from the previous harvest: the Ndebele were meant to see themselves as rubbish that had to be swept away before a new fruitful time could begin (Eppel, 2004, p. 59).) Over the next three years anywhere between 10 000 and 20 000 people were murdered—the exact number of dead will probably never be

known—their bodies buried in mass graves or thrown down disused mine shafts. Isolated attacks continued until Joshua Nkomo, the leader of ZAPU, to end the violence, signed the Unity Accord in 1987, making Zimbabwe a de facto one party state (Eppel, 2004, p. 46) and insuring the subordination of Matabeleland.

‘Informalisation’ of the economy and erratic displays of force were employed as the country headed into its second decade. Structural adjustment in the 90s marked the beginning of a process of informalisation: urban dissatisfaction as a result of curtailed government spending (and growing evidence of corruption and kleptocracy) lead to strikes and protests, provoking a government backlash and then concessions to accommodate a range of informal practices through deregulation and new enabling statutes in a process of negotiation that differed notably from the later autocratic military-style ‘Operations’ used during the 2000s (i.e. Operation Murambatsvina “clean out the filth” and Operation Dzikisa Mutenga “price controls”) (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 270). In 1998, without consulting Parliament, Mugabe sent troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo to prop up Laurent Kabila’s regime at the cost, at one point, of \$1 million a day (in return for which, Kabila handed out mining and timber concessions to Mugabe’s allies). The cost of the government’s involvement in the war in the DRC also contributed to the failures of the structural adjustment programmes.

Mugabe and Zanu-PF continued to ‘win’ every election for the next twenty-five years until, in 2008, Zanu-PF lost its majority in parliament and Mugabe lost narrowly to Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), formally the head of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. The MDC, formed in 1999, offered the first credible opposition to the regime. The MDC’s first victory was the mobilization of a

'No' vote in the 2000 national referendum, through which the government hoped to get the nation's support to change the constitution so as to increase Mugabe's powers and expropriate white-owned farm land. The fast-track land redistribution plan went ahead regardless and 3500 commercial white-owned farms were appropriated, in some cases violently. This was, according to the government, the start of the Third Chimurenga. The intended beneficiaries were supposed to be landless black peasant farmers but all the best farms were given to well-connected members of the ruling party (Meredith, 2003, p. 195-200). The decimation of the agricultural sector is seen as the most significant cause of the collapse of the economy and severe food shortages. Historically-unseen levels of hyperinflation peaked in 2008 at what the International Monetary Fund estimates was 500 billion percent, effectively and swiftly wiping out life savings, making trillion dollar notes worthless and propelling the health and education systems into a state of total collapse (Dugger, 2010).

The MDC contested all presidential and parliamentary elections since 2000. Wide-spread electoral fraud is blamed for the continued leadership of Mugabe and Zanu-PF. According to Human Rights Watch, "Zimbabwe has a history of elections that fall far short of international and regional standards and of government-sponsored repression of opposition parties" (June 2008, p. 2). In the lead up to the 2002 elections for example, Mugabe told delegates at a party conference, "What we are now headed for is real war, a total war...When the time comes to fire the bullet, the ballot, the trajectory of the gun must be true" (Meredith, 2003, p. 226). Finally, in 2008, at the urging of South Africa's then President Thabo Mbeki, the results of the March 29<sup>th</sup> election were to be counted at each polling station and posted immediately outside the venue. This was supposed to

significantly cut any chances of electoral fraud. Zanu-PF suffered their first ever loss of the majority in Parliament but the electoral commission refused to release the results of the presidential election, which the MDC had declared a victory for Tsvangirai. When the results of the presidential election were finally released on May 2<sup>nd</sup> showing that Tsvangirai had received the most votes but fell short of a majority, it was agreed, in accordance with the Constitution, that a second round of voting must be held. This was scheduled for 27 June 2008. Mugabe's Joint Operations Command (JOC) launched Operation MaVhoterapapi ("Whom Did You Vote For?"), which resulted in the murder of an estimated 200 people as well as the beating and torture of 5000 more, and the displacement of about 36 000 people (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The JOC is comprised of the heads of Zimbabwe's security forces: Gen. Constatine Chiwenga of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces; Commissioner General Augustine Chihuri of the police; Happyton Bonyongwe, director general of the Central Intelligence Organization; Maj. Gen. Paradzayi Zimondi of the prison services; and Air Marshal Perence Shiri, commander of the Air Forces, who also commanded the Fifth Brigade during Gukurahundi (Matshazi, 2007, p. 78). Minister of Rural Housing Emmerson Mnangagwa is reported to be in charge of the JOC (Human Rights Watch, June 2008). (Mnangagwa, as Mugabe's security advisor in the early 1980s, was directly involved in the planning and implementation of *Gukurahundi* (Meredith, 2003, p. 63) and he is touted as being one of two in the running to succeed Mugabe.) Neither the perpetrators of the election run-off violence nor those who gave the orders and orchestrated the murders and human rights abuses have been charged or brought to justice.

Four days before the June 27<sup>th</sup> run-off, Tsvangirai withdrew from the contest unable to compete in safety or with any guarantee of fairness. Mugabe declared himself the winner and was inaugurated as President, despite international, regional and local outrage. Mugabe finally agreed to enter negotiations with the MDC in late July after African election monitors concluded that the June runoff was not free or fair and African leaders insisted on talks. A power-sharing agreement, the Global Political Agreement (GPA), mediated by Thabo Mbeki, was signed on the 15th September 2008 with the two parties agreeing to form a Government of National Unity (GNU).

The coalition government was formed on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2009 after the inauguration of Tsvangirai as Prime Minister and Mugabe as President. The ministries of state were divvied up between the parties and even though the Ministry of Finance is now in the control of the MDC's Tendai Biti, the fact that the Ministry of Home Affairs, which controls the police, and the Army are still in the control of Zanu-PF is cause for great concern. The agreement stipulated that over the following eighteen months, a new constitution must be drawn up and elections held in 2011. As of early 2011, there has been little sign that the MDC holds any credible power as Mugabe and his ministers continue to flaunt their disregard for "power sharing." Mugabe has refused to abide by some of the key stipulations of the agreement, namely the need to consult with Tsvangirai over the appointment of the Reserve Bank Governor and Attorney General and the process of drawing up a new constitution has been halted due to continued reports of political violence.

Other recent developments affecting the state of the nation include: The discovery and at first violent exploitation of alluvial diamonds at Marange in north-eastern

Zimbabwe. It has been suggested that Marange holds a larger deposit of diamonds than Kimberley in South Africa. Zanu-PF have already been accused of turning these diamonds bloody after the massacre of hundreds of small-scale diamond miners by the military. It is thought that the funds procured from the diamonds will fill Zanu-PF's until-recently dry coffers and fund violence in the coming election.

After the MDC took control of the Ministry of Finance, the decision was taken to abandon the Zimbabwe dollar, which had become completely worthless, and instead use a variety of foreign currencies, mainly the US dollar and South African rand. This has helped to stabilize inflation (now resting at a reasonable 3.6 percent) and fill once-barren store shelves but not all the population have access or any means to earn foreign currency. Meanwhile, Zanu-PF's Saviour Kasukuwere, Minister of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment, oversaw the passing of the Indigenization Bill, which requires all white- and foreign-owned businesses worth \$500 000 or more to give 51% ownership to indigenous blacks. The passing of the Bill has significantly curtailed investment which had seen improvement since the signing of the GPA (Bell, 2010). A new election will likely be held sometime this year even though many of the stipulations of the GPA have not been fulfilled.

'Informalisation', which began by affecting the economy in the 90s, has now infected all areas of official and institutional life in Zimbabwe. Historian Brian Raftopoulos, in a keynote address at the Conference on 'Political Economies of Displacement in Post-2000 Zimbabwe' in Johannesburg in June 2008, argued that 'informalisation' best describes the results of the economic crisis, its displacements and the broader political effects:



in the Zimbabwean countryside, formal tenure rights had been replaced by political bargaining; in the cities, the contraction of formal employment undercut the union movement, and both parties increasingly depended not on formal appeals to their respective constituencies, but on the deployment of unemployed youth; informality also characterized the greater part of the mass displacements across national borders and states responses to them.

(Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 269)

It is now accepted that “many of the changes of the previous ten years are potentially irreversible: land distribution, the exodus of citizens, the highly militarized state and new patterns of economic control” and that these changes “will have legacies that shape the region for the next generation although the outcomes are still emergent and unclear”

(Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 264).

The historian, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2010), writing for *The Independent*, a South African newspaper, believes that Zimbabwe is “undergoing a generational leap-forward” in that it is at a “crossroads in which the old are dying and the new are being born”. ‘The Crisis’, as he sees it, is that “the old are taking time to die and the new are taking time to be born” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010). In the mean time, however, “monsters have come to the centre of politics, spoiling everything and generating new crises” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010).

What happens when the will of the young comes up against the will of the old? The recent events in North Africa are, of course, prescient and illuminating on this issue. In some cases, the dictator flees in the night “like a broken king” (Eliot, 1936, p. 201); in some, he attempts to hold on to some façade of paternalistic leadership, employing the

appropriate rhetoric and citing any manner of reasons why he should stay; and sometimes, so convinced is he of his right to rule, clutching the country to his chest, saying “mine, all mine”, he will turn his army against his own people and start murdering them until they no longer doubt that he is their father, that he is in charge, that the country is indeed his.

Dictators, like Mugabe, are heavy: obdurate and unmoving, like the stone statues they erect to themselves. Chenjerai Hove (2008) believes that what was fought for during the Liberation Struggle will never be taken away by anybody because, “dictatorships, tyrannies, they are transient” (Hove, 2008, p. 146). He is right, of course, but dictatorships often take a long time to become transient! The millions who have had to go into exile because of Mugabe’s obduracy are, conversely, fluid, fluctuating, transitory, and mobile. Eventually, (surely?) these two opposing states of being, fluidity and obduracy, will clash to such an extent that the dictator will become “transient” (Hove, 2008). Water, after all, can crack and wear away at stone.

Robert Muponde (2004) writes how the regime dictates who counts as ‘Zimbabwean’ but that their definition is rigid and inflexible, and hard as stone: *Zanu PF is the people, and the people are Zanu PF*, in itself an equation that creates an indivisible utopian community. But it is a community of hermetically sealed and time-proofed identities. Mugabe’s is a politics of reconstruction and ‘return to source’, in which there is a clear and vicious selective reproduction of the people in a selectively reproduced and redistributed land-space. This land-space is a tight matrix which is more than a metaphor of the ‘house of stone’, the ancient ruins which are the

eponym of the country. The 'house of stone' is a mindset which is inflexible as it is stony in its seeming timelessness and imperviousness. (p. 177)

What can we hope to build out of this stoniness? What fecundity can be found in Zimbabwe's ruins? I intend that the following study will navigate its way from this wreckage to a possible place of creativity and learning that may be found through articulations of responsibility.

## **Afterword**

### *Departures*

Harare International Airport used to be that scene from old movies: passengers exiting onto the tarmac and those waiting for them standing on the open-air balcony waving and shouting with joy. As a child, it was the most exciting thing going to the airport to welcome relatives and friends. We would rush upstairs to get pole position on the balcony, taking in the thunderous noise of the aeroplanes as they landed and took off and breathing deeply the thick smell of plane fuel. In 1999 though, the Chinese built us a new airport, all shine and gloss and fanciness, with the watchtower built as a replica of the conical tower of Great Zimbabwe, the ruins dating from the middle ages, from which our country takes its name. The old one had become too small for all the thousands of international tourists that visited our country annually. But a year after the new airport was built, the country descended into a chaos from which it has never recovered and our

new fancy airport stands near empty except for a few regional flights. “An international airport only in name” (Gappah, 2009, p. 75), which is sad of course but what is really sad is that for those of us who do still fly into the country, we can no longer walk down the stairs from the aeroplane onto the hot tarmac and look up into the smiling faces of our family waving and shouting on the balcony.

In August 2006, flying out of that empty airport to the States for the first time to start my graduate degree at Teachers College, I was travelling on one of the very last British Airways flights to fly into and out of Zimbabwe—the airline, the last of the international airlines, pulled out of the country for a variety of logistical, commercial, and perhaps even ethical reasons, and now only African airlines fly here. I was seated in the first row of economy and while settling in before take-off I could see and hear the family of four (mum, dad and two young girls, their hair brightly beaded) seated in the last row of First Class. I watched as the parents buzzed and bustled, putting away bags in the overhead compartment, making sure their girls had their toys to keep them occupied, and I noticed that they were African American. Once all was sorted, the Dad turned to the Mum and with a visibly huge sigh of relief said, “Thank god! The African nightmare is over!” Oh dear, I thought cynically, the return ‘home’ to the motherland didn’t go as planned; should have stuck to Cape Town, so much more civilized down there. While the assessment was of course unfair for a number of reasons, the truth of it is that nobody would have enjoyed Zimbabwe in 2006. Even those who were born and raised in the country, called it home and loved it were leaving in their droves. Isn’t that just what I was doing? I was on that plane too.

## Chapter III

### *After words*

But one day we woke to disgrace; our house

a coldness of rooms, each nursing

a thickening cyst of dust and gloom.

Carol Ann Duffy, 'Disgrace' (1993)

In this study, I use 'the Crisis' in Zimbabwe as a site of inquiry into questions related to what happens *after* the rupture caused by political, economic and psycho-social catastrophe. In this chapter, I conceptualize the idea of the scope and possible experiences of this time *after*. I begin just after the catastrophe with the naming of the event and move on to theorize notions of rupture and loss and how those affect temporality.

#### **What's in a word?**

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen a vast majority of the Zimbabwean people suffer as a result of acute levels of political and economic corruption, violence and oppression, resulting in the near-total collapse of the economy; the emigration of an estimated 3 million people (near on a quarter of the total population); the murder of many of those deemed to be a threat to the regime; a cholera epidemic which started in 2008

and resulted in the death of over four thousand people; and one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world (thought to be at 25%).<sup>4</sup> The 2010 Human Development Index, a composite national measure of health, education and income for 169 countries, puts Zimbabwe as the worst places to live (along with Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo) and it is also one of only three countries in the world to be worse off now than it was forty years ago (Dugger, 2010). The economy has almost halved in size; formal unemployment stands at more 90 percent; 1.7 million of the country's 11 million people will need food aid in the coming months; the average Zimbabwean is dead by age 36 down from age 62 in the early 90s; and the country has the highest percentage of orphans in the world. The government has called the events of this past decade the Third Chimurenga but to most everyone else, it is known simply as 'the Crisis.'

The Palestinians have a word for the cataclysmic and defining events of 1948 when they were forced to flee from their homeland. The word is "Nakba," which means "the catastrophe" (Abu-Lughod, p. 79). This word holds all that loss in its two syllables. It is the representative for lives irrevocably changed: for a homeland lost; for communities displaced; for the humiliation and the horror and the mourning. Such words work as markers holding the before and the after together. They have to carry the weight of historical trauma and are therefore heavy with significance. "Nakba" signifies loss; it is the marker of absence, scabbing over the trauma and bridging the rupture because, after

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<sup>4</sup> These are all largely undisputed facts (see UNDP fact sheet for Zimbabwe and epidemiological fact sheet with UNAIDS) although accurate statistics on many aspects of Zimbabwean life are difficult to verify locally.

all is lost, what have you left but words? Or rather, what have you left but the task of finding the words to say it (Michielsens, 2000, p. 186)?<sup>5</sup>

Some words, though, that are used to mark catastrophic events, work as a diversion; a smoke screen to hide what is really going on. The use of the word “Chimurenga” to describe the events of the last eleven years in Zimbabwe is an example of such a diversion. The word itself is ripe for abuse because it is a historically weighty word—it is Shona for “the struggle for independence” and so carries with it the weight of ninety years of colonial domination—and so it is heavy with psycho-social and cultural meaning. In this way, the government is positioning the many losses suffered over the last ten years as something gained rather than lost, or rather they are saying that the losses are actually gains. From my perspective, in so doing, Zanu-PF strive, by illusion and blackmail, to tame the populace. The government’s steadfast insistence that the country is not in a state of crisis but rather in the final glorious stages of the struggle for independence is part of a pervasive and dedicated propaganda machine that uses historical truth to hide the lies motivated by greed and corruption. Brian Chikwava, in his award-winning short story, “Seventh Street Alchemy,” describes the illusion as such:

Several official declarations only perfect the parallel existence of most of Harare’s residents. Officially basic food commodities are affordable because prices are State-controlled. Officially no one starves because there is plenty of food in supermarket shelves. And if there is not, it is

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<sup>5</sup> In Magda Michielsens’s (2000) “Memory Frames: The role of concepts and cognition in telling life-stories”, she draws her research from the experience of having interviewed women in Bulgaria after the collapse of communism and considers the difficulty that these women had in “finding the words to construct the past” (p. 199) after such a “radical rupture in the way they were giving meaning to what had happened in their lives” (p. 195). She describes it as a social process whereby “words lose their power to express earlier experiences” (p. 184) when the ideological context has changed.

officially somewhere, being hoarded by the Enemies of the State. With all its innumerable benefits who would not want to exist in this other world spawned by the authorities—where your situation does not daily remind you what a liability your mouth and stomach are. (Chikwava, 2003, p. 23)

Officially, Zimbabwe is the perfect place to live; the only cause for concern is the shadowy “Enemy of the State,” or more obviously put, the enemy of the struggle for independence. But continual and irrefutable physical evidence to the contrary of every government announcement shatters the illusion, creating a slippage between the official reality and lived realities. Pettina Gappah satirizes this slippage in her short story, “An Elegy for Easterly.” The narrator comments, “If the government said that inflation would go down, it was sure to rise. If they said there was a bumper harvest, starvation would follow. If the government says the sky is blue, we should all look up to check” (2009, p. 38). The weight of the physical reality—barren store shelves, empty grain silos—is hard for the government to consistently deny and so the illusion of “Chimurenga” is also cast in doubt.

But the use of “Chimurenga” to control the people works much more effectively by blackmail and guilt. Because of the historical legacy of the word, the implication is that if you are opposed to the government’s actions, actions which they position as part of the struggle, then you have betrayed the struggle itself and you have betrayed your people and all those who fought and died in the liberation war. Not only are they implying that, “If you’re not with us then you’re against us,” they’re also saying, “If you’re not with us then you’re against us *and* the historical legacy of the fight to end colonization.” Robert



Muonde, the former director of literary studies in the Department of English at Zimbabwe Open University (now living in South Africa), explains:

The Third Chimurenga, better known as ‘the Crisis’, is premised on a platform of political and cultural ideologies that Terence Ranger (2004) has called “patriotic history”. It is a virulent, narrowed-down version of Zimbabwean history, oversimplified and made rigid by its reliance on dualisms and binaries of insider/outsider, indigene/stranger, landed/landless, authentic/inauthentic, patriot/sell-out. The net effect of operating these binaries is the institution of othering as a permanent condition of political and cultural life where ‘difference’ translates unproblematically into ‘foe’. For the other to insist on being different is to invite the title of enemy of the state: it is to invite treason charges upon oneself (Muonde, 2004, p. 176).

### **The abuse of history**

The abuse of history for political gains has been one of the hallmarks of Zanu-PF’s strategy these past ten years; the other has been violent acts of retribution. “The consistent deployment of Goebbels-like impassioned sound-bite politics” is a means to an end, as is “terrorist and mafia-type strategies that include arson, torture, bone-breaking, displacement, and suchlike ‘final solution’ tricks” (Muonde, 2004, p. 177).

The historian, Terence Ranger, upon retiring his Oxford Chair in 1997, returned to the University of Zimbabwe as a Visiting Professor, thirty-five years after he had first

taught there. Once back in the country, he noticed that “In Zimbabwe, history seemed enormously important. The question was—which history for what Zimbabwe?” (Ranger, 2005, p. 219). In a valedictory lecture given in 2001, he spoke of two circumstances in which historical scholarship, which seeks to “complicate over-simplifications” and offers “a plural history” (Ranger, 2005, p. 219) was vitally important for a country. The first was when people were denied a history, which had been the case during the years that Zimbabwe was a colony and ruled by a minority white government. The second circumstance was when you had too much history, which was the case twenty years into Zimbabwe’s independence. “You could have too much history if a single, narrow historical narrative gained a monopoly and was endlessly repeated” (2005, p. 219). In the late 90s and first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there emerged a new variety of State-sanctioned historiography, which Ranger calls “patriotic history” (2005, p. 220). Such a history “resents the ‘disloyal’ questions raised by historians of nationalism. It regards as irrelevant any history which is not political. And it is explicitly antagonistic to academic historiography” (2005, p. 220). The “patriotic history,” which the government espouses, is a “condensed resistance history communicated at various levels, from the relatively sophisticated to the crudely racist” (Ranger, 2005, p. 221).

In the lead-up to the 2005 presidential election, the state-controlled national newspaper, *The Herald*, ran an article which articulated the government’s stance towards the election:

Zimbabwe is a product of a bitter and protracted armed struggle. That armed struggle should serve as the guiding spirit through the presidential elections and even beyond. The right to choose a president of one’s own

choice should not be considered as a mere exercise of a democratic right. It is the advancement of a historical mission of liberating Zimbabwe from the clutches of neo-colonialism. Any other wild illusion about it constitutes a classic example of self-betrayal and self-condemnation to the ranks of perpetual servitude. The stampede for democracy should not undermine the gains of the liberation war. (Quoted in Ranger, 2005, p. 221).

“yellowed news-sheet / shamed by its own print” (2009) is how the Zimbabwean poet-in-exile, Amanda Hammar, describes such propaganda. Shameful, indeed! And hidden beneath such words she writes, “pressed into mud,” is “a mosaic of dried blood / and bone in silent invocation” (Hammar, 2009), which reminds us that, ultimately, the use of the word “Chimurenga” is a call to arms. (What comes after words? In the Zimbabwean context, “blood and bone” (Hammar, 2009) come after words.) If we are to believe the opinion expressed in the newspaper, the electoral process in Zimbabwe is not about universal suffrage or any other such “wild illusion,” it is about war. In positioning ‘the Crisis’ not as something distinct with its own causes and culprits but rather as part of the process of creating “the product” that is their nation of Zimbabwe, it is seen as an extension of the continuing war for independence. Are we really to believe that these last ten years of murder and mayhem are *just* the afterbirth of the postcolonial nation?

One of the most pernicious results of Zanu-PF’s employment of “patriotic history” (Ranger, 2005, p. 220) is a country bound and tethered by the rope of the past: a rope that over time has tied itself into a noose of “twisted nationalism” (Ranger, 2005, p. 225). That “history is [this] nightmare” (Joyce, 1961, p. 34) from which we are trying to

awake reminds me of Walter Benjamin's "angel of history" who is described as looking like he is about to flee, "his wings are spread," but his head is turned and he is staring fixedly back "toward the past" (1968, p. 257).

Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin, 1968, p. 257-258)

Benjamin's use of the word "progress" points to the temporal connotations we have of history: our humanist assumptions imagine history to be a linear process where we consistently move forward on to better things; but the problem with history, of course, is that it leaks out from the discourses that try to contain it. In reality the movement is much more recursive.

Judith Butler explains that there are a series of paradoxes at the heart of the experience of "the temporality of social and political life" (2003, p. 467): "the past is irrecoverable and the past is not past; the past is the resource for the future and the future is the redemption of past" (2003, p. 467). The past is not over, in part, because historical catastrophe is never a clean break: material as well as psychic debris remains. By the force of time, we are propelled into the future while still reeling from the past. Our journey is treacherous as we have to make our way through the "wreckage," (Benjamin,

1968, p. 258) finding ourselves stumbling over the “debris” (Benjamin, 1968, p. 258) of history that is piled up around our feet.

In Amanda Hammar’s poem, “Debris,” the speaker’s gaze focuses in on what has been lost and now “lies scattered / in a desolate wasteland” (Hammar, 2009). The poem mostly reads as a list of artifacts, as if from an archeological dig, of a culture and society now extinct. The descriptions of a “faded blue school dress, pockets / ink-stained, proud hem unraveled;” a “sweat-stained hoe, splintered door,” and “random fragments of glass, iron, clay, thatch” (2009) work to imbue the material debris with psychic loss. The scene is deathly quiet—“dried blood” and “bone” remain in “silent invocation” (2009)—as those who inhabited this life are gone in one way or another. What remains after the catastrophe, to haunt the survivors, is the memory of life as it was before. In the final stanza of the poem, we find “a flame tree’s waxy / orange blossom,” which is “caught in the rusted barbs of a fence” but is “still full with the memory / of its own magnificence” (2009). And it is these memories that haunt the life that comes afterwards. This is where history leaks and can contaminate what is left over.

### **Afterwards**

In her essay, “Return to Half-Ruins: Memory, Postmemory, and Living History in Palestine,” Lila Abu-Lughod recounts the story of her father’s return to his homeland after many years in exile. Her father, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, a noted academic in the U.S., decided to make “*Awda*” (p. 77), the return, after steadfastly refusing to do so for forty years. His decision came after recovering from a serious illness when “he realized

that he might die without ever having seen Palestine again” (Abu-Lughod, 2007, p. 78). For the majority of Palestinian refugees, “cut off from their homes and their pasts” (Abu-Lughod, 2007, p. 78) and living in the diaspora, “memories of home were frozen” (p. 78). Contemplating the significance of memory and Marianne Hirsch’s concept of ‘postmemory,’ which is the term Hirsch employs to describe the transfer of traumatic memory across generations, Abu-Lughod learns that both have “a special valence” for Palestinians “because the past has not yet passed” (p. 79). She rejects any notion that the catastrophic effects of “the Nakba” are over, finished, or past. For Abu-Lughod, Palestinians are still living in the aftermath of the catastrophe. The effects of the “different kinds of losses”<sup>6</sup> (Butler, 2003, p. 467) suffered as a result of that event, continue now:

For the Palestinian catastrophe is not just something of the past. It continues into the present in every house demolished by an Israeli bulldozer, with every firing from an Apache helicopter, with every stillbirth at a military checkpoint, with every village divided from its fields by the “separation” wall, and with every Palestinian who still longs to return to a home that is no more. (Abu-Lughod, 2007, p. 103)

Eva Hoffman’s book *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History and the Legacy of the Holocaust* is about her experiences growing up as the child of Holocaust survivors.

The experience was such that

Everything else was precarious aftermath, or maybe an interregnum. In retrospect I can see that I spent much of my childhood waiting for the war.

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<sup>6</sup> Butler (2003) describes the “different kinds of losses” (p. 468) as being “the loss of place and the loss of time, a loss that cannot be recovered or recuperated but that leaves its enigmatic trace”, as well as the loss that one cannot “get over”, which is the “deliberate act of violence against a collectively” (p. 468).

Waiting for it to manifest itself again, to emerge from where it lurked with its violent ravaging claws. Waiting for danger and destruction, which were the fundamental human condition, to trample the fragile coverlet of peace. (Hoffman, 2004, pg. 4-5)

According to Hoffman, one of the results of catastrophic trauma, even trauma that is transmitted cross-generationally, is a feeling that one's life is fragile; that one's position in the world is tenuous. We learn from J. M. Coetzee's fictionalized autobiography, *Summertime*, that such feelings of "provisionality" (Coetzee, 2009, p. 211) can be transmitted not only through the familial line but more indirectly too, historically even. In the novel, Martin, a friend of the main character, "John Coetzee," is being interviewed by an English biographer who is researching a particular period of the now dead author's life. The biographer has been reading the private notebooks of the author and noted that in one entry the author seemed to be heading in the direction of a discussion of what he thought of his own "white South Africanness" but the notebook entry stops short before saying anything of substance on the issue. The biographer asks Martin why he thinks the author did not elaborate any more on the issue. Martin says that he believes that the author stopped short of exploring his own "white South Africanness" because he held the attitude that his presence in South Africa was "legal but illegitimate" (Coetzee, 2009, p. 209). The presence of whites in South Africa, he says, "was grounded in a crime, namely colonial conquest, perpetuated by apartheid" (Coetzee, 2009, p. 209) and so Martin and John felt themselves to be "whatever the opposite is of *native* or *rooted*... We thought of ourselves as sojourners, temporary residents, and to that extent without a home, without a homeland" (Coetzee, 2009, p. 210). The aftermath, in this postcolonial context,

continues even after there is no one alive who has firsthand experience of the original catastrophe. “His ancestors in their way...had toiled away, generation after generation, to clear a patch of wild Africa for their descendants, and what was the fruit of their labours? Doubt in the hearts of those descendants about the title to the land; an uneasy sense that it belonged not to them but, inalienably, to its original owners” (Coetzee, 2009, p. 210). While it is claimed that this experience of “provisionality” (p. 211) was not tragic, there is, we imagine, still the “enigmatic trace” (Butler, 2003, p. 468) of loss found here because we ourselves cannot imagine living a life “without a home” (Coetzee, 2009, p. 210).

What I find particularly striking about this passage is Coetzee’s use of the word “sojourners” (Coetzee, 2009, p. 201). In the context that is described it does seem especially apposite but it clashes with the perception of what displacement and rootlessness should feel like. (The character, in fact, even describes the experience as “comic” (Coetzee, 2009, p. 210).) A common trope that is used in descriptions of displacement is that of the journey. Considering this, “traveler” or “voyager” connote a much sturdier and more committed intention and type of journey, whereas “sojourner” seems so idle, so spectator-like, more expat than citizen, more tourist than traveler. Coetzee’s character seems to be implying that the “crime” of colonialism made “internal exiles” (2007), to use Hove’s phrase, of white Africans no matter their generation and personal history; they are destined to merely sojourn.

Indeed, in another of Coetzee’s novels, *Age of Iron* (1990), the main character Mrs. Curren is telling the homeless man, Mr. Vercueil, whom she has taken up with (or, who has taken up with her) about her daughter who left the country ten years earlier in



1976 as a kind of personal protest against the apartheid government.<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Curren, who is, in the narrative present, dying from terminal cancer, will not tell her daughter how sick she is because her daughter will not come back anyway: she made a vow, when she “shook the dust of this country from [her] feet” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 139), that she will not come back; will only come back when the men of the apartheid government “are hanging by their heels from the lampposts” (p. 75). Her daughter now lives in America, is married and has two children. Mr. Vercueil, upon hearing this, comments: “So she is an exile?” Mrs. Curren’s response is to say, “No, she is not an exile. I am the exile.” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 76). The point is made that those living in and under apartheid are those truly in exile; it is they who are banished from ‘home’; ‘out of place’. This “crime” that was committed “so long ago that [she] was born into it... it is part of her inheritance” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 164) and according to Coetzee’s characters, some catastrophes are so monumental that there is no clean and reconciled afterwards; there is only the aftermath. Because of this Mrs. Curren feels that despite the fact that she herself did not commit the crime, it was committed in her name, and therefore she has to pay the price and endure the punishment, which she thinks is to live life with a sense of shame “as a touchstone” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 165), with acts of kindness as a means of lifting her “out of this pit of disgrace” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 117).

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<sup>7</sup> Briefly, *Age of Iron* is written as a letter from Mrs. Curren, who lives in Cape Town, to her daughter, who is living in the United States. The writing of the letter is initially inspired by two events, which occur one after the other on the same day: upon returning home from her doctor’s office, where she has been told that she has terminal cancer, Mrs. Curren finds a homeless man sleeping in the alley alongside her house. The homeless man, she later finds out, goes by the name of Mr. Vercueil. Mrs. Curren’s letter offers an account of her remaining days as she tries to understand what it is and what it has been for a liberal, white, educated woman to live through the horror of apartheid. The novel is set in 1986 when the struggle in South Africa against apartheid had all but reduced the country to a state of civil war.

While I can agree with Coetzee's notion of people being forced into a state of "internal exile" (Hove, 2007) while living under political, economic and social conditions that cannot be sustained or countenanced, I am not sure of what the point would be in even considering such notions as the "original owners" (Coetzee, 2009, p. 210) of the land? For example, considering the long history of migration into and out of the Zimbabwe Plateau, as outlined in the previous chapter, who are the original and so apparently rightful owners? How far back in history do we have to go? To the direct descendants of the Leopard Kopjie people 1000 years ago, because those are the first people of this region that we have a name for? Is this the kind of historical debris that we have to contend with? Of course, I am exaggerating to make a point, and while I am not denying that crimes were committed under the name of imperialism and colonialism, it is this very talk of "original owners" and those not of that stock being mere visitors that Mugabe and his propaganda machine use. In calling the events of the last decade the Third Chimurenga, they are historicizing the present by invoking the struggle for independence which began in 1896/97. (I cannot believe that when Zanu-PF chant, "This land is ours", that that is what they really mean; their intention is much more singular, much more individual. What they really mean is, "This land is mine, all mine.")

Considering all this, I must ask again, and this time not rhetorically: Is 'the Crisis' in Zimbabwe just the afterbirth of the postcolonial nation? Is 'this' merely a question of redress? Or is it something much more? Should we white Zimbabweans give up our farms, our homes, our businesses, and our citizenship as payment for a crime that was committed before we were born but was committed in our name? (For many, some or all of those things have been given up, so what happens next?) Would that be the morally

responsible thing to do? As a collective, are we responsible, and so blameworthy for the crime of colonialism? And leading on from that, the next, and more important question must be: How responsible are we for the history we inherit? Certainly, we are implicated because as T. S. Eliot emphasizes, “History is now” (Eliot, 1963, p. 222); we live it every day as “the past is not past” (Butler, 2003, p. 467). Antjie Krog, writing in *Country of My Skull* (1999), her book about South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, describes a similar sense of the weight of colonial history and implies that we will forever be implicated by the history we inherit:

And suddenly it is as if an undertow is taking me out...out...and out. And behind me sinks the country of my skull like a sheet in the dark—and I hear a thin song, hooves, hedges of venom, fever, and destruction fermenting and hissing underwater. I shrink and prickle...And what we have done will never be undone. It doesn’t matter what we do. (Krog, 1999, p. 171)

Krog’s description of ‘history as undertow’ reminds me of our need for history to be a container for all that has “been lost / And found and lost again” (Eliot, 1963, p. 203). We want history to structure the past but we know from experience that the structure is rickety and the container leaks. There is also the sense, again reiterated here, that there is no afterwards, or rather that afterwards there is only the aftermath, and the aftermath can go on and on and on.

Hoffman (2004) takes the title of her book, *After Such Knowledge*, from T. S. Eliot’s poem “Gerontion,” which was written in 1920. “After such knowledge, what

forgiveness? Think now / History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors / And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions, / Guides us by vanities” (1963, p. 54).

Employing personification, Eliot gives history a vindictive and conniving disposition, to which it would seem we humans often and easily fall victim. Shoshana Felman, in *Testimony: Crises in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, says that “History is written in a foreign language, a language that the reader who relies on a translation cannot understand” (1992, p. 160). Felman warns that what “the translator has to give up is the temptation to translate history by making sense of it, that is, by using apologetic or apocalyptic discourse” (Felman, 1992, p. 158). Hoffman knows that, as the inheritor of the history of catastrophe, the responsibility is to *not* “make a nice story out of loathsome cruelty and of piercing, causeless hurt” (2004, p. 15). “Translation thus itself becomes a metaphor for history, not only in that it demands the rigor of a history devoid of pathos, but in that it opens up the question of *how to continue when the past, precisely, is not allowed any continuance*” (Felman, p. 162, my italics). “How to continue” seems to be the right question to ask because even though past events are not allowed any continuance their effects reach out, tentacle-like, and pull us back and push us forward.

Judith Butler (2003) in “After Loss, What Then?” the Afterword to *Loss: the Politics of Mourning* considers the space that is the aftermath of catastrophe:

Places are lost—destroyed, vacated, barred—but then there is some new place, and it is not the first, never can be the first. And so there is an impossibility housed at the site of this new place. What is new, newness itself, is founded upon the loss of original place, and so it is a newness that has within it a sense of belatedness, of coming after, and of being thus

fundamentally determined by a past that continues to inform it. And so this past is not actually past in the sense of “over,” since it continues as an animating absence in the presence, one that makes itself known precisely in and through the survival of anachronism itself. (p. 468)

It is the “animating absence” (Butler, 2003, p. 468) that haunts the present. It is a negative space, which in artistic composition is the space between objects. It is the area of a painting, which contains no contrasting shapes, figures, or colors itself, but is framed by solid or positive forms (OED). If we think of loss in terms of artistic composition, what is lost are the shapes and images that would make up the “positive forms.” In a painting our eye is drawn to the positive space, that is the objects at the center of the composition, but in their absence, our eye sees only negative space and is haunted by what is missing from the picture. It seems that it is the absence of what used to be there, of what should be there that we cannot ‘get over’ and it is experienced as a rupture to our psychic life because the rupture draws a line between before and after. The rupture is the catastrophe, the cataclysm. Various, Butler calls it “the fractured horizon” and “the internal break” (2003, p. 468). Nostalgia, among other feelings and from some conceptualizations, seems to be located at this point. It is a longing for the before: before the event, before the break, before the end, before the knowledge.

Eliot wrote “Gerontion” in the wake of the First World War, and Hoffman wrote *After Such Knowledge* in and about the shadow of the Holocaust and the Second World War, both in their ways considering the ravages of history. For my purposes, considering “the Crisis” in Zimbabwe, it seems to me that Eliot’s and Hoffman’s question: “After such knowledge, what forgiveness?” is the most profound and relevant, if we understand

‘forgiveness’ here in terms of the psychological process of being able to accept and ‘move on’. How do we continue after such knowledge? What do we, those who inhabit the afterlife, do with the knowledge of what has and can be done? What do we do when things come undone?

Accepting that we can never go back far enough to right the wrongs; accepting that the past will never be past and that there is no after the afterwards; accepting that “Somewhere, sometime, something was lost” (Butler, 2003, p. 467); accepting that “a fractured horizon looms in which to make one’s way as a spectral agency, one for whom full “recovery” is impossible, one for whom the irrecoverable becomes, paradoxically, the condition of a new political agency” (Butler, 2003, p. 467); accepting all these things, what might it mean to continue into “this new place” (Butler, 2003, p. 468)? What might it mean for us to live as “spectral agency”? What might it mean for us to live, knowing there is no after, no clean finish, no post-? What might it mean for us to live, knowing all this, but with the promise of there being a “strange fecundity” (Butler, 2003, p. 469) in the wreckage? And what shape and form might that “fecundity” take?

David Eng and David Kazanjian, in the introduction, “Mourning Remains”, to their edited collection of essays, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (2003), believe the task we must set ourselves is that of “mourning remains—mourning what remains of lost histories as well as histories of loss” (p. 1). Drawing on Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940), Eng and Kazanjian, describe their notion of “the politics of mourning” as being a “creative process mediating a hopeful or hopeless relationship between loss and history” (p. 2). Eng and Kazanjian (2003) interpret Benjamin’s “historical materialism” as a process of mourning “the remains of the past

hopefully...to establish an active and open relationship with history”; it is a “creative process” which seeks to animate history “for future significations as well as alternate empathies” (p.1). Rather than blotting everything else out that one knows about the later course of history (the method employed by “historicism” according to Benjamin), historical materialists must bring the past to memory, establishing “a continuing dialogue with loss and its remains—a flash of emergence, an instant of emergency, and most important a moment of production” (Eng and Kazanjian, 2003, p. 1). Eng and Kazanjian introduce their notion of “mourning remains” by acknowledging that what might seem counterintuitive—imputing loss as creative—is precisely the location of their concern: “We might say that as soon as the question “What is lost?” is posed, it invariably slips into the question “What remains?” That is, loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained” (p. 2). Their hope is to encourage a politics of mourning that might be “active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary” (Eng and Kazanjian, 2003, p.2).

Eng and Kazanjian (2003) use Sigmund Freud’s theory of mourning and melancholia to structure their ideas of what hopeful and “continuous engagement with loss and its remains” (p. 4) might look like. In the next chapter, I too will consider Freud’s theory to think about what has been lost and how that loss is being apprehended.

## Afterword

### *Many-headed Monsters*

1997

I remember the exact day that things started to go wrong in Zim. It was the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1997; the day that I wrote my ‘A’ Level Economics exam, which was awful, by the way. I went to school and wrote the three hour paper—Mercy Mutetwa, sitting behind me, cried for the first hour; I wanted turn around and say, “I know how you feel”—and when I got home in the evening there was a nationwide power cut (now this is a common occurrence, not so much then) and my Mum told me that Mugabe had just paid out billions of dollars from the Reserve Bank (money the country couldn’t afford) to the war veterans (yes—from that war thirty years earlier) to assure their support, which had been waning of late. I remember this so well because all three events connected in my mind—bad exam, power cut, war veterans pay out. ‘Black Tuesday’ they came to call it. Or was that the Wall Street Crash? Perhaps it was a Thursday.

2000

During my third year of university in South Africa, the farm invasions started. Angus and I would huddle around the television every night to watch the news—white farm owners and black farm workers were being killed, people were given three months to leave their homes with only their personal belongings while the green bombers and war veterans (nicknamed “wovets”) ran riot. In the neighbouring ‘digs’ lived other



Zimbabwean students. We had very little to do with them and now I cannot even remember their names, although I'm sure one was called Judd. They were what we (derogatorily) call "Rhodies". Rhodies, in our humble estimation, were more often than not of farming stock, and in fact I'm sure the one girl's father was president of the Commercial Farmers Union, an organisation that was much in the news during this time. Rhodies, to those of us who came from Harare, were thought of to be badly-dressed, culture-less, and invariably racist. (True to expectation, the one girl who lived next door dressed so badly that Angus and I couldn't help but make fun of her, behind her back of course.) The only connection that we had with our neighbours was that we shared a maid, Eunnis, who couldn't have been more than five feet tall. She had TB and was old beyond her years; she hand-washed all our clothes. She would tell me how rude the neighbours were to her, how they spoke to her badly. "Typical fucking Rhodies," I thought to myself, "God they make you sick." But remembering all this now, it is the thought that these people, these neighbours, were, while we laughed at their clothes, having their homes violently stolen from them that makes me feel sick.

2005

When the call came, "Leigh Reilly, I am going to kill you. I know where you work" (or something along those lines) I initially found it hysterically funny. I can't really remember his exact words but he definitely knew that I was a teacher at Chisi and it was that part that I found so funny. I had a vision: sitting in my classroom with my wonderful, attentive, and eager sixth formers reading *The Pardoner's Tale*, with this B-

grade movie-quality thug, wielding a weapon, wandering the school grounds, stopping to ask students, “Miss Reilly’s classroom, please?”

2005

How do you live with this going on around you? I read *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* during the opposition-organised mass stay-away; I taught *A Grain of Wheat* during Operation *Murambatsvina*; and when I returned home from work because the police had closed our school and arrested our headmistress, I found Cordy, my domestic worker, enjoying her mid-morning break, sitting in a patch of sun by the back door, drinking a cup of tea, reading my copy of Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country*, which put to mind John, “Poor John,” in Coetzee’s *Age of Iron*, who we are told is “destined to be a garden boy and eat bread and jam for lunch at the back door and drink tea out of a tin” (1990, p. 151).

2006

My parents started their own earth-moving and civil construction company in 1980, the year of Zimbabwe’s Independence. They borrowed some money from a wealthy friend and bought one second hand bulldozer. Two men were hired and trained to work as operator and machine assistant and everything else my parents did themselves. Over the next twenty-five years, the company grew and grew to be the largest, privately-owned civil construction company in the region. And in its twenty-sixth year it was stolen by Zanu-PF. After months of intimidation, including a death-threat, my parents agreed to sell the company for a fraction of what it was worth in Zim dollars at the height of

hyperinflation. The appropriation of white-owned businesses started after the success of the farm invasions. The tactics were more subtle but no less effective. I remember vividly thinking to myself: what is happening to us is too terrible, it is a crime. And there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. My father mourned the loss of his company for two years and then his first grandchild was born.

2006

“How do we vomit out the poison?” asked the man with one eye and no arms. He looked at me. “Do you know how we do it? Do you know how we vomit out the poison that is our anger and hatred and bitter furious need for revenge?”

Seven years ago, while living in Harare, he had received a letter, he had opened the letter and it had exploded in his face. A bomb in a letter—a letter bomb.

Bile. I tasted it in the back of my throat. He looked at me and I didn’t know the answer. How do we vomit out the poison? I don’t know the answer to this question. Panic and fear (or was it revulsion?) induced this reaction in me, a rush of saliva to my mouth, followed by the bitter taste in the back of my throat. Bile rising. I don’t know how to vomit.

A letter bomb robbed him of his eye and both arms and now he asked me, “How do we vomit out the poison before it curdles our insides and we become just like them?” Them? Them who put bombs in letters and cars and subways. Them who strap bombs to their shaved-hairless chests and walk them into market squares and cafes and onto buses and into bars. After being so rudely forced to become something other than what he was before, he wanted to know how to carry on now. Now that he was so dramatically

altered. Afterwards, he wanted to know, how do you carry on afterwards. Can you transform yourself from being an object of history to becoming a subject of history?

Rather jauntily, he wears a navy beret. When his nose itches, he uses his pincers to scratch. Articulated fingers, they move joint by joint. My mind goes blank. I don't know how this man puts his beret rather jauntily on his head. I don't know how he buttoned his shirt this morning. I don't know how he fishes money out of his wallet. I don't know how he eats, or drinks, or writes, or loves and so lives. So no, I don't know how we vomit out the poison.

2011

What do you do with the many-headed monsters in your head?

## Chapter IV

### *Afterlife*

Red hills, and the smell of exile  
 Exile breathing over our shoulder  
 in a race that already looks desperate.  
 Red hills, and the pulse of exile  
 telling us this is home no more.

(Hove, “Red Hills Of Home”, 1985, p. 2)

Chenjerai Hove’s “Red Hills of Home”, published in 1985, describes what he would later come to call, during ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe, “internal exile” (2007). The exile experienced by the peasant community in the poem is created by a radically changing rural landscape in the face of colonial domination (“Yesterday sabhuku Manyonga had the push / of muscular hands on his chest / and now lives in drunken exile” (Hove, 1985, p. 2)) and bullish urbanization (“the nearby sooty homes of peasants / live under the teeth of the roaring bulldozer” (p. 2)), and the attendant effects thereof, such as labour migration to the mines in South Africa (“Father died underground seven rainless seasons ago” (p. 2)). Where once there was harmony with the land: “Father grew up here / tuning his heart / to the sound of the owl” (Hove, 1985, p. 2), there is now only “Red hills and the smoke of man-made thunder / plunder the land under contract” (p. 2). His poem, though, does seem almost prophetic now, considering his own predicament (he

has been in exile for ten years), and the predicament of millions of Zimbabweans living inside and outside the country who have experienced “the smell of exile / Telling [them] this is home no more” (Hove, 1985, p. 2).

In a 2007 interview, Hove quoted the passage cited above and made this comment: “Many years ago I wrote these lines, which remind myself that “the smell of exile” has always been like a vulture hovering over my head, our heads” (2007). For exile to be vulture-like (in that vultures scavenge off the dead), those forced into exile have, in some way, died. This death by exile, Edward Said (2001) explains, in his seminal essay “Reflection on Exile”, is as a result of being “torn from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography,” and so exile is “like death but without death’s ultimate mercy” (p. 174). What does this mean in relation to the Zimbabwean Crisis and the conditions of “internal” and “external” exile’ (Hove, 2007)? If the rupture caused by ‘the Crisis’ is a like a death, then is exile a form of afterlife? And if that is so, how do we continue to live after life?

David Eng, in his essay “Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas” (2003), uses Sigmund Freud’s theories of mourning and melancholia to conceptualize aspects of loss and depression, which attend the conflicts and struggles associated with immigration, assimilation, and racialization. He stresses that “it is important to emphasize that the experience of immigration is based on a structure of loss” and that “when one leaves a country of origin, voluntarily or involuntarily, a host of losses both concrete and abstract must be mourned” ” (Eng, 2003, pg. 16). Sigmund Freud, in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), describes mourning as “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland,

liberty, an ideal, and so on” (1957, p. 125). Where would the many “different kinds of losses” (Butler, 2003, p. 467) suffered because of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe fit in to this definition? Zimbabwe is dramatically different from what it was ten years ago—in some ways it is no longer recognizable—but it is still there. It is not as if the place itself has been swept off the map. It is not lost in a physical sense. I can go home to my country, to my city, to my house. But still, something has been lost.

Finn Stepputat, in a keynote address entitled ‘Studying Displacement: Reflections on States, Sovereignty and Ethnographies of Im/Mobility’, at the Conference on ‘Political Economies of Displacement in Post-2000 Zimbabwe’, held in Johannesburg in June 2008, called the experience “domicide”, which he argued “was apposite as it captured the loss of home, social relations, work, rights, predictability and also ontological security” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 268). “Domicide” invokes not just loss though but something much more violent and catastrophic as it suggests the murder of ‘home’. He discussed in detail the diverse meanings of displacement as a result and cause of “domicide” saying that the term invokes “the fragile link between life and death” and so “invites reflection on the phenomenology of loss” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 268). For most of us Zimbabweans, our lives have been dramatically disrupted by e/immigration and exile whether we live there still or not. We, and yes, “loss has made a tenuous ‘we’ of us all” (Butler, 2004, p. 20), have lost our communities, and our physical, financial, and psychological security. We’ve even lost our planned for futures because the traditional narrative trajectory of our lives has been interrupted and we flounder in the gap between what went before and what has come after versus what was ‘supposed to’ come after. Svetlana Boym (2001), in *The Future of*

*Nostalgia*, describes this as “the unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that became obsolete” (xvi).

Another keynote speaker at the conference in Johannesburg in 2008, Jane Guyer, drew on her most recent research surrounding economies in crisis, specifically looking at Nigeria in the late 1990s. “Guyer reflected that the term ‘displacement’ implied spatial movement, but that the Nigerian modes of survival she had documented did not involve physical displacement. She suggested an alternative metaphor, ‘dislodged’, that could capture profound changes *in situ* that occurred in the contexts of crisis and grief when people were ‘existentially dislodged from ideas about the future’” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 268). Drawing on James Ferguson’s work, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (1999), which looks at the economic crisis in Zambia after the copper price collapsed, Guyer elaborated that “periods of profound economic crisis shake expectations of modernity: “what imagined future trajectory can there be when essentials are suddenly lacking and there is no petrol, no water, no electricity, and when parents are unable to take their sick children to hospital?” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 268). Unable to imagine the future, while scrambling to get by from day to day, can change “not only economic logics, but also the nature of social bonds and the sense of oneself in the world” (Hammer McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 280).

In the Zimbabwean context of ‘the Crisis’, there is a real and profound sense that ‘we’<sup>8</sup> have lost our ‘home’: some literally have lost their homes in that their houses were

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<sup>8</sup> I appreciate that the plural pronoun that I use throughout this section might seem awkward but in this I am persuaded by Judith Butler’s argument in “Violence, Mourning, Politics”, that “Loss has made a tenuous we of us all” (Butler, 2004, p. 20) as referenced earlier. Her intention in the essay is to “consider a dimension of political life” that is exposed to violence and vulnerable to loss (p. 19), and to ask the



demolished, appropriated or left behind after immigrating; some have lost their idea of what constitutes their ‘home’ (for example, ideas of security, belonging, and citizenship); and some have lost elements and aspects that made up the totality of their ‘home’ with the emigration of family, friends and acquaintances. It is in this context that I am drawn to Judith Butler’s expression of the many “different kinds of losses” (Butler, 2003, p. 467) to describe the losses suffered by many Zimbabweans because of ‘the Crisis’. Considering these losses, I would argue that ‘we’ fit into Freud’s definition and are in mourning for “the loss of some abstraction” (1957, p. 125).) Boym (2001) says that what is most missed “during historical cataclysms and exile” is “the 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” (p. 53). Those affinities found in that place helped to define who we thought we were. But here’s the rub: the place is not lost but our place in it is, whether we live there still or not. Those relational ties that once tethered us so tightly have come undone and so, for many, ‘Zimbabwe’ lives forever in our imaginations and devotedly we mourn the loss of that way of life.

Freud explains that “grief involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life” (1957, p. 125), and the experience of mourning is characterized by,

the feeling of pain, loss of interest in the outside world—in so far as it does not recall the dead one—loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love, which would mean a replacing of the one mourned, the same turning

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questions: “Who counts as human?” and “What makes for a grievable life?” (p. 20). She does not assume that there is necessarily a human condition that is universally shared, which would call for a “we”, but rather she assumes, as do I, that “despite our differences in location and history...it is possible to appeal to a ‘we,’ for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody” (p. 20). Working off Butler’s assumption, I use the plural pronoun more specifically in that I assume that many Zimbabweans have during ‘the Crisis’ “despite differences in race, class, gender, age, experience, political affiliation and sexual orientation” experienced some form of loss. I ruminate on the question of what has been lost in the above section.

from every active effort that is not connected with thoughts of the dead.

(1957, p. 125)

The “inhibition and circumspection in the ego,” he says, “is the expression of an exclusive devotion to its mourning” (Freud, 1957, p. 126). Such “exclusive devotion” accounts for the painful, seemingly impossible task of ‘letting go’ or ‘getting over.’

This tendency to tether ourselves to what has been lost illuminates for Judith Butler (2004) “the thrall in which our relations with others hold us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain” (p. 23). This experience of being held captive, of being bound and so in service to our relations with others is most acutely experienced when that person or thing is lost. And so white-knuckled we hold on and make no sudden movements (so inhibited is our ego), and the rope that binds us burns our skin because we fear that if we lose the thing to which we are bound, then we would become unmoored, the rope could unravel and we could simply float away. (But what is it that we are holding on to because what was there is no longer there? We are holding onto absence, left only with negative space.) We are undone by our relations with others, by the loss of our relations with others. “When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do” (Butler, 2004, p. 22).<sup>9</sup>

The ties that constituted many of us as Zimbabweans were ties of nationality, identity and community, and privately, I would argue, our notions and perceptions of

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<sup>9</sup> Butler’s thinking is influenced by the Hegelian notion of relational recognition, which is a psychological stance but also metaphysical and dependent on language. In this we must recognize our “fundamental dependency on the other, the fact that we cannot exist without addressing the other, without in some ways being addressed by the other, and that there is no wishing away our fundamental sociality” (Butler, 2001, p. 93). We exist in relation to the other but there is a danger in only wanting to see ourselves this way. We must accept that we will never see ourselves just reflected in the other because we are always shifting and changing: “no matter how much we each desire recognition and require it, we are not therefore precisely the same as the other – there is an irreducibility to our being, one which becomes clear in the distinct stories we have to tell, which means that we are never fully identified with any collective ‘we’ (Butler, 2001, p. 93).

these markers are still in place. In fact, it could be argued that in ‘losing’ these ties, or as a result of the threat of ‘losing’ these ties, the experience of ‘the Crisis’ has in some ways made these ties even stronger; white-knuckled we’re holding on. But ‘officially’ and in the public, bureaucratic space these ties have been severed because you can only belong if you toe the party line and fit a narrowed, prescribed definition of what constitutes a ‘real’ Zimbabwean. As Brian Raftopoulos explains:

In former settler societies in which race has been a central signifier of political and social identity, compounded by a global environment in which this category has been hardened, race “and the hard-won, oppositional identities it supports are not likely to be lightly or prematurely given up” (Gilroy, 2000, 12). In Zimbabwe the crises over the legacies of colonial rule and post-colonial legitimacy have certainly hardened state politics around the race question. The result has been an extraordinarily prohibitive conception of national belonging and a severe closing of spaces for discussion of citizenship, economic transformation and democratization. (Raftopoulos, 2004, xix-xx)

And in Zanu-PF’s Zimbabwe, belonging is not only dependent on race but also on political affiliation, sexual orientation and place of residency. In this way, the idea of home and one’s place in it, for many millions of Zimbabweans, has been undone.

It is this coming undone, that as Butler explains, “often interrupt[s] the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide” (2004, p. 23). Our narratives falter in the midst of the telling because what has been challenged is “the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control” (2004, p. 23). How can I tell any story about

who I am or where I am going while knowing that I have very little control over that story? Finally, we do not just lose that person or that place, we also lose ourselves, our 'old' selves, our conception of ourselves because loss forces us to recognize that agency is a "spectral fantasy" (Butler, 2003, p. 467). And with this terrible knowledge we have to go on.

If we come undone, how do we tie ourselves up again, and do we want to? Freud initially assumed that "the absorbing work of mourning" (1957, p. 127) would be successfully completed when our grasp of the ties that bind us begin to slip. Overtime, he assures us, the rope will go slack and fall down about our feet and we will be able to grab hold of some other rope as we transfer our affections elsewhere (1957, p. 125-127). Freud maintained that mourning involves "the testing of reality" (1957, p. 126), a long and painful process that often results in an intense struggle, forcing the mourner to turn away from reality and cling to the lost object "through the medium of a hallucinatory wish-psychosis" (1957, p. 126). While we mourn, "the existence of the lost object is continued in the mind" as all of "the memories and hopes which bound the libido to the object is brought up and hyper-cathected" (Freud, 1957, p. 126). All of our mental energy is concentrated on re-living and reviewing the past and because of this, while grieving, "the world becomes poor and empty" (Freud, 1957, p. 127). In the case of exile, I see this devotion to mourning and fixation on what has been lost (i.e. the exile's home) as a contributing factor to the exile's inability to assimilate. Said describes this as "The sheer fact of isolation and displacement, which produces the kind of narcissistic masochism that resists all efforts at amelioration, acculturation, and community" (2001, p. 183). In this way, exile is a jealous state: "Clutching difference like a weapon to be

used with stiffened will,” with the exile insisting on “his or her right to refuse to belong” (Said, 2001, p. 182).

David Eng (2003), however, believes that those who immigrate struggle to assimilate not because of the processes of mourning but because they are in a state of melancholia. “In contrast to “normal” mourning, where libido is eventually removed from a lost object to be invested elsewhere, melancholia as described by Freud is a “pathological” mourning without end” (1957, p. 16). In leaving one’s country of origin, losses of homeland, family, language, property, identity, custom, status are irrecoverable and so Eng places immigration within the framework of melancholia:

a state of suspension between ‘over there’ and ‘over here.’ In Freud’s theory of mourning, one works through and finds closure to these losses by investing in new objects and ideals. One’s inability to invest in new ideals, i.e. those that belong to the host country, either because of one’s “outsider” status or because of one’s own sense of “otherness” means that one cannot ‘get over’ it and actively set about the “work” of mourning. (Eng, 2003, pg. 16)

Judith Butler (2003), too, wonders if mourning can ever be thought of to be successfully completed. She makes reference to Freud, and describes his first theory<sup>10</sup> as pointing to a “promiscuity of libidinal aim” (p. 21). She cannot imagine that once one has completed the work of mourning one is simply able to pick and move on to a replacement. She thinks, in contrast, that “one mourns when one accepts that by the loss

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<sup>10</sup> Freud changed his mind on this aspect of his theory of mourning. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud explains that the ego itself is constituted through the remains of abandoned object-cathexes, meaning that the work of mourning is not possible without melancholia. The ego is composed of “the residues of its accumulated mourning” (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p. 4).

one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever”; one must submit oneself to a transformation “the full result of which one cannot know in advance” (2004, p. 21). Mourning is an unplanned for and unknowable process. Life now takes place in this foreign terrain for which we have no map or compass, and the latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates are Hallmark clichés. We learn how to mourn. It is not something instinctual. It is a skill learned over time-spent living.

Eva Hoffman in *After Such Knowledge* (2004) explains that Freud, in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), “makes the suggestive observation that in order to accomplish the natural process of mourning—to grieve and then move on—you have to know what you have lost. If you do not know what the lost object is, then mourning can turn into a permanent melancholia, or depression, as we would call it today” (p. 72). Melancholia, as Eng (2003) explains, is “a psychic condition whereby certain losses can never be avowed and, hence, can never be properly mourned” (p. 16) and if they can’t be properly mourned then how can they be got over? Or are they, as Butler believes, merely submitted to? Hoffman (2004) explains that “emigration is an enormous psychic upheaval under any circumstances” because

It involves great, wholesale losses: Of one’s familiar landscapes, friends, professional affiliations; but also of those less palpable but salient substances that constitute, to a large extent one’s psychic home—of language, a webwork of cultural habits, ties with the past. Perhaps even ties with the dead. (p. 80)

She wonders what we do with the losses from which it is impossible to recover, which reminds me of Said’s observation, in “Reflections on Exile” (2001), that exile is a

“condition of terminal loss” (p. 173). There is perhaps deliberate ambiguity here because terminal in this context can be understood in a variety of ways. He could be describing the finality of the loss (but are not all losses final?), or he could be saying that exile is the final loss—the ultimate loss after many losses. Or does he mean that this kind of loss is terminal, as in lethal? This use of such a temporal descriptor is ambiguous precisely because the loss experienced by those in exile is a loss that is never-ending: “like death but without death’s ultimate mercy” (Said, 2001, p. 174). Death is more kind in that it is an event: once someone has died, those who live on can busy themselves with the “work of mourning” (Freud, 1957, p. 127), knowing that there is no going back, no hope of a return. But for the person in exile the “unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” (Said, 2000, p. 173) feels like a death but there can be no active work of mourning until one knows for certain that one will never go home. And how can anyone ever give up on the hope of return? It is the waiting that makes this kind of loss so cruel, so painful, and perhaps so “terminal.” It is the indefinite postponement, the endless deferral of one’s life as one waits to go home that can be terminal.

“Let’s wait and see...” we Zimbabweans often say (too often, I wonder?). There’s been a lot of waiting over the last eleven years and so many could wait no longer and so they left, emigrated, exiled themselves so as to get on with their lives. But many are still waiting. Some certainly have ‘moved on’ and made lives for themselves but many have not been able to for a variety of reasons from the practical to the psychic. “Processes of exclusion have generated a sense of limbo among many of those who have left Zimbabwe find themselves unable or unwilling to settle elsewhere” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau,

2010, p. 264). And those who have not been able to ‘move on’, continue to wait and see when they can go home; vacillating between hope and despair, living off hope and memory. In *A Grief Observed* (1961), a collection of observations written from notes taken in the months following the death of his wife, C. S. Lewis begins by commenting: “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear” (p. 5). Over time he finds that grief continues to feel like fear, or “Perhaps, more strictly, like suspense. Or like waiting; just hanging about waiting for something to happen. It gives us a permanently provisional feeling. It doesn’t seem worth starting anything” (Lewis, 1961, p. 30). He believes that grief feels like suspense because of the “frustration of so many impulses that had become habitual....” And where there were “So many roads once; now so many *culs de sac*” (Lewis, 1961, p. 41). Lewis’s experience of grief as something similar to “hanging around and waiting for something to happen” (1961, p. 30) seems more akin to Freud’s observation that the process mourning involves turning away from the world and fixating on the lost object so that one is immobile and in this sense waiting for the time when you’ll be able to concentrate on something else. Whereas the ‘waiting and seeing’ that many of us Zimbabweans have experienced seems more akin to a melancholic state: being unable to move on and get over because we ask: “what has been lost and will we get it back?” Eng and Kazanjian, in “Mourning Remains” (2003), see melancholia as a “confrontation with loss through the adamant refusal of closure” (p. 3) and so “the past remains steadfastly alive in the present” (p. 4). This, Eng and Kazanjian believe, is the work of “mourning remains” productively and creatively—allowing for the losses of the past to continually be negotiated and apprehended.



Amanda Hammar, in her poem “Partitioned” (2002), explores the condition of exile, evoking imagery of death, and speaking to this sense of aimlessness:

I cross continents  
 inhabit heartless landscapes to escape the ache of exile  
 a persistent dead-weight  
 like stones in my shoe  
 stubbornly kept there so as not to forget  
 the Other Place

the Otherwhere full of watchful ghosts now  
 and I am one too  
 an eager shadow  
 seeking not revenge but the right of return  
 as ancestors do

Her descriptions of the condition of exile are of an afterlife: a world inhabited by “watchful ghosts” and “ancestors”. Life is now aimless habitation in “heartless landscapes” (Hammar, 2002); “*culs de sac*” instead of roads (Lewis, 1961, p. 41); the limbo-like, melancholic state of an “eager shadow” (Hammar, 2002). Andre Aciman, in his essay “Shadow Cities” from the book *False Papers* (2000), evokes a similar aimlessness, attributing it to the exiles’ inability to re-root because of the damage done to their concept of home and the loss of that abstraction:

They may be mobile, scattered, nomadic, dislodged, but in their jittery  
 state of transience they are thoroughly stationary. It is precisely because

you have no roots that you don't budge, that you fear change, that you'll build on anything, rather than look for land. An exile is not just someone who has lost his home; he is someone who can't find another, who can't think of another. Some no longer even know what home means. They reinvent the concept with what they've got, the way we reinvent love with what's left of it each time. Some people bring exile with them the way they bring it upon themselves wherever they go. (2000, p. 39).

Said another way: "exiles" have "two homes in the wrong places" (Aciman, 2000, p. 152). Is it this very homelessness that is unwelcome? Is it this homelessness, this loss of the abstraction of home, whether we live there still or not, suffering internal or external exile, that we can't name and so can't successfully mourn? Or are we stuck with something else? Is it instead, merely, a pathological nostalgia?

I wonder, in the context of the Zimbabwe Crisis, what the difference is between mourning and melancholia and nostalgia.<sup>11</sup> Do I prefer to consider the terms 'mourning' and so 'melancholia' as a mourning without end simply because as Svetlana Boym (2001), in *The Future of Nostalgia*, puts it, "Nostalgia is something of a bad word, an

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<sup>11</sup> Nostalgia, from the Greek *nostos*, to return home, and *algia*, a painful feeling, is defined as the state of being homesick, or a wistful, excessively sentimental yearning for return to some past period, or irrecoverable condition (Merriam-Webster). First coined in 1688 by Swiss physician, Johannes Hofner, nostalgia was thought of as a disease. Returning "nostalgics" to their homes was thought to be the cure for the condition (Hirsch & Spitzer, 2002, p. 255). Over time, the perception of nostalgia changed and by the mid-nineteenth century, it was no longer considered a medical condition (Hirsch & Spitzer, 2002, p. 258; Miller, 2009b, p. 14). Its core definition has remained as a 'longing for home' but nostalgia has been taken up as a concept by a number of different disciplines. In some articulations, the understanding of nostalgia now includes a sense of loss for ideas, places/civilizations, and times (Miller, 2009b, p. 14 – 16). Svetlana Boym (2001) explains that "nostalgia goes beyond individual psychology. At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams" (p. xv). For this reason, nostalgia can be prospective as well as retrospective (Boym, 2001, p. xvi) and it is this that Boym says must make us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales: "Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory" (p. xvi).

affectionate insult at best” because it is thought of as “an abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming” (p. xvi). (This is certainly true in the white Zimbabwean context. As journalist Sean Hunter Christie writes, “Any hint of nostalgia will be met by pained groans of ‘When-we!’” (2009). ‘When-wes’ are classified as white expatriate Zimbabweans who talk constantly of the good old days “when we lived in Zimbabwe...” To be called a ‘When-we’ is a great insult.) But is there a more subtle difference between mourning, melancholia and nostalgia, besides this baggage that nostalgia carries around with it? There certainly is a difference between the connotations of nostalgia as a ‘longing’ to return home, which seems so passive, while mourning is described as “labor” and “work” (Freud, 1957, 126). Boym, who describes two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective, does not necessarily see a distinction between reflective nostalgia as “a form of deep mourning that performs a labor of grief both through pondering pain and through play that points to the future” (Boym, 2001, p. 55) and mourning. Reflective nostalgia “thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately” (Boym, 2001, p. xviii). While this form of nostalgia can create “a new kind of space that plays with the past and the present” it also understands that “the labor of grief...could take a lifetime to complete” (Boym, 2001, p. 55), which also seems melancholic in its devotion. Restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, does seem reactionary and manipulative as it “stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home” (Boym, 2001, p. vxiii). Boym (2001) tells us that this type of nostalgia does not think of itself as nostalgia but rather the (heavy, ponderous and conflicted) concepts of “tradition” and “truth” (p. xviii).

If one can't ever go 'home', to that original place, then must one become at home in the experience of the "labour of grief," or reflective nostalgia, or melancholic existence? Andre Aciman sees the movement of traffic as an accurate metaphor to describe the homeless and nostalgic psyche. This kind of movement,

captures the confused, back-and-forth, up-and-around, congested nature of ambivalence, of love, and of nostalgia. Traffic captures the bizarre nature of the psyche, where the dominant motion is one not so much of ambivalence as of perpetual oscillation. The *true* site of nostalgia is therefore not a land, or two lands, but the loop and interminable traffic between these two lands. It is the traffic between places, and not the places themselves that eventually becomes the home, the spiritual home, the capital. Displacement, as an abstract concept, becomes the tangible home. (2000, p. 139)

He borrows from Heraclitus, calling this traffic-like movement "palintropic".

"Palintropic" means that which "turns again and keeps turning," which loops back or "turns back on itself" or is backstretched" (Aciman, 2000, p. 139). "*This*," he suggests, "is the seat of nostalgia, perhaps not its origin but certainly its end point" (Aciman, 2000, p. 140). And to live there is to construct the world as palintropic because everything is now other:

My home is a counterhome, and my instincts are counterinstincts. Yet this is my home, my emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual home. Exile, nostalgia, a broken heart, and other profound reversals mean nothing

unless they induce a corresponding set of intellectual, psychological, and aesthetic reversals as well. (Aciman, 2000, p. 140)

Considering these iterations of the experience of exile, whether internal or external, I would imagine that there are moments and times when all ‘conditions’ have been experienced and are being experienced almost simultaneously—mourning, melancholia, reflective nostalgia and restorative nostalgia—such is the effect of such a radical rupture. James Clifford, writes in his essay “Diasporas” (1994) that the experience is such that “Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed, painful yearning” and the result is a “sense of rupture, of living a radically different temporality” (p. 318). This experience would surely induce all manner of nostalgic longings, while also having to work through mourning, and while not being able to ‘get over’ certain aspects of the experience because within it is contained many “different kinds of losses” (Butler, 2003, p. 467): material, existential, psychic, physical, aesthetic.

So what does it mean to live within this non-linear time, having realized that agency is a spectral fantasy (Butler, 2003)? What would it mean to live without a homeland? How do we learn to live with thinking and feeling ‘out of place’? Is this now our task, our responsibility? What can be learnt from constantly feeling like a stranger lurking outside the house? If homelessness is the new home of the exile, because we know that “in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional” (Said, 2001, p. 185), can we learn to live without feeling rooted? “Exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one’s native place; what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both” (Said,

2001, p. 185). The experience of this kind of loss becomes “the condition and necessity of a certain kind of community, where community does not overcome the loss, where community *cannot* overcome the loss without losing the very sense of itself as a community” (Butler, 2003, p. 468) but becomes a “new place” of belonging. Here perhaps is where we must, despite being “marked for life” (Butler, 2003, p. 472) by our loss, find fecundity in the wreckage (Butler, 2003).

### **Communities “lost / And found and lost again” (Eliot, 1963, p. 203)**

A common sense of what has been lost because of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe are the communities that had come to make up a significant part of our lives. As a result of the “extraordinary exodus” (McGregor, 2010, pg. 3), communities no longer had the requisite population to sustain themselves and for this reason, whether we live there still or not, our communities, or perhaps I should say, our notion of our communities, have been dismantled. It is the loss of those people with whom we shared “elective affinities” (Boym, 2001, p. 53) that shakes us as those people found in that place helped to define who we thought we were. It is this aspect of community that is often so alluring and, of course, so oppressive. Tethered as we are by the relational ties to such communities, however false and arbitrary, we believe: These are my people, this is where I belong. It is, Marilyn Friedman (1995) explains, “a social conception of the self... which acknowledges the fundamental role of social relationships and human community in

constituting both self-identity and the nature and meaning of particular individual lives” (p. 5).

Sociologists call the communities we are born into “communities of origin” (Friedman, 1995, p. 295). Made up of family, neighborhood, school, it is, in most cases, the community about which we have no choice. Friedman (1995), in her essay, “Feminism and Modern Friendship: Dislocating the Community,” distinguishes between communities of origin and “communities of choice,” which are “found” (p. 295): a union, or a support group, a political coalition, or a research community. The important distinguishing factor here for Friedman (1995) is that people are motivated to join or form “communities of choice” because of their “own needs, desires, interests, values, and attractions” (p. 295) and I would argue, their changing circumstances.

Our romanticized notions of community are in part born of two powerful connotations of the term. One is to be rooted and the other is to share. Communities are formed when something is shared. It can be, for example, “sharing common cultural or ethnic identities” or “a group of people who share the same interests, pursuits, or occupation” (OED). This ideal of sharing something, of being in sync, is linked to the other powerful connotation of the notion of community and that is to be rooted. In sharing something we feel we have found a person or group to which we belong and in belonging we are rooted. Through these affiliations we come to identify ourselves or are identified as such with that group. “We desire to think things together in a unity, to formulate a representation of a whole, a totality” (Young, 1995, p. 234). We are family; we’re from the same town; we believe in this but not in that: “we” is such a powerful pronoun. It can be

so attractive, so comforting, but can and has in many cases also been very oppressive and exclusionary because if there's a "we" then there's also a "them." When "we" get together, who is left out? The manipulation and ferment of group identities and affinities can and has lead to all manner of oppressions of those deemed outside of the sacred "we". Iris Marion Young (1995) writes, in "The Ideal of Community and The Politics of Difference," "The desire to bring things into unity generates a logic of hierarchical opposition. Any move to define an identity, a closed totality, always depends on excluding some elements, separating the pure from the impure" (p. 235). This unity is always a fiction (Miller, 2009a); a face put on to meet the many faces that we meet (Eliot, 1963, p. 2). Young (1995) argues, "The ideal of community presumes subjects who are present to themselves and presumes subjects can understand one another as they understand themselves. It thus denies the difference between subjects" (p. 234). We gloss over the fact that communities are made up of many-varied individuals. And while Friedman's delineation of communities into ones of origin and choice may be helpful as a descriptor, it does, I believe, of course polarize and works into the dichotomy of one being "better" than the other. The distinction is arbitrary because all communities are made up of "selves" who are opaque to themselves as much as they are opaque to each other (Butler, 2005). And so oftentimes, not only are the outsiders left out but the insiders are left out too. There is perhaps nothing as lonely as feeling like an outsider from the inside out.

It is the denial of our differences that can be so oppressive. Janet Miller (2009a), in a response essay, entitled "'Communities Without Consensus': Musings



on Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez's 'Toward Creative Solidarity in the 'Next' Moment of Curriculum Work'", describes working with the group who were reconceptualizing the field of curriculum studies in the 1970s. Miller (2009a) recalls at first being "disturbed by such fissures, and then recognizing the necessary and contingent differences among that loosely organized group" (p. 96). She came to recognize that what was needed in that community, in any and all communities, was a "riotous array of theoretical stances" (Miller, 2009a, p. 96). Accepting divergent and conflicting views from within one's own community can be an uncomfortable experience. Young (1995) describes difference as "the irreducible particularity of entities, which makes it impossible to reduce them to commonness or bring them into unity without the remainder: such particularity derives from the contextuality of existence" (p. 236). Miller (2009a) wonders how we might become comfortable with such difference; how we might become comfortable with ambiguity and ambivalence from within. She envisions "communities without consensus" (Miller, 2009a, p. 96), which is an "active refusal to construct any universal notions of 'selves,' 'collective,' or 'solidarity'" (p. 96), thus enabling representations to be "unfixed, mobilized, destabilized, and released as forces capable of recombining in as yet unimagined and perhaps untraceable ways" (Miller, 2009a, p.100).

Communities drawn together by a common sense of loss have additional complexities. Whether communities of "origin" or "choice" (Friedman, 1995, p. 295) or some "new place" (Butler, 2003, p. 468) altogether, how those members are mediating, responding to and experiencing their loss, both individually and

collectively, will influence the politics of the community, which is already riddled by differences. Where grief is often thought to be privatizing, Butler (2004) believes that loss could furnish “a sense of political community of a complex order” (p. 22), which it does by drawing to our attention the “relational ties” (p. 22) that illuminate our “fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility” (p. 22). If this could be a consequence of grief, what kind of responsibility could be learnt? Would it be individual responsibility or collective responsibility or both? And if it is collective responsibility, is it to the new community, or to something that exceeds the community? In the Zimbabwean context, could a community founded on a sense of loss, become responsible for that loss, for the nation, or just for itself? These complex questions will be given attention in the last chapter, but I do wish to summarize, in conclusion, that how the losses of “internal” and “external” (Hove, 2007) exile are mediated, reflected upon, and narrated will influence not only how the experience is lived but also what can be done with it afterwards. Mourning, melancholia, and the different kinds of nostalgia will influence how the exile lives with exile.

Accepting that “my account of myself is partial” and that “my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision” (Butler, 2005, p. 40), the Afterword that follows allows me to read my ambivalent and shifting place within a so-called community of origin (an expatriate group of Zimbabweans) from the inside out. In the next chapter, I write about a very different kind of community, one of ‘choice’ in that it is a diaspora community. My intention, in part, is to reflect on the individual experience of exile and community from an

autobiographical point of view in the following Afterword, and then reflect, in the next chapter, on the collective experience of exile in the diaspora by reading critically a report of a gathering of diasporans in London in June 2009.

### **Afterword**

The following tale was based on the observation of a group of wedding guests. The group observed is from a white Zimbabwean community who live or used to live in the wealthy Northern Suburbs of Harare, known in some circles as “The Golden Triangle.” Those of the group who no longer live in the country are referred to as “When-wes,” which is a colloquial term for a once indigenous white inhabitant of the country Zimbabwe, now living elsewhere, so called because they regularly start a conversation with the expression, “When we lived in Zimbabwe...” (Please note: “when-wes” must not be confused with “been tos”, which is a colloquial term for black Zimbabweans who have studied or trained in the West and so have “been to Britain...”) The study was conducted in Harare, Zimbabwe on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2007. The natives were observed from approximately 4.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. during the cocktail hour, known locally as “sun downers.” The hour was spent as a fully participating wedding guest. My role as researcher was not made explicit. While this raises obvious ethical concerns, I took the decision to masquerade as a fellow guest, so as to allow the subjects to speak freely in my presence. The conversational data are drawn primarily from naturally occurring encounters with other guests. Since I did not use a tape recorder, the conversational data are only as accurate as memory, ear, and Pimm’s allow.

No formal interviews were conducted (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 55). Final note: The title of this tale is borrowed from Samuel Taylor Coleridge because, like the Ancient Mariner, “till my ghastly tale is told” about this wedding guest “This heart within me burns” (Coleridge, 2005, p. 12).

### *My Ghastly Tale*

The When-wes are in town. All here for the big wedding. They’re gathering like hyenas around a decaying carcass. To be fair, they do fall into two distinct categories: those who belittle the country and try to make you do the same and those who long to come home, who yearn for it, and imagine it to be the place it was ten years ago. Some hold home on a pedestal, while others knock home off its high horse and stamp it into the mud of their disappointment.

Those who have stayed express varying degrees of derision, irritation, even fury towards the When-wes (but never to their faces of course). “Who are they,” they think, “to have an opinion at all! And when things come right, do they presume that they can just waltz back in here and enjoy the benefit of all that we’ve stayed and fought for?” For some who have left, they pity the poor, backward lot who didn’t get out: “Such hicks, so uncouth, wouldn’t even know how to navigate the underground!”

Contested ground, indeed. And all this, stirring at the wedding, like Yeats’s “rough beast” after “things fall apart” (1965, p. 27), while we watch the sun retreat behind the Msasa-covered Chishawasha Hills, Pimm’s in hand!

“It is surreal, just surreal to be here,” says the (ex-) Zimbabwean who has lived overseas for ten years, “Don’t you think it surreal?” he asks me again getting on my last nerve.

“No,” I reply.

“I mean, all this expense, the food and the booze, while the country’s collapsing. You must admit it is obscene.”

Obscene, really? That seems a little strong, I think to myself. And if they had decided to celebrate their wedding outside of the country, like you did, would it really be any different? If they had spent thousands of dollars for as lavish a wedding but in a foreign land, would it really be any different? Really? Why is celebrating here more reprehensible? Why is living more contested? Should we just lie down and play dead? Or behave like that antelope (what’s its name?) whose only line of defense is to freeze like a statue in the face of danger? They have weddings in Afghanistan you know.

His wealthy American wife, a few days earlier: “Harare’s such a village, a small provincial village, the way you’re all in each other’s business.” She went on to call our landscape “dry and ugly.” We’d just had winter for fuck’s sake! (I think I hate her and I’ve only met her once. Hate’s a strong word, my mother says.)

His mother sidles up; she now lives in South Africa, “So tell me what you’re up to?”

“I’m studying for a doctorate in New York. I’m enjoying it. A little unsettled at times with all the travelling back and forth. And I’ve no idea what I’m going to do with it afterwards!”

Said fiercely, while she grips my arm, “You mustn’t come back here. You mustn’t waste yourself on this place.”

Mustn’t waste myself on this place? This place is my home. If I were to be laid to waste anywhere, surely it should be here. Here in this land of drought and fever; here in this land of “red hills, and the pulse of exile / Telling us this is home no more” (Hove, 1985, p. 2).

## Chapter V

### *Aftermath*

“Whenever we Zimbabweans in Lilongwe get together, we invariably end up talking about home. I assume that is the case with Zimbabweans in other parts of the world.”

(Mphisa, July 2009).

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2009, Morgan Tsvangirai (leader of Zimbabwe’s opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change, and, after the protracted election battle of 2008, now the country’s Prime Minister to Mugabe’s President) addressed over one thousand exiles living in London. Tsvangirai’s arrival at Southwark Cathedral was met with cheers and ululations: for many he is a hero figure, having fought, always peacefully, a brutal regime for ten years as the leader of the lone opposition movement. With the formation, in February 2009, of the transitional Government of National Unity (GNU), which has resulted in the opposition party taking control of some of the government ministries, and knowing that Zimbabwe’s revival is, in part, dependent on the return of the skilled workers living ‘elsewhere,’ Tsvangirai had come to London to call the diaspora home. Once he made the declaration: “Zimbabweans must come home,” the mood in the cathedral shifted dramatically. The call to return, one that has been ardently longed for, was met by jeers and booing, angry shouts and “sucking of teeth” (Logan, 2009). The Prime Minister brought his speech to an abrupt end and walked out of the cathedral. The fallout saw the various UK-based Zimbabwe advocacy

groups blaming each other for the turn of events with speculations that certain groups had plotted the disruption. The Zimbabwean news websites were filled for days with accusations being flung back and forth as well as sobering editorials wondering what went wrong.

The swift change of mood illuminates James Clifford's (1994) description that, "Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension" (p. 312). Tsvangirai is a symbol of hope for many people: hope that the situation in Zimbabwe will change (the MDC's rallying cry is *Chinja Maitiro*, which means "change in the way things are done"), hope that Mugabe will be toppled, hope that one day the diaspora can go home. And yet, when the call came, it was met by anger and resentment, distrust and despair. In this chapter, I will 'read' this event and the fallout through the lens of diaspora discourses and articulations of the experiences of exile, asking: What is diaspora consciousness? How is the diasporic condition different from the condition of exile? And how is it the same? What happens to the relations within the diaspora community when the "myth of return" is threatened? What happens when the existential crisis, typical of "ideal" diasporas, becomes 'merely' a logistical one? If one doesn't want to go home, how can one retain a myth of return, which is a defining characteristic of diasporic existence? Can the events in the cathedral add to our understandings of the tensions and (perhaps necessary) ambivalence that diaspora communities live?



## Definitions of diaspora

“Diaspora,” which means, “to scatter about, to disperse,” historically describes the “the exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands” (Safran, 1991, p. 83). The Jewish Diaspora is seen as the “ideal type” and their experience has been used to read other experiences of dispersal and scattering. William Safran (1991), in “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” recognizes that today, the term “seem[s] increasingly to be used as metaphoric designations for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*” (p. 83) and “lest the term lose all meaning” (p. 83) he offers a comprehensive definition which covers the experience of dispersal: the communal memory of the homeland; feelings of (self-imposed?) alienation in the host country; belief in the possibility of an eventual return home; a collective commitment to the restoration of the homeland; and continued relations, in some form, with the homeland (p. 83 – 84).

James Clifford (1994), in his essay “Diasporas,” similarly feels that the term is “loose in the world” (p. 302) as a result of “decolonization, increased migration, global communications, and transport”, in other words “a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations” (p. 306). Not wanting to limit diaspora discourse, something he sees as “travelling” or “hybridized”, by relying too strictly on a definition of an ‘ideal type’, he draws on Safran’s definition but distills ‘the essentials’ of diaspora as: “a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for

eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (Clifford, 1994, p. 305). Clifford (1994) goes on to make important distinctions between immigrant communities and diaspora communities—the former can be defined by a desire for assimilation into the host nation, something diaspora communities do not desire because their “sense of identity is centrally defined by collective histories of displacement and violent loss” which “cannot be ‘cured’ by merging into a new national community (p. 307)—and between the conditions of diaspora and exile—exile being the individualistic experience of leaving and subsequently longing for one’s home, while diaspora is the communal and collective experience (p. 308).<sup>12</sup> Despite his desire to tighten the meaning of the term, Clifford admits that in this age, “all or most communities have diasporic dimensions (moments, tactics, practices, articulations)” and while “Some are more diasporic than others,” he believes it possible “to perceive a loosely coherent, adaptive constellation of responses to dwelling-in-displacement” (Clifford, 1994, p. 310).

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<sup>12</sup> Nico Israel, in *Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora* (2000), makes a more specific distinction between the terms. While both “exile” and “diaspora” distinguish “two overlapping ways of describing the predicament of displacement”, he explains that exile, which in literary and cultural studies is most closely associated with literary modernism, “tends to imply both a coherent subject...and a more circumscribed, limited conception of place and home”, whereas diaspora, which he sees as being more closely associated with “the intersection of postcoloniality and theories of poststructuralism” by contrast “aims to account for a hybridity or performativity that troubles such notions of cultural dominance, location, and identity” (p. 3). McGregor (2010a) explains that while both terms hark from ancient times, predating the modern state, and are prone to romanticisation, distinctions are seen in that the idea of diaspora is broader than that of exile, and exile denotes an act of banishment, while diaspora can invoke a degree of choice (p. 10-11). She concurs with Clifford’s assessment that exile is a more individualistic experience while diaspora is intrinsically collective, however, she claims that in the Zimbabwean context, those who have mobilised as ‘exiles’ have been able to breach this individualism and “use it as a shared identity and as a basis for broader solidarity campaigns” (McGregor, 2010a, p. 11). She further distinguishes between the two terms, explaining that “While being in exile often suggests little about the duration of time abroad or the relationship with the host land, the term diaspora implies a degree of embeddedness in the country of residence (even if clearly also estrangement)” (McGregor, 2010a, p. 11). Some Zimbabweans, McGregor (2010a) tells us, have rejected the term ‘diasporan’, instead choosing ‘exile’, because it can convey ambivalence about the reality of return (p. 11).

Susan Stanford Friedman (2009) simplifies the definition even further, describing diaspora as, “migration plus loss, desire, and widely scattered communities held together by memory and a sense of history over a long period of time” (pg. 9). Of Friedman, I wish to ask: How long is a “long period of time”? For those who long to return home but cannot, a year can feel like millennia.

Considering these articulations of ‘diaspora’, how does the Zimbabwean experience ‘fit’ the definition? Sarah Logan, a Zimbabwean friend, attended Tsvangirai’s meeting at the cathedral in June and wrote a descriptive narrative of what took place, which she posted in a public forum on Facebook. Her description, entitled “Ishe komborera Africa!” gives an on-the-ground, in-the-crowd description of what took place.

The Bishop welcomed us into his cathedral, closely linked with 4 out of the 5 dioceses in Zimbabwe, and pointed out to us the portrait of the first Zimbabwean Anglican martyr, Bernard Mizeki, on the pulpit, and the map of Zimbabwe on the wall of the church. The map is made out of earth from various parts of Zimbabwe, he told us, and continued to say that his church prayed for Zimbabwe and its people every single day. He called for the meeting to start by the singing of our national anthem, and as the singing drifted back to where I was standing, I realised that people were singing 'Ishe komborera Africa', Zimbabwe's old national anthem, instead of our new one 'Simudzai Mureza'. Ishe komborera is a beautiful anthem, the Shona version of South Africa's Nkosi Sikelel' iafrica, and the anthem I associate with happier days in Zimbabwe, when it was peaceful and prosperous. Then we prayed together, hundreds of us packed closely

together. We prayed for Zimbabwe and its people and for Morgan Tsvangirai on the loss of his wife.<sup>13</sup> (Logan, 2009)

“Diaspora cultures work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions” (Clifford, 1993, p. 317). The community building “work” was done at the cathedral meeting by three things: making reference to the soil of Zimbabwe, the singing of the ‘old’ national anthem, and the communal prayer for the home country. The map of Zimbabwe made from soil from different parts of the country works in creating that sense of community and ‘homeland’ because it evokes for the attendants what has been lost and what is worth returning to. Clifford (1994) reminds us that, “rootedness in the land is precisely what diasporic peoples have lost” (p. 310). The political act of choosing to sing the old national anthem, which translates as “God Bless Africa,” rather than the more recent and overtly nationalistic anthem, also works to remind the audience of a time before the rupture. Singing “Ishe komborera Africa!” brings with it attendant feelings of nostalgia, which importantly are not just for the lost place (as the map of soil evokes) but also for a lost time. This disjuncture between time and place is important to keep in mind when theorizing the diasporic condition: exiles desire to go home but they desire to go home to a different time, which can be past or future, but not present. Svetlana Boym (2001) describes nostalgia as both seductive and manipulative (p. xviii) and I would argue that the nostalgia at work in the singing of the old national anthem is what Boym would call “restorative nostalgia.” This kind of nostalgia “stresses *nostos* (meaning to return) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home” (Boym, 2001, p.

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<sup>13</sup> Less than a month after Tsvangirai was sworn in as prime minister of the unity government, he and his wife, Susan, were involved in a car accident just south of Harare. She was killed and he sustained neck injuries. Immediately suspicions were raised and calls were made for the crash to be investigated. Prominent Zimbabweans, who pose any sort of threat to Mugabe’s regime, have a history of dying in ‘car accidents’ (Fuller, 2011, 71).

xviii). Finally, the work of community-building is done through communal prayer for the homeland. I imagine that all of these elements would have made for a very moving start to the proceedings but also they could have worked to bring cohesion, at least for some, to a very large of group of ethnically, racially and socio-economically diverse Zimbabweans.

### **Diaspora and responsibility**

Sarah admits that “there was a strange tension in the air” as people were “uncertain about how the meeting would go.” The reception to Tsvangirai’s opening comments was warm. He told the crowd that “he knew most of [them] had not come to the UK voluntarily, coming as political and economic refugees, and that, given the opportunity, most of [them] would go back to Zimbabwe as soon as [they] could” (Logan, 2009). Leaving one’s homeland can carry with it feelings of betrayal.<sup>14</sup> While the remittances that Zimbabweans in the diaspora have sent home have been of vital importance to their families and the economy at large (the International Organization on Migration estimates that in 2007, 7.2% of the country’s GDP was derived from remittances (IOM, 2009)), in leaving one also leaves one’s on-the-ground responsibilities, which include the personal, such as the care of family members, but also

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<sup>14</sup> In a recent blog post on Sokwanele.com, an online forum that also gathers the latest news from Zimbabwe and documents state abuses of power, blogger ‘Glow’ wrote, “I am a Zimbabwean who has lived out of Zimbabwe for 10 years now. Though this is hardly an unusual revelation, I do somehow have the sense that I am making a guilty confession. I retain something of a deserter’s sense of shame. The shame of having left a sinking ship. The guilt of having left friends and family behind. Of course, there are none who leave Zimbabwe without losing a part of themselves” (Glow, 2010). Petina Gappah, award-winning author of a collection of short stories entitled *Elegy for Easterly*, also speaks about feeling guilty for being outside of the country, especially “when you have dinner party conversations where people say, ‘Oh, those Zimbabweans, why aren’t they getting rid of their tyrant? They should just go out on the streets.’ Yeah, but where are you? In Geneva” (2009b).

political and civic. Safran (1991) acknowledges that “While the homeland myth exists, however, it is exploited for a variety of political and social purposes by the diaspora, the homeland, and the host society” (p. 92). Tsvangirai, importantly, begins his speech by recognizing the very hard decisions that those in the diaspora have had to make.

Recognition of their predicament, which is an element of the diasporic experience—the choice to leave is very rarely a choice at all—is a savvy move, especially as he means to play on their sense of responsibility and harness their economic and political power.

Considering that “It is certain that without significant return migration there is little hope of sustained economic recovery in Zimbabwe” (Crush and Tevera, 2010, p. 16), the relevant and urgent question that must be asked is: What is the responsibility of the diaspora to its homeland? Does the diaspora, as a community, have a collective responsibility to its home nation that supersedes responsibility for individual personal safety and well-being? Is what is good for the greater number of people more important than what is good for oneself and one’s family? Taking into account the fact that many of those who left Zimbabwe were obliged to do so because they were responsible for their families, we must ask: What is the distinction between obligation and responsibility?<sup>15</sup>

Tsvangirai declared, “Zimbabwe is changing for the better, and that change is for you and me to ensure that we can build a Zimbabwe together” (BBC, 2006). Despite smacking of political rhetoric, he does make a valid point: more change “can” happen if the collective “we” make it happen. To some extent, this is a numbers game. In the 2008 election, Tsvangirai won 47.9% of the vote, missing the required majority by 3.1%. If a significant portion of the diaspora returned by the next election, surely Tsvangirai would

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<sup>15</sup> The last chapter, *Afterwards*, deals in depth with questions of responsibility.

win an outright majority. (This, I know, is a rather pointless argument because it is reliant on too many unknowns and assumptions: if the diaspora returned, would they even be on the voter's roll and if not would they be able to register to vote; would they vote for Tsvangirai and if so, is Tsvangirai the answer to our prayers?). Whose responsibility is it to make that change happen? Can the diaspora, with any legitimacy long to return home without helping to create the conditions conducive to return?

Blogger 'Glow' (2010), in a recent post "When will the Zimbabwean diaspora return?" on *Sokwanele.com*, explains the experience of living in the diaspora as feeling like an unmoored ship bobbing on "foreign seas, waiting for a storm to clear so that they can one day make their way home. Of course, we have been bobbing on those foreign seas for years now. The storm has still not abated." As mentioned in the previous chapter, Zimbabweans are well-known for "waiting and seeing." The reaction of the audience in the cathedral to Tsvangirai's call to return was an expression of great frustration but were they not also saying that it is too soon to tell if they can come home; they will have to 'wait and see'. Glow (2010) asks provocatively, "How long I can responsibly *wait* for change?" Feeling that the diaspora are waiting for someone else to solve their problems is a significant issue at the heart of the "love/hate" (Magaisa, 2006) relationship between those who've left and those who've stayed. Is not this kind of waiting an abdication of political responsibility? Is it not cowardice? Glow goes on to cite Ghandi's call to be the change you want to see in world but confesses that she does not know what "being the change really looks like for the Zimbabwean diaspora" (2010).

Is it enough, she wonders that the diaspora engage in various forms of activism overseas and send back their monthly remittances?<sup>16</sup> She rightly wonders,

*how* real change can come in Zimbabwe when such a large part of its wealthiest, most skilled and educated populace live and invest in faraway places... It certainly does not seem legitimate to stand outside, awaiting a new day whilst expecting someone *else* to make the sacrifices that will bring it... Can one exist as "diaspora" forever? There surely comes a time when storm or not, we must either anchor where we are or else turn our ships and steer them homewards. (Glow, 2010)

Tsvangirai went on to speak about the progress that the MDC had made working in the difficult confines of the new political dispensation—schools and hospitals had been reopened, he announced, which cheered the crowd. But upon hearing him claim that “their success includes having made Zimbabwe peaceful and more stable” the audience

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<sup>16</sup> In 2005/2006, it was estimated that half of the families in the two major cities in Zimbabwe were in receipt of remittances from workers in the diaspora (Raftopoulos, 2009, p. 223). In fact, the high volumes of remittances kept the economy grinding along for a number of years (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 14). However, Zimbabwean emigration has had serious implications for the country’s economic growth and development as it has led to significant human resource shortages in key sectors (IOM, 2009). Therein lies the double irony: “Without the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, migration would not have reached the volume that it has. In turn, migration (through remittances) has staved off the worse aspects of that crisis for many households” (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 37). While it cannot be denied that without the remittances the country’s economy and many of its residents would have been in dire, life-threatening situations, researchers remain skeptical about the long term benefits of remittance payments. This is because they are used solely for basic needs (food, school fees, healthcare) rather than for savings and investment in productive activity (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 14). Recent studies have emphasized the importance of remittances but have also begun to provide evidence showing how they can contribute to inequities. For example, households in Zimbabwe’s affluent suburbs receive more than those in the high density suburbs and are disproportionately dependent on funds from relatives in the West rather than in the region. The Solidarity Peace Trust shows the limits to remittances in the region by drawing attention to the rural households who have no relatives abroad or received little or nothing at all from family members in South Africa, particularly if migrants had departed recently and lacked longer-standing connections (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 266). Celia Dugger, Southern Africa correspondent for the *New York Times*, while investigating a story of a rural hospital in Zimbabwe that (literally) accepts peanuts as payment for health care met a woman, Esther Chirasasa, who is quoted as saying, “It’s very difficult to get this famous dollar that people are talking about” (2011).



starting “jeering and heckling, hurling at him examples of continued violence and assaults” (Logan, 2009). Once the verbal assault had died down, thanks to the intervention of the Bishop, Tsvangirai continued, “saying that the MDC was doing all they could to fulfill their continuing goal of making Zimbabwe safe for its people to live in” (Logan, 2009). He made it clear, Sarah writes, that “Zimbabwe needed the skills of those living in the diaspora to rebuild [the] nation,” to which most of the audience agreed.

"Zimbabwe is changing," he said, and "Zimbabweans must come home". The heckling and shouting started up again, louder than before. A lady next to me yelled, "When you bring your own children out of exile, we'll go back!" and those around her yelled their agreement. (Logan, 2009)

A call deserves a response. The response to the call in this situation is supposed to be the return, or at least the assent to return. But the response of this one particular woman shows that a return would not even be a consideration until she saw further evidence of real change in the country. This seems to be the location of the double bind: the diaspora will not go home unless significant political and economic change takes place, and significant political and economic change will not take place unless the diaspora go home. “While the Zimbabwean diaspora remains intensely interested in their home country and follows events there with great assiduity, many in the diaspora are profoundly hostile to the political regime in power. Supporting struggling families at home is one thing. Engagement in any other activity that might be deemed supportive of – or co-optable by – Mugabe is not” (Crush & Tevera, 2010, pg. 19). To some members of the diaspora, the fact that some of Tsvangirai’s children are living ‘elsewhere’ is

evidence that he himself does not believe in the progress of the unity government. There must have been the sense that he was being disingenuous in his assessment of the situation back in Zimbabwe. Was he really saying: Do as your leader says, not as he does?

Tsvangirai is in a difficult position: As the leader of the opposition movement, how does he shift his stance and discourse, now that he is a member of the government, without seeming insincere? For years he has decried the oppression and violence of the state and now as a representative of that same state, he has to make believe that the situation has significantly changed. He has to re-brand the country to the diaspora, who in (large?) part could hold the power to turn the country around, by glossing over the reality of the excesses of state, the very reality that brought him to power in the first place. Is he then not also guilty of obfuscation? Who must he be most responsible to now: his party, his movement, or his government?

Despite this, I do think that the reaction to the call to return illuminates the tensions and ambivalent sentiments of those who inhabit the diaspora. Diasporic consciousness is, in part, founded on the myth of return. “The myth of return serves to solidify ethnic consciousness and solidarity when religion can no longer do so, when the cohesiveness of the local community is loosened, and when the family is threatened with disintegration” (Safran, 1991, p. 91). If the diaspora is a product of dispersion, the myth of returning to one’s origin works to cement the dispersed individuals into a community that shares similar origins and experiences of loss and displacement. The reaction of the Zimbabwean audience to Tsvangirai’s call to return is illuminating and shocking in that it disrupts the myth of return. “Some diaspora persist” Safran writes, “and their members

do not go ‘home’—because there is no homeland to return to; because although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically, or socially; or because it would be too inconvenient and disruptive, if not traumatic, to leave the diaspora” (p. 91). It is important that return is spoken of as a “myth” rather than a “goal” or “ambition.” I can understand it being described as a “myth” for those who will never be able to return, as in the case of the Jewish Diaspora, but what if the reasons for not returning are logistical rather than existential? Does that make the “myth” any less alluring? Or any less legitimate? I find interesting the range of words that Safran uses to describe the reasons for not returning: “inconvenient,” “disruptive” and “traumatic.” Emigration is very traumatic. Eva Hoffman (2004) writes that it involves “enormous psychic upheaval under any circumstances” (p. 80) and for some I would imagine that the thought of disrupting their lives and moving again would be far too traumatic.

Writing after the event for *allAfrica.com*, one of the many online Zimbabwean news sites that have sprung up in the last ten years, Farayi Maruzani (2009) tries to understand what went wrong at the cathedral and why. He believes that the audience became so upset because many of them were asylum seekers and they feared that if the British Home Office heard of Tsvangirai’s assessment of the situation, their asylum applications would be refused. (In the last six months, both the British and South African governments have ended the temporary measures they had imposed to allow illegal migrants and failed asylum-seekers temporary leave to remain in their countries because they feel that the humanitarian and political crisis is over.) “Some people want to bring their families to the UK which is only possible if they get asylum—something they feel is

being threatened by Tsvangirai's statements. Many Zimbabweans expected Tsvangirai to actually come and assist them to get asylum by demonizing Mugabe and painting a bleak future for the inclusive government” (2009). Tawanda Takavarasha, writing for the *Harare Tribune*, after Tsvangirai made another call to the diaspora to return in Cape Town on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2009, says, “Most Zimbabweans abroad are afraid to come home, thinking that the shaky GNU deal might collapse and leave them stranded in a country where there is no rule of law” (2009). To ask someone to return to a place of trauma and fear just because ‘your country needs you’ is a lot to ask, especially when you cannot offer them assurances of safety and well-being. And so an equally important and urgent question must be: What is the responsibility of the homeland to its diaspora? Tsvangirai cannot legitimately appeal to the diaspora’s sense of responsibility without addressing the responsibility of the homeland in return. I believe that the antagonized response of the audience in the cathedral articulated, at least in part, this perceived discrepancy.

Phil Matibe, writing for the *Zimtelegraph*, describes the lives of Zimbabweans living in the US, numbering over fifty thousand, according to the US State Department:

This Diaspora grouping is now accustomed to and anchored in unavoidable capitalist consumerism social habits that are an indispensable feature of the fast-paced life in the USA. Drive through banking, fast food courts and the emergency (911) number that promptly triggers the response of an efficient ambulance, fire or police service within minutes have become second nature. (Dec 2009)

Immigrants change the communities they move to; just as they themselves are changed by those communities. Matibe's comment speaks to the fact that the return is sometimes not possible because the journey and relocation has changed the individual; a transformation has taken place. This can be a cause of confusion and anguish though because yearnings for home, which can be very powerful, must live alongside the painful realization that one no longer 'belongs' or 'fits in' at home; one has grown accustomed to another way of life. In Leon and Rebecca Grinberg's *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (1984), they detail the realities of the process of return as such:

The nature of an emigrant's return to his home country is as variable as the subject's personality, the duration of the absence, the many motives of returning, and the circumstances of the return, as well as his success or failure in accomplishing the objectives of the original migration. Yet the inescapable fact is that no return is solely a return; it is a new migration, and as such implies all the fears and hopes that characterize migration. Those who return are not the same people they were when they left, and the place they return to is not the same place. (p. 215)

The idea of a glorious return is always an impossibility—it is known as a “myth” after all, not a “fact.” Clifford (1994) reminds us: “In diaspora experience, the copresence of “here” and “there” is articulated with an antiteleological (sometimes messianic) temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed, painful yearning” (Clifford, 1994, p. 318). What is longed for is the remembered future and the romanticized past and there is no return trip there.

## Diaspora and trauma

When the heckling did not die down a second time, Tsvangirai abandoned his speech and allowed for the Q & A to begin. He was asked what he was doing about the traumatized people in Zimbabwe; he was asked not to forget them and to do all he could for them. “He responded saying that he would not forget them, and, after all, if anyone had been traumatized, it was him”<sup>17</sup> at which point, “People started screaming that he had not been as traumatized as many had been, with a woman yelling, "Were you raped? No!" (Logan, 2009). For me, these comments point to a tendency to ‘grade’ experiences of trauma, which takes a qualitative assessment of loss and trauma, in which the implicit question is: whose loss counts the most? In considering the vulnerabilities of our bodies, Judith Butler, in *Precarious Life* (2004), asks the political question: What makes a grievable life? She believes that the experience of loss should work to make us feel more like a community in the world; “loss” she says, “has made a tenuous ‘we’ of us all” (Butler, 2004, p. 20). “Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation...But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties” (Butler, 2004, p. 22). We live amongst each other and in that way we are dependent on and ethically responsible to and for each other. Butler (2004) wonders if there is a way that we can strive for autonomy while simultaneously considering the demands of “living in a world of beings who are, by definition, physically dependent on one another” (p. 27). She

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<sup>17</sup> Tsvangirai has suffered a number of attacks from the ruling party’s security forces: once he was strung out of the window of his 10<sup>th</sup> floor office building, only to be pulled back in when his unsuspecting secretary walked into the room (Meredith, 2003). In 2007, he was also tortured while in police custody for trumped-up treason charges (Raftopoulos, 2009, p. 228).

wonders if there is “another way of imagining community” (Butler, 2004, p. 27). When Tsvangirai responds to the question about the people in Zimbabwe who have been traumatized by insisting on his own trauma, he is speaking from a privatizing position, as is the woman, who undermines his trauma by implying that it ‘could have been worse’, in her estimation, sexual trauma would be worse than the physical torture Tsvangirai is known to have experienced. It certainly does not seem, drawing from this example, that an awareness of the vulnerability of our bodies can help us form “a political community of a complex order” (Butler, 2004, p. 22). The community that uses its losses as a place of gathering should be a place of understanding but oftentimes, I imagine, it is rather a place of measuring and grading.

I would not want to discount Butler’s theory too soon though. By this stage, the situation in the cathedral was already fractious so I imagine that people spoke from that place of frustration. (And perhaps the fractious nature of the event is itself an aspect of “a community of a complex political order” (Butler, 2004, p. 22).) Also, there is a political and social precedent in Zimbabwe, dating from the Liberation War, which uses individual victimhood as a badge of honor and token of belonging. Robert Muponde (2004) sees the privatization of victimhood as a direct consequence of the how the political structures in Zimbabwe have been used in the past.

There is a way in which the nightmares and traumas of the past, whether experienced individually or collectively, are invested as an insurance policy against present and future power shifts. It is necessary therefore for Mugabe’s party to invest in ritualizing the memory of past victimhood. It

is no wonder that ownership of past victimhood is privatized by Zanu PF, and is 'passed on' via totemic and lineage politics. (Muponde, 178)

It has become a situation, in certain political and social spheres, whereby you can't really belong unless you have battle scars: unless you fought and were wounded in the fight. And added to all this, I would say that there is a limit to how much we can share with one another.<sup>18</sup> C. S. Lewis (1961) understood this after the death of his wife:

There's a limit... You can't really share someone else's weakness, or fear, or pain. What you feel may be bad. It might conceivably be as bad as what the other felt... But it would still be quite different... It can't be transferred. The mind can sympathize; the body, less. (p. 13)

Despite these qualifiers, I am still persuaded by Butler's theory. I myself have certainly found that if I happen upon a fellow Zimbabwean while 'overseas' there is an instant and warm recognition and connection. The second question that is always asked after "where are you from?" is "when did you leave?" And these moments of recognition have been indiscriminate. There is a deeper and more subtle recognition (I'm sure of it), beyond what would ordinarily be experienced if the circumstances were different, if we were on holiday in a foreign country, for example, and happened upon a fellow tourist of the same national origin. There is certainly a recognition of the loss that has been shared; a recognition of a shared melancholy. Alex Magaisa, writing for *NewZimbabwe.com*, says that words fail to capture the emotion of this kind of meeting: "You shake hands and you smile at each other – the connection is more than physical" (2010) and it inevitably leads to a sharing of stories about "the trials and burdens of living far away from home" and a

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<sup>18</sup> A Zimbabwean friend, now living in Cape Town, said to me in April 2009, six years after she and her family had left the country: "You can only cry with someone who left at the same time as you."



sharing of reasons why one left in the first place. In these instances, there is a sense of community formed through feelings of empathy and compassion, knowing that the other person shares your experiences. Recalling this, I do wonder (and hope) if the experience of diaspora could teach us to appreciate and acknowledge that all lives are grievable; that all losses count. I do think that if those community meetings are carefully mediated, diaspora could help to unify people isolated by trauma.

I see the clash between Tsvangirai and members of the audience also being a result of conflicting notions of temporality. Tsvangirai is implying that ‘the Crisis’ is over and so it is time to come home as there is work to be done. His linear and reconciled projection of events antagonizes those in the audience who have no sense that anything is over. The clash is a result of these conflicting ideas of the time span of the aftermath. Those in the diaspora and with/out are still living within the aftermath of current abuse, state terror, displacement and exile. There is, for them, therefore, no sense that anything is over or finished; they do not yet consider themselves to be living after ‘the Crisis’. In Tsvangirai’s estimation, the worst is over but for those he is addressing who live ‘elsewhere’, the diaspora is the aftermath.

### **Diaspora and class**

“After the jeering wouldn’t stop, Tsvangirai stepped down from the podium and refused to continue with the meeting” (Logan, 2009). The fallout saw Zimbabwe Vigil and Restoration of Human Rights (ROHR), two UK-based Zimbabwean advocacy groups, and various online Zimbabwean news sites hurling accusations about who was to

blame for the disruption of the meeting. Alex Magaisa (2009), a political analyst and lawyer based in the UK, wrote about “Tsvangirai’s Fateful Western Voyage” for the *Zimbabwe Standard*. He calls the scene in the cathedral the “biggest blemish” on Tsvangirai’s trip, which also saw him trying to secure funds from Western nations. Magaisa takes pains to assure his readers that the hecklers were just “one section of the crowd” and he wants the Prime Minister to know that “the heckles do not necessarily represent the homogenous views of all the Zimbabweans living in the diaspora. Indeed, contrary to general thought, the diaspora is not a homogenous entity...their concerns, fears and interests may meet at times but they are not necessarily uniform across the board” (Magaisa, 2009). He continues: “At the risk of sounding elitist, with all due respect, the call of the PM is very relevant to certain segments of the diaspora—the skilled and professionals—but not all and it would have been well-received and discussed sufficiently by that type of audience” (Magaisa, 2009). He admits to having this privileged information because he “works[s] with many Zimbabweans who have shown a critical interest in playing a role in rebuilding the country. They appreciate that when the Prime Minister calls for people to return home, it is not a literal call for people to pack their bags to return home instantly” (2009). (Indeed, when Tsvangirai returned to the pulpit after first stepping down in the face of the jeering, he said, backtracking rhetorically, ““I did not say ‘pack your bags tomorrow,’ I said you should be thinking about coming home”” (Sokwanele, 2009, June).)

While Magaisa’s observations may very well seem elitist, despite his not wishing to appear so, he does draw our attention to the lived realities of any diaspora community, which is the fact that it is not homogenous. “Diaspora communities should not be

understood as reified groups with a fixed essence, but as the outcome of historical, political and cultural processes through which ideas of belonging come to be defined primarily in terms of attachment to a distant homeland and shared national imaginaries” (McGregor, 2010a, p. 6). McGregor (2010a) feels it important to stress this distinction as some leading experts, in her opinion, employ the term in an “essentialised manner” whereby they specify that there is neither invention nor imagination. Instead she draws on the work of Turner (2008) who researched Burundian diaspora communities and argued that the term ‘diaspora’ is more appropriately used as an adjective rather than a noun, though in Zimbabwean discourse it is only used as noun and oftentimes it is also capitalized, “as if it were an ethno-national group or country itself” (McGregor, 2010a, p. 6). McGregor (2010a) prefers using the term as an adjective because she feels that it has a “more fluid alignment” (p. 6) permitting an examination of why some people do not consider themselves part of the diaspora, or the circumstances that encourage or discourage diasporic positioning, and the tensions and movements within diasporic communities. “Particularly when produced in the context of conflict, diasporic communities are characteristically fractious and riven, partly along imported political and social divides, partly frustrations and differences opened up in countries of settlement” (McGregor, 2010a, p.6-7). The Zimbabwean diaspora is fractured and fragmented so that any generalizations about a singular diaspora can be profoundly misleading and problematic.

Alex Magaisa’s (2009)<sup>19</sup> comments also draw our attention to the diverse classed experiences of diaspora communities. Clifford worries that “theories and discourses that

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that Alex Magaisa is a socially and economically mobile member of the diaspora—he works as a Senior Lecturer at Kent Law School; is also a financial services regulatory

diasporize or internationalize “minorities” can deflect attention from long-standing inequalities of class and race” (1994, p. 313) and he admits that much more could be said about class differences among diasporic populations: “degrees of diasporic alienation, the mix of coercion and freedom in cultural (dis)identification, and the pain of loss and displacement are highly relative” (Clifford, p. 312-313). For many who are ‘lucky’ enough to escape Zimbabwe, life in the diaspora is a miserable existence. Petina Gappah, in the short story, “Something Nice from London”, has a character describe this reality: many Zimbabweans, she says, “have flooded England to wipe old people’s bottoms” (2009, p. 73). And another character in another story, “My Cousin-Sister Rambanai,” describes how she and her husband had to give up their respective professions of teaching and engineering because “the curse of the green passport condemned us to work in the unlit corners of England’s health-care system, in care homes where we took out the frustrations of our existence by visiting little cruelties on geriatric patients” (Gappah, 2009, p. 190).<sup>20</sup>

The Zimbabwean diaspora “is widely-dispersed, very young and extremely insecure. This is not a group who have emigrated permanently to another country over an extended period of time, put down roots and achieved some kind of social and economic success” (Crush & Tevera, 2010, pg. 19). Migrants to the Western world are drawn predominantly from Zimbabwe’s elite and middle class.<sup>21</sup> They, of course, can afford the

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consultant; a public writer; and Chair of the Board of the Zimbabwe Diaspora Development Interface—and so his assessment of Tsvangirai’s address is seen through that particular lens.

<sup>20</sup> Caring for Britain’s elders is the largest single occupational category among Zimbabweans in Britain, so much so that caring has become iconic of the process of migration to the UK: Zimbabweans joke derogatorily of their compatriots joining the BBC, meaning not the British Broadcasting Corporation but the “British Bottom Cleaners” (McGregor, 2010b, p. 179).

<sup>21</sup> The British Home Office estimates that 200,000 Zimbabweans are in Britain (McGregor, 2010a).

long distance flights, and have the professional qualifications or contacts necessary to make the journey. Despite this, though, very few have been able to use their skills or professions in the West; they have had to rely on underpaid, exploitative menial work oftentimes because they have arrived in the country on visitor or tourist visas and so lack work permits, or because good jobs are hard to find and very often ‘foreigners’ are not considered for the position. Many migrants speak of appalling working and living conditions whereby they have no recourse to the law because they are ‘illegal’ and have to contend with racism, as well as their own shame at working jobs they deem to be beneath them (McGregor, 2010b; McGregor, 2010c). “The stress created by doing insecure, poorly-paid and low-status work is compounded for some by life on the margins of the law and fear of deportation and for other, who worked legally, by a sense of being trapped without prospects” (McGregor, 2010b, p. 201).

South Africa is the main destination for Zimbabwean labour migrants, some professionals, refugees, and circulating traders, and non-professionals. For many of the estimated millions who have migrated ‘down South’ instead of ‘overseas’, life in the diaspora is equally fragile. Stories abound of hundreds of thousands of desperate people ‘jumping the border’ to get into South Africa—the border in this instance being the crocodile-infested Limpopo River—having to watch out for *maguma-guma* (people who prey on those crossing the border, often committing violent acts of thievery, rape and murder) on the Zimbabwean side, while also dodging wild animals, police roadblocks and army patrols (Rutherford, 2010, p. 254; Lefko-Everett, 2010, p. 274-275). Once across the border, migrants have to contend with South African *tsotsis* (thugs), harassment by the police, appalling living conditions, exploitative working conditions,

and openly-expressed hostility from South Africans (Lefko-Everett, 2010). “Diasporic identities are, of course, intimately shaped both by the politics of receiving countries and by unfolding events back home” (McGregor, 2010a, pg. 4) and just as “the processes and experiences of displacement have reconfigured Zimbabwean geographies, political economies and social forms, the ‘export’ of ‘Zimbabwean’ bodies, logics and practices beyond the country’s political frontiers has contributed to processes of change within neighbouring countries” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 264). A shameful example of this was the outbreak of xenophobic violence in South Africa in May 2008 when scores of Zimbabweans, along with migrants from other African countries, were hounded out of their homes by rampaging mobs, accused of stealing South African jobs (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 21). “Popular xenophobia and resentment over competition for jobs have stimulated or revived debates over the nature of community, nationhood, and the limits of inclusion and fraternity” (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 264) as well as casting the lived experiences of working in the diaspora in stark light.

It is important to remember that the lived experiences of those in the diaspora are differently mediated by race, class and gender. As a white, comfortably middle-class, educated woman, with easy access to work and student visas for South Africa and the U.K., and comparatively easy access to a student visa for the U.S., my geographic and logistical transition to any of these locations has been and would be dramatically easier than the majority of other diasporans. Many white Zimbabweans now live in South Africa; I don’t imagine that any of them had to get there by swimming across the Limpopo River, and certainly none of them were hounded out of their homes during the xenophobic attacks of 2008.

## **Diaspora and community**

Experiences of loss, marginality, and exile (differentially cushioned by class) are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement. This constitutive suffering coexists with the skills of survival: strength in adaptive distinction, discrepant cosmopolitanism, and stubborn visions of renewal. Diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension. (Clifford, 1994, p. 312)

Where can we find “hope” in this example of the tensions that exist in the Zimbabwean diasporic community? For Clifford, “stubborn hope” resides in the ability to not “merely lament a world that has been lost” (1994, p. 328) because loss, which has resulted in unplanned for gains, must be mediated and put to good use. I see connections here to Butler’s idea of the “strange fecundity in [the] wreckage” (2003, p. 469). Butler tells us that after “Places are lost—destroyed, vacated, barred” there is not nothing left but rather “some new place” (2003, p. 468). This new place that remains is “founded upon the loss of original place” and so contains within it “a sense of belatedness, of coming after, and of being thus fundamentally determined by a past that continues to inform it”. The “new place”, Butler thinks, rather than being a place of no belonging, could perhaps be a place “where belonging now takes place in and through a common sense of loss” (Butler, 2003, p. 469). Loss in this sense (although she stresses that not all losses are the same), “becomes the condition and necessity for a certain sense of community, where community does not overcome the loss, where community cannot overcome the loss without losing the very sense of itself as community” (Butler, 2003, p. 468). And if this

is true, Butler says, then this new place “turns out to be oddly fecund” (Butler, 2003, p. 468). She goes on to wonder what this productivity could be, because whatever it is, “it cannot constitute a rewriting of the past or a redemption that would successfully reconstitute its meaning from and as the present”, no, “whatever is produced from this condition of loss will bear the trace of loss” (Butler, 2003, p. 468).

We too must wonder what fecundity could be found in the wreckage; what kind of productivity could come out of “the new place”; where would we find “stubborn hope” (Clifford, 1993, p. 328)? The diaspora community is founded on a common sense of loss, and this “new place” that they inhabit, which is not a geographic location but rather an existential and perhaps ethical place too, could be strangely fecund existentially and ethically, if there is not the attempt to stick to the same temporal plane that was inhabited before the catastrophe. There can be no moves informed by restorative nostalgic (Boym, 2001) attempts to simply rebuild a lost home and ‘go back’ to what was lost or ‘go forward’ to what was thought and imagined to come next. Rather, there can only be movement from the “new place” if one has accepted that one has undergone a “transformation” (Butler, 2004, p. 21). But what kind of movement could it be?

Clifford believes that the experience of diaspora can teach the “practice of dwelling (differently), as an ambivalent refusal or indefinite deferral of return, and as a positive transnationalism... These decentered, partially overlapping networks of communication, travel, trade, and kinship connect the several communities of a transnational “people”” (Clifford, p. 321 – 322). Is this kind of movement—decentered, transnational, overlapping—the kind of movement that diaspora communities should hope for if they are to build something out of the ruins?



## **Diaspora and transnationalism**

Would such transnational movements apply to the Zimbabwean context? And if so, could they be put to good use? Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa and the region as well as those living in Britain and other Western nations maintain close links with the country and return home frequently. The intensity and frequency of the contact and exchange is such that terms “transnational migrants” and “transnationalism” have been increasingly applied to the Zimbabwean situation and its patterns of migration specifically (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 19). Transnational migration has been defined as: “a pattern of migration in which persons, although they move across international borders, settle and establish ongoing social relations in a new state, maintain ongoing social connections with the polity from which they originated” (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999, p. 344). In an essay entitled, “The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promises of an Emergent Research Field”, the authors Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt (1999) explain that transnational migrants live out their lives across international borders through “the high intensity exchanges, the new modes of transacting, and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustainable basis” (p. 219.) Zimbabwean migrants certainly maintain “high intensity exchanges”, characteristic of transnationalism, and in fact, Crush and Tevera wonder if the fact that Zimbabwe’s migration is ‘crisis-driven’ and that “the dire situation of many people in the country” might have even intensified the level of exchange connectivity with home” (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 20).

Another important characteristic of transnational migrants is that they are simultaneously embedded in more than one society (Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1995, p. 48). The reality of “simultaneous embeddedness” is crucial to understanding the movements and flows of transnational migrants but it is important to note that while circulation is a feature of transnational migration, ‘transnationalism’ itself is not simply about continuous or regular physical movement between two places (Crush & Tevera, p. 19), rather, ‘transnationalism’ first emerged as a way of describing and understanding migrant cultural identities and practices rather than their movements specifically. While assimilation of immigrants into some notional ‘national culture’ is a goal of many social and cultural integration and social cohesion programmes in the West (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 20), for transnational migrants “success does not depend so much on abandoning their culture and language to embrace another society as on preserving their original endowment, while adapting instrumentally to a second” (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999, p. 229). This idea of “simultaneous embeddedness” (Glick Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, 1995, p. 48) encourages the construction of hybrid identities and cultures.<sup>22</sup>

Crush and Tevera (2010) wonder to what extent Zimbabweans living in diaspora feel and experience “embeddedness” in the host nation, especially considering the

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<sup>22</sup> ‘Hybridity’, in post-colonial theory, generally refers to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998, p. 118). These forms can be linguistic, cultural, political, racial, aesthetic, or a combination. The term is disputed though with competing assertions about the implications of its meaning within the postcolonial context. In terms of transnationalism, I would argue that the experience of “simultaneous embeddedness” allows for the notion of hybridity employed by post-colonial discourse to mean “cross-cultural exchange”. This notion has been disputed because it implies “negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of power relations... stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonized and colonizer” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1998, p. 119). While in the transnational diaspora context, we are not talking about the power relations that impact the colonized and colonizer, there are, of course, imbalances and inequalities that would impact the lives and experiences of those living as immigrants in host lands, especially if those immigrants are illegal.

generally, but of course not comprehensively, unwelcome reception they have received on arrival. Much research suggests that Zimbabwean migrants as a whole are denigrated, devalued and marginalized, especially in South Africa and the United Kingdom (Mawadza & Crush, 2010; Zimbabwe Torture Victims Project, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2006; McGregor, 2010d). Considering this hostile reception, Crush and Tevera (2010) think that for many Zimbabweans their level of “embeddedness” in their host nations could be superficial. And if that is the case, would that mean that it is unlikely that Zimbabwean migrants feel transnational? Phil Matibe, writing for the *Zimtelegraph*, seems to think that this is not the case (we must keep in mind that reception is heavily dependent on one’s class, race, level of education, and profession):

Life in the Diaspora requires the dexterity of balancing the patriotic yearning for a return to Zimbabwe and surviving in the difficult rigors of an exiled existence. This tenacity and resilience has become a hallmark by which the majority of Zimbabweans abroad are now defined.

Zimbabweans have become world citizens and tolerant internationalists. Soon it will be common to experience a cultural fusion that will blend Asian, European, American and African Diaspora experiences at a single-family reunion in Zimbabwe. (2009)

Matibe’s vision, I think, speaks to what Clifford (1994) believes are the versions of utopic/dystopic tensions present in all diasporic cultures: “They begin with uprooting and loss. They are familiar with exile, with the ‘outsider’s’ exposed terror” but at the same time they “work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions, ‘customizing’ and ‘versioning’ them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations”

(p. 317). Clifford speaks of diaspora communities grappling with a fundamental ambivalence because of “the entanglement of subversion and the law, of invention and constraint—the complicity of dystopia and utopia” (1994, p. 319). This ambivalence is a result of living with loss and hope simultaneously for an extended period of time: enjoying the experience of certain aspects of one’s new home and culture, while longing for home; and longing for home while knowing that aspects of that life and culture are traumatic, discriminatory, and hostile.

“Diasporist discourses reflect the sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes the homeland, not as something simply left behind, but as a place of attachment in a contrapunctual modernity” (Clifford, 1994, p. 311). (“Contrapunctual” describes a piece of music in which more than one melody is played at the same time, without one dominating.) Said (2001) in *Reflections on Exile* also uses the term contrapunctual to describe one of the positive experiences of exile:

Seeing “the entire world as a foreign land” makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is *contrapunctual*...For an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus the new and the old environments are vivid, occurring together contrapunctually. (p. 186)

Clifford believes that these reflections on exile also apply to experiences of diaspora, excepting that with exile the experience is more individualistic and existential and with diaspora the experience is “tempered by networks of community, collective practices of displaced dwelling” (1994, p. 329). Petina Gappah, the Zimbabwean author, speaks to this experience when she talks about simultaneously feeling guilt for having left Zimbabwe but also being able to appreciate that in having left she can see with a “more objective eye...a larger context, that’s freed [her] to be more distanced” (2009b). This objectivity has allowed her to see that “We’re not that special: you’re like any other country that has had a similar history. Kenya’s been through the same thing, Nigeria has, but it is human to only see your own crisis and your own dilemmas” (2009b). Achieving something like objectivity as a positive outcome is commonly experienced by anyone who has directly or indirectly experienced some form of crisis but usually we lose that sense of objectivity more quickly than we should; as life moves on so too do we revert to our blinkered, day-to-day obsessions. The experience of exile and diaspora however, because it is usually experienced over an extended period of time, does not necessarily allow one to ‘revert’, certainly not as quickly as usually experienced. The aftermath lasts longer because diaspora *is* the aftermath.

In its contrapunctuality, diaspora consciousness is constituted both positively and negatively. It is constituted negatively, Clifford writes, “by experiences of discrimination and exclusion”, but it is constituted positively “through identification with world historical cultural/political forces” and also by “feeling global” (1993, p. 311-312). What might it mean to ‘feel global’, and how is that a good thing? Is this what it might mean to

learn from the “practice of dwelling differently” (Clifford, 1993, p. 321) and is that the responsibility of the diaspora to its homeland?

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to articulate and trouble the experience of diaspora as it relates to my greater concern of how “internal” and “external” exile as a result of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe is and can be lived. What does become clear is that while diaspora is conceived of as the collective experience to exile’s individual experience, that collective is hardly homogenous. The events in the cathedral show the tensions and ambivalences and losses experienced by those who have left Zimbabwe. The possibility of return, pointed to here, is something I will look at in greater depth in the following chapter as I seek to consider how responsibility could be a response employed by those in “internal” and “external” exile (Hove, 2007). In the final chapter, I will draw from what I have learnt from this reading, as well as what I have learnt from the previous chapters, to propose five possible claims of responsibility.

## Afterword

*Will the swallows return?*

sometimes home is the only place that will have you

Having returned from South African rehab, Dubai divorce, Texan jail, and anorexia they sat, old and new friends, eating Coimbra's peri-peri-chicken-and-chips (known to all who know to be the very best peri-peri-chicken-and-chips this side of Mozambique).

"So this is freedom?" he asked.

"No, this is just home."

and sometimes home is no home at all

And then these white people who have left say things like, "You know, what I'm amazed at is that every time I speak to someone who still lives at home and I ask them how it is, never once do they mention how the 'ordinary people' are doing (read here: poor black people)." This coming from someone who's left! How much did you care about the so-called 'ordinary people' when you packed your bags, dismissed your workers and moved to the first world with your degree under your arm. The fucking hypocrisy makes me want to scream. We, who live there, don't mention the 'ordinary people'? No, we just live there and work there and pay our taxes (for whatever that's worth!) and pay the 'ordinary people' their wages and pay for their ordinary children to go to school.

sometimes The Return returns its revenge

The aunt, she has returned, in all her magnificence, after eight too-short years. She immediately insisted on The Tour—to the old house, the even older house, and the house before that, the old school, the old shops, the old hairdresser, the old friends (in that order). The Tour, you see, is not like the return to one's childhood home: bitter—because childhood is over and dreams didn't come true—sweet (hard boiled) because memories can be rolled around on your tongue and savored. No, that tour is nothing like The Tour. The return of the native tour takes a lot longer, the ticket usually costs more, and no rose-tinted glasses allowed. Loss and drama and hurt are inscribed on all places especially as one imagines what would have happened if... wandering down the passage you did not, in the end, take and opening, just a crack, the door you didn't allow yourself to open, disturbing all that dust on a bowl of rose-leaves (Eliot, 1963). That is a bitter house. Feeling that you've been cheated out of your remembered future; shocked that life went on without you. And sometimes that is too much to forgive. Is that why those who have left hold home to higher, more exacting standards? Private schools at home are "more exclusive" than private schools elsewhere; the fact that new bars and restaurants have opened up is "wrong" in some way, capitalism is more reprehensible here. Are they not really saying: How dare things go on without me? How dare life be lived and lived well when I have left and am living exiled in a foreign land. Auden knew it: how life goes on so casually while catastrophe happens.



For those who did not leave but are subject to participate in The Tour by familial obligation or proximity, there is much eye-rolling exasperation because the events as they've played themselves out have created a divide between those who've left and those who've stayed. And this divide is represented by the contrasting stories that we tell of 'the Crisis.' To those who have left it is a story of loss and despair but to those who stayed it is a story of survival. Those who left go into therapy; those who stayed go home. I, of little-patience for such bitter nostalgia, abandoned my Mother to take the aunt on The Tour. They returned to the house hours later, my aunt's speech painfully (exaggeratedly) slow, my mother, with the look of murder in her eye, reached for the PainStop to hold the migraine at bay.

and sometimes The Return can never be returned

With her near-dead child clutched to her chest, she came screaming out of the bush, onto the road, where my parents had stopped having just witnessed the accident. She ran directly to my father, placed the boy in his arms as if he could save him.

Later in the hospital, she said, her voice full of the horror, "I should never have come back." She turned to look directly at my mother, "Why did I come back?"

On caps of wind the migrant swallows soar:

will they return?

"Winter in Matabeleland, 1987" John Eppel

## Chapter VI

### *Afterwards*

“I am trying to keep a soul alive in times not hospitable to the soul.”

(Coetzee, 1990, p. 130)

Toward the end of J. M. Coetzee’s novel *Age of Iron* (1990), Mrs. Curren, having witnessed, first-hand for the first time, the true horror of the apartheid regime in the state-sponsored deaths of two young boys that she knew, has an epiphany and makes a “confession” (p. 165). She starts by acknowledging what she always knew: that a “crime was committed long ago... So long ago that I was born into it” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 164). She also says that she knew that “Like every crime it had its price” (p. 164). She had thought, drawing deeply from the Western tradition (she is a Classics professor by profession), that the price “would have to be paid in shame” as a means to retain personal honour even “though it was not a crime I asked to be committed, it was committed in my name.” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 164). What she has come to realise, though, is that “the price was even higher” (p. 165). She admits to having miscalculated: “Where did the mistake come in? It had something to do with honour, with the notion I clung to through thick and thin, from my education, from my reading” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 165); and this leads to the confession: “I have been a good person, I freely confess to it. I am a good person still. What times these are when to be a good person is not enough!” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 165). She says that instead of goodwill, the times call for

“heroism” but she admits that it is “a word that sounds foreign to [her] lips” (Coetzee, 1990, p. 165).

What is Coetzee saying here? That a troubled conscience is not sufficient a response to times of profound crisis? That it is not enough to live ‘feeling badly’ about a situation? Mrs. Curren retroactively assesses her actions and realises that she is worthy of blame for not doing more than being a good person. She feels that if she were held to account for her actions in the context of apartheid South Africa, she would be found wanting. More was needed of her than personal goodwill; something larger and more heroic was required. Originally, she had assessed how she would respond to her context by drawing on the norms and standards that were available to her, such as honour and shame. In this, she is acknowledging that she feels a sense of individual responsibility for the history she has inherited. But what she finds out through the course of events in the last few months of her life is that those taken-for-granted codes of good conduct were not appropriable to the current context in which she lives. Her sense of moral outrage toward the regime inspired her sense of individual responsibility, which she articulated through codes of honour and shame and acts of kindness. But how can one take responsibility for something that is much larger and older than oneself? If one feels responsible but is unable to act for legitimate reasons, must one still be held attributable and accountable? What is it to live in vexed political and social conditions, knowing that goodwill, expressed through acts of kindness and feelings of benevolence, is not good enough? How should we respond to times of dire political crisis?

In light of the quandary that Mrs. Curren expresses, I offer an overview of individual and collective responsibility, with the intention of proposing responsibility as a

possible response to times of crisis. I will also propose five possible kinds of responsible stances could be taken by those living in conditions of “internal” and “external” exile (Hove, 2007) in relation the ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe. (Responsibility is not as glamorous as heroism but then nothing really is!)

### **Individual responsibility**

Gayatri Spivak (1998), in the essay, “Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace”, positions her interests as being “in the crease between global postcoloniality and postcolonial migrancy” (p. 334). She begins by wondering, “In what interest, to regulate what sort of relationships, is the globe evoked?” (p. 329) and goes on to describe how “unexamined” cultural politics, when it is used to “provide crucial ideological support” for “crude cultural relativism” is an “abdication of responsibility” (p. 336). It is in the context of this argument about cultural politics and “globality” that she writes, “History is larger than personal goodwill, and we must learn to be responsible as we must study to be political” (Spivak, 1998, p. 337). What might it entail to take a stance of responsibility as a response to history and politics? And how might we “learn to be responsible” (Spivak, 1998, p. 337)?

The word “responsible” is always followed by *to* or *for* because one is always responsible to someone or for something. Even when we say, “She is a responsible child”, we mean that she is responsible for herself. In this way the word implies a transaction of sorts, it is an action, a type of conduct and so it is about *doing* something. Spivak’s assertion that responsibility is a “two way response structure” (1998, p. 343)

means precisely that one is not just suddenly responsible but rather that one is responsible in response to something (context) or someone (the context of an other). In this way, when a person performs or conversely fails to perform an action that would be expected of them in a particular context it is thought of to be a question of individual moral responsibility or irresponsibility in the case of failing to perform an action.

Questions of moral responsibility occur on a temporal plane in that such questions are usually backward looking, or retroactive, as in when we ask after an event or situation, “Who is responsible for this?” This can be either a positive assessment, as when we want to attribute praise, or a negative assessment, as when we want to blame someone or something. What would be the purpose in assessing an action as praiseworthy or blameworthy, especially as the action or lack thereof is in response to a past event or situation? When someone fails to perform what we assume to be a reasonable and expected action which would meet the standards of a moral community, what might be the point of retroactively attributing blame or praise? Aristotle identified two conditions under which it would be appropriate to attribute blame or praise: 1) the merit-based view, by which praise or blame is an appropriate reaction if it is merited and deserved, and 2) the consequentialist view, by which praise or blame is appropriate if such a reaction would lead to a desired change in the agent and/or his or her behaviour (Eshleman, 2011). I wonder what the point would be in apportioning praise or blame if not to influence future behaviour. Is this not to take a teaching and learning stance toward responsibility? Would this not be a means of learning to be responsible (Spivak, 1998, p. 337)?

Distinctions can be made between responsibility which is understood as attributability and responsibility which can be understood as accountability.

Responsibility as attributability assesses whether the action elucidates something about the nature of the agent's self (Eshleman, 2011). A judgment of responsibility in the sense of attributability entails an assessment of the agent's self as measured against some standard, in that "the action discloses something about the agent's evaluative commitments" (Eshleman, 2011). For example, if someone fails to perform a responsible action in relation to a particular event or situation, we assume that this failure tells us something about their priorities, assessment process, and/or commitment and we judge them accordingly.

The second notion of responsibility, that of accountability, goes further in that it presupposes responsibility as attributability but also judges whether an agent's behaviour is governed by "an interpersonal normative standard of conduct that creates expectations between members of a shared community" (Eshleman, 2011). This is a social notion of moral responsibility. In this sense, to hold someone responsible is to address a fellow member of the moral community and expect them to give an account of their conduct. One must, of course, be warranted or justified in holding someone responsible, in that the action that is expected of them is within their power or control. Therefore, if someone fails to achieve such an action we assume that they chose not to and the assessment that follows is to try and work out why they chose not to. This is where the agent is called upon to give an account of his or her actions. "To hold someone responsible is thus to be one to whom an explanation is owed" (Eshleman, 2011). This sense of responsibility means that the agent is answerable to another person for their actions.

The concepts of responsibility as attributability and accountability establish responsibility as an assessment of action or inaction after the fact but can assessment of responsibility be attributed and accounted for proactively, by which I mean, can questions of responsibility be forward looking too? Can we assign responsibility for the future? It can also be forward looking, or proactive, as in when we find ourselves in a situation or context and must decide on a future course in relation to that context, for example, when we ask: “Who *will* take responsibility for this situation?” This is where proactive expectations can be acknowledged. As time passes, responsibility will once again be retroactively assessed, and so in this way, responsibility does not merely work in a backwards and forwards motion but rather it is recursive.

### **Judith Butler (2005) and responsibility as accountability**

Judith Butler is persuaded by the view of responsibility as accountability and in *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), she articulates an understanding of how being addressed and asked to account for one’s actions could provide the opportunity to learn about responsibility. Butler (2005) begins by establishing that moral philosophy has to do with a question of “conduct and, hence, with doing, within a contemporary social frame” (p. 1). Ethics as such is active; therefore responsibility as an ethical stance is a response in action, not just in thought and feeling. The prior thesis from which Butler (2005) works establishes that moral questions emerge in the context of social relations and the form these questions take changes according to context. Our conduct (how we ought to or should act) is developed in relation to our social context and always through a

Hegelian notion of relational recognition, which stresses our fundamental dependency on the other. To deny such dependence would be to deny “something fundamental about the social conditions of our very formation” (Butler, 2004, p. 23).

Butler (2005) quotes Theodore Adorno’s stance from his 1963 lectures entitled *Problems of Moral Philosophy* that all ideas of morality or ethical behaviour must relate to an “I” that acts. Butler’s concern though is that there is “no “I” that can fully stand apart from the social conditions of its emergence” (2005, p. 7) for the reason that “when the “I” seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration; indeed, when the “I” seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist” (p. 7-8). The subject in Butler’s view is constructed in relation to a pre-existing set of norms and various discourses that are available at the time of its emergence. In this way, the “I” in trying to give an account of itself also has to account for how it came to be and that is through the social conditions of its emergence; and so it is in that way that the “I” also becomes a “social theorist” (Butler, 2005, p. 8). The “I” does not simply come into existence independently; it is born into and constantly mediated by pre-existing relations and discourses that precede and exceed its attempt to give an account of itself. To account for itself, the “I” would have to tell of many other things that it cannot know or control or even necessarily explain.

The opposition to this understanding that could be raised, Butler explains, is that if this is the case then the “I” is dispossessed of its subjective ground for ethics. This line of argument would stress that if the “I” is not independent and autonomous and in control



of the creation of its own subjectivities, then how can it possibly create its own set of ethics. Butler believes, in response to this opposition, that it is precisely this state of coming into being that provides the modes and circumstances for moral inquiry and so a formation of a set of ethical responses. She believes that this is done through the creation of such circumstances, which not only encourage critique but require it if the “I” is to come to understand itself. “If the “I” is not at one with moral norms, this means only that the subject must deliberate upon these norms, and that part of that deliberation will entail a critical understanding of their social genesis and meaning. In this sense, ethical deliberation is bound up with the operation of critique” (Butler, 2005, p. 8). In being addressed and asked to account for our actions, we are forced, because we cannot account for them in whole, to assess the larger social context in which we find ourselves. It is this very situation that provides us with the opportunity to assess ourselves and our interdependency within the social and ethical context provided for us. Through this, the “I” comes to ‘see’ itself, not clearly or fully, but opaquely in relation to others and through the recognition of others, while also offering recognition in return. It is through this awakening to our interdependence that would, in Butler’s view, allow us to create a conception of an ethical stance.

Could this inability to ‘self-ground’ inhibit the possibility of giving an account of ourselves and learning to be responsible? Butler argues that in fact it is the subject’s very opacity that furnishes it with the conditions by which it becomes responsible to/for others. “A theory of subject formation that acknowledges the limits of self-knowledge can serve a conception of ethics and, indeed, responsibility” because “Moments of unknowingness about oneself tend to emerge in the context of relations to others,

suggesting that these relations call upon primary forms of relationality that are not always available to explicit and reflective thematization” (Butler, 2005, p. 20). She goes on to explain that “primary opacity to the self” as a result of formative relations “has a specific implication for an ethical bearing toward the other” as it is “precisely by virtue of one’s relations to others that one is opaque to oneself, and if those relations to others are the venue for one’s ethical responsibility, then it may well follow that it is precisely by virtue of the subject’s opacity to itself that it incurs and sustains some of its most important ethical bonds” (Butler, 2005, p. 20). If one learns of one’s opacity while being asked to give an account of oneself, this “venue” (Butler, 2005, p. 20), the site of relational address, is also the site of learning about one’s dependence on and so responsibility for the other. In other words, we learn to be responsible while learning that we can never give a whole and clear account of ourselves because we are constituted socially and relationally.

I am persuaded by Butler’s articulation of our relational and social constitution and find convincing the notion that this could be a venue for learning to be responsible. If we are relationally constituted, which is a continual process, then we are forever relationally tied, and my well-being is dependent on your well-being. As Butler explains in *Precarious Life* (2004) “If my fate is not originally or finally separable from yours, then the “we” is traversed by a relationality that we cannot easily argue against” (p. 22-23).

In Zimbabwe, the Shona language has a linguistic blueprint for everyday greetings which follows this pattern:

A: “Mangwanani.” (Good morning.)

B: “Mangwanani, marara sei?” (Good morning, did you sleep well?)

A: “Ndarara kano mararawo.” (I slept well *if* you slept well.)

B: “Ndarara.” (I slept well.)

Greetings for all times of the day follow this pattern. For example, in the afternoon, when you are asked if you have had a good day, you respond by saying that you had a good if the person who addressed you has also had a good day. This greeting structure emphasizes and stresses a belief in the relational ties that bind people to each other. The idea, as Chenjerai Hove explains, is that “I am because I am acknowledged by others” (2008). Acknowledgement of our relationality is also an acknowledgement of how we are constituted through the recognition given to us by the other. But the greeting structure also stresses that we are responsible for each other’s well-being. If my well-being is dependent upon the well-being of another, and vice versa then through that scene of address we are made aware of our interdependence and should learn to feel responsible for each other.

I wonder if this concept could also be collective. If my well-being is dependent on another’s well-being and so on another’s and another’s, connected as if by a web, then are we not collectively responsible for the well-being of the collective? Butler (2004) would argue that because of our relationality we are collectively responsible. She establishes in *Precarious Life* (2004) that it is our experiences of loss and grief that makes us conscious of our relational ties by which we are constituted. And this constitution is personal as well as political “in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies” (Butler, 2004, p. 20). When we lose someone or something we are undone by that loss because we are tied to that person or thing and so recognised through that

relation. These ties and bonds thus “compose us” (Butler, 2004, p. 22). Butler (2004) wonders if it is through this learned sense of our human vulnerability, and if we tarry with grief rather than fearing it (as fearing it could cause us to resort to violence or fantasy) that we achieve a sense of “collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another” (p. 30).

### **Collective responsibility**

What is the difference between individual moral responsibility and collective responsibility? The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes collective responsibility as referring to the “causal responsibility of moral agents for harm in the world and the blameworthiness that we ascribe to them for having caused such harm” (Smiley, 2010). Unlike individual responsibility, however, which locates the source of moral responsibility in the free will of individual moral agents, collective responsibility associates both causal responsibility and blameworthiness with *groups* and locates the source of moral responsibility in the collective actions taken by these groups (Smiley, 2010). Briefly, the objections to this idea stem from two contentions. The first contention stresses that groups cannot be held responsible because groups unlike individuals cannot have intentions and without intent there cannot be group action (Smiley, 2010). The second contention stresses that groups, which cannot be thought of as distinct from their individual members, cannot be morally blameworthy in the way that individuals can be morally blameworthy (Smiley, 2010).

These debates are worthwhile in that they force us to try and articulate the scope and realm of notions of collective responsibility, especially important as the scope and realm seems fluid. As we contemplate notions of collective responsibility, there seems to be a slide between the collective and the individual and vice versa. The fact that we do hold collectives responsible is because we do see collectives taking morally blameworthy or praiseworthy actions in the world. For example, many Zimbabweans would hold Zanu-PF, as the collective, responsible for 'the Crisis' in Zimbabwe although we often focus on Mugabe as being individually responsible and the representative of that collective. It cannot be denied though that Zanu-PF, as the collective political party is complicit and so blameworthy, but that party is made up of individuals who are (also?) each individually responsible. Similarly, do we Zimbabweans, as a collective rather than as individuals, have a responsibility to our nation? I stress, this is not just individual responsibility to the collective, but is there a group responsibility to the collective? When Tsvangirai calls the diaspora home, he is appealing to a sense of collective responsibility directly, saying that the diaspora as the collective grouping of those individuals in exile are responsible to the nation, but he is also indirectly appealing to the individual within the collective. There is certainly the assumption that Zimbabweans as a community are in part responsible for the continuation of 'the Crisis'. Non-Zimbabweans have been known to wonder why Zimbabweans, as a collective, don't take responsibility for the situation. Petina Gappah in reflecting on her sense of guilt for having left Zimbabwe recounts what she has often heard while living in Europe: "Oh, those Zimbabweans, why aren't they getting rid of their tyrant? They should just go out on to the streets" (2009b). Her sense of guilt is as a result of her sense of failed individual moral responsibility but it

is articulated within a public assessment of the larger failure of the collective responsibility because of inaction.

In October 2008, I attended a lecture given by Jacob Zuma, the President of South Africa, hosted by New York University's Africa House. After Zuma finished talking and the floor was opened to questions, I leapt up out of my seat and was the first person at the microphone. My question was: "Mr. Zuma, we often hear Africa's leaders state that there must only be African solutions to African problems but in the case of Zimbabwe's worsening crisis, those solutions have been largely ineffectual. What do you say to the accusation that the South African government and SADC (Southern African Development Community) leadership have continually enabled the Mugabe regime and so are in part responsible for the crisis?" Many members of the audience broke into applause. As I walked back to my seat, a Zimbabwean man a few places behind me in the question queue said that I had asked what he wanted to ask. I told him to ask his question anyway. When the other Zimbabwean got to the front of the queue, he said, "How could... I mean...how could... how could you guys let this happen?"

I wasn't expecting an engaged response from Zuma and I certainly didn't receive one. Instead, he meandered around the point and complained that 'the Zimbabwe question' was the first thing he got asked whenever he visited the West. It is not his response, or lack thereof, that I am interested in now, but rather I am interested in why I asked him that particular question and what that says about individual and collective responsibility. I asked the question, and I write this in all seriousness, because I felt I had to. I felt that I was responsible to myself and to my conceptions of my fellow Zimbabweans to ask. I felt compelled, and even though the thought of getting up in front

of 600 people and television cameras (my parents saw me on the South African news the following night!), I felt that it would be wrong not to ask; that it would be an abdication of personal responsibility. My sense of individual moral responsibility dictated that I ask but what did I expect would happen in return? I was appealing to Jacob Zuma as the representative of the South African government so I was appealing to his sense of individual responsibility but also in referencing the South African government and SADC leadership I was appealing to the sense of responsibility of whatever regional collectives I could think of. I was hoping to draw his attention to what I see as the collective responsibility of the bodies and organizations that he is in charge of or has influence with.

But to what purpose? What was I hoping to gain by calling attention to the collective responsibility of the South African government and SADC leadership? Smiley (2010) explains the difference between *being* responsible, which is an assessment of what has been done, while our *holding* someone responsible is a matter of what we do with the knowledge of what has or has not been done. Asking Zuma to account for what I perceive to be his government's irresponsibility because of inaction (their approach to 'the Crisis' in Zimbabwe has followed a so-called policy of "quiet diplomacy") is a means to stirring his conscience so that he will 'stir the conscience' of the collective. But obviously, in an ideal world, I wanted more from him; I wanted an assurance of action, something more like loud diplomacy! I wanted to let him know that I hold him and his government responsible, and to be *held* responsible, Smiley (2010) explains, is to "make the agents' responsibility known both to them and to the rest of the community". My assessment of asking Zuma to account for his actions does sound rather self-aggrandizing (who am I after all?) but I merely mean to establish that my personal sense of moral

responsibility *insisted* that I say something. And where else could a collective sense of responsibility start and grow but from the sense of personal moral responsibility of a number of individuals with shared intent?

### **Suggestive claims of responsibility**

In light of this brief articulation of how responsibility can arise as a response to particular social contexts and through the relation of the self to others, and the dynamics of collective versus individual responsibility, I propose and interrogate five possible claims of responsibility in relation to those in “internal” and “external” exile and living in the diaspora as a result of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe. These claims are drawn directly in relation to my situated interpretations of ‘the Crisis’ and so are not meant to be seen as normative but rather suggestive of avenues that could be used to open up considerations of how one could respond to such formative experiences.

The first claim I propose is:

### **Return as responsibility**

Morgan Tsvangirai’s call to return, such as the one he made in Southwark Cathedral in June 2009, and has made since in other locations, deserves a response. What should the response be to Tsvangirai’s call to return? He would like to see the physical return of the majority of the diaspora so as to help rebuild the country. And there is



certainly the implication that the diaspora have an obligation to return. Considering this, what is the difference between obligation and responsibility? In an attempt to investigate this question I draw on two examples from the Zimbabwean context.

Eric Worby in “Address Unknown: The Temporality of Displacement and the Ethics of Disconnection among Zimbabwean Migrants in Johannesburg” (2010) investigates the strategies of “social disconnection” (p. 417) of Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg considering that they are beset by “a complex set of material demands and ethical constraints” (p. 419). These demands include the obligation to send money and supplies back home as well as hosting, in already inhospitable conditions, the stream of incoming migrants while they settle and look for work. Of this situation, Worby asks, “What are the perceived ethical implications and consequences of not forwarding one’s address or cell phone number, or of not replying to calls and letters?” (2001, p. 421). The vast majority of those who have left have lived with “the eternally prolonged expectation that an end to the political and economic ‘crisis’ was imminent. The inevitability of a return home, while still a central pillar of most migrants’ life plans, seems to be continuously and indefinitely deferred” (Worby, 2001, p. 421). For how long is one obligated to support one’s home, family and friends? It is this “open-ended condition of displacement” that “lends itself to a particularly vexing moral economy for Zimbabweans abroad—one in which the temporal horizon for reconciling credits and debts, present capacities and future dependencies, is unknowable” (2010, p. 417). Migrants interviewed by Worby listed a variety of reasons why they would ‘disconnect’ (i.e. change their cell phone number, move home, and in extreme cases, change their name) so as to try and lose those relational ties of obligation. The reasons—poverty and the inability to offer

financial support, as well as feelings of shame and indignity because of where one lives and/or works—Worby summarises as a “condition of abjection” which is a condition whereby “appropriate or desirable morality is impossible to maintain, and therefore, one in which the possibility of realising one’s full and proper personhood is indefinitely suspended” (2010, p. 430). In this situation, responsibility becomes a “continuing burden” and attempts to maintain “dignity and social reputation within a context of sometimes extreme stigmatization and socio-legal exclusion” (Worby, 2010, p. 431) is too great a pressure. In these types of situations, the thought of ‘dodging’ one’s responsibilities comes up against one’s sense of morality, and Worby surmises that the only viable solution in the face of such a dilemma would be to “disconnect” (p. 431). In disconnecting one is attempting to deny one’s relationality so failing to receive recognition, which would have implications, as Worby points out, for one’s ability to attain “full and proper personhood” (2010, p. 430).

Considering this, what is the difference between responsibility and obligation or duty? For legitimate reasons (poverty and indignity), one feels that one must deny one’s obligations and disconnect. It could be argued that disconnection is done out of a sense of responsibility to oneself. If the taken-for-granted modes of conduct, such as being obliged to help one’s family and community, are not appropriable in one’s current situation, is one not obliged to take care of oneself? The consequences of such an action, as already illustrated, would be dire.

Another example, which highlights this quandary, is the departure of skilled professionals from Zimbabwe to the diaspora, which has had drastic effects on certain sectors of the economy and society at large. The public health care system has been

especially damaged by the large-scale loss of doctors and especially nurses.<sup>23</sup> While it can be appreciated why these professionals left, considering the abysmal working conditions and shockingly poor salaries, their leaving has not only aggravated aspects of ‘the Crisis’, but has also induced others to leave too for the reason that their leaving has put more pressure on those who were left behind. “While out-migration is a common response to socioeconomic disintegration, it can also accelerate that process, leading, in turn, to further migration.” (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. 2). It can be surmised that they left because they had to as they had no means of supporting their families while working in Zimbabwe; they were obliged to leave as it were; they left out of a sense of individual responsibility to themselves and their families. But in leaving, are they not ignoring their collective responsibilities to their communities at home and even their colleagues? Is there a debt of obligation to the country that schooled and skilled you? Here is the clash because one can be responsible to oneself and one’s family while being irresponsible to one’s community or nation. And how can one reconcile this position? If one is able to make the very difficult decision to ignore one’s sense of obligation to one’s friends and relatives, I doubt that one would take into account any sense of obligation to one’s country. If anything, I imagine that people who have left feel that their government has reneged on its obligation to them, in terms of not being able to provide adequate health care, job opportunities, security, and the rule of law.

While the word responsibility carries with it a connotation of obligation, they are not the same thing. Responsibility as a “two way response structure” (Spivak, 1998, p. 343) is in a sense much more open for interpretation. Decisions regarding responsible

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<sup>23</sup> By 2003, Zimbabwe had become the fourth largest ‘supplier’ of nurses to the U.K. (Crush and Tevera, 2010, p. 27).

action are made in relation to specific social contexts, whereas obligation is more rule-bound and dependent on cemented notions of duty, custom or law. And while they do not mean the same thing, responsibility and obligation are often two sides of the same coin—the obligation to leave or to “disconnect” (Worby, 2010, p. 431) is out of a sense of responsibility to themselves or to their immediate families. Without the government fulfilling its obligations to its citizens still at home, it is unlikely its citizens living outside the country would feel any obligation to return. The government’s collective irresponsibility creates the conditions for its citizens’ collective irresponsibility.

There is a further complication though to the possibility of return besides the fact that the country is not in a state to be returned to. As I discussed earlier in Chapter V, part of the reason that those in the cathedral reacted so vehemently against Tsvangirai’s call to return was because he spoke without acknowledging, or at least certainly not to a sufficient degree, the contexts in which the diaspora find themselves. People will make the decision to return after weighing up a number of contextual issues, which predominantly would be the state of the political, economic and social situation back home, as well as their “embeddedness” in their host country.<sup>24</sup> Knowing that while ‘the Crisis’, in its current articulation, may someday be resolved, the state of the country, its political structures and economy, and the social relations have all been profoundly changed by events of the last decade. In this sense, there will be no ‘going home’ to what ‘home’ was; it will be going home to some radically different, or “new place” (p. 468) as Butler (2003) would describe it. In this way, the return will not be, can never be, about

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<sup>24</sup> Studies have been conducted in which people living in the diaspora have been asked whether it is likely they will return to Zimbabwe. In two studies, one conducted in the U.K. (Block, 2010) and one conducted in South Africa (Makina, 2010), two thirds of respondents from both studies said that they would return home, but all qualified their desire with the caveat that they would return *if* the Zimbabwean economy and political situation were to normalize.

‘going back’ but can only be about ‘going forward’. As Leon and Rebecca Grinberg epilogue their book, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (1989), “One never goes back, one always goes toward” (p. 216).

The problem of return, however, is not simply about political and bureaucratic logistics; it is also about the personal and psycho-social changes that those who have ‘been away’ have experienced. It is also a more existential problem in that “Between the idea / And the reality/ Falls the shadow” (p. 61) as Eliot (1936) articulated in “The Hollow Men”. Very often the act of return disturbs the fantasy of return, especially as our imaginations have been put to good use fanaticizing about a glorious homecoming, which will bring completion and closure to our time of struggle (Eng, 2003). It is in this way that to return is to lose something (Hartman, 2007).

Saidiya Hartman, in *Lose Your Mother* (2007), her book about the African slave trade and her journey to Ghana tracing the routes and roots of the trade, writes evocatively about what it would be to the return. She writes that “Return is the hunger for all the things you once enjoyed or the yearning for all the things you never enjoyed. It bears the impress of everything that has been taken from you” (2007, p. 99-100). The hope at the heart of thoughts of return is very powerful and would be a hard thing to give up, especially when one reckons with the reality of the disappointment that “there is no going back to a former condition. Loss remakes you. Return is as much about the world to which you no longer belong as it is about the one in which you have yet to make a home” (2007, p. 100).

Andre Aciman (2000) playing with the word “nostalgia” calls writing about return “nostography” (p. 7). In his essay ‘The Capital of Memory,’ Aciman recounts the story

of his return to Alexandria, the city that he and his family were cast out of by the Nasser regime when he was a teenager. He tells us that he went back “to touch and breathe the past again, to walk in shoes I hadn’t worn in years” (Aciman, 2000, p. 3). The return took him down a predictable path: “the tears, the final reckoning, the big themes: the return of the native, the romance of the past, the redemption of time. All of it followed by predictable letdowns: the streets always much narrower than before, buildings grown smaller with time, everything in tatters, the city dirty, in ruins” (Aciman, 2000, p. 3). In truth, knowing that it can never stand up to what he has made it in his mind, Aciman admits to returning in the hope of getting over it. “I had come not to recover memories, nor even to recognize those I’d disfigured, nor toy with the thought that I’d ever live here again; I had come to bury the whole thing, to get it out of my system” (2000, p. 5). By the end of his visit though, he admits, “I had hoped to finally let go of this city, knowing all the while that the longing would start up soon enough, that one never washes anything away, and that this marooned and spectral city, which is no longer home for me... would eventually find newer, ever more beguiling ways to remind me that here is where my mind always turns” (Aciman, 2000, p. 21).<sup>25</sup>

These are cautionary tales: there can be no going back “to touch and breathe the past again” (Aciman, 2001, p. 3) because as David Eng explains in “Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas” (2003) “confronting the past challenges any sense of recoupable stability” (Eng, 2003, p. 29). Instead, Eng (2003) says that we can return “not by going back but by moving forward”, by bringing “the past into the present”, not “the

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<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, in a recent *Newsweek* article, Aciman writes about the very real possibility of a return to Egypt in light of the February revolution. The thought of going “Back to Egypt” all these many years later to help rebuild the country “couldn’t have been more exhilarating”. “The words ‘Back to Egypt’” he writes, “felt like a promise of something I’d given up on and learned to live without for so long”, despite the fact that “Egypt is not [his] home. It hasn’t been [his] home for decades” (Aciman, 2011, p. 34).

present into the past” (p. 32). The individual responsibility of those returning then is not to try and recreate what has been lost by bringing the present into the past and dwelling on “restorative” (Boym, 2001, p. vxiii) nostalgic tales, but rather one returns responsibly by bringing the past to one’s present. This is an act of looking forward rather than craning back over your shoulder hankering after something that is no longer there. This act of looking and moving forward and bringing the past to the present, I would argue, is not just for those who do literally return. As has been established, a literal return for most of those who have left is still impossible, and some will never return.

For my own part, I will be returning permanently this year. I left Zimbabwe in August 2006 to come to New York to attend graduate school. The dire situation in Zimbabwe certainly helped to influence my decision to take up the position offered to me by Teachers College, but I never considered it a permanent departure, and I always intended to return once I was done, by which time “things would surely be better!” I suppose it is for this reason that I never really considered myself to be a diasporan but I would allow that I lived in the diaspora, if one can even make such a distinction. I went home regularly, spending the academic year in the States and the rest of year in “Zim”. I do feel, and have always felt, a sense of responsibility to my country, and I return in part because of that sentiment. I return in part because I feel a sense of individual responsibility but also because I *can* return. My situation, class, resources, education and familial support mean that a return is a viable, possibly even easy, option, logistically that is. Considering that I can return, is it not then my responsibility to do so? (Primarily, though, I return because I miss my family and because I miss my home. I return because I can’t imagine being as happy living anywhere else.)

In light of the impossibility of a literal return for many of those living in the diaspora, is there another way to enact a return? Can one return not physically but in other ways? Here I am thinking of a 'return' as an act of coming home not in a literal sense but rather psychically. Can one be responsible to one's country while living elsewhere? It is a turn of one's thoughts and feelings away from "so many wounds on the heart" as Chenjerai Hove (2007) explained it, to an enacted return that is about learning to "cherish hearing the voices of my country more intensely" (Hove, 2007). Hove describes it as being in geographic but not emotional exile. To 'return' in this way is to be able to think and feel and remember in more positive and creative ways, rather than in reactionary and regressive ways. It is to be able to narrate one's role in the story of 'the Crisis' and its aftermath, not denying the losses but using them as sites of renewal, as in being able to create something new out of them. Patti Lather (2001) believes that "Accepting loss becomes the very force of learning and what one loves when lovely knowledge is lost is the promise of thinking and doing otherwise" (Lather, 2001, p. 161). What could this "lovely knowledge" have been? Lather draws the term "lovely knowledge" from Deborah Britzman's and Alice Pitt's (2003) conceptualisation, whereby "lovely knowledge" is "knowledge that one loves" (p. 766), meaning it is what we think we know or want to know and find difficult to give up. (And "difficult knowledge is what one makes from the ruins of one's lovely knowledge" (Britzman & Pitt, 2003, p. 766).)

Butler articulates, in "After Loss, What Then?" (2003), that loss teaches us to live "as a spectral agency" (p. 467). That agency is a fantasy is something that we are



learning as we are trying to become responsible and give an account of ourselves. We learn this as we are unable to give “a final or adequate narrative reconstruction of the prehistory of the speaking “I”” (2005, p. 78) other than one that is speculative. In giving an account of ourselves, we have to preface that account with an articulation of how we ‘found’ ourselves in that situation in the first place but as we are trying to do this, the prehistory “interrupts” (2005, p. 79) our narrative. “Narrative capacity constitutes a precondition for giving an account of oneself and assuming responsibility for one’s actions through that means” (2005, p. 12). This is of importance because it suggests that how we relate the story of what has happened to us will dictate how we respond to that situation. So even though we arrive in a situation that we had no hand in creating and over which we have no control, we are implicated in and by our relations to that situation by the very fact of being there and being socially constituted beings. Therefore when we are addressed with regard to this situation, we must respond, and how we choose to respond will result in the kind of stance we take up. The narrative available to us however will be “partial” and the discourses conflicting so that “my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision” (Butler, 2005, p. 40).

Acceptance of the fact that I am implicated in the lives of others and that I am created in part out of historical, political and social conditions and discourses not of my making and over which I have no control becomes the fecund site for my articulations not only of myself and my situation but also of my sense of responsibility. In giving an account of myself I become accountable for that narration; how I tell that story will determine how I live its repercussions.

I articulate and interrogate the possibility of such a fecund site in the following two claims of responsibility: the claim of melancholia and reflective nostalgia as responsibility and the claim of art (specifically literature) as responsibility.

### **Melancholia and reflective nostalgia as responsibility**

David Eng and David Kazanjian, in the introduction, “Mourning Remains”, to their edited collection of essays, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (2003), see Freud’s concept of melancholia as a means of “interpreting loss as a creative process” (p. 3). They describe melancholia “as a confrontation with loss through the adamant refusal of closure”; it is a “mourning without end” as a result the “inability to resolve the grief” (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p. 3). Melancholia therefore is something which offers a “formal relation”, a “structure of feeling”, and “a capaciousness of meaning” which can “encompass the individual and the collective, the spiritual and the material, the psychic and the social, the aesthetic and the political” (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p. 3). In their articulation, melancholia can be creative because of its ambivalent relation to the past. Whereas Freud felt that mourning would come to an end eventually allowing the mourner to ‘move on’, with melancholia, the past is “steadfastly alive in the present” (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p. 4).

One might wonder how this could be a good thing. As established in Chapter IV, the kinds of losses suffered as a result of ‘the Crisis’ in Zimbabwe means that psychic, material and historical debris remains after the catastrophe; “the past has not yet passed” (2007, p. 79) as Lila Abu-Lughod describes the historical and political catastrophe of “the

Nakba”. Considering this, Eng and Kazanjian’s (2003) conception of melancholia as an “ongoing and open relationship with the past” (p. 4) means that we take stock of and engage with the debris, thus allowing ourselves to reckon with loss and its remains. This kind of engagement, Eng and Kazanjian believe, “generates sites for memory and history, for rewriting the past as well as reimagining the future” (2003, p. 4). In this way, “Melancholia raises the question of what makes a world of new objects, places and ideals possible” (2003, p. 4). If part of the struggle, after dramatic ruptures of historical proportions, is concerned with how one lives on afterwards, now knowing what has and can be done and that one has very little control over any of it, it seems that any way of actively and creatively engaging with those losses would help to structure the present and future in proactively responsible ways. By this I refer to the idea that responsibility can be retroactive, in looking back so as to apportion blame and demand reparation, but also being proactive and assessing responsible action for the present and future. There is nowhere else to go from a position that ‘harks on’ about the past, clings to fantastical notions of better times (so called “hey days”), and bemoans the bad luck of your times; it is a *culs de sac* (Lewis, 1961, p. 41). Rather, one needs to assess and engage with the past in a manner that is informed by “reflective nostalgia” rather than “restorative nostalgia” (Boym, 2001).

As explained in Chapter IV, Svetlana Boym (2001) articulates two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Briefly, restorative nostalgia desires a return to the past by attempting a “transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home” (Boym, 2001, p. vxiii), whereas reflective nostalgia “delays homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately” (Boym, 2001, p. xviii). The focus of reflective nostalgia is not on the

“recovery” (Boym, 2001, p. 49) of what has been lost but rather a “meditation on history and the passage of time” (Boym, 2001, p. 49). There is a “flexibility” in its relation to the past and its narration of the past, which Boym (2001) describes as “ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary” (p. 50). In this way, reflective nostalgia does not dwell on set pieces from the past or thoughts of glorious better days; it does not return endlessly to stories which begin with the expression, “When we lived in Zimbabwe...”, and seek to denigrate the lifestyle and choices of those who still live at home. Reflective nostalgia can create “a new kind of space that plays with the past and the present”, or as Eng (2003) would encourage, brings the past to the present, so that “a modern nostalgic can be homesick and sick of home at once” (Boym, 2001, p. 50).

Reflective nostalgia is a claim of responsibility precisely because nostalgia can be prospective as well as retrospective (Boym, 2001, p. xvi). “Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future” (Boym, 2001, p. xvi) and so considerations of the future must make us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales: “Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory” (p. xvi). It is not just the personal and individual stories that one is trying to narrate but rather the stories of others too who are implicated in the telling by the relational ties between us.

I need only think of the veritable flood of white Zimbabwean memoirs that have been published in the last ten years as a prime example of irresponsible restorative nostalgia.<sup>26</sup> Ranka Primorac writes in her essay, “Rhodesians Never Die? The

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<sup>26</sup> *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2003) and *Scribbling the Cat: Travels with an African Soldier* (2004) by Alexandra Fuller and *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa* (1996), *When a*

Zimbabwean Crisis and the Revival of Rhodesian Discourse” (2010), that even as the recent white writing “strives to adapt its sense of home and belonging to conditions of crisis and multiple exile in the twenty-first century, a certain formation of white writing that identifies itself as ‘Zimbabwean’ continues to reproduce a deep and colonial-rooted ambivalence towards notions of Africa, home and belonging” (p. 202-203). Much has been written in critique of the two most well-known white memoirs to have been published in the last fifteen years: Alexandra Fuller’s *Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2003) and Peter Godwin’s *Mukiwa: A White Boy in Africa* (1996). Both memoirs recount experiences of growing up in Zimbabwe from the mid 1960s till the end of the Liberation War and Independence in 1980. Both authors insert themselves into “colonial-era ideologies by writing about ‘African’ childhoods with a mixture of nostalgia and anxiety” (Primorac, 2010, p. 211), hence there is an awkwardness in their depictions in calling themselves ‘African’ (that sweeping descriptor) while depicting colonial childhoods. Their nostalgia is irresponsible because nostalgia “is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations” (Boym, 2001, p. xvi). Their renderings implicate others in ways that they wouldn’t want to be rendered but also in ways that are uncritical and ahistorical.

Conversely, reflective nostalgic recollections can be seen in the use of humour and irony in Petina Gappah’s short stories from her collection *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009). Better past times in Zimbabwe are brought to the reader’s attention not through stories of idealised childhoods but through amusing anecdotes inserted into the stories,

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*Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir of Africa* (2008), *The Fear: Robert Mugabe and the Martyrdom of Zimbabwe* (2011) are the most well known in the States, but there has literally been an outpouring of memoirs written by Zimbabweans, especially after the farm invasions. Many were self-published, most had sentimentally nostalgic titles, always followed by a colon and some statement beginning “An African...”, and all have found a hungry audience amongst the white Zimbabwean diaspora.

such as an anecdote about a group of children who hear a woman ask for six cents and think she asks for ‘sense’ as they’ve never seen coins before (they ceased to exist in 2000 when hyper-inflation eroded the worth of the currency) (Gappah, 2009, p. 42). Zanu-PF’s “patriotic history” (Ranger, 2004), which would definitely be characterized as restoratively nostalgic in its idealisation of a glorious past, is satirized by Gappah’s characters who amuse each other with jokes about the state of the country: “Before the President was elected, the Zimbabwe ruins were a pre-historic monument in Masvingo province. Now the Zimbabwe ruins extend to the whole country” (2009, p. 33). Gappah’s stance towards the past is “ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary” (Boym, 2001, p. 50); it shows a reflective nostalgia, which forces the reader to similarly reflect and question the stories we choose to tell of the past.

I return to Gappah’s writing to elucidate the third claim of responsibility:

### **Art as responsibility**

Edward Said (2000) believes that if the “exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned [from the experience]: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity” (p. 184). Referencing Theodor Adorno’s *Minima Moralia* as an example of such a “scrupulous subjectivity”, Said explains that Adorno’s reflections were “informed by the belief that the only home truly available now (after the advent of an ‘administered’ world), though fragile and vulnerable, is in writing” (p. 184).

Such “scrupulous subjectivities” are created through the fiction of Petina Gappah.

Petina Gappah, in an interview with the *Guardian* newspaper, after winning the Guardian First Book award, says that though she doesn't "live [in Zimbabwe] physically", she is "there mentally" (Guardian, 2009), which for me exemplifies a kind of imaginative and even psychic return. "Despite the psychic disorders of exile, it ironically offers opportunities for creativity" (Muchemwa, 2010, p. 135). The stories in her book are humorous and ironic renderings of lives lived in and through various aspects of 'the Crisis'. Kizito Muchemwa (2010) writes that Gappah's stories, which "return to diasporic creativity to re-imagine identity in the Zimbabwean context" (p. 135), are a response to the current crisis in that they "mediate the experience of a population that has been externalised by the state" (p. 135). The space that such writers occupy is a "liminal" one that "mediates the melancholia of those who find themselves in strange lands and the anomie of those left at home, who experience many types of deprivation" (Muchemwa, 2010, p. 135).

Gappah mediates the ruptures and losses experienced as a result of 'the Crisis' through satire and irony. For example: her brilliantly comic short story, "The Mupandwana Dancing Champion" (2009), begins with the arresting sentence: "When the prices of everything went up ninety-seven times in one year, M'dhara Vitalis Mukaro came out of retirement to make the coffins in which we buried our dead" (p. 91). The narrator, who teaches geography at the local secondary school in Mupandawana, which is described as "not even a townlet, a townling, or half a fraction of a town," but a so-called "Growth Point," a term used by the government as a diversion "from the reality of [their] present squalor" (Gappah, 2009, p. 91), observes that his students' only interest in his subject is their desire to know the exact distance between Mupandawana and London,

and Johannesburg, and Gaborone, and Harare. M'dhara Vitalis returns to Mupandawana from Harare, where he worked for thirty years for a furniture manufacturer before being forced into early retirement because his employer was shutting down the company due to the impossible economic conditions. Inflation “zoomed and soared and spun the roof off the country” (Gappah, 2009, p. 95) and Vitalis’s pension, resulting in a retirement package made up of his work overalls, some of his tools and three pairs of shoes.

The story is about, as the title suggests, a dancing champion, who turns out to be M'dara Vitalis. The owner of the local tavern, “Why Leave Guest House and Disco-Bar”, decides to host a dancing competition, to which the “Growth Pointers” (Gappah, 2009, p. 92) respond most favourably. During the championships, it becomes apparent that old Vitalis has picked up some very impressive dance moves while in Harare and wows the crowd, winning the competition. In his final victory dance, what looked like ecstatic and emphatic dance moves, are in fact the moves induced by a fatal heart attack. This story, I believe, its point of view and representation, show a positive and creative engagement with the country’s past and present. After ‘the Crisis’, and during it too, there is still hope and humour and dancing and community. And even though M'dhara Vitalis was “not dancing, but dying” (Gappah, 2009, p. 129), he got his story on the front page of the national paper (“Man Dances Self to Death” (Gappah, 2009, p. 130)), right under the daily picture of the President! Gappah uses certain events and aspects of ‘the Crisis’ only as a backdrop to show how Zimbabweans explore and trouble life lived in post-colonial Zimbabwe. She uses “the motifs of connection and reconnection to examine a range of postcolonial subjectivities” (Muchemwa, 2010, p. 136).



The wreckage is fecund if these are the kinds of stories we come to tell of it. Art, and literature in this specific example, can offer a positive and renewed engagement with ‘the Crisis’ and the country. This is where I see the claim of responsibility. I am not advocating that only positive or happy and humorous stories be told but rather that there is an ironic and open assessment that ordinary life is lived there. “The country that she writes about is a country where life goes on in the face of political oppression and economic collapse” (Guardian, 2009). Gappah’s secret to writing: “You don’t focus on the big moments, you focus on the people, the tiny little moments” (Guardian, 2009). For this reason, Gappah says in the interview with the *Guardian* that she dislikes the label ‘the voice of Zimbabwe’, something her publisher first tried to pin on her, because “writing of a place is not the same as writing for a place” (Guardian, 2009).

There is in fact a plethora of new literature coming out of Zimbabwe. Where it had for a time gone quiet as many of Zimbabwe’s prominent writers were silenced either by the AIDS epidemic, collusion and bribery (Hove, 2001), or exile and disillusionment, a new younger vibrant crop of writers is emerging and writing of about the place, not for the place (Guardian, 2009). Literature, in its broadest articulation is working positively as an archive.

There has been no shortage of documentation of the suffering of Zimbabweans at home and across borders over the last decade. One of the ‘positive’ dimensions of the crisis is the record created by the extensive media coverage and an extraordinary body of human rights reporting.

There has also been a flourishing of literary representations, from personal memoirs (mostly by white Zimbabweans), poetry, short stories, longer

fiction, and plays, that provide greater intimacy with the questions and experiences generated by the crisis. (Hammar, McGregor, Landau, 2010, p. 280)

There is hope to be found in this productivity as it shows the effort of continual engagement with the country's past and present and future, even if those representations are contested. This productivity is also a result of so many people having left though and not just because access to the necessary resources are more readily available outside of the country and because you don't have to write under the threat of incarceration. It is also because exile offers a kind of nourishment (Hove, 2007) and can also be motivational factor. It is also, I believe, because of the "practice of dwelling differently" (Clifford, 1993, p. 321) in that one is afforded a perspective that only leaving and being forced to reflect and give an account of yourself can provide.

The next claim that I wish to propose is the claim of:

### **Learning as responsibility**

Thomas Keenan (1997) sees responsibility arising precisely when we don't know how we ought to act, and believes that responsibility should be "an interruption between the orders of cognition and action" (p. 1). This he believes takes place at a "frontier" (p. 12). He writes that "Something other than knowledge comes into play at the frontier, something that exceeds or cannot be reduced to cognition and the application of a rule—otherwise the decision at the border would make no difference" (Keenan, 1997, p. 12). What is this "something other than knowledge" (Keenan, 1997, p. 12)? What is it that

happens beyond “knowledge” in the borderland? I would argue that learning happens at this frontier: we are learning about responsibility and about making one’s way as spectral agency (Butler, 2003, p. 467), and about the perils of self-narration, and we are also learning to learn (Spivak, 1998, p. 343).

Spivak (1998) speaks of love in relation to learning. She describes the engagement of “ethical singularity”, love, as an engagement of “singularity and responsibility and accountability” (Spivak, 1998, p. 340). Such an engagement is approached when “responses flow from both sides” (Spivak, 1998, p. 340), which is prerequisite because the responses cannot be out of balance, “otherwise, the idea that if the person I am doing good to resembles me and has my rights, he or she will be better off, does not begin to approach an ethical relation (nor, does an attitude of unqualified admiration for the person as an example of his or her culture)” (Spivak, 1998, p. 340). To inhabit such a relation one must not see the other as a person who must adopt your values nor as a person for whom one has “unqualified admiration” (Spivak, 1998, p. 340). While encouraging us to “learn to learn”<sup>27</sup>, Spivak explains that

learning can only be attempted, through the supplementation of collective effort by love. What deserves the name love is an effort—over which one has no control yet at which one must not strain—that is slow, attentive on both sides, mind changing on both sides, at the possibility of the unascertainable ethical singularity that is not ever a sustainable condition.

The necessary collective efforts are to change laws, relations of production, systems of education, and health care. But without the mind-

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<sup>27</sup> In the context of the essay, Spivak encourages us “to learn to learn” from the “original ecological philosophies of the world” (p. 340), which will teach us “to make the globe a world” (p. 343).

changing one-on-one responsible contact, nothing will stick. (1998, p. 340)

Spivak sees responsible action as being grounded in singular engagements of love and it is from this experience that collective action learns. Learning to be responsible is to learn from the “two way responses of love” (Spivak, 1998, p. 340). It certainly seems true that political, historical and collective responsibility begins with personal and intimate responsibility, because as Spivak says without that “nothing will stick” (1998, p. 340).

Collective responses take place with/in the community. But how does this community of responsibility come about? Who are its members? And in what ways do they position themselves to act responsibly?

### **Community as responsibility**

I have spent time in this study articulating notions of community. I use this opportunity to re-cap Butler’s convincing position on community as a place of fecundity and responsibility.

In *Precarious Life* (2004) Butler considers “a dimension of political life that has to do with our exposure to violence and our complicity in it, with our vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows, and with finding a basis for community in these conditions” (p. 19). As discussed in Chapter V, Butler believes that grief, instead of being “privatizing”, “furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order” (2004, p. 22). This it does by “bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility” (Butler, 2004, p. 22).

In *Frames of War* (2010), Butler continues to elaborate upon the precarity of life and what that means for “the ontology of individualism” (p. 33), as well as thinking about ways to “assume responsibility for the minimization of precarity” (Butler, 2010, p. 33). Butler establishes that the body is “a social phenomenon” in that “it is exposed to others, vulnerable by definition”, and so “it must rely on what is outside itself” (2010, p. 33). Butler writes that “precariousness as a generalized condition relies on a conception of the body as fundamentally dependent on, and conditioned by, a sustained and sustainable world; responsiveness—and thus, ultimately, responsibility—is located in the affective responses to a sustaining and impinging world” (p. 34).

How we respond—and so are responsible—to this world depends on certain critical question: “Am I responsible only to myself? Are there others for whom I am responsible? And how do I, in general, determine the scope of my responsibility? Am I responsible for all others, or only to some, and on what basis would I draw that line?” (Butler, 2010, p. 35) These critical questions must be further troubled: “Is it only as an “I”, that is, as an individual, that I am responsible? Could it be that when I assume responsibility what becomes clear is that who “I” am is bound up with others in necessary ways? Am I even thinkable without the world of others? In effect, could it be that through the process of assuming responsibility the “I” shows itself to be, at least partially, a “we”? (Butler, 2010, p. 35). Emphasizing the relational ties through which we are constituted, brings Butler from the singular to the collective, because if the “I” exists in relation to others, then surely we cannot only be responsible to ourselves, if we were that would be a denial of our relationality. This conception of myself as “invariably in community” comes about through the realisation that one is impressed and impinged

upon by others “in ways that are not fully in my control or clearly predictable” (Butler, 2004, p. 27).

Butler asks, “But who then is included in the “we” that I seem to be, or to be part of? And for which “we” am I finally responsible” (Butler, 2010, p. 35-36). She does not see this “we” as being a question of belonging to a particular community bound by nationality, or territory, or language because “If I identify a community of belonging on the basis of nation, territory, language, or culture, and if I then base my sense of responsibility on that community, I implicitly hold to the view that I am responsible only for those who are recognizably like me in some way” (Butler, 2010, p. 36). And as Spivak argues, relations of ethical singularity, or love as responsibility, cannot take place “if the person I am doing good to resembles me and has my rights” (1998, p. 340). Butler’s question is much broader; instead she asks provocatively, “What is our responsibility towards someone we do not know?” (Butler, 2010, p. 36).

The relational ties by which we are recognised and constituted insist upon a sense of community. But we cannot expect that community to be homogenous. It can only be a place of accepted differences. Using our sense of loss to see and feel what connects us as a community seems to be most hopeful. And I wonder too if this new sense of community could also be a place of reconciliation, not between political parties, but rather reconciliation between the past and the present and the future. Could we use this new sense of community to realise our sense of individual, collective and even historical responsibility?

## Conclusion

This work for me has always been a question of ‘so what’, and not necessarily the ‘so what’ of research and theoretical stances and methodology but rather a more urgent and topical ‘so what’. So what can this situation be made to mean? So what do we do with this situation? Or rather, (I must stop deflecting by using the plural pronoun) what can *I* do with this situation? To attempt to find answers to this question (accepting that the answers may just be the arrival at more questions) I had to start with the naming and articulating of the events and the experiences of the events. What is it? What has happened? Through this work, I have learnt to appreciate, articulate and mediate my conceptions of the “different kinds of losses” (Butler, 2003, p. 467) that have been experienced as a result of ‘the Crisis’. I felt it before when I was living at home and in my first years in New York but it is through this academic work that I have found the words to say it! But what implications might these words have?

From here, again I asked, “So what?” So I can name it for myself but what happens next? I feel (as a way of coping?) that I must always keep trying to do something with this experience; tarrying with grief, as Butler (2004) encourages. As such, it was working with conceptions of mourning, melancholia and nostalgia that provided me with a theoretical framework with which to meditate on my conceptions of the psycho-social experiences of “internal” and “external” exile (Hove, 2007). Needing to think more practically and politically as well as theoretically, I started to wonder about the experiences of the diaspora, again returning to the question of ‘so what’. So what can

be made of the three million strong Zimbabwean diaspora? Leading me finally to ponder responsibility as the next (and, perhaps to my mind, inevitable) ‘so what?’

Through this work, I have learnt to think more deeply on questions of responsibility. I have come to understand that there are more, sometimes less obvious ways, to take a responsible stance towards times of crisis. I suspect that this work which has only just scratched the surface of how responsibility could be a possible response to times of crisis, could and should go much deeper into the ethical nature of such a stance. (And I hope to go further and wider and deeper in my future journeys into research.) But I must also ask, ‘Why did I choose or why was I drawn to conceptions of responsibility?’ I think it would be fair to say that I am drawn to notions of responsibility because I see it as an active response and engagement (I have an innate fear of passivity) but also I think that I am drawn to it as a response because of the implication of being held to account, with its attendant connotations of reparation and ‘righting of wrongs’.

My education and upbringing in a fairly traditional, Western enlightenment-informed setting means that I cannot help but desire and long for justice, the righting of wrongs, a world where people are held to account. (I use Judith Butler because she offers ways of thinking about agency and taking action in the world from poststructuralist and psychoanalytic perspectives.) And desiring ‘justice’ is probably why I am drawn to notions of responsibility. (In my more cynical moments, surveying the destruction wrought by the regime on the country’s institutions, I do not think there will ever be justice for Zimbabwe because perhaps justice is a fairy tale.) And from this confession, I must also acknowledge the sneaky presence of the normative voice in my work. This is wrong, I am implying, it is a crime and it must be righted by ethically responsible action!



While I did not intend for the personal voice to be normative, it is there none-the-less. I think that it might come from a place of self-consciousness about my (white) place in the history of my country but also I think that it is a reaction to the niggling child-like humanistic fear that ‘the Crisis’ will never be over, despite having theorized that there is no after or over, I, of course, still dream of an after and an over.

In owning the normative voice, I must also own the five claims. These claims are drawn directly in relation to my situated interpretations of ‘the Crisis’ and so are not meant to be seen as normative but rather suggestive of avenues that could be used to open up considerations of how one could respond to such formative experiences. It is through the work of attempting to engage with my interpretations of the psycho-social experiences of ‘the Crisis’, which are all informed by my white, middle class background, my education in literature, literary studies and education, as well as my experiences having taught in literature in Zimbabwe that the five possible claims are drawn. This fact—that the proposed claims are drawn from my very particular conceptions, education, interests and passions and are not meant to be normative—is in fact a source of hope for me. Hope in the realization that there are a myriad of other ways that myself and others could think about responsibility as a stance in response to our own experiences and interpretations of crisis.

I believe that my use of autobiography stresses my situatedness. Using autobiography I wish to challenge “the normative, the ordinary, the taken-for-granted” (Miller, 2005, p. 54) as I attempt to contextualize, mediate and trouble my interpretations of my experiences of certain aspects of ‘the Crisis’, which has been a formative experience in my life. Speculative inquiry, and specifically writing autobiographically as

a method, provides me with skills to help me think through and on and around the experiences of crisis and exile. In this way, I believe that this hybridized method could be used in curriculum in Zimbabwean schools to find the words to articulate the losses and confusion caused by ‘the Crisis’, which could possibly lead students and teachers alike to “learn to be responsible while studying to be political” ((Spivak, 1998, p. 337).

If “Home is where one starts from” (Eliot, 1963, p. 203) then where do we finish? My journeys to the States, through graduate school and the years of thinking and reading that have lead me to and through this paper have helped to clarify what I always knew: that I must return. I return home to return to the classroom where I am most happy. I had thought that my explorations out of Zimbabwe would open up the desire to take on other opportunities (academia? NGO work?) but what I have learnt is that what I was doing is what I should be doing. I return to teaching, anticipating the pressure and the penury, because I love teaching and I love teaching English but also I return because I feel compelled to. It turns out that this was a long and circuitous route “to arrive where [I] started” but hopefully my journeys have taught me to “know the place for the first time” (Eliot, 1963, p. 212)!

Finally, I wish to acknowledge that I did worry that you would find the following and final *Afterword* depressing. I suppose I doubted it because I felt a sense of responsibility to give my reader (and myself) a more hopeful ending. I wondered if I should write you something else but then decided to stick with my original decision because I want to stress, as I did in the Introduction, that ‘the Crisis’ is ongoing and I feel a sense of urgency in this work. What overcame my sense of responsibility to provide my reader with a hopeful ending was my sense of responsibility to those children and

teachers at that forgotten school. I feel a sense of individual responsibility to use this opportunity to tell you about my interpretations of their situation. To acknowledge that I am not, and cannot, be well unless they are well. I write it to remind myself: *La lotta continua!*

## **Afterword**

### *The Omay*

The drive to the Omay Communal Area in the north-west of Zimbabwe takes us seven hours; three of those hours are spent navigating corrugated and eroded dirt roads. Chidygamugamu Primary School is our destination. And the reason for our trip? The NGO funded project that we are running intends to construct nutrition gardens at rural schools in the Omay – one of the least developed and poorest areas in Zimbabwe. The majority of the Omay's residents are Tonga. Famous for their craftsmanship, especially their traditional doors, which we in the cities buy up as 'art', they are also famously forgotten. Living so far away from any major urban area and holding no political power being neither Shona nor Ndebele it is almost as if they are not there at all.

This region is beautiful but oh so very hot, and usually very dry. But we have come at the end of the rainy season so it is green and lush but that means that the chances of contracting malaria is high. This is not a good area for farming; the land is stubborn and does not provide a good yield. A nutrition survey carried out in the district by the Save the Children Organisation in February 2002 found a global acute malnutrition or

wasting level of 5.8% and a chronic malnutrition or stunting level of 34.1%. Due to economic collapse, these figures must be so much worse. We will build a nutrition garden, we think. That will help. We will encourage the school children to grow anything other than *mealies* (corn). We bring with us seedlings of the Maringa tree – the leaves can be cooked and eaten and are an excellent source of protein.

“Ah, we have heard of this Maringa,” members of the School Council tell us, “It can cure The Disease.”

“No, no it cannot cure The Disease”, we say over and over again, “But it will make you feel strong and healthy.”

So armed with spades and seedlings, shade cloth and plenty of mosquito repellent, as well as unwanted library books that I’ve collected from the private school I teach at in Harare, we arrive at the school. The school is situated atop a hill, with a view of the Matusadona National Park. The classrooms are shaded by aged Msasa trees, and there is plenty of space for the children to run around and play soccer. But there must be something I’m missing, I think, once I’ve stretched my legs. I thought this school catered to seven hundred children and yet there are only six classrooms. I wander inside one of them. There are no window panes or ceilings. There are no desks and only twenty or so chairs per classroom. “Hot seating”, says the headmaster. I look at him blankly. “Half the children come to school in the morning, the other half come in the afternoon. But, you know, some of these children must walk 5 kilometres to get to school and then when they get home they must help with the farming, so they are very tired.” While we walk the school grounds, he tells me, “Resources are few. We haven’t heard from the ministry (of education) in many months.” Despite this, they have not sat idly by. The community

of parents, teachers, and children had gathered and built makeshift classrooms out of thick branches and thatch. They have no walls but at least they are cool in the stifling summer months.

Chidygamugamu Primary School does not have electricity or running water. The teachers and the pupils have to walk to a well that is situated at the bottom of the hill and walk back up with 5 litre containers of water balancing on their heads. Most of the teachers are not locals but are recent school leavers from other parts of the country. They have had no teacher training but are promised some form of government support if they first do a couple years of teaching in places like the Omay. They are unbearably isolated. Because of chronic fuel shortages, the bus service no longer runs regularly through these parts. For months on end they live at the school, several teachers to a room, each waiting for the holidays when they can make the long trek out of the Omay to catch a bus to their homes to see their families.

But what really makes me want to weep is the hand-drawn calendar on the wall in the headmaster's office that outlines the events and activities of the students' extracurricular activities. I don't want to ask but for the life of me I can't figure out where they hold the "swimming gala". The extracurricular activities of these children surely just entail walking home five miles and then helping their parents in their small plots of land, fetching and carrying water, ploughing, weeding, and herding if they were so lucky as to have cows and goats.

Sustainable nutrition gardens in the face of all this? How would I account for that? Who is responsible for this situation? Who is responsible to these children and their teachers?

You don't know what to do with this experience. You don't know where to file it away. On some level you knew that many of your fellow Zimbabweans lived in such abject poverty, you knew that for many of them, their options were limited to eking out a living on some barren piece of land, you knew that they made sacrifices for the survival of their families that you could never really contemplate...but you never really knew until you saw, and now that you've seen, you don't know how to read it, or understand it, or who to get angry at or if there's even a place for anger. You don't know what to do with this experience.

### **Postscript**

I know now that, in part, this dissertation has been a way for me to do something with this experience.

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