Intra- and Inter- Continental Migrations and Diaspora in Contemporary African Fiction

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Declaration

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Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is the examination of the relationship between space and identity in recent narratives of migration, in contemporary African literature. Migrant narratives suggest that there is a correlation between identity formation and the types of boundaries and borders migrants engage with in their various attempts to find new homes away from their old ones. Be it voluntary or involuntary, the process of migrating from a familial place transforms the individual who has to negotiate new social formations; and tensions often accrue from the confrontation between one's culture and the culture of the receiving society. Return migration to the supposed country of origin is an equally important trajectory dealt with in African migrant literature. The reverse narrative stipulates similar tensions between one's diasporic culture – the culture of the diasporic space – and the culture of the homeland. Thus, intra- and inter-continental migrations and diaspora is a bifurcated inquiry that examines both outward and return migrations. These movements reveal the ways in which Africans make sense of their Africanity and their place in the world.

The concepts of "border", "boundary" and "borderland" are useful to examine notions of difference and separation both within the nation-state and in relation to transnational, intra-African as well as inter-continental exchanges. I focus more fully on these notions in the texts that examine migrations within Africa, both outward and return movements. This study is not only interested in the physical features of borders, boundaries or borderlands, but also on their consequences for the processes of identity formation and translation, and how they can help to reveal the social and historical characteristics of diasporic formations. What undergirds much of the analysis is the assumption that the negotiation of belonging and space cannot be separated from the crossing or breaching of borders and boundaries; and that these negotiations entail attempts to enter the borderland, which is a zone of exchange, crisscrossing networks, dissolution of notions of singularity and exclusive identities.

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Opsomming

Die fokus van hierdie proefskrif is ‘n ondersoek na die verhouding tussen ruimte en identiteit in onlangse migrasie-narratiewe in kontemporêre Afrika-literatuur. Migrasie-narratiewe dui op ’n korrelasie tussen identiteitsvorming en die soorte skeidings en grense waarmee migrante gemoeid raak in hulle onderskeie pogings om nuwe tuistes weg van die oues te vind. Hetsy willekeurig of gedwonge, die migrasieproses weg van ’n familiale plek verander die individu wat nuwe sosiale formasies moet oorkom, en spanning neem dikwels toe weens die konfrontasie tussen die eie kultuur en dié van die ontvangersamelewing. Migrasie terug na die sogenaamde land van herkoms is net so ’n belangrike onderwerp in Afrika-migrasieliteratuur. Die terugkeernarratief stipuleer dat daar ooreenkomstige spanning heers tussen ’n persoon se diasporiese kultuur – die kultuur van die diaspora-ruimte – en die kultuur van die land van oorsprong. Die ondersoek na intra- en interkontinentale migrasies en diasporas is dus ’n tweeledige proses wat uitwaartse sowel as terugkerende migrasies beskou. Hierdie bewegings openbaar die ware maniere waarop Afrikane sin maak uit hulle Afrikaniteit en hulle plek in die wêreld.

Die konsepte van “grens”, “grenslyn” en “grensgebied” is nuttig wanneer die begrippe van verskil en verwydering ondersoek word binne die nasiestaat asook in verhouding tot transnasionale, intra-Afrika en interkontinentale wisseling. Ek fokus meer volledig op hierdie begrippe in die tekste wat ondersoek instel na migrasie binne Afrika, beide uitwaartse en terugkerende bewegings. Hierdie studie gaan nie net oor die fisiese kenmerke van grense, grenslyne en grensgebiede nie, maar bestudeer ook die gevolge daarvan op die prosesse van identiteitsvorming en vertaling, en die manier waarop hulle kan help om die sosiale en historiese eienskappe van diasporiese formasies te openbaar. ’n Groot deel van die analise word ondersteun deur die aanname dat die onderhandeling tussen tuishoort en ruimte nie geskei kan word van die oorsteek of deurbreek van grense en grenslyne nie, en dat hierdie onderhandelinge lei tot pogings om die grensgebied te betree, waar die grensgebied gekenmerk word deur wisseling, kruising van netwerke en die verwording van begrippe soos sonderlingheid en eksklusiewe identiteite.

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Chapter One: Introduction

African Migrations and Diasporas in context

This thesis will engage with contemporary 21st-century African fiction by continental and diasporic authors, with a view to examining how a diversity of African writers from different locations and cultural backgrounds share a common concern with the relationship between the African subject and space—either in movement or fixedness. The diversity and multi-vocality provided by the choice of authors enables one to assess, to use to Gilroy's phrasing, how "sameness" and "difference" influence each other in the production of a totality that tends towards a diversification of the black diasporic and African imagination rather than to any ethnic or cultural purity (*Between Camps* 103-108). African literature's engagement with the postcolonial condition attests to the mobility of African peoples in an increasingly globalising world. This literature thus explores the tensions that result from the encounter between the autochthon and the foreigner, between "us" and "them", the "one" and the "other". The texts that I have selected for this dissertation are inscribed within the frame of migrant literature; as literature about migration, these texts form a genre of what Paul Tiyambe Zeleza has called the "literature of exile" (11). Traversing the continent, one finds (as does Zeleza) that "there is hardly any African writer of note who has not experienced exile at one time or another" (11). Moreover, as the thesis will demonstrate, migrations are often embedded in the process of affirming subjects' ties to a "national home", thus attesting to the interdependence of both home and exile (Skey 234).

This dissertation investigates how recent African fiction expands the existing theoretical understanding of African identity and the processes of African migrant identity formation. I will examine two strands of contemporary African fiction dealing with migrants: (1) that which deals with internal migration and (2) that which deals with external migration. These two trajectories present an opportunity to investigate a gap in literary studies: migration flows and diasporic formations within Africa have often been overlooked, and migrant populations have been referred to as "immigrants", "émigrés", "foreigners" etc. The gap reveals that in contrast to the North Atlantic world, which is the privileged site for literary studies on migration, Africa and its diasporic dispersions and formations have scarcely been investigated. In his article "In Search of the Diasporas Within Africa", Oliver Bakewell (as his title indicates) conducts an inquiry into intra-continental African diasporas and finds that these have received little serious scholarly attention. Reading narratives of extra- and intra-

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continental migrations alongside each other leads to an understanding of an aesthetic of border and boundary crossing. This thesis will investigate what it means to cross a national, intra-continental, or intercontinental border or boundary and the way this affects identity formation and an individual's relation to space. Inter- and extra- continental flows not only represent what Isabel Hofmeyr refers to as the privileged "north-south modes of transnationalism" but also "non-western . . . processes of transnationalism that happen without reference to Europe" (3). However, African colonial history hovers in the background of these intra-continental movements and social formations.

The presentation of the relationship between identity and place in recent narratives of migration forms a canvas for revisiting theories of diasporic and migrant experiences. Migration literature suggests that there is a correlation between identity formation and the types of boundaries and borders that migrants traverse in their various attempts to relocate or reconnect with former places of residence. Thus the notions of leaving and returning are at the heart of my interest in examining journeys across borders and boundaries, and migrants' attempts to make sense of their place in the world and their relation to Africanity. It becomes clear that the concepts of diaspora and diasporic identity are shifting and dynamic, especially since these terms are used in a number of different fields of study to express peoples' relationship with both their places of residence and origin (see Stock, Cohen, Manning, Bakewell, and Clifford). Diaspora, especially, has become a concept that moves across and within disciplines.

In a ground-breaking work on world diasporas, William Safran suggested that in order to be classified as diasporic, a people needed to satisfy six criteria (which Robin Cohen later revised). Based on the historical cases of the Jewish, Greek and Armenian diasporas, the traditional definition of diaspora comprises the following characteristics:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
4. an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;

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6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial;
9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

(Cohen 17)

The descendants of the Atlantic slave trade will later feature in the category of historical diasporas. The phrase "African diaspora" was first used by George Shepperson in 1965 at the International Conference of African Historians in Tanzania (Olaniyan and Sweet 5). Since then other groups or populations have been added to the category of the diaspora; these include migrants and their offspring who maintain some transnational links with their homelands. Thus the definition and features of diaspora have been substantially revised, especially as a result of a number of publications in the social sciences in the last fifteen years (Bakewell 1). Patrick Manning's framing of the definition provided by social scientists is useful for this study of contemporary African diasporic formations. In *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* Manning observes: "Social scientists today use the term 'diaspora' to refer to migrants who settle in distant lands and produce new generations, all the while maintaining ties of affection and making occasional visits to each other and their homeland" (2). This definition differs significantly from the traditional definition by Cohen (above). In Manning's definition, the homeland is not a myth: return to physical spaces of origin is often an actual behaviour, and first generations are regarded as members of a diaspora (to cite only a few of these diverging features). I will be mainly relying on this definition by social scientists in my analysis of and references to diasporic subjects in their diasporic spaces.

Moreover, in looking at African diasporic populations within Africa, I limit my scope to those that fit Oliver Bakewell's study. Bakewell isolates four categories, which he deems useful for an examination of intra-African diasporic formations. The four categories include those listed by Cohen above: numbers 1, 2, 3, and 8. I will use these four categories to show how through the journey of return some categories are forced on the diasporic subject. In "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic", Paul Tiyambe Zeleza observes

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that "the term 'diaspora' tends to be preoccupied with problematizing the relationship between diaspora and nation and the dualities or multiplicities of diasporic identity or subjectivity" (39). Zeleza's observation points to the existence of common ground between both definitions of diaspora. As the dissertation will argue, narratives of involuntary returns to the homeland tend to shuffle the traditional definition of diaspora.

In general, the concept of diaspora itself already connotes a sense of difference and multiple experiences of displacement and movement. The interrogation of the diasporic phenomenon provides us with a much needed, textured understanding of contemporary migrant realities both in and outside Africa. Diasporic identity with its connotation of out-of-place-ness and heterogeneity contradicts any idea of fixedness or purity of identity (Gilroy, *Between Camps* 125). Diaspora evokes a sense of mixture, non-purity, and more importantly, as Caryl Phillips puts it, a sentiment of "[being] of, and not of [a] place" simultaneously (*New World* 3). In other words, diaspora suggests the state of entrapment between different selves that bestow on diasporic people what Du Bois would call some kind of double consciousness[1] (Gilroy, *The Black* 126). Thus, I agree with Wendy W. Walters that fiction becomes the space within which displaced peoples attempt to build themselves imaginary homelands and "perform their varied and multiple claims to home" (xxv)[2]. The people I am concerned with in this dissertation are caught between the dual reality of Africa and Europe, or "home" and "away"; they find themselves attached to these places in various manners in the making of their identities.

Diasporas can be classified as a subset of more general transnational connections. Scholarship recognises diaspora as one of the defining features of global migratory practices. Diaspora is understood to refer to "a distinct form of transnational communities" (Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri 209). Transnational modes of social formation are opposed to notions of singularity and are open to cross-border networks and connections (Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri 213). Though located within the international scheme of social, cultural, economic, and diplomatic networks and exchanges, transnationalism still presupposes a location of origin and location of settlement (Adesina and Adebayo 3; Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri 208). As Ann Miles has argued, transnational migrancy is, then, a process whereby migrants engage in

[1] The term commonly refers to the state of feeling and being conscious of belonging to at least two distinct cultural, racial and geographical backdrops. It was coined by African-American scholar and Pan-Africanist W.E.B. Du Bois and popularised by Paul Gilroy, a prominent voice in Cultural Studies and the culture of the Black Atlantic diaspora. Gilroy explains: "Double consciousness was initially used to convey the special difficulty arising from black internationalisation of an American identity" (*The Black* 126).

[2] If this assumption is true of external diasporic subjects, a close reading of contemporary African fiction would enable one to contemplate the same hypothesis with regard to internal African diasporic identities.

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creating new social networks and reshaping both their spaces of settlement and of origin through their actions (8). Writing about the tendency to misuse notions of diaspora and transnationalism, Bakewell warns that these terms need to be used with caution. He argues, for instance, that "not all those who engage in transnational practices are necessarily diasporic"; he further explains that not all diasporas engage in "transnational practices" (3). However, "diasporas", he maintains (in agreement with Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri), "cannot be separated from transnationalism" (Bakewell 3). It is this logic of interconnectedness that I intend to utilise when referring to transnationalism – along with borders, boundaries, or borderlands – as spaces of migratory practice. This will assist the examination of fictional representations of intra-African migrations. It should be noted, however, that this interconnectedness of terms does not supersede their main distinguishing characteristics. Ninna Nyberg-Sørensen argues in this regard: "Migrants' transnational practices have been understood to dissolve fixed assumptions about identity, place, and community, whereas diasporic identity-making has been understood to evolve around attempts to 'fix' and closely knit identity and community" (7). This is mostly true of intra-continental diasporas (Bakewell 14).

As the title of the dissertation indicates, I am exploring two trajectories of textual representation of Africans migrant practices, both of which engage outward and return migrations. In the inter-continental trajectory I examine novels by Abdulrazak Gurnah, Brian Chikwava, and Jude Dibia depicting both outward and return migrations and Buchi Emecheta's novel that represents a narrative of return to Africa. In the intra-continental trajectory I analyse texts by Marie Beatrice Umutesi, Phaswane Mpe, and Simão Kikamba to represents outward migrations, and novels by Kikamba, Alex Agyei-Agyiri, and Binyavanga Wainaina's short story to discuss intra-continental movements of return. Both the inter-continental and the intra-continental trajectories entail migrants leaving their African home countries and settling elsewhere in Europe or Africa, as well as migrants returning to or visiting their African homes (they may depart from Europe or from within Africa). The seemingly disparate choice of authors and texts demonstrates that migrants' stories and trajectories are not homogenous, and this diversity can only provide a richly textured rendering of migrant experiences. However, the younger generation of authors discussed here have in common an interest in taking up non-exclusive positions and do not seem to pledge allegiance to localised pockets of identity. They inhabit and traverse various borderlands rather than being rooted in one place from which they write back to another. The selected texts are complimentary and speak to one another; together, they describe border and

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boundary situations of familial, ethnic, national, international, and inter-continental dimensions. In addition, I pay particular attention to these writers' use of personal experiences to render the refraction of the political. I will read the texts following a thematic of migrant trajectories; because some texts engage both outward and return migration (within the same trajectory), these will appear in more than one chapter.

Thus, *Harare North*, *Admiring Silence*[3], *By the Sea*, *Unbridled*, *The New Tribe*, and *How We Buried Puso* are all novels about inter-continental migration. Two writers of the older generation of immigrant writers are featured: Abdulrazak Gurnah (1948) and Buchi Emecheta (1944) are black British African writers, based in the UK, from Zanzibar and Nigeria respectively. They constitute the shift from the *Windrush* generation[4] that distinguished itself with seminal texts such as Caribbean-born Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). C. L. Innes' observes that both Gurnah and Emecheta fall into the category of the post-Windrush "generation of writers who have been concerned with recreating and reflecting upon the experience of those who came from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and the experience of their children" (22). Emecheta and Gurnah both remain concerned with the postcolonial condition of Africans displacements "within and without"[5] Africa.

Nigerian Jude Dibia (b. 1975) and Zimbabwean Brian Chikwava (b. 1972) belong to a younger generation of writers, born in postcolonial Africa, and both are writing about intercontinental migrants. Dibia lives, works, and writes from Nigeria: his three novels, *Walking With Shadows* (2006), *Unbridled* (2007), and *Blackbird* (2011) have gained him international recognition as a writer who does not shy away from writing about taboo subjects (Ojikutu n.pag). In *Unbridled* Ngozi, a young Nigerian woman travels to England in search of socio-economic stability. After her failed romance with a white Englishman, her father dies and she feels compelled to return to Nigeria for the funeral. Chikwava is an inspiring voice from Zimbabwe. He is London-based but his insight into the contemporary culture of both his home-country, Zimbabwe, and the host-country, England, puts him in the same tradition of experimental writing as Amos Tutuola, with *Palm Wine Drinkard*. Chikwava's

[3] This novel is an older text; the other texts were published from 2000 onwards. However, the text's representation of contemporaneous phenomena of objectification of the Africa subject as well as its lingering impact on colonial discourses makes it valuable in the analysis of the crossing of inter-continental boundaries, both outward and inward.

[4] The ship *MV Empire Windrush* brought the first group of 492 West Indian immigrants to Tilbury near London on 22 June 1948. These immigrants are the origin of today's Britain multicultural society.

[5] Phrase borrowed from to the title of the book edited by Leif O. Manger and Munzoul A.M. Assal. *Diasporas within and without Africa: Dynamism, Heterogeneity, Variation*.

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innovative language register reflects the madness of political and socio-economic realities in the 21st century Global South and Global North[6]. Through *Harare North* he "expresses the Zimbabwean sensibility better than standard English" (Chikwava in "Kwachirere" n.pag). Morabo Morojele was born in Maseru, Lesotho. He has worked for a number of NGOs and taken part in the training of organisations funded by USAID. His novel *How We Buried Puso* offers a captivating representation of Africa's sequential tales of "endless year zeros" (Morojele 196). He suggests in this text that migration and the local are intrinsically linked in the process of an individual's identity formation. In this text, Molefe receives news of the death of his brother; he interrupts his exilic stay in an unnamed European country and returns home to an unnamed African country.

The authors who write about migration to the Global North show that Africanity is more salient once the characters have left Africa than it is in their respective countries of origin. Regardless of the countries from which they originate, the protagonists seem to become "African for the first time" when they leave Africa (Isegawa in Vasquez 144). These experiences echo Fanon, who relates in "The Fact of Blackness" to such unfortunate, excessive visibility and ascription of identity:

> You are in a bar in Rouen or Strasbourg, and you have the misfortunate of being spotted by an old drunk. He sits down at your table right away. 'You, African? Dakar, Rufisque, whorehouse, dames, coffee, mangoes, bananas.' You stand up and leave, and your farewell is a torrent of abuse.
>
> (*Black Skin* 33)

For instance, in *Unbridled* Erika is referred to as the girl "from Africa"; in *Harare North* the unnamed narrator is first seen as "Mr Africa" before he is identified as a Zimbabwean. Africanity comes to precede particular ethnic or national affiliations. Nesbitt observes that "Africanity is foisted on the migrants the moment they arrive in the West . . . . It is in exile that a Nigerian Igbo, South African Zulu, and Kenyan Kikuyu suddenly and unequivocally become Africans" (Njubi Nesbitt 71). Thus the crossing of the continental boundary tends to bring the African self to the fore by way of objectification by others and, at times, through self-representation as well.

This objectification of African migrants does not, however, dissolve their national and ethnic identities, but it does make them realise that they belong to a marginal people, with England as the centre. Meanwhile, migrants are able to "come to terms with [their] newly

[6] See also Flora Veit-Wild's article, "'Zimbolicious' – The Creative Potential of Linguistic Innovation: The Case of Shona-English in Zimbabwe" for a history of language experimentation in Zimbabwean literature.

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discovered sojourn into the diasporic experience" (Zeleza, "Politics and Poetics 14). The distinction between self-representation and objectification or ascription is significant. Objectification is the starting point for the production of minority discourses; it witnesses the birth of "cultures produced as minorities by the dominant culture" (JanMohamed 4). This side-lining of minorities is not exclusive to extra-continental migrations. JanMohamed argues further that

> the collective nature of all minority discourses also derives from the fact that minority individuals are always treated and forced to experience themselves generically. Forced into a negative, generic subject-position, the oppressed individual responds by transforming that position into a positive, collective one. (10)

Minorities are therefore excluded from what Walter D. Mignolo has called the "macro-narratives" of the colonial/dominant discourse in which their needs as subaltern cannot be "interpreted" (in Delgado and Romero 9). These experiences of marginalisation and the objectification of the African subject are the focus of the inter-continental trajectory. Reverse migrations back to Africa represent for these marginal migrants an alternative mode of inscribing themselves in the macro-narratives of their own stories, especially through self-representation.

I interrogate the significance of Africa for migrants who have opted to settle in European diasporic spaces. The thesis shows how African homelands exercise a significant pull on migrants and influence the latter's *homing* practices. Following the intercontinental trajectory, the fiction draws on people's efforts to find a balance between an often unforgiving space and a loaded past; memories of their past in the homeland still have a firm hold on their ways of negotiating their migrant identities. In these texts, migrants do not (often) plan on returning to Africa. Interestingly the texts that narrate stories of return to Africa represent reverse migration as subject to specific sets of circumstances. For instance, return to African homelands becomes possible through literature, with the written text as metonymic connection. Africa, that is the actual countries and families from which migrants originate, often appear as the space of traumatic memories. However, these writers make the journey back to the homeland an enabling narrative. Thus, the crossing of historical, transcontinental boundaries or borders on the way back to Africa not only proves the centrality of Africa in the lives of migrants, but it also most definitely displaces the African homeland and reveals England as their true home. In *Unbridled* Ngozi receives a letter and

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returns to Nigeria on the death of her father. In *Admiring Silence* the narrator breaks twenty years of silence and travels to Zanzibar after receiving a letter informing him of his mother's deteriorating health. Chester in *The New Tribe* decides to follow his dreams and arrives in Nigeria in search of the supposed kingdom of his birth.

The other main focus of the thesis is the intra-continental trajectory, which features tensions emerging from the encounter between local and foreigner, and within local citizenry due to such factors as the politicisation of identity. This trajectory is described in the following texts: Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire*[7], Kikamba's *Going Home*, Agyei-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Wainaina's "Discovering Home", and Morojele's *How We Buried Puso*. These texts retrace the different stories of intra-African exiles. Internal migrations define the journeys of migrant Africans who, due to a variety of circumstances, have experienced internal continental displacements and reside in countries other than their home countries. This diasporic trajectory is as old as migration to different continents.

Binyavanga Wainaina (b. 1971) is a co-founder of the Kenyan journal, *Kwani*? Wainaina is mostly concerned with identity formation across multiple spaces, traditions, and cultures; however, Africa remains at the centre (Mwangi 174). Wainaina is based at Bard College, New York. In his short story, "Discovering Home", the unnamed narrator is a young Kenyan living in Cape Town, South Africa; he answers a call for a family reunion in Uganda, his mother's country of birth, and he uses this opportunity to discover Africa. Kikamba's *Going Home* is a fictional autobiography. He writes about Africans' movements within the continent; and in Annie Gagiano's words (in an online review), Kikamba's "wryly apt, deliberately ambiguous title expresses yearning as well as a sarcastic accusation against this continent's recurrent ejections of its own people" (n.pag). Kikamba lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. Phaswane Mpe (1970-2004) is a South African writer and poet. His insights into post-apartheid South African society, which he describes in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, show the intricacies of a people's emergence from half a century of legalised racism and discrimination, during which time they have shared the national space with African immigrants. Mpe fictionalises a nation emerging from a history of legalised discrimination but now facing, in the microcosmic space of Hillbrow, the reality of a "high proportion of African immigrants" (Green 334). The novel eerily anticipates the xenophobic

[7] This book is an autobiography by one of the survivors of the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Due to the author's in-depth description of fabrication and hardening of intra-national ethnic identities, not just a personal tale, I argue that the distinction between fiction and autobiography might as well be nullified here, as both genre contribute equally in terms of what Alan Collett refers to as "truth value" (qtd. in Flohr 1).

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attacks that shook the country in May 2008. Alex Agyei-Agyiri is a Ghanaian novelist, poet, and playwright. His novel, *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, was written eighteen years before it was finally published, in 2004. Agyei-Agyiri is an academic and lawyer; he started off as a painter and played the drum "until he realised his passion for the written word and made a conscious decision to develop his literary talent" ("Unexpected praise" 16). Marie Béatrice Umutesi was born in Byumba in 1959. She is a survivor of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 that claimed about one million human lives. Umutesi is a trained sociologist. Her book *Surviving the Slaughter* is one of the few accounts of the genocide written by a Rwandese (Tripp 89). The book was originally published in French and was then translated into Dutch, Spanish, Catalan, and English. Umutesi lives in exile in Belgium. Morabo Morojele, whom I have already introduced, needs to be listed here, as his novel also features intra-African migrations. In addition to ethnic and racial divisions in the intra-continental trajectory, the body significantly comes to bear the marks of national and regional differences. Diasporic spaces in Africa are characterised by the prevalence of ethnic differences, partly in response to the way the concept of modern citizenship has been used in colonial and postcolonial Africa (Adesoji; Idowu; Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels). For a black African person, having an internal diasporic home or a sense of belonging is determined by the socio-economic and political attitudes of the receiving communities. Thus, internal migration poses the challenge of being African in another African country. This challenge resembles the difficulty of defining African identity on the continent of Africa. Migrations within Africa point to two main forms of anxiety concerning "African identity". On the one hand, there is the question of the origin of the name "Africa" and the ways in which "African identity" came to be defined (Mazrui; see also Appiah 1994) On the other hand, African scholars such as Achille Mbembe (2007) and Kwame Anthony Appiah (1994 & 2006) express the urgency of redefining African identity in a postmodern world in which identity is no longer tied to a fixed place.

Intra- and inter-continental connections overlap in the making of Africa's diversity. I am interested in the possibility of assessing definitions of diaspora, home and belonging resulting from these age-old connections, especially since these same kinds of exchanges and feelings of un-belonging have been part of African social, cultural and political experiences. Although this study builds on the important work of scholars on this subject, it is still necessary to investigate existing theory more fully, especially the way in which it privileges external diasporic formations. The thesis seeks to develop a more nuanced understanding of Africa as a diverse continent by categorising diasporic communities, not according to their generic African origin, but rather in terms of the experience of individuals originating from

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specific regions, countries, and cultures of Africa. The selected primary texts provide ideal material for such a study; and raise questions referring to what one can learn from local African communities, societies, or cultures whose syncretic nature is self-evident.

Theorising an aesthetics of border/boundary crossing

The selected primary texts contain tropes through which the diasporic and African imaginations and heterogeneous relationships are woven into old and new narratives. These tropes include: memory, trauma, nostalgia, conditions of rupture and escape, return, community (ethnic, national, and otherwise imagined), self-representation, and encounters (national, transnational, intra- and inter-continental). The nuclear and extended family serves as a privileged trope in the analysis of many migrant narratives, as the authors use this as a narrative shorthand to complicate simple notions of race, ethnicity, or nationality. This thesis looks at the boundary as a demarcating frame because it is a significant, albeit contested site. However, at the same time the crossing of borders and boundaries enables individuals to re-imagine communities beyond the confines of the nation. Borders and boundaries are an inherent part of human experience; they are signposts that reveal that an individual does not exist in isolation. They also demonstrate that movement is an integral part of human experience.

The spatio-temporal distribution of African diasporic communities cuts across thousands of years and across continents (Zeleza 2005; Baud and Schendel; Manning; Gomez). It needs to be made clear that this dissertation does not attempt to offer an exhaustive analysis of African diasporic formations as such. It delimits the period of study to what Zeleza calls "contemporary diasporas". Zeleza discerns "three main waves: (1) the diasporas of colonization, (2) decolonization, and (3) the era of structural adjustment, which emerged out of the disruptions and dispositions of colonial conquest, the struggles for independence, and structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), respectively" ("Rewriting" 55, numbering added). For the purpose of this project, I reduce this to just two waves: diasporas of colonization;[8] and post-independence diasporas. These two categories encompass displaced or migrant Africans who crossed continental and national borders and find themselves in strange places.

In order to avoid generalisations, I specifically focus on what I want to call the *social context of diaspora communities* that is, the social, cultural and political status of diasporic

[8] The Berlin Conference symbolises the officialising of African colonial borders which were adjusted after WW1.

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subjects in their receiving nations.[9] Thus, I examine these social contexts, in addition to what Zeleza calls "the historical conditions and experiences that produce diasporic communities and consciousness" ("The Challenges" 6-7). The formation of diasporas does not follow general guidelines. As I will demonstrate in this dissertation, the nature of the diasporic community depends primarily on three factors: (1) circumstances of departure; (2) conditions of arrival in new settlements; and (3) the relationships that result from the location of origin and the new zones of settlement. The thesis asks how diasporic communities are formed and what the historical forces presiding over their formation are. Zeleza contends (in passing) that the historical forces presiding over diaspora formation have yet to be seriously studied. I suggest that insufficient attention has been paid to these social formations as represented in works of fiction. It is this gap that this thesis seeks to address.

I use the terms "border", "boundary" and "borderland" as organizing tropes to examine notions of difference and separation both within the nation-state and in relation to transnational, intra-African exchanges. I focus more fully on these notions in the texts that examine migrations within Africa, both outward and return movements. In order to examine the dynamics of diasporic formations and migrations within Africa, I provide an overview of notions of border, boundary, and frontier or borderland and how these operate in the African postcolonial context. In a seminal book edited by Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju, *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits, and Opportunities*, the editors reveal that in Africa there is a relationship between "the lack of congruence between the kind of hard lines which are reflected visually on maps and the reality of *the cultural and historical distribution of the people inhabiting the borderland*" (1; emphasis added). Fiction will thus provide contextual examples of how the notions of boundary, border, and borderland inform relationships between nationals of the same country; they also inform interactions at the border, as well as the way strangers negotiate identities and belonging. The processes of the political border crossing in Africa often reflect a preconception on the part of migrants that by virtue of their Africanity they can belong or be welcome on either side of the national border.

Although scholars in different languages, such as English, French, or Spanish, tend to use the terms *border, boundary,* and *frontier* interchangeably to convey some idea of separation, Baud and Schendel (in "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands") suggests that it is important to emphasise that these terms are conceptually distinct (213). These authors maintain that these conceptual differences relate to the way they are used. He

[9] In "Three meanings of 'diaspora' exemplified by South Asian religions", Steven Vertovec speaks of the social forms of diaspora.

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explains, for instance, that "boundary", apart from its diplomatic use when referring to a zone of separation between two countries, also designates a divide between people or cultures. Moreover, a "boundary" demarcates two political spaces and shows the limits of each space; political entities are "defined in treaties and delimited on maps" (Griffiths 68). A "border", Baud and Schendel suggest, points to "psychological differences" and is often used to indicate regional divides rather than lines on maps. It also implies a border post and other man-made structures that serve the purpose of demarcation. The term "frontier" is used to point to "territorial expansion" (213). According to Oscar J. Martínez, frontier "denotes an area that is physically distant from the core of the nation; it is a zone of transition, a place where people and institutions are shaped by natural and human forces that are not felt in the heartland" (5). The "borderland" is a region that is defined by a shared border between two or more countries (Baud and Schendel 216). The "borderland" extends on either side of a political border. It features transnational and international connections and provides evidence of the disruption of socio-ethnic dynamics brought about by imposed separation.

My focus in this study is not only on the physical features of borders, boundaries or borderlands, but also on their consequences for the processes of identity formation and translation, and how they can help to reveal the social and historical characteristics of diasporic formations. What undergirds much of the analysis is the assumption that the negotiation of belonging and space cannot be separated from the crossing or breaching of borders and boundaries; and that these negotiations entail attempts to enter the borderland, which is a zone of exchange, criss-crossing networks, dissolution of notions of singularity and exclusive identities.

According to Stephen Clingman in *The Grammar of Identity*, the "boundary" is "movement", "perpetually dissolving as it shifts" (3). It would be interesting to question what happens when one starts thinking of a boundary as also a space that shifts, dissolves and translates – read transforms – the individuals and objects that engage with it. The aim is not, as Clingman warns us, to establish whether "boundaries exist –because they do, they always do – but what kind of boundaries they are" (4-5). Some boundaries "override" others (5). The way to negotiate anew is to admit "the reality of differentiation *and différance*" (6; emphasis added), without erecting barriers at the borders of these differences; borders are the physical features that define each side of the boundary; they are markers of difference. Clingman suggests that "the possibility of connection should not be" closed off *a priori* (6). It seems that "possibility" plays an important part in the processes of border/boundary crossing and the negotiation of identity. If, for Clingman, the boundary "is not a limit but the space of

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transition" (22), it stands to reason that the boundary is not just a dividing line between two or more sets of differences, but rather a transitory space that links one subject-position to another, the crossing of which is dependent upon subject A allowing subject B to enter his or her space – after subject B has made an attempt to engage the conversation.

The notion of nostalgia is intrinsically linked to migration and the effect of the past on migrants' relationships with their new living spaces. According to Marianne Marroum, nostalgia is the fact of "living in the hyphen", of being straddled between life in present space of residence and the memory of the homeland (491). Therefore, nostalgia behaves like a boundary, and acts as a connector between past and present. With regard to the function of the boundary, I see the process of translation and transition between selves in Tina Steiner's terms, that is, I remain intrigued by the "oscillation between aspects of past and present" (*Translated People* 4); or, in other words, between old and new selves, and by extension between the various types of identity that migrancy makes possible.

The concept of "border navigation" does not simply imply examining movements of people: one is reminded of James Clifford's concept of travelling discourse (306) and how this can be linked to an understanding of theories in movement. In this context, Walter D. Mignolo's "border thinking" provides a potent theoretical frame with which to interrogate "mono-logic" of epistemologies which tend to limit lines of intellectual inquiry to unilateral trajectories (see Mignolo in Delgado and Romero 19). Thus, Mignolo argues that to "engage in border thinking is to move beyond the categories created and imposed by the Western epistemology" (in Delgado and Romero 11). It becomes evident in this view that border thinking allows for "moving beyond the categories" of the hegemonic discourses that tend to subjugate minority discourses. Thus borders, boundaries and borderlands are spaces wherein understanding and conviviality can be encouraged. In the same vein I understand differences and borders to be interchangeable terms; I examine how fiction emphasises the danger, to use Mignolo's phrase, of turning "differences into values and hierarchies" ("The Geopolitics of Knowledge" 71), in order words, of erecting barriers at the borders around various forms of identities.

More than the inter-continental return, the journey of intra-continental return captures the encounter of diasporic subject and autochthon at the crossing of the national border. Mikhail M. Bakhtin introduces the concept of chronotope in *The Dialogic Imagination*; I use this as a means for thinking about the relationship between time and space in migrations of intra-continental return. Bakhtin's application of the notion of the chronotope to literature derives from its expression of "the inseparability of space and time" (84). He defines

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chronotope in these terms: "We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). My intention is not to revisit the history of the novel or its development in contemporary African literature. However the use of the term chronotope is pertinent for the concept of migration, especially with regard to the trajectory of return to the African homeland. In this trajectory, and in addition to being two inseparable entities, time and space are closely related to generations (ancestry and the diaspora) and to contemporary spaces (migrant space and the original homeland). Being "an important aspect of the chronotope", as Steiner notes ("Navigating Multilingually" 51), the encounter with both extremities occurs at the moment of return when the diasporic subject (physically[10]) returns to the homeland and is confronted by the local (the autochthon) regarding claims to citizenship. In Bakhtin's chronotope, "adventure time" refers to a succession of events in a work of fiction that is characterised by "a sharp hiatus between two moments of biographical time, a hiatus that leaves no *trace* in the life of the heroes or in their personalities" (90; emphasis in original). I contend that there is a sort of "extra-temporal hiatus" that is revealed in the narrative of return, whereby the encounter of ancestry and diaspora seems to indicate that both parties could hold conflicting (and biased) understandings of history.

The crossing of international boundaries makes migrants enter what I wish to call North-based globalisation – when they leave the South-based global system of exchange. This distinction between forms of globalisation is necessary since goods, information and services do not circulate in the same way in the West as in the global South. (Post)colonialism ensures the entry of minority cultures into the global exchange system; but globalisation in the so-called "Third World" is a more entrenched form since Africa, for instance, is in a position of disadvantage (as the main importer in the larger global scheme). Arrival in England signifies introduction to the Northern global system. However, does the subject enter this structure directly on arrival? What does it mean to be part of a minority discourse in the metropolis? Do we continue to speak of minorities when the postcolonial subject, in the metropolis, is said to have become a planetary subject? Simon Gikandi's contribution, "Between roots and routes", in *Rerouting the Postcolonial*, identifies the stages that "rejects of failed states" in Africa go through in order to become celebrated postcolonial subjects and cosmopolitan migrants.

[10] This encounter is not limited to the physical presence of the diasporic subject in the homeland. It can also be represented metaphorically in memory, but especially as a quest for roots either through interviews or archives.

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This dissertation does not simply aim to examine migration literature and the way writers imagine the movement of Africans across national and international boundaries/borders. The methodological approach I use is one in which notions of (1) migration, (2) transnationalism, and (3) diaspora intersect. Inter- and intra-continental African migrations engaging journeys within and out of Africa show not only textual evidence of movements across space and time, but they grant particular significance to transitory moments in individual protagonists' trajectories. Thus, border, boundary, and borderland situations permeate these trajectories and become a wealth of knowledge when read through the lens of literary criticism rather than from a more quantitative social sciences perspective. The literary narratives provide contextual examples of border, boundary, or borderland crossing: an area of scholarship that has not received significant literary critical attention. This line of inquiry will promote a literary understanding of border crossing dynamics.

I use texts as canvasses for meaning making. In exploring the migratory trajectories of protagonists, I aim to examine the dynamics of the latter's displacement in time and space, across various types of borders and boundaries. It is in the textual trajectories (intra- and inter-continental) and directions of travel (outward and return) that meaning is produced. Each individual chapter hinges by and large upon its own theory and criticism; these are in turn dictated by either or both the trajectory and direction of migration. In addition, each chapter includes an introductory section that introduces the main theoretical angle with which I proceed to read the literary texts. The organisational structure of individual chapters is motivated by a need to juxtapose the discussed texts in order to read them (comparatively) under one determined theme. This is done purposefully so as not to lose track of the nuances and/or similarities of experiences and authorial perspectives while I deal with a particular theme in a section.

Therefore, with reference to the structure of the dissertation, Chapter Two argues that Africans who leave the continent usually face their Africanity for the first time as a result of a process of objectification. In many cases, this experience is a revelation of their African identities, as assigned to them by their hosts, and regardless of which country they are from. Here I focus on Dibia's *Unbridled*, Gurnah's *By the Sea*, and Chikwava's *Harare North*. These texts describes in different ways the causes and circumstances of displacement from the African homeland. Africans' reasons for leaving their home nations include economic insecurity, familial persecution, and the fragility of politico-legal institutions.

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In Chapter Three I argue that, in contrast to inter-continental migration, Africans' migration within the continent is a statement about becoming African as a self-proclaimed common identity. This is needed to gain acceptance within the host society. The challenges of negotiating belonging might be seen as similar in both spaces of settlement. However, I argue that if there is any difference between the two migratory destinations, this is based on the relationship between individuals and the nature of zones of separation that either bring them into contact or widen the rift between them at the intra-national and inter-national levels. The primary texts here are Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter*, Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, and Kikamba's *Going Home*.

Chapter Four begins the discussion of reverse migration or return to the homeland. In both outward and return migrations, Africa remains the gravitational point of reference. In this chapter I examine the fictional depiction of migrants' confrontation with their various African pasts, on returning for the first time to their countries of birth. The three texts, Gurnah's *Admiring Silence*, Dibia's *Unbridled*, and Emecheta's *The New Tribe* challenge preconceived ideas of Africa and the African experience. The texts suggest that a physical return to Africa is neither what I call diaspora-oriented nor Afro-centric: through travel, migrants become better equipped to face their choice of diasporic space as a space of residence.

Chapter Five interrogates fictional representations of migrants' return to their supposed original homelands. Here, authors paint a sorrowful picture of a fetishising of the notions of origin and the right of blood basis of citizenship, and how these hinder processes of integration or *homing* practices in diasporic spaces. I show how the fictions deal with return as a process that encroaches on notions of ancestry and reveals a dual understanding of history on the part of both autochthons and intra-diasporic subjects. The narratives depict the ways in which the homeland inadvertently becomes a utopian space – because of an apparent inability of the migrant to remain in the diasporic space. Nonetheless, the crossing of national borders and boundaries celebrates Africanity and the fact of multiple belonging. The relevant texts here are: Kikamba's *Going Home*, *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* and Wainaina's "Discovering Home".

Chapter Six, the concluding chapter, is a synthetic chapter: I make use of Morojele's *How We Buried Puso* and Gurnah's *By the Sea* in order to assess the arguments presented in the core chapters. I base my analysis on the fiction that will provide, if not counter-arguments, then perhaps complementary or alternative ways of reading migration and diaspora in relation to Africa and African identity. The chapter questions whether migration

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can be an escape from various entrapments at home; it considers whether return is ever definitive and contemplates localness as a mode of being not separate from migration. The chapter also interrogates the implication of an existing African identity as well as African diasporic identity, especially within the continent.

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Chapter Two

Making and mending homes: journeys from Africa across the sea

"I had no trust in our legal system and no strength for more
hurly-burly, so I packet my casket of ud-al-qamari and left"
(Gurnah, *By the Sea* 241)

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*, Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*, and Jude Dibia's *Unbridled* are stories of displacement of Africans to Europe in the trajectory that represents extra-continental migrations. In Gurnah's *By the Sea* Saleh Omar is released from an eleven year detention. After about two decades of relative freedom, he evades persecution from Hassan, the son of his departed foe, Rajab Shaaban Mahmud, by using the identity papers of the latter to seek asylum in England. In London, he encounters the second son, Latif who had immigrated about thirty years earlier as a student. In Jude Dibia's *Unbridled* Ngozi, a naïve young woman from Nigeria wants to escape the economic stagnation of Nigeria and the abuse she suffers at the hand of her family; she meets a young English man online and decides to travel to London to be married to him. Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* recounts the misadventures of a young Zimbabwean man who subverts the asylum system in the hope of saving money in England, so that he can return home to create some order in his life, which is plagued by cultivated state terror, and traditional obligations.

This chapter examines how contemporary African fictions depict individuals' conditions of departure from their African countries and their arrival in England. It looks at ways in which a person, as a subject of a state, a member of community, and as an individual, is affected by circumstances that give rise to dislocation. The authors describe the phenomenon of leaving a familiar African environment in search of better living conditions in Europe. I examine the various steps through which the characters in these novels gradually enter the troubled and multifaceted boundaries of displacement. I aim to draw attention to what Gurnah refers to in a conversation with Nisha Jones as the "human condition" attending such migrations (Jones 41). Africans often cross (national and) continental borders because they have exhausted their ability to survive in their home countries (Gikandi 23). Displacement in these texts is often the result of the influence of the state, society, and family which, to borrow from Moses Isegawa, constitute "forces" to be reckoned with (J. Jones 92). The influence of these "forces" results in a troubled relationship between citizenry and the

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state, and the inability to sustain a living. The chapter engages with how Gurnah, Chikwava, and Dibia render these causalities in their respective novels. These forces often overlap as they conspire to uproot characters from their original locations.

The migrants in these novels are not travellers expressing their cosmopolitan desires to discover new places. All the departures in the novels are motivated by the need for survival and escape from political and economic restrictions on individuals. Gurnah and Chikwava especially point to the way economic hardship as a ground for displacement often pales into insignificance in comparison to the somatic objectification of the would-be migrants by the sovereign power of the state. They describe the postcolonial state as being more concerned with laying blame on colonialism and with the conservation of political power rather than with ensuring the well-being of the people that it claims to represent. Achille Mbembe's seminal book, *On the Postcolony* and his much-discussed article, "African Modes of Self-Writing", offer valuable insights into the politics of the state's self-representation vis-à-vis the subject's manifestation of selfhood. Mbembe is most unforgiving in his analysis of the postcolonial state. According to him, the 'postcolony', as he aptly calls the postcolonial state, is caught in narratives that seem to entrap African political leaders in the dialectic of "victimhood" and the rhetoric of re-appropriating a sense of an Africanness which was supposedly corrupted by colonialism. I read the novels from the perspective of Mbembe's analysis of African political philosophies that often, sadly, carry with them their "baggage of instrumentalism and political opportunism" ("African Modes" 240). As a result of such atavistic philosophies, the postcolonial state falls into the pitfall of reinstating "the spatio-temporal order of colonialism" (Chekuri and Muppidi 54). The postcolonial era has seen a number of African political leaders dressing up the chair of state power with an African cloth, while the frame remains the same (see Chikwava, "Writing the Story" n.pag). In such cases, the change from colony to postcolony has begot its fair share of instabilities and mishaps. As Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels explain, the constraints imposed by international loan sharks such as the IMF and the World Bank in the context of Structural Adjustment Programmes did not often accord with the particular realities of the nations these were (are) supposedly helping (1).

It needs to be emphasised that the novels retrace the personal stories of particular characters and show how these relate to external "forces" in order to explain their displacement. Although the particular realities of postcolonial Africa influence migration, Africa itself is not the reason for extra-continental relocations. In other words, "extra-continental migrations" can only mean displacement from particular nations and local

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communities, not flight from 'Africa' as a geopolitical hold-all category. The other focus of this dissertation, "intra-continental migrations", will help to explain this statement. Placing the protagonists in their original habitats allows for an examination of fictional depictions of migrations in particular circumstances: every displacement is contextualised. The chapter focuses on three main steps which account for (1) the causes of displacement (due to the influence of the "forces" of the state, society, and family); (2) the transgression of international borders/boundaries; and (3) the making of home in strange places, as motivated by what Avtar Brah calls a "*homing desire*" (180; emphasis in original).

Displacement is caused by the loss of one's home; which is inevitably followed by homelessness – the condition of losing one's anchor. The three novels discussed in this section convey this experience of uprooting by depicting how characters are sometimes cornered and left with no other choice but to seek refuge away from their communities of origin and families in Africa. I explore the relationship between the nature of the location of origin and the circumstances of making of a new home. By 'African homes', I mean to examine the conditions of displacement from an original family structure to a strange "elsewhere" (see Stein 62). The definition of home is difficult to pinpoint but can be contextualised. As Rosemary Marangoly George aptly observes, "binarisms are essential for the purpose of definition. Homes and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered 'not-home,' with the foreign, with distance" (4) Allegiance to home is not a fixed form of connection. Caryl Phillips suggests, writing for those who adopt progressive attitudes with regard to "old labels," that diasporic and migrant people "have yet to accept the fact that the old descriptions which usually have to do with religion or with nationality are actually inadequate for our new condition. We've got old labels but we've got new people" (Goldman 115). I will often use 'home' or 'African home' to refer to places of origin, regardless whether these are welcoming or threatening. Arguing along these lines, Brah proposes that "'home' can simultaneously be a place of safety and of terror" (180). What is of concern here is how the texts narrate departure from homelands by examining the part played by politics, society and family in causing homelessness.

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Causes of dislocation

Gurnah's *By the Sea*

In *By the Sea*, Gurnah offers accounts of Zanzibar's transition from colonial rule to the aftermath of the 1964 Revolution. He gives insight into a continuum of displacement which dates back to the Arab Omanis' conquest of Mombasa from the Portuguese in the late sixteenth century. Debates on ethnicity and race fuelled the political life of Zanzibar under the rule of Omani Arabs, who established a racial hierarchy in the island: the Arab Omanis were on top, the indigenous islanders were in the middle and the African mainlanders were at the bottom (Glassman 402). In spite of this racial hierarchy, Shanti Moorthy argues, Arab Omanis "intermarried extensively" (75), which, Jonathan Glassman observes, ensured the elusiveness and permeability of "boundaries within this ethnic hierarchy" (402). The racial pogrom of 1964 reflected the rhetoric of restoration of indigenous people to their so-called rightful place (Moorthy 85). The events of the early 1960s which capture the misfortunes of Saleh Omar in *By the Sea* can be read in the light of the island's colonial history. *By the Sea* depicts the discontinuity of the cosmopolitan setting in Zanzibar due to what Moorthy terms "postcolonial ethnic cleansing" (97). Therefore, Saleh becomes victim of the apparent postcolonial "revenge for the slave trade and the desire to erase centuries of Arab influence" (Moorthy 97). Saleh's racial and economic affinity with the former ruling elite makes him a target of post-revolution discrimination.

The precipitate departure of colonials had innumerable consequences, not only for the life of the country but also for ordinary citizens. Before the crisis, and because of his white client base, rumours circulate about Saleh being "a colonial stooge" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 156); ironically the departure of the British does not improve his image. Beyond the colonisers' abandonment of the colonial space, Gurnah zeroes in on interpersonal relations within which the seeds of pain, betrayal, and loss are sown. Saleh befriends and lends a considerable sum of money to (a dishonest) Hussein[11] using the property rights of Rajab Shaaban Mahmud's house as security. Thirty-four years later, Saleh learns that Hussein had forged the certificate of the property and reinstated Rajab's son, Hassan, as the legal beneficiary.

The change of political leadership and management affects Saleh both as a citizen (a *raiiyai*), and an individual within the local community. The appropriation of political power

[11] Hussein is Rajab Shaaban Mahmud's guest.

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begets a scramble for what I call *powership* – an enjoyment of sovereignty and fetishisation of the role of leadership resulting in utter disregard of citizens' rights. Gurnah depicts a context whereby a citizen becomes the target of *powership*. Citizenship is problematised. Claiming citizenship is a statement of belonging, a demand to the new political elite to remember the common objectives of the independence struggles. This thought is reflected in the novel when Saleh reminisces about his troubling past: "When our daughter came, I wanted to call her Raiiya, a citizen, to make her life an utterance, a demand that our rulers should treat us with humanity, as indigenes and citizens of the land of our birth. It was a name with pedigree, I told Salha, used for centuries to describe citizens of nations which had been overwhelmed by conquest" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 150). Glassman observes how the narratives of nation-building and debates on citizenship are often governed by a vested interest in defining who belongs and who does not (397). Indeed, this narrative can be pervasive, since in the case of Zanzibar, the distinction between Arab Omani and the indigenous islanders was blurred as a result of the extensive and enduring "cross-pollination of genes" (Moorthy 79). The events described in the novel fit with Glassman's observation about the aftermath of the revolution, whereby the issue of who has the right to belong and to true citizenship is a source of much grief and bitterness.

Interestingly, Gurnah does not seem to criticise the principle of independence. Nor is he dismissing the relevance of the transfer of power from the colonial administration to local rule. However, the author is scathing in his representation of the manner in which African political leaders justify their greed and desire for power. For instance, in order cope with the economic crisis, Saleh takes a loan from a local bank. However, before the due date, the bank recalls the loan, thus rendering Saleh unable to recover the money he lent Hussein; the decision is justified as being a national government project. The assistant bank manager refers to the higher institutions of the republic to justify the decision: he was abiding by "instructions from the relevant government office" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 213). This illustrates what Mbembe elsewhere describes as the corruption and abuse of local institutions to justify the exaction of loyalty from citizens by calling upon a higher authority, to the detriment of individual rights (Mbembe 2001). The reference to "relevant government office" demonstrates, in this sense, the manoeuvres intended to confirm "state legitimacy" (Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* 105).

Political partisanship is a space where the private and public spheres coalesce. This is what the novel illustrates when Rajab accuses Saleh of conspiring with Hussein to steal his house. After the British colonial court rules in favour of Saleh's ownership of the house, this

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decision is overturned by the Party ruling in favour of Rajab. Asha, Rajab's wife, is involved in an affair with the Minister of Development and Resources. It is through the irony presented in the minister's function that the author explores the relationship between the polity and the private space. Here, sexuality becomes a channel of power. The dramatic flaunting of the affair with disregard for public opinion would only make sense in the postcolonial phallocratic regime, which Mbembe articulates as follows: "The male ruler's pride in possessing an active penis has to be dramatized through sexual rights over subordinates, the keeping of concubines, and so on. The unconditional subordination of women to the principle of male pleasure remains one pillar upholding the reproduction of the phallocratic system" (*On the Postcolony* 110).

Subsequently, Saleh is sent to prison for a few weeks, then taken to an island prison for seven months; finally, he lands in a mainland detention camp in the south of the country, where he spends the rest of his undetermined sentence. The prison island is a detention centre that used to serve as a hospital for tuberculosis patients. This special prison has the same connotations as the lepers' seclusion in Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*). The 'hospital' is where the regime keeps the undesirable – the "enemies" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 218) – lest they taint the moral economy that is enforced by the new leader of the postcolonial state. Saleh suffers a great deal both as witness and victim of bodily deprivations and violence. Despite the trials and tribulations suffered in prison, however, Saleh endures his detention without protest. He is deterred from protesting by the gratuitous violence and the humiliation that Omani prisoners suffer: these Omanis whom everyone recognises as "citizens, *raiiya*" and yet who are denied acceptance despite the overwhelming evidence of their similarity to other "indigenes" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 225). As for his personal narrative, Saleh cannot find the words to express what he has physically – as well as psychically – suffered. He remains hopeful of reuniting with his family, his wife Sahla and daughter Raiiya. The reason Saleh is driven to seek asylum is linked to his life in detention: "Everything about the condition we lived in was bleak and uncomfortable" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 231).

However, his austere life in detention is not the sole reason. Saleh has forced himself not to imagine being with his family, despite the fact that they are a constant presence in his mind. His refusal to be deported along with the Omanis attests to this. He does not vividly represent his family in his mind. However, as soon as he receives his release papers, after eleven years of detention, he heads for the harbour. "I was at last able to imagine how changed Salha would be and how tall my daughter Ruqiya would have grown" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 234). But his world is shattered when, upon his release; he hears that his family had

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died during his first year of detention. I argue that Saleh's pain runs even deeper for, on the one hand, had he known, he could have contemplated deportation; on the other hand, he has endured psychic isolation for eleven years, not dreaming of his family. "I was at last able to imagine" evokes the image of someone who has not (really) lived in detention. And "how changed" and "how grown" convey the idea that he could have filled the spaces of the camps with the (psychic) company of his loved ones.

Hassan begins persecuting and threatening Saleh within a couple of decades after the latter's release,; Saleh finds himself with no anchorage in his natal land. He has reached the limit of what he can tolerate in the homeland. With no home left – whether familial or territorial – Saleh has no choice but to consider crossing the national border.

Chikwava's *Harare North*

Harare North shows how political power enforces poverty through political control of an economic crisis. The novel describes Zimbabwe in the late 20th and early 21st centuries where the use of violence has become the norm and joblessness provides a fertile ground for the state to exploit the youths' inability to perform familial duties or achieve personhood. Chikwava narrates the saga of an unnamed hero who finds himself in England as an asylum seeker. The unnamed protagonist, who I choose to call 'Noname,' was (is[12]) a member of the youth brigade in Zimbabwe. As such he and his comrades carried out the ruling party's unlawful acts against supporters of the opposition MDC. Any desire of the youth to be part of a bigger purpose is systematically thwarted for the benefit of the private satisfaction of political leaders. Through Noname, Chikwava interrogates the future of a country where the younger generation lacks the material means to provide for either their families or themselves. The state converts its subjects' economic scarcity into an opportunity to reinforce its power. However, the opportunity to join the rank and file of the ruling party becomes a double bind for the youth. Initially, it seems to be an escape route from misery. For instance, reflecting on the circumstances in which he joins the youth brigade, the protagonist says: "If you back home leading rubbish life and ZANU-PF party offer you job in them youth movement to give you a chance to change your life and put big purpose in your life, you don't just sniff at it and walk away when no one else want to give you graft in a country even if you is prepared to become tea boy" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 17). The young man is co-opted by a political system that has imagined – or constructed – an enemy (supporters of the

[12] He does not lose faith in the figurehead Comrade Mugabe.

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opposition) which must be fended off. Thus, Chikwava condemns the erasure of what Shadrack Gutto calls the "necessary distinction between the state and governments" (61). Here the political elite appropriate the state and nullify the distinction between state and nation. The novel reflects on a situation in which, in order to meet personal and political objectives, the postcolonial state creates conditions which Couz Venn refers to as "the violent production of insecurity and scarcity" (30). Chikwava presents Noname as both a perpetrator and a victim, thus conveying the illusion of power that Noname experiences as he acts as a channel for that power. The relation between politician and subject is that of a puppet and its master. Thus, lost in a kind of "arrested development" Noname (and his like) fittingly resemble what Sandisile Tshuma elsewhere describes as a "fearful *kid needing a guide to help him across* a busy road" (35; emphasis added).

In addition to *By the Sea*, in which the individual is the object of political power, *Harare North* represents the body as not only targeted as an object but also as an instrument of/for political power. As targets of political power, the youth are used as instrument to administer and police the state with violence. Chikwava shows that, robbed of their individual hopes for a brighter future, the youth carry on their bodies the marks of subjectivity to a political economy in a country where the dictates of the ruling party become the law. Indeed, by involving himself with the Green Bombers as one of the "jackal breed"[13], Noname understands that he has been conditioned differently. The body is reconfigured as an instrument, conditioned and shaped into a new 'breed', a site of sovereign power. In effect, during a heated conversation between Noname and his co-squatters in London, Noname demarcates himself from the others: "You see me hiding under the same roof as you and you think that we is all the same folk... Some of us have defend the country from the enemies of the state" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 124-5). He becomes the justification of the malaise of the country and is made into a substitute for law enforcement, operating outside common law.

Undeniably, political leaders exploit the desire of the youth to be part of a "big purpose," such as involvement in the building of the nation. Instead, the youth are dragged into what Mbembe has called "instrumentalism and political opportunism" ("African Modes" 240). Chikwava depicts the politics of land seizure from white farmers as well as the systematic displacement of black Zimbabweans from their homes. Here ZANU-PF implements the philosophy of nation-building, conveying it via a "narrative [that is] associated with politics as a sacramental practice" ("African Modes" 251). 'Sacramental

[13] 'Jackal' is the nickname of the van used to transport the new recruits to the training camp.

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practice' refers to a leader proclaiming him/herself as the saviour of the people. According to Mbembe, this sort of "politics require[s] the total surrender of the individual to a utopian future and to the hope of a collective resurrection that, in turn, require[s] the destruction of everything that [stands] opposed to it" ("African Modes" 251; see also Chan 134-5). Therefore, emphasising victimhood fixates the state in the spatio-temporality of colonialism and colonial plunder. The state becomes the property of a few; an enemy is fabricated along with an unlawful force (the youth brigade) to defend the state against the 'enemy' (the members of the opposition). Mbembe argues: "In Foucault's formulation of it, biopower appears to function through dividing people into those who must live and those who must die. Operating on th[is] basis...such a power defines itself in relation to a biological field – which it takes control of and invests in" ("Necropolitics 16-17). In *Harare North*, biopower is distributed in such a way that the people of Zimbabwe, are divided into genuine 'citizens' and 'enemies'. Zimbabwe becomes what Mbembe would call a "spatial arrangement that remains...outside the normal state of law" under the auspices of a supposedly righteous government ("Necropolitics" 13). *Harare North* echoes *By the Sea* where local politicians operate outside of the law by becoming themselves the law**.** Felicity Hand's assessment of *By the Sea* as showing the "irrational despotism of African nationalist discourses" (72) can be applied to both novels.

Furthermore, Chikwava uses the theme of forgiveness to drive home his point about the violence of the state's failure to protect its citizens and as a reason for their displacement. Chikwava superimposes the meaning of violence on "forgiveness" as violence becomes the means to nation-building: "For traitors [supporters of the opposition] punishment is the best forgiveness . . . And it is because of giving forgiveness that my trouble start" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 19). Chikwava subverts the conventional use of language to convey untold violence in the state of exception, where according to Giorgio Agamben, violence becomes the rule. Administration of pain to the "enemy" as "forgiveness" suggests a kind of vindication of violence. Whereas it has become a kernel in narratives of reconciliation and mending of the past (post-genocide Rwanda and post-apartheid South Africa come readily to mind) the author uses it here as black humour in order to illustrate the gratuitous abuse of sovereign power by the state with regard to its subjects. Noname is arrested in Zimbabwe for *forgiving* a *traitor*. With "punishment" becoming "the best forgiveness", chaos, gratuitous violence and political erasure regulate living spaces. In the end, "forgiveness" refers both to the impunity enjoyed by state power and the injustices suffered by victims of "forgiveness".

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As a superstructure, the state controls the lives of people in untold and pervasive ways, just as society and the family do at a more private level.

Noname leaves Zimbabwe because he needs to honour a traditional obligation regarding his mother's death. Through this type of behaviour, the text questions the role of tradition in ensuring the spiritual, psychological, and material needs of a person. For instance, years after his mother's death, Noname feels the need to perform a ceremony which, according to tradition, will allow his mother's spirit to finally rest in peace in the protective company of the ancestors: "Mother, she die . . . Then they take she body . . . and bury she in rural home . . . Now she spirit is still wandering in the wilderness . . . Me I have to . . . organise *umbuyiso* for she" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 16). The "wandering in the wilderness" becomes the condition of the living. After his release from prison, Noname has no fixed abode, since he is hiding from the law. Apart from trying to keep the "house of stones" intact, the only emotional attachment he has with his country is through the mother's natal land.

In addition to honouring the departed, the *umbuyiso* becomes a substitute for a healing and cleansing ceremony. Until he has performed it, Noname cannot be rid of the burden of his past. The attachment to tradition becomes a personal endeavour intended to both ensure conformity and seek healing and cleansing. As a metaphor, the *umbuyiso* is a reflection on a life of scarcity, on the complexity of the present and the uncertainty of the future. The healing ceremony would free Noname from the burden of the past and open new routes for a more fulfilling existence. Both tradition and socio-economic reality represent entrapment from which the protagonist is unable to break free. Noname's survival depends on him fulfilling the former by mending the condition of the latter. Noname is trapped between tradition and personal accountability. He contemplates engaging the continental boundary to be able to unload his burden. He flies to England to make enough money to perform the ceremony and pay (through bribery) for the disappearance of his docket; he cannot make these things happen by staying in Zimbabwe.

Dibia's *Unbridled*

Displacement can also be an opportunity for change, where leaving one's African familial habitat is seen as the pursuit of a dream as well as existential flight. Dibia conveys this idea by constructing Ngozi's travel to London as an escape from danger such as is expressed in *By the Sea* and *Harare North*. As a place of opportunity, London is presented as an accidental

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choice of destination.[14] In a moment of doubt that pulls her back to the reality of Nigeria, Ngozi wonders: "maybe London was too much of an ambition, if someone had offered me a ride to Cameroon or Ghana, I would gladly accept" (Dibia 80). Ngozi's horizons are limited and she has no knowledge of the possibility of widening them; she is sent away from her village to Lagos, where she has lived with her uncle and his wife for a couple of years. She encounters Tiffany Okoro, a spoilt teenage girl of her age who "made [Ngozi] conscious of [her] austere state" (Dibia 3). On entering the Okoros' house Ngozi is slapped in the face by the opulence of this family; and this both makes her covetous and instils in her the need to escape her austerity[15]. Unlike the Okoros, Ngozi belongs to the category of the have-nots, and she is a rural girl. I argue that her migration to England follows the normal trajectory of rural-to-urban migration. When Tiffany boasts about the holidays she spends in London, this bit of information makes Ngozi wish she were Tiffany. She starts dreaming of better places. She is "stunned by the luxury of [Tiffany's] room" (Dibia 47). Against the stark opulence of the Okoros and the display of Tiffany's bedroom, which looks like something from a "cartoon" movie, the author justifies Ngozi's desire to explore possibilities away from her family and country: "How could I not want to be her?" she wonders (Dibia 49).

Victimisation operates as a cause of displacement and figures in the domestic space. Through domestic violence, victimisation creates alienation from family which in turn causes border crossing. In *Unbridled,* Dibia blends superstitious beliefs with an extreme case of alienation to condemn the violation of a female child's rights to well-being in the family. The night of Ngozi's birth coincides with a "catastrophic rain" (Dibia 162), which wreaks havoc on houses, cattle, plantations, and even claims human lives. By tradition, the villagers readily associate Ngozi's birth and skin tone with an evil spirit. From birth, Ngozi is thus regarded as an oddity in her society; even as a child she lives on the margin and is denied by her father (Dibia 163). Thirteen years later, her father verbally disavows her while sexually abusing her. For a year Ngozi suffers her father's sexual predation. According to him, the act is neither incestuous nor is it rape: Ngozi is a spirit-child. In "Images of Rape in African Fiction" Augustine H Asaah discusses Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des Independances* (1970) in which the protagonist, Tiecoura blames a spirit for his raping of Salimata (340). However, as the story unfolds it becomes evident that Mr Akachi's depraved sexual desire for his daughter reaches back to when she was but six years old: "I was six years old then . . . I scrambled to

[14] This statement marks a problematic in this thesis in its representation of African migrations as both Northern-bound and intra-continental.

[15] As it will be evident later on this chapter, Ngozi is also determined to leave Nigeria in order to escape persecution from family.

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my feet and rushed to him . . . He stared deeply at me, touching my cheeks gently and using his fingers to straighten my eyelashes... I felt something else pressing against me" (Dibia 144-5).

Obviously, it would be fallacious to tie the rape to tradition or the cosmology of the village. The rape, which occurs six years after the events described above, is not socially sanctioned[16]. Dibia's depiction of this gruesome act is unsettling, especially since it is also incest, yet the narrator's choice of speaking out is in line with what Achebe argues is the role of the writer to speak out against social ills when necessary (Quayson 119). In not sparing the reader the details of the crime, the author takes a stand against what South African feminist Meg Samuelson calls "the unspeakability of rape" (Samuelson 125). Dibia's decision to write the rape story, thus breaking the decade-long silence of the victim, suggests that, if the victim is powerless and voiceless, then a third party ought to speak out. To the villagers and family, rape remains unspeakable. It is the writer's role to undo the silence imposed upon domestic violence against female children. Later, this harrowing experience creates a rift between Ngozi and her entire family, and ultimately her country, Nigeria: "The tears ran freely down my cheeks as I went into some kind of shock. Momentarily I felt that I had somehow floated out of my body and was watching this terrible thing happen to a person that was once me"(Dibia 164). The phrase "a person that was once me" is an evocation of Orlando Patterson's "social death". A rift separates her and the family to which she never belonged. It is only on hearing the news of her father's death that Ngozi is able to speak about her rape.

Ngozi's trauma is aggravated by the silence in which her experience is shrouded. Despite the textual ellipsis, it is improbable that the villagers would have missed the heart-rending cries the child uttered that first morning, when villagers, such as Ngozi's mother who had gone to fetch water from the river, were obviously up and about to start the day. The author's deliberate ellipsis suggests that this is his way of passing judgment on patriarchy and the community as whole (see Asaah 340). On the other hand, Ngozi's older brother, Nnamdi, knows about his sister's routine violation, but keeps quiet. Yet again, the reader is not sure whether Nnamdi's silence should be seen as cowardice, or as reverence for the figure of the father, or even as powerlessness. The narrative voice remains ambiguous. As Ngozi confronts Nnamdi about her trauma, he proceeds to silence her: "It is not a woman's place to complain about her father," he snaps back (Dibia 167). Nnamdi's reaction suggests that he assumes the position of the male child whose duty it will be to ensure that male figures remain dominant

[16] In other words, it is unlikely that rape is a social practice in Ngozi's village. Rather strangely, no one takes a stand on the child's behalf: there is no doubt that the village must have been aware of the facts.

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in the family. Venn's comment on Tsitsi Dangarengba's *Nervous Conditions* (1989) places this kind of behaviour in the context of maintaining " social and *familial* hierarchy" (Venn 84; emphasis added); a hierarchy within which, according to Asaah, women are often assigned "non-assertive roles in society" (336). Nnamdi's reaction demonstrates the silence and voicelessness of the traumatised female child.

The silence surrounding Ngozi's rape is an allegory of the powerlessness of the female figure. Indeed, it is in a bout of tears and sobs that Ngozi informs the reader, as she sits next to her father's corpse, ten years after the rape, that her mother had known all along of her repeated molestation. The silence of Ngozi's mother is a reflection of the role of the mother in the family. In this novel, the mother's role is at odds with her position as a woman and wife. Dibia poses a crucial problem: can the mother be considered an accomplice or a victim? If one thinks of the mother as victim, then the reader has reason to empathise. When she tells her mother about the rape Ngozi rapidly realises that her mother had been a voiceless observer all her life. By letting the narrator sob out her past agony and present trauma, the author aims to denounce what Abena P.A. Busia, in her article "Silencing the Syncorax," pertinently refers to as "the symbolic laryngectomy" performed on abused women (90), either as witnesses and/or victims. *Unbridled* represents family as responsible for the protagonist's displacement and by the same token reveals the mother's inability to perform her role of guardian. Both women suffer the status of second-class individuals in their society.

By the Sea, *Harare North*, and *Unbridled* reflect on familiar habitats and the ways in which they cease to provide the security of home to the characters. The novels place the individuals within social, economic, and political networks in terms of which bodies become disposable when they occupy inferior positions in the power hierarchy. The familiar/familial habitat as locatedness is neither a permanent nor guaranteed condition. Migration thus represents the continuation of life narratives that have been disrupted by social, economic, and political "forces". In the case of these novels, England does not figure as a privileged destination; rather it constitutes the option preferred by or available to the displaced, who find themselves entering new, continental boundaries from various parts of Africa.

Dwelling in or Transitioning across the continental boundary

This section examines the dynamics and processes of negotiating transcontinental boundaries by inhabiting the troubled space of the refugee and exile in England. Gurnah and Dibia narrate stories of African migrants escaping various forms of oppression in their homelands,

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whereas Chikwava blurs the boundary between oppressor and oppressed. The novelists describe how parental abuse, political crises, and community oppression conspire to uproot individuals from their original locations. I am interested in the processes of entering continental boundaries, especially the compulsion that characters experience to translate themselves into new, sometimes makeshift identities in order to fit into prescribed modes of border crossing. Although none of the characters presents a genuine case of political asylum-seeking the texts nonetheless describe them as such. By 'a genuine case' I mean that none of the characters here preserve their original identities as they attempt to leave Africa. The element of compulsion in their dislocation results in their helplessness and subjection to the often threatening dynamics of continental boundary and border crossings. Here characters are confronted by the reality of what Homi K. Bhabha aptly terms as "postcolonial provenance" (213) – namely, their African origins. Seeking asylum and claiming refugee status become the preferred means of crossing the boundary in order to escape violence at home.

Since the mid twentieth-century, the refugee has represented the human condition (Savic 2). David Farrier refers to Hannah Arendt's observation that the "figure of the refugee ought to be the principal embodiment of human rights" (Farrier 122). However, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen the category of the refugee being subverted and re-categorised as asylum seekers (Farrier 122). Basing his reading on Jacques Derrida's essay *Of Hospitality*, Farrier examines this reclassification of the figure of the refugee by looking at what it alludes to in the juridical process of the host country: the refugee is eligible for unconditional hospitality, while the asylum seeker's status in the host-country is conditional. However this distinction has lost its purchase: both refugee and asylum seeker "come to represent a conditional, indefinitely temporary presence" (Farrier 126). Most important here is the role of the border in the process of negotiating a homing space in the host country. Forced displacement seems to keep the African migrant in the space of the boundary long before arrival. Here the condition of those who cross borders becomes what Enrica Rigo has referred to as a condition of "indefinite temporariness" (qtd. in Farrier 124). In a sense, the status of refugees and asylum seekers depends on the discretionary power of the host nation's juridical process.

From the late twentieth-century the adjective "political" been used to describe the core reason for requesting asylum. However, asylum remains the discretionary "right of the state and not of the individual (citizen)" (Savić 2). One witnesses the "fractioning of the refugee label" (Roger Zetter, qtd. in Farrier 126), which as a result "conveys an image of marginality" (Farrier 126). This fractioning shores up the critique that the definition used in Refugee

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Convention of 1951 and in the 1967 Protocol is "narrow" (Mullins 147; Gutto 64). The Convention defines asylum precisely and narrowly in article 1(A)(2) to refer to a person who has "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion" (Mullins 147; Savic 2).

This section seeks to link the particular circumstances of departure and arrival to the formation of diasporic and migrant communities[17] through the novels' reconfiguration of the definition of asylum. As one narrator in *By the Sea* bemoans, this is a condition of new beginning: "It is a familiar minor climax in our stories, leaving what we know and arriving in strange places, carrying little bits of jumbled luggage and suppressing secret and garbled ambitions" (4). The texts show the inability of border policies to recognise the situation of migrants who claim asylum and refugee status. To make sense of the "human experience" of their characters, the novels point to identity change as part of the process of displacement and subversion of the (narrowly defined) legality of refugees and asylum seekers.

Gurnah's *By the Sea*

In this novel, Saleh Omar usurps the identity of his departed foe, Rajab Shaaban Mahmud, in order to flee Zanzibar, fearing that his history of persecution will repeat itself with the return of Hassan, Rajab's son. It is by a stroke of luck that Saleh finds Rajab's birth certificate among the belongings that were not claimed after Saleh took ownership of his house. Saleh uses the birth certificate to change his identity in order to obtain a passport; as he reminds the reader, his release from detention and the ensuing amnesty required him to give up his passport (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 241). Thus, he makes use of this birth certificate and flees to England. Saleh's story is a complicated one: his claim of asylum is genuine since it relates to having "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, and membership in a particular social group or political opinion" (Mullins 147). However, the change of identity (on paper) both validates and voids his claim with regard to official definition. A genuine official claim would have needed his real name. Gurnah twists the story to invite the reader to see past the politics of asylum seeking and zeroes in on the actual experience of claimants. As discussion in the previous section showed, Saleh Omar is being persecuted for reasons of race and political affiliation. Saleh finds himself in the continental boundary, without the possibility of turning back.

[17] The experience of "departure" has bearings on the person's memory of home; and the experience of arrival, linked to the making of home, affects what Femke Stock refers to as "diasporic memory" (27), the memory of the original homeland possessed by later generations of migrants.

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In order to extricate himself from this double-bind, Saleh uses the general post-independence political atmosphere in Zanzibar to secure a place in exile: "I knew [Kevin Edelman, the Immigration office at Gatwick airport] would find that the British government had decided, for reasons which are still not completely clear to me even now, that people who came from where I did were eligible for asylum if they claimed that their lives were in danger" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 10). Farrier observes that Saleh indeed qualifies for "hospitality of invitation," and therefore for conditional hospitality (123). But Saleh resolves to present himself as an "absolute other," a refugee, who deserves to qualify for unconditional hospitality (Farrier 125-127). This resolve in fact helps him to fit into the juridical process of qualifying for refugee status. I argue that in relation to the legal basis for asylum claims, Saleh evades the system: legally he does not qualify, even though he literally fears for his life. The context of "invitation" here pertains to the British legal provisions regarding asylum, whereas, in reality, Saleh deserves "unconditional hospitality" since he genuinely fears for his life.

The continental boundary is a space of transition especially for asylum claimants, for whom leaving the home-country does not necessarily equate to arriving in the host-land. Saleh is being kept at a detention centre which he would rather call an "encampment in the countryside" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 42). He almost dotes on the place, and especially appreciates the unspoken company of his fellow detainees. The camp is a transitory space, marking what is to be a new beginning. The camp is (located at) the boundary of three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia, with the latter two continents being the original location of the refugees. The unfortunate travellers are still journeying, not having completely left their original home countries or having completely arrived in the host country: they inhabit the space of the boundary. As a transitional space, the encampment is not fully located within England per se. This transitional space results in the creations of micro-nations where detainees prefer to stick together with their fellow countrymen. Gurnah uses language as a tool for examining the reason for the formation of these micro-nations in the zone of transition. The narrator in this story still wonders about the facilitator's advice: "the man who sold me the ticket had advised that I did not speak English, or when it would be wise to admit that I did" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 45). The other detainees do not make use of English as a communication medium. Saleh imagines that perhaps they too are refraining from speaking English. Each group of detainees converses in the original language of its members, thus creating the illusion of micro-nations in this transitional encampment. This gives credence to the following statement: "Without English, you are even more a stranger, a refugee, I

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suppose, more convincing" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 143). I argue that this is Gurnah's way of emphasising the need to hold onto the familiar for as long as possible, even in alien territory. Saleh observes: "The detainees in the other building were all from South Asia, from India and Sri Lanka, and perhaps people of Indian origin from elsewhere ... They conducted their affairs separately from us, sat together as a group, and seemed to have a language with which to speak to one another which was not comprehensible to the rest of us" (44).

Saleh on the other hand is the sole asylum-seeker from Zanzibar, East Africa. As an enunciator, he is completely deprived of the use of language: he can only listen to the ramblings of the aspirant writer, the transient Angolan Alfonso, who refuses to leave the centre, where his muse resides (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 44). The boundary is a transitional space for Saleh too. Like his co-detainees, he is able to allay the pain of dislocation and strangeness by dwelling on the familiar – although he is deprived of language. In the narrative, rootlessness provides the victim of dislocation with new lenses with which to interpret phenomena and negotiate his/her presence in particular circumstances. Saleh finds solace in this new place, although he dreads the future. When in the novel, Rachel Howard from the social services visits him, a sense of trepidation washes over him: "I did not feel ready to be rescued yet from these only just visible lives" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 45). The encampment is a reminder of a familiar habitat, the detention camps in Zanzibar: "I had been in the camp two days and I liked it there . . . I liked the drift of muffled rumbles and crashes in the sodden air, which made me slightly apprehensive at first because I thought they were the distant pounding of the sea . . ." (Gurnah , *By the Sea* 45).

This apprehension about the camp is a comment on its transitional nature, as I argue in this thesis. The attachment that Saleh and his companions feel to each other and to the land reflects Edward Said's observation about "filiation" and "affiliation," which Rosemary Marangoly George refers to in *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*. For Said, there are "two kinds of affinity that an individual can hold" (George 16). "Filiation" refers to a person's attachment to his or her "natural culture" as indicated by "geography and biology". "Affiliation" on the other hand designates ties "forged" by the individual with the public sphere and "other social creations" (16). I use this definition to argue that in the zone of the boundary, the refugee does not easily do away with his/her "filiations"; s/he attempts to reconstruct an image of the forms of filiation and affiliation left behind. Conversely, forging alternative affiliations in the continental boundary is almost impossible in *By the Sea*, because language constitutes an unbreachable barrier.

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Saleh can speak English, but as a strategy of border crossing, he (and probably also his companions) refrains from using the host-nation's language.

Saleh's asylum story is ambivalent especially since he is forced to employ a ruse to acquire the rights which he deserves, as a genuine asylum seeker. However Dibia represents Ngozi's asylum status in a similarly nuanced way.

Dibia's *Unbridled*

Ngozi in *Unbridled* is not a political asylum seeker. However, not only is she an economic asylum seeker who escapes the daily struggles for bread in Nigeria, but she is also a domestic refugee running from a family that has been persecuting her since birth. As with Gurnah, Dibia allows context to define the nature of Ngozi's refugee status. If one were to consider her simply as an economic exile, then, her reasons for leaving Nigeria are related to local socio-economic conditions. She finds Nigeria to be stiflingly unfulfilling: it is a dream-killing country that she needs to get out of. After she is ostracised by her aunt, Ngozi wanders the streets of Lagos in the rain and, by a stroke of luck, comes across Princess and Uloma who offer her shelter. Reminded of her own traumatic experience (of being a victim of sexual exploitation by a relative in Italy), Princess sympathizes with the sixteen-year-old and offers to put her under her protective wing. In Lagos, she works as "a helper in a beauty shop, earning a moderate-enough salary that allowed [her] to barely survive a full month even though [she] shared an apartment with two other single ladies, Princess and Uloma" (Dibia 7). She opens an account in an online chat room to find a way out. As suggested above, Ngozi's displacement history can be read as another instance of the usual rural-to-urban migration; it lands her in the metropolitan centre of London.

In this novel particular attention should be paid to Ngozi's trauma since it shows, in the light of her migratory trajectory, how she gradually inches her way into the continental boundary zone. Her change of name, as I will show, is not a consequence of border policies. Ngozi is physically and psychologically tormented by members of her own family. The narrative thread links her trauma back to both the sexual abuse by the father and her physical molestation by her aunts. I focus here on the aunt's abuse. Tiffany relaxes Ngozi's hair at the age of fourteen: "I was stunned by my reflection . . . I looked like an adult. My hair stretched and dishevelled but refined, just like a white person's hair. I almost cried out in panic. I knew I was surely in trouble" (Dibia 53). True to form, her aunt punishes her for ruining her "innocence" and sense of decorum: "As an African girl, my hair was an integral symbol of

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my innocence and youth" (Dibia 52). Relaxing her hair was proof to her aunt that Ngozi had recently become sexually active; she is oblivious of Ngozi's molestation by the father who had taken the "innocence" and "youth" that the aunt obnoxiously tries to preserve. Ngozi remembers when her aunt cut her hair and she "watched pieces of [her] hair drop on the floor just like the tears dropped from [her] eyes" (Dibia 57). The aunt probably cuts Ngozi's hair out of jealousy because her own daughter could not afford to relax hers. The second traumatizing episode takes place when Tiffany, angry and bitter at being betrayed, informs her aunt that Ngozi is involved in a romantic relationship with Gerald, her brother. Her aunt literally tortures Ngozi, and Dibia does not spare the details:

> She got me and ordered me to lie on my back and spread my legs… and felt her finger slip inside me to examine me. It felt wriggly and foreign as being violated again in my second home. I then heard her cry out
> "Ngozi . . . Ngozi . . . Ngozi!"
> She grabbed the jar of pepper, opened it and stuck her fingers into it. I watched in pure horror . . . [S]he stuck her peppered thumb in me".
>
> (Dibia 112)

Ngozi lives in Lagos with these fears bottled up inside of her. In addition to the rape and her aunt's torture, her brother's impromptu arrival at the shop indicates that as long as she is in Nigeria, Ngozi is not safe. Her family can reach her anytime they choose. In order to break away from her family and their abuse, Ngozi joins a dating site while she lives with her friends. Ngozi's crossing of the continental boundary becomes an escape from family and their harrowing treatment of her She confides to James during one of their online chats (James is *Ja_King* and Ngozi is *AfricanWomanSearching*:

> *Ja_King: . . . Why are you scared of your family?*
> *AfricanWomanSearching: You won't understand. I left my family some years ago . . . I had to leave . . .* (Dibia 10; emphasis in original)

Although the Refugee Convention and its subsequent ratifications do not include domestic violence in the range of human rights violations which guarantee asylum, Dibia, Chikwava and Gurnah insist that literature provides a more inclusive canvas that shows up the limitations of the narrow views of asylum law-makers: their regulations do not take sufficient account of personal and familial human experiences in the production of meaning. In this regard, one has to agree with Mullins that "[l]iterary representations of violence in family

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life, however, remind us that human rights violations can also occur within the family" (Mullins 157).

Like Gurnah, Dibia shifts the focus from what constitutes the legal basis for asylum and draws the debate back to the private. Mullins' argument that "the emerging understanding that human rights violations occur not only in the public sphere but also in the domestic or private sphere"[18] helps position Ngozi as a refugee seeking asylum from family persecution. Her change of identity from Ngozi to Erika coincides with the necessity to change location and cut the ties that link her to her family[19]. In her article "The Public and Private Sphere: Family Narrative and Democracy in Argentina and South Africa", Kerry Bystrom examines the link between family narratives and the national imagination. With regard to the regulation of the private sphere, Bystrom argues that in times of crisis – national or domestic – the state often fails to deliver on its promises to keep its citizens safe (143). It becomes evident from Bystrom's overarching argument that the projection of a bourgeois family structure onto the national polity is a matter of power play – in both the so-called First and Third Worlds. In *Unbridled* Ngozi is trapped in the patriarchal power games whereby the father figure has the last say and can get away with anything (see also Asaah 338). This is where the novel becomes, rather like the "exemplary civic theatre" that represented the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a fitting medium for "public hearing of private griefs" (Simon Lewis qtd. in Bystrom 146).

When Ngozi finally makes the necessary preparations for legally travelling to England, Dibia sets her up for disappointment. Her hopes for a psychologically and materially secure and loving home crumble the moment she gets off the plane. From the onset, James tramples on Erika's dreams by lying about being "as comfortable as they come" (Dibia 7). Home, it seems, does not depend on the economic development of the host-nation. More importantly, the text suggests that a habitable home is best constructed by the person in question, rather than simply bestowed by someone else. Ngozi's life is a daunting irony: even the name she was given at birth does not jibe with her life experience. Ngozi is an Igbo female name that means "being a blessing". From her family's perspective, Ngozi is almost a curse, especially to her father. The narrative reveals the contradiction between the significance of the name "Ngozi" and her life story. Changing her name to Erika is one of the steps she takes to enter

[18] This case refers to the United Sates' amended legislation on the legality of asylum claims.

[19] Changing names also has a seductive purpose. Ngozi admits: "Erika was the name we both agreed on over the Internet before I applied for my international passport… there was no way [James'] Caucasian tongue could roll out [Ngozi] correctly" (Dibia 1).

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the continental boundary zone in the hope of starting anew. In a sense, asylum is risky as there is no infallible way of distinguishing between real victim and an imposter. This is what Chikwava demonstrates through Noname.

Chikwava's *Harare North*

The unnamed hero in *Harare North* claims the status of political asylum as the ultimate solution to his predicament: it will allow him to save enough money to pay for the disappearance of a (non-existing) police docket. He also needs to meet his obligation to his late mother by organising a proper burial for her, years after her death. Chikwava also subverts the asylum situation – as does Gurnah. When Noname gets on the plane and arrives in London, he usurps the identity of his victims and claims political asylum: "So on arrival at Gatwick airport I disappoint them immigration people because I step forward to hand my passport to gum-chewing man sitting behind desk, I mouth the magic word – asylum – and flash toothy grin of friendly African native. They detain me" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 4). This account figures on the very first page of the first chapter and sends a powerful signal as to the meaning the author aims to convey regarding the condition of asylum. Noname identifies himself as the victim of political persecution. As he puts it himself: "The story that I tell the immigration people is tighter than thief's anus. Me I tell them I have been harass by them boys in dark glasses because I am youth member of the opposition party" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 1). Unlike Gurnah, Chikwava does not dwell on Noname's conditions of detention.

What marks the difference between Noname and Ngozi or Saleh is that, unlike the latter, he is (in part) also a persecutor. He takes advantage of the asylum system: since he is planning for a temporary 'asylum' he cannot be categorized as seeking political asylum (according to its legal definition). In this novel the status of asylum seeker is not clear-cut. Even though Noname physically commits crimes against enemies of the state, his role as perpetrator is not beyond dispute: he is a mere tool in the hands of politicians, but is nonetheless accountable for his actions. Chikwava is presenting Noname as the visible component in the political machinery. Noname is visibly a representation of the author's earlier impression of the figure of Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai about whom he wonders whether "we have a hero or victim as the protagonist" ("Writing the Story", n.pag) Even when he is told his former leader is a wanted man, Noname's trust in the Head of the state, Comrade Mugabe, does not waver; instead he blames his immediate leader.

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Noname accosts Mhiripiri in London, where the latter finds refuge from the law: "Why you play cool style and deny me? In case you don't see – the past stands tall before us, the wind is blowing she skirt up, and there underneath she, soon I see you huddling down; no more cover for you now" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 179). Yet, he remains a proud defender of "the house of stone" against the MDC enemy.

The textual presentation of his admission into England is meant to complicate and challenge the legal definition of asylum. In fact this definition only takes into account the official story and has little regard for the private lives of the subjects seeking asylum. The official story further marginalises the "rejects", as Gikandi names them, who become second-class minority subjects as part of their wider marginalized postcolonial identities. Gikandi remarks: "I have nothing in common with these people [the refugees]; we do not share a common critical discourse or set of cultural values. They are not the postcolonials with whom I have spent the last weeks, but strangers caught in the cracks of the failed state." (23) According to Gikandi, whereas the cosmopolitan subject with whom he identifies enjoys a postcolonial stance, the refugee and asylum seeker are accidental occurrences produced by political failure of, in this context, their African countries of origin. Thus, by virtue of his being a victim of the powers that be, Noname can be said to qualify, in terms of the legal definition, for asylum as a state reject without political standing; but he is also planning to return to Zimbabwe. Noname navigates the space of the transnational cosmopolitan while at the same time not living in it. In this sense Noname is not living as a cosmopolitan since he lacks the freedom and the financial security to choose how and when to travel.

The question of asylum, as these authors present it, raises a number of questions: why do the authors choose to blur the representation of asylum for their characters vis-à-vis the legal definition? What meaning is inferred by admitting these people on British soil even when their asylum claims are not legally valid? Beyond the obvious answer, that asylum is too narrowly defined, there is a sense in which the texts are critical of the premises of asylum definitions. On the one hand, the authors seek to emphasize human experience over any politico-legal definition of persecution. If one accepts Savić's comment, that traditionally, "asylum is a right of the state and not of the individual (citizen)," then one understands that the "asylum business" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 11) has to do with state politics. Hannah Arendt argued accordingly that 'the idea of human rights transcends the present sphere of international law which still operates in terms of reciprocal agreements and treaties between sovereign states" (qtd. in Savić 1). It can thus be argued that the definitions of refugee and asylum status are made to suit the host state rather than the claimants.

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On the other hand, by having the character plan to return to the site of persecution (in *Harare North*) and by representing Ngozi as internally displaced (in *Unbridled*), Chikwava and Dibia use their novels to show that the destination sites of refugees can be both within and outside national boundaries. They strongly question the idea that the crossing of international boundaries should be a necessary requirement for "asylum". The text thus echoes Suzanne Metselaar's suggestion that one should "transcend" the philosophies underpinning the agreements of sovereign states in order to arrive at a "concept of humanity which transcends economical and political interests" (62). Moreover, Chikwava and Dibia argue for a wider legal definition of asylum. In this regard, an international law specialist at UNHCR, Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, points out that the focus of international law is to direct attention away from internal displacements; thus downplaying the wide range of human experience and human rights violations (1). In addition, in "The Internally Displaced: Challenges and Solutions," Anthony Minnaar looks into neglected cases of internal displacement in South Africa. He gives harrowing accounts of "witch-purging 'refugees'" in KwaZulu-Natal and of the victims of political violence on the East Rand (Gauteng) in the early 1990s. Minnaar notes the difficulty inherent in even adequately "quantify[ing] . . . those displaced" (180). He underlines the failure of "official policy" to provide an adequate response to the problem at the time (Minnaar 180).

The textual nuances and alternative definitions of asylum encourage an examination of the status of the refugee that takes into account the hidden, private narratives of asylum seekers. It becomes clear that the legal definition of asylum cannot fully render the human experience, since as the texts have shown any one can become a candidate for asylum by choice and/or by circumstances. In the following section, I am interested in the modes and conditions of creating a home away from 'home' and in how this process informs the formation of diasporic communities in Europe. In addition to the change of names and the advancing of asylum claims, the crossing of continental boundaries in these texts leads migrants to come to terms with their continental identity, their Africanity.

Making home away from 'home'

The crossing of national and continental boundaries is a process of discovery of the self. I am interested in the situations whereby African migrants encounter their Africanity in different circumstances and from various angles. Gurnah, Dibia, and Chikwava represent arrival in

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England as a shocking experience. Previous literature of the Windrush[20] era has explored the collapse of the dream of finding liberation in the British metropolis. However, there is still much to say about this disillusionment. Contemporary African fictions continue to excavate the postcolonial condition of those who arrive in the ex-coloniser's central metropolis. This subsection is concerned with how the circumstances of departure from homelands and arrival in England – as well as related experiences – inform of the kind of diasporic identities that are constructed. Identity is made complex through the individual's encounter with the unknown. This phenomenon occurs while the characters are trying to make sense of the present when all the fibres of their being experience feelings of strangeness, otherness, blackness, trauma, and feelings connected with asylum or homelessness or with being a refugee. This is the sense that the reader gathers from reading *Unbridled*, *Harare North*, and *By the Sea.* If displacement manifests itself by relocating and moving from one location to another or from one mode of being to another (Appiah, "African Identities" 90)[21], the process remains incomplete: translation from an origin to a destination is an unfinished process.

The texts chosen for discussion represent characters who embark on journeys to a known but unfamiliar destination, England. However, in the literature of migration, expectation is not always commensurate with reality: individual migrants are often shocked by the fact of their strangeness. The postcolonial displacements in these novels are marked by their difference from older versions of diasporic displacement, such as those resulting from the trans-Atlantic slave trade or the Jewish diaspora. During these mass displacements, subjects were largely herded to destinations which they had not chosen. This thesis argues that relocating, making a new home, as well as the making of memory, depend on the causes of displacement and on how identity is negotiated on arrival in the host country.

In his celebrated essay "Reflections on Exile", Edward Said posited that "exile . . . is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being" and that exiles "feel . . . an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives" (140-1). Said makes it clear that unlike the exile, the émigré or expatriate enjoys less "rigid proscriptions" (144). Nonetheless, they all share the same feelings of alienation from families and from connection (if any) with a homeland (Said 144-5). In fact, Said suggests that the difference between these categories of migrants lies in their circumstances and in the causes of their displacement. Etymologically, exile signifies banishment. However, living in exile requires, in addition, some performance of choice.

[20] The Windrush generation consists of the first largest black migrations of Caribbean nationals who sailed to England in 1948 in response to Britain's need for labour in the post-WW II reconstruction efforts.
[21] Appiah observes that "being African is, for its bearers, one among other salient modes of being" (90).

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There is some ambiguity in this 'choice': migration can be either "attractive" or "necessary" or even both (Siundu 16). None of the characters of the three novels is expelled from his or her native country; they choose voluntary exile in order to escape various forms of persecution in their homelands; thus *Unbridled*, *By the Sea*, and *Harare North* depict African migrants' lives in exile.

African migrants' arrival in Europe sees them tagged with their continental identities while their different nationalities are effaced in the process of objectification; while their migrant experience is informed by their being members of particular nations. Coming to terms with the African self is a condition of continental border crossing; this means living in the boundary zone, in the "space of concern" as Charles Taylor puts it elsewhere (qtd. in Bhabha 213). In his article "African Intellectuals in the Belly of the Beast" Njubi Nesbitt examines "the double consciousness of African migrant intellectuals in the West." According to Nesbitt:

> the migrant is forced to come to terms with *Africanity* for the first time and [the] resolution of this identity crisis is a political act that produces three "types" of migrant intellectuals: the comprador intelligentsia, postcolonial critic, and progressive exile. (70; emphasis in original)

Nesbitt explores these three categories of postcolonial exile. The "comprador" serves as a middleman and a tool for Western power: "The unabashedly corporatist institution has transformed Pan-Africanist solidarity into a quest for profit and recruited Black intellectuals and politicians as scouts and interpreters for rapacious corporations" (72). The postcolonial critics are "the interpreters of the African experience for Western audiences"; their race, ethnicity and origin are markers of their selection (72). The last type, the progressive exile, uses the vantage point of his or her location in the West in order to participate in Pan-Africanist efforts of development. Life in exile necessarily forces the migrant to come to terms with his or her African origins. The texts suggest a pointed interest in the private life of the migrant as a site for the production of meaning, rather than to reduce migration merely to developmental causes.

Dibia's *Unbridled*

The experiences of departure from the homeland and arrival in the diasporic space influence the manner in which the new home is negotiated. Furthermore, these experiences and the (in)hospitality of the new location give form to the kind the relationship that first generation

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and future generation migrants have with both their new and old homes. As life force deriving from human experience, memories weave together the past, present and future possibilities of the self. As such, "diasporic memories," Femke Stock argues, "are told and retold, appropriated and reinterpreted in the light of the here and now" (27).The "here and now" of diasporic experience is reflected in three steps: departure, arrival, and the construction of home. For instance, though they live together as a couple, James and Erika seem to inhabit parallel universes. The promises of happiness disappear as soon as she gets off the plane. It is unlikely that Dibia intends James to epitomise white English identity. His treatment of Erika, however, might influence her future relationship with white males, should she decide to re-enter this boundary zone. James scorns Erika, especially after they get married. He makes daily attempts to enslave her; he overtly cheats on her on her first night out after arriving from Nigeria, and he encourages his friends to make all sorts of comments to her face. Most revealingly, James' abuse of her is not a consequence of her individual character. James sees Ngozi as his African fetish: he has a "thing" for black African women and a reputation for abusing them. The text also tends to render problematic a race-oriented reading of Ngozi's dilemma by her housemate, Thomas, and her father.

In this novel, affinity with fellow migrants from "home" is not a spontaneous reaction. When Ngozi becomes uncomfortably close to Nigerian-born Providence, who is one of the couple's two house-mates, James forces the latter out. It is the other lodger, Thomas, from Jamaica, who informs James of the budding interest Providence and Ngozi are developing in one another. Providence becomes Ngozi's in-house refuge: a home away from home. Providence and Ngozi share their personal narratives. Later, when she has had enough of James' beatings and degradations, Ngozi literally fights for her freedom, leaves James and follows Providence. The nature of the relationship between Ngozi and the white Englishmen is likely to be one of suspicion and distrust. Her diasporic experience with James, it can be argued, is likely to impact the diasporic memories of (her) future children. Diasporic communities have minds of their own: they are formed and their different strands are woven together, according to individual experiences and encounters with the realities of the new living space. Domestic and communal memories as well as personal experiences are part the social and cultural currency of diasporic experience. The result of Erika's traumatic encounter with James is racial prejudice and the strengthening of a racial, ethnic and national bond with Providence. Since diaspora is formed at the crossroad of place of origin and place of settlement, Ngozi's and her future children's relationship to Nigeria – and in particular her

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family – is fraught as her memories of both arrival and 'home of ancestry' are filled with traumatic experiences.

The violence of the mix-race domestic space favours the formation of fringe communities of migrants. Dibia signifies this through what I choose to term 'forced isolation'. Ngozi comes to England as a dependent. James defines the conditions on which she can stay: she remains a woman, a black woman, an African black woman, and more importantly, one in need of financial security. First, during their online encounter, James could not pronounce "Ngozi"; he "wanted [Erika] to come up with an alternative name" (8). His preference for Erika – or rather his decision to change her name to Erika, as it almost rhymes with Africa, implies a denial of effective self-representation for her. Her refuge becomes a prison. As she enters James' space, his flat, Ngozi realises that she has entered a cul-de-sac with no possibility of freedom. Once in, she is trapped. James does not erect fences around her; rather he invites her into his fenced environment. In this flat, there is no room to build a heterogeneous community in the diasporic space. She looks to Providence for family and migrant community building.

The possibility of escape comes in the form of transnational bonding. Conscious of her entrapment, Ngozi tries to find solace in a transnational relationship with her Ghanaian-born friend and neighbour, Bessie. She supplements writing in her diary with human contact, and Bessie becomes the indirect catalyst of her freedom. James realises that Ngozi has crossed a dangerous boundary, a boundary that establishes a bridge to the formation of an apparently essentialised friendship and network of migrant subjects. In fact, as Dibia presents it, James is threatened by the viable ethnic and racial boundary across which Ngozi moves as she strengthens her bond with Bessie. Erika is compelled to put an end to this friendship for her sanity's sake, but not before she realises that what was a dangerous boundary for her to cross has now become the way not only to her freedom – even to her salvation, perhaps – but also to a promising emotional and domestic refuge. Boundaries exist whether we want them to or not, but Dibia shows that what is a boundary for one is not necessarily a boundary for someone else: a boundary does not have meaning on its own; its meaning depends on the perspective of the one who crosses or contemplates it. In Erika's case, the choice of putting up barriers or bringing them down relates to the individual who ventures to tug at them to test their resilience. No boundary is impervious to crossing. In addition to racial, cultural and ethnic boundaries which are visible in praxis and understood via historical conditions, individual boundaries may also exist because people often will them into being. Marginal

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communities in diasporic spaces thus strengthen their networks because circumstances lead them to do so.

Gurnah's *By the Sea*

In this text, consciousness of one's Africanity has a direct impact on a person's migrant experience. For the contemporary African migrant in the West, this can be a painful experience. Latif is the son of Rajab Shaaban Mahmud. He left Zanzibar for East Germany as a foreign student on a bursary which he received as what Mahmud Mamdani calls an "independence gift"; he pursues a degree in dentistry (Vasquez 145). Within a few years, he escapes from East Germany (the GDR) and arrives in England where he finds "a kind of anonymity" (Gurnah, *By the Sea,* 239). His life is filled with "unspoken regrets" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 71) and his memories of "nativity" are subjectively constructed. Thirty years later, Latif is a resident university lecturer in London, where he thinks he has successfully hidden from his nativity, until Saleh springs up from his past. Latif has neither returned nor heard from home for three decades. Latif confronts Saleh and his African self by coming to terms with a version of history which he had distorted due to painful memories.

The novel reflects on and interrogates the fact that the black presence in England is still a source of discomfort for white nationals. To Latif, this comes in the form of verbal invective which forces him to revisit the etymology of the qualifier 'black' and its derivatives. As he commutes to work in the morning, a scruffy-looking older white man calls him "a grinning blackamoor" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 71). Prior to this encounter, Latif understands and accepts "the social construction of black as other" with composure. His is shocked at the extent to which the Concise Oxford Dictionary offers negative compound words such as "blackhearted, blackbrowed" or "black sheep" (72). More than the "hiss of loathing" produced by the older white man, this vocabulary list "[makes him] feel hated, suddenly weak with a kind of terror" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 72). As he opens the "OED, the big mama herself" he is relieved to notice that "blackamoor" has been "grinning through" the English literary canon from as far back as the early 1500's: the "word has slipped from the pen of such worthies of English letters as . . . the incomparable W. Shakespeare" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 73). Gurnah points to the centuries-long resistance by white British of black presence.

Gurnah uses Latif to provide insight into exiles' lives and their rendering of the idea of Africa. For instance, after listening to a message on his answering machine from Rachel Howard of the refugee council, requesting him to offer his services as an interpreter, Latif is

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forced to confront the historiography of his origins: "The speaker said she had been told that I understood the language they spoke there. I suppressed the dread I always felt when I was required to meet someone from nativity" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 73). Here Latif encounters the spatio-temporal boundary that connects him to his homeland, a boundary that fills him with dread and apprehension. In this sense, Latif Mahmud seems to be forced into the category of postcolonial critic, according to Nesbitt's classification, an "interpreter . . . of the African experience for Western audiences" (72). Upon listening to the message, Latif proves to have a strong sense of self-awareness as he is forced to face his African self. He is wary of how he is represented as well as of how he represents himself in relation to his impression and memory of Africa. Most of all, the immediacy of his encounter "with someone from nativity" brings to the surface feelings of belonging to a community that is not England, a community from which he has been separated for many years.

Latif's wilful erasure from, and erasing of, homeland community increases his apprehension. Saleh and Latif's common interest in literature helps them ease their way toward possible understanding, each one proceeding with an advised step. Saleh tells him of his subterfuge at the airport (how he decided to use Herman Melville's catch sentence in his novella, *Bartleby the Scrivener* (1853) in order to both conform to and slip through the system). He uses the phrase "I would prefer not to" as a way of avoiding a complicated situation. Early in the story – as both men decide to share experiences from here and there – Latif suspects Saleh of being mischievous. Latif is delighted to realise that he is on a par with Saleh – at least with regard to the intimate story they share – and presses Saleh to tell him how he came to know the story of Bartleby.

Gurnah uses the Bartleby story both to explain the circumstances of Saleh's arrival and to explore Latif's private life. Let us place Saleh's interest in this story in context. On hearing that Saleh knew of Bartleby, the text reads as follows: "'Bartleby the Scrivener', he said, grinning all over his face, the skin round his eyes creased in lines of surprised pleasure, suddenly happy. 'You know the story! . . . You like it too, I can tell. I love the impassive authority of that man's defeat, the noble futility of his life'" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 156). Latif's delight is a slip which indicates/betrays his identifying with the story on more than an intellectual level. His admission that he loves the "passive authority of that man's defeat" suggests that he might have applied the Scrivener's principles to his own life. In fact, like Saleh, he has consciously applied the principle of "passive authority". For instance, Latif is surprised to hear that the story and details of his successful career are known to people in Zanzibar, even though he had chosen not to get in touch with his natal land. Previously, when

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he hears that Saleh no longer needs an interpreter, he sighs: "It was such a relief that second message on the answering machine, to say I didn't, after all, have to do penance for my treacherous absence from nativity" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 74). Although he prefers to remain anonymous, he suffers a great deal and finds himself stuck in a limbo: "I want to look forward, but I always find myself looking back, poking about in times so long ago and so diminished by other events since then, tyrant events which loom large over me and dictate every ordinary action" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 86).

Preferring not to stay in touch with nativity has caused a great deal of pain to Latif. Latif recognises the tyranny of memories such as these, which would often "loom large," beyond his control. After sharing stories with Saleh, he realises that the memories of home which he had entertained for so long were erroneous, one-sided, and based on puerile cognition; these memories had hardened as a result of his Bartlebian stance and due to (unresolved) traumatic experiences of family squabbles, sexual promiscuity and abandonment. By confronting his past self, which still "loom[s] large over [him]," for the first time in three decades, he is able to make peace with his Africanity. He is thus able to lay the foundations of his first true home away from Zanzibar. Kearney adds a valuable insight in suggesting that "in relation to Saleh's new house 'by the sea' Latif has indeed in a sense come *home*" (Kearney 56; emphasis in original). With more reliable memories of nativity, he is able to correct his impressions and insights about his presence in England. The "tyrant events" seem to have started loosening their grip; he resolves to stay in touch by threatening Saleh that he will call unannounced (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 244). Perhaps now Latif will be able to consciously grin in the streets of London, with eager anticipation at the prospect of returning to his London residence home after work to someone from home, Zanzibar.

Chikwava's *Harare North*

In *Harare North* African identity is represented mostly as a subject position, a form of agency. It is not a position of enunciation that requires an audience or interlocutor. Africanity here is an (unconscious) mode of being. Chikwava portrays a young African man from Zimbabwe for whom being Zimbabwean and being African form one monolithic identity. From this perspective, Africanity becomes the norm and Zimbabwean nationality an additional form of identification. For this protagonist, Noname, the African self does not need

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a special occasion or situation to manifest itself[22]. Therefore, when he speaks of being a "son of the soil" he refers to his Zimbabwean origins (Chikwava, *Harare North* 180). What seems like a platitude is in fact the text's way of saying that Africanity is not always a position the African subject is forced to inhabit. The adjectives "native" or "rural" are used in the novel to refer to protagonists' personalities, not to national cultural practices. These terms are also part of a counter-discourse to the idea of Africa and Africans in the diasporic space (in Europe).

Harare North is about embracing Africanity as a constitutive part of one's identity. "Original native" means a real African. Here "real"' or "original" are used loosely to indicate that the person being referred to is African-born, and is not a "lapsed African", that is, a diaspora-born African (Chikwava, *Harare North* 137). "Original" here does not have the meaning of "authentic"; it only indicates the person's origin. "Original native" is an alternative formulation for "African". This is illustrated in the text when Noname and his friend and host, Shingi attend an African concert. The narrator refers to a Congolese guitarist as "the original native from Kinshasa" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 137) – just as he is an "original native" from Zimbabwe. The protagonist's consciousness of being an African in Europe does not alter his personality. The "original native" is a proud man – an individual – but his pride is not a statement of his Africanity.

If Africanity is ever represented in a negative light in the text – as far as Africans' self-representation is concerned – it would have to do with being an (illegal) African in Europe, as this is a position of disadvantage, daily struggle and humiliation, especially for those living under the official radar or waiting for their asylum status to be approved. Some people in this situation work as B.B.C's[23] and sewer-cleaners because of the intricacies of finding decent "grafts". Through the appellation "original native," Chikwava describes a dimension of African identity that crosses and undermines national and continental boundaries and borders. In a sense it is a pan-African mode of being which relegates nationality to a second-class form of identification. Chikwava uses "native" to deconstruct the meaning derived from imperial discourse. As opposed to what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin refer to as the "unconscious . . . naturalisation of constructed values" (Ashcroft 3) instigated by imperial discourse, Dibia describes an unconscious embrace of Africanity which is not defined – by the African subject – as a position of resistance but rather as a mode of being. In this text, the

[22] I contrast this statement in subsequent chapters according to the nature of boundaries a person enters or crosses.

[23] This is colloquial for British Bottom Cleaners, that is, immigrants who cater for the elderly. One cannot help but notice the uncanny resemblance between these types of jobs.

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empire is writing its life narrative from the margin and the statement is not directed "back to the centre", to borrow Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's words (*Empire Writes Back* 6).

Chikwava uses the same approach to examine the cultural element of migrants' lives. Here too there is no confrontation of cultures per se, which would suggest a sense of inferiority from Noname's point of view. The narrative tone seems neutral. This is illustrated by the contrast the narrator makes between those of his countrymen who behave as "civilians" and himself, who has been fashioned as a one of the "jackal breed" – a non-civilian. It is important to recognise that this novel glosses over cultural difference as an obstacle to surviving under the official radar. Noname does not trade any form of his African cultural identity. Interestingly, there are instances where English people react with shock, such as when Noname gets on the bus with a loaf of bread: "I pull and I tear [it] in half. Shingi grin in nervous way and he look at them people around us. The bus is full and everyone on the bus point they eyes at us" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 136). What is a shock to other passengers, including Shingi, is a source of joy and freedom for Noname: "a feeling that I have not have in years now come over me; my eyes get more fire" "I feel free" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 136). The crossing of inter-continental borders does not necessarily bring about a translation or transition in cultural identity. Although this is quite a graphic image of an African man *misbehaving* – by English standards – on public transport, it cannot be called a performance of cultural identity. This is performance of the self, which I argue differs from the performance of African identity. To borrow from Aimee Cesaire and Leopold Sedar Senghor's historical, political and reactionary notion of *Presence Africaine*[24], Chikwava's text describes an African's presence in the metropolis, one whose passive modes of being are enough to suggest Africanity as a subject position.

In *Harare North*, Chikwava parodies the performance of the African self. Here the text is ambivalent in its representation of Africanity: it is not clear whether the author seeks to criticise the narrator's behaviour, or whether the narrator is bemoaning the representation of Africans by migrant Africans and members of the African diaspora. In the novel these two groups tend to over-perform their Africanity: "them Africans in their colourful ethnic cloths it make us feel you is not African enough. Many of them is also them lapsed Africans because they have live in England from the time when it was OK to kill kings, queens and pigs" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 137). Two points of view need examining. The first is the deconstruction of African culture, as a set of cultural practices and modes of being that is not

[24] The *use of Presence Africaine* here is inspired by Rosemary Marangoly George in her Book *The Politics of Home.*

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uniform, but rather as a mosaic of cross-cultural, cross-continental, cross-racial and cross-ethnic forms of representation (see Hall 231). In addition to this "colourful" diversity, Africa is entangled in a network of global exchanges. African modernity is a reality that has to be taken into account when speaking of African culture. Noname admires the "original native from Kinshasa", the star of the performance, as he does not harbour "flashy African cloths" but "he is dressed in jacket and tie," and Shingi and Noname "is the only *natives* wearing jeans" (Chikwava, *Harare North* 137; emphasis added). Appiah argues that there is no single African identity, rather there are African identities (90). Africa is a continent of diversity. Most of all, the African experience here is neither is monolithic nor impervious to external influence.

This novel represents African identities differently, in comparison to *Unbridled* and *By the Sea*. Here the author is concerned with self-representation and the representation of the African presence in England. Chikwava is more interested in Africans' modes of being which neither necessarily depend on white English society's stereotypical reactions to the other nor reflect Africans' cultural identities per se. In short, Chikwava's Africans do not speak from the perspective of their cultural identities. As Stuart Hall has observed: "cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (223). This process of self-representation derives from an appreciation of migrant life from the point of view of social and economic struggles: it is a subjective representation of the self, the African self.

To conclude, from the definition of asylum offered here, it emerges that that neither Saleh Omar nor Ngozi Akachi nor Noname represent genuine cases of asylum seekers, if one considers the "legal basis" for asylum status (Mullins 146). What sense, then, does the reader make of these characters' statuses as asylum seekers in the novels *Harare North*, *By the Sea*, and *Unbridled*? Viewed on the basis of characters' personal experiences, and taking into account the reasons that make them seek refuge abroad, one can argue that the protagonists, Noname, Saleh, and Ngozi. do qualify, even though their cases do not fit into the legal definition of asylum. It becomes apparent that Chikwava, Gurnah, Dibia use fiction as a canvas for interrogating the procedures and guidelines which form the basis of claims to asylum status. In this respect, the novels can be classified as fictions which "contribute to the study of human rights a deeper understanding of human experience and humanity in the fullest sense of the word" (Mullins 146). The three texts, *By the Sea*, *Unbridled*, and *Harare*

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North present particular textual nuances of the modes of migrant experience, and the condition which leads migrants to engage in intercontinental migrations.

The production of migrants and refugees does not engage only the host-countries in their attempts to police their borders. In an effort to find a solution to the difficulties of host countries in regulating and adequately caring for unfortunate refugees, Shadrack Gutto adopts a matter-of-fact position. He suggests that perhaps the solution to crises of identity formation and the negotiation of new beginnings is to be found in the country of origin. He argues the refuge problem can be prevented by dealing with its root causes (71-72).

Migrant and diasporic communities are formed at the cusp of memories of home, the experience of arrival in the host country, and personal approaches to negotiating the new space. The various boundaries that migrants cross are not flat, passive spaces. They have the potential to shape personalities and identities at the time of (and as a result of) entering and/or crossing these boundaries. The dynamics of intra-continental boundary crossing describe Africanity from a different stance: claiming African identity aims to facilitate negotiation and crossing of borders/boundaries.

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Chapter Three

Africanity and Intra-continental boundaries

"This is not your country"[25]:
(Kikamba 12)

Simão Kikamba's *Going Home* is a story of voluntary migration from the Democratic Republic of Congo – Zaire[26] at the time of narration – to Angola and of involuntary migration from Angola to South Africa. The protagonist's movements in this novel include displacement from Angola to Zaire, Zaire to Angola, and Angola to South Africa. This text navigates across intra-continental boundaries. Marie Beatrice Umutesi's autobiography, *Surviving the Slaughter*, chronicles the Rwandan genocide of 1994. This historical tale features the disintegration of a nation in which the colonial epistemic order, post-independence elites and popular culture conspire to establish and maintain ethnic differences. Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is the story of a nation in the process of redefining itself, where the encounter between the local and the foreign, the urban and the rural, results in tensions that question the meaning of the nation, community and personhood.

This chapter demarcates itself from the second in terms of both migratory trajectory and analytical approach. The second chapter explored the continental boundary separating protagonists' African homes from their European destinations. In contrast, this chapter focuses on international and intra-national boundaries and borders within Africa and seeks to understand the meaning of these concepts in the context of intra-continental displacements. The concepts of border, borderland and boundary are paramount to this project as a result of Africa's history of colonial conquest. I intend to examine the movements of Africans within the continent and the subsequent interactions involved in negotiating home and identity in an African country other than that of one's birth. The boundary, borderland and border considered here are to be conceptualised as both geographical and human. Their use is also both metaphorical and literal. Umutesi's book aims to provide an historical and a social perspective for the study of ethnic boundaries within a nation-state. The book is best suited for this task because it clearly delineates boundaries and borders between people and ethnic

[25] These words are uttered by a South African policeman to an Angolan asylum-seeker in Simão Kikamba's *Going Home.*
[26] From here on I will be referring to the old name, Zaire; it is the name used in the novel.

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groups; it also examines instances where the blurring of lines translates into violence in terms of identity. The association between Umutesi's text and the two novels is deliberate, as these works of fiction respond to contemporary issues of migration, conviviality and ethnic friction in Africa. These fictional texts also help to show how definitions of border, boundary and borderland inform relationships between nationals of the same country; they also influence interactions at the border. This chapter looks at relationships between individuals within a demarcated territory, and at multiple nationalities sharing what Jonathan Crush and David A. MacDonald call "migrant spaces", such as Hillbrow (3); it explores the effects of the so-called arbitrary colonial borders on people whose movements are influenced by them. I use the borderland as an organizing trope to examine notions of difference and separation both within the nation-state and in relation to transnational movements. I argue that through their migrations within the continent, Africans make a statement about becoming African, and express their Africanity in order to negotiate this space. I examine the dynamics of migration and diasporic formation from the vantage point of the borderland – as a space that encompasses national as well as intra-national boundaries.

The configuration of contemporary intra-continental migrations in Africa links to the continent's colonial history. Hana Zlotnik, in "The Dimensions of Migrations in Africa", observes that migrant workers in the colonial era and in post-independence Africa moved across borders irrespective of the colonial or post-colonial power that ruled their migrant spaces. According to her, contemporary migrant trajectories are "routes established during the colonial period" (15). Poverty, environmental disasters and civil and interstate warfare have significantly contributed to the production of migrant communities in Africa and worldwide. Moreover, urbanisation plays a key role in the shaping of migratory trajectories, both inter-regional and intra-national – irrespective of how poor the country of origin might be. In *Going Home* the main character leaves Kinshasa for Luanda; in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* Johannesburg is the urban centre of both apartheid and post-apartheid migrant communities. Intra-continental migrations are framed within the context of voluntary (labour migration) and forced (refugee) movements (Baud 221). As William B. Wood has observed in "Forced Migration: Local Conflicts and International Dilemmas", this distinction between voluntary and forced migration holds many grey areas. The degree of choice of so-called voluntary migrants problematises the semantics of involuntariness and voluntariness. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1990-2000), Sadako Ogata, recognised this definitional dilemma: "Refugees are forced to flee. Immigrants are supposed to have a degree of choice, but when their livelihood is so miserable, I don't know what the level of

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choice is" (qtd. in Wood 607). This gloomy picture of intra-continental movements and migratory trajectories is produced by people who are simply expressing a desire for greater social, economic and political fulfilment.

This chapter is mainly concerned with understanding three types of boundaries: (1) physical boundaries (and borders) which I employ as analytical tools for examining (2) boundaries between locals, and (3) transnational boundaries between local citizens and foreign nationals. First I will look at physical boundaries, borderlands and borders as depicted in *Going Home* and at how these provide the analytical tools for a study of human interactions. Much has been said about how colonial rule arbitrarily dismembered Africa. The result of this forced demarcation is still evident today as contemporary African nation-states observe these boundaries. My interest in this chapter is not to dispute the current map of postcolonial Africa. I intend to read how literature represents these boundaries and their impact on national communities and on migration across borders. Both Umutesi's book and Mpe's novels examine the fraught relationships between people sharing a common national territory. Although migrants spill over from Rwanda into Zaire, what is of interest here is the nature of the boundaries between imagined "Hutuness" and "Tutsiness". Umutesi's book questions the way inherited boundaries are conceived as natural. Mpe's novel imagines a community of people with apparently irreconcilable differences. Hillbrow as part of Johannesburg is a migrant space. It is also Tiragalong's "other", mainly because of the supposed influence of the foreigner. Tiragalong is the rural space from which the protagonists originate; it is thought to be untainted by the urban and the transnational. However, it is itself a community of irreconcilable opposites; its supposed oneness is a fiction. The first section seeks to understand the impact of the study of physical boundaries and borders on human interactions.

Migrations across borders and colonial legacy

In this section, I am focusing on Kikamba's *Going Home* in order to examine the contemporary representation of the borderland/border/boundary in the process of migration. It should be mentioned at the outset that this novel is about returning to the country of origin. I use it here to read the process of border crossing because it takes a unique view of the experience of leaving familial and familiar habitats. In this text, the borderland is not limited to the zone near the border; it includes the emotional reaction provoked by the imminence of and the process of departure. A number of academics, such as Shadrak Gutto, ponder the

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significance of blaming intra-national and cross-border conflicts on the fact that African political/colonial boundaries are a colonial imposition (64). The question is: should Africans (politicians and scholars) continue to the blame present border conflicts on this fact? I approach this debate, not by attempting to provide an answer, but rather by examining how the authors, especially Kikamba, approach this question in depicting a border crossing by a young Angolan in the early 1990s. I do not emphasise the fact of return, but rather focus on the process of departing from home and reaching and crossing the political border between Zaire and Angola. But first, it is necessary to revisit the definitions of border, borderland and boundary, and put these concepts in their epistemological context.

The US-Mexican border has become the iconic example in border and borderland studies. As Robert R. Alvarez, Jr. suggests, it has been "elevated to the status of paradigmatic case" (449). The demarcating line of the border, that is the physical and literal boundary, functions as a space "separating social forms, peoples, and regions" (448). This use of the iconic border cannot be easily transferred to the African context since most of the African borderlands are historically zones of habitation. African borders were not drawn, as in the case of the US-Mexican border, on the *frontera* (the frontier). The border regulates influx of migrants and borderlanders. In the case of the US-Mexican border, Alvarez offers a definition of borderland as "a region and set of practices defined and determined by this border that are characterised by conflict and contradiction, material and ideational" (448). Although the African borderland shares some of the characteristics of this border, the experience of the African borderland, I would argue, is characterized by a history of peoples' arbitrary separation from kin, clan, or ethnic groups. The African borderland is not the space of encounter between so-called First and Third Worlds, as in the case of the US-Mexican border. In the African experience of the border/borderland, "social forms", "regions" or "peoples" on either side of the arbitrary border are often marked by cultural sameness. The differences between peoples on either side of the border are less autochthonous than they are a colonial or postcolonial creation.

Going Home represents the borderland both as space and an atmosphere. It is a zone of non-distinction between and conflation of two African nation states divided by colonial design. Whereas the boundary, as represented on the map, stretches along the line of demarcation, the borderland is more like a zone of interaction. It is also the journey itself from a familiar habit towards an elsewhere. The novel traces the story of a young man who embarks on a journey from Zaire to Angola, his parents' country of origin. His parents were displaced sometime during the 1966-1974 war that Jonas Savimbi's UNITA and the MPLA

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waged against colonial rule. Manuel Mpanda is an English school teacher whose meagre salary barely keeps him afloat. He feels deeply for Angola and wants to participate in the efforts of reconstruction; Angola represents the place where he can redefine himself as a man. However, he knows almost nothing about Angola. His mother carried him on her back when he was only two years old as she and her husband and thousands of others fled war-torn Angola, about two decades previously. Mpanda has no memory of the route his parents took or of Angola itself. Yet, he baptises his adventure a "journey of return". Disregarding the warnings of his parents about political instability in Angola, Mpanda sets off on his adventure.

It is useful, following Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, to look at borderland in terms of cross-border practices. The usual definition of borderland is of the region that is affected by the political border between two or more countries (224). The border thus bisects the borderland. In addition to this cross-border practice, I understand borderland in this novel as encompassing the protagonist's journey. Mpanda is leaving his country of residence, Zaire. He has not been abroad before. This semblance of rootedness increases the feeling of loss that he has from the moment he leaves the familial home. The progressive distancing from what is familiar and movement towards the unfamiliar is what I refer to as entering the borderland – even though the protagonist is still nowhere near the border. Thus, the borderland is not just the region along the physical border; it is also, metaphorically, the experience of leaving. The ambience of the borderland is located in the moment separating departure and crossing. It is a spatio-temporal divide in the story of a life interrupted in the country of residence, where hope and expectations lie over the border. For instance, Mpanda embarks on his migratory journey to the rhythm of various sounds and music: the familiar accents of a mother calling out to potential customers in Lingala, "Ya moto yangoyo, Papa" (Kikamba 22) and the tunes of Congolese rumba with "Pepe Kalle's latest hit blasting away" (Kikamba 21). Mpanda knows what he is leaving behind, compared to what he hopes to find in Angola: "I took a last look at what I was leaving behind: this city where I grew up and these people I loved and who loved me" (Kikamba 22). Mpanda enters the borderland resolved to cross the border, but burdened by the memory of that which he leaves behind. Mpanda's journey responds to the impulse to migrate to a better place: it is a voluntary displacement to the country of his birth, even though he admits he that he "had been too young to remember" anything about Angola (Kikamba 25).

He is soon disillusioned as he approaches the border. The route is unpredictable and unsafe. From the heights of his hopeful demeanour, he muses about the colonial border and

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the haphazard features of the line supposedly marking it. His crossing of the political border becomes a critique of the effects of imposed boundaries on the socio-ethnic dynamics of the people of the borderland. On his journey he encounters a young woman, Isabel, with whom he falls in love and later has a baby girl, Mansanga, in Angola. In Angola, Mpanda becomes involved in the opposition and joins UNITA, the political faction supporting Jonas Savimbi[27]. He is then targeted in post-electoral witch-hunts and forced to abandon his family as he flees to South Africa, the "country of Mandela" (Kikamba 121). In South Africa, Mpanda is once again (but more severely) confronted with the hardship of being an African abroad, away from his family and relatives.

The border post forces the protagonist to pause in his journey. Here there are two conflicting narratives: the official story of disruption, and the popular, historical story of continuous interaction and connection. The Zaire-Angola borderland reminds the reader of the history of colonial demarcation and its arbitrariness. Thus, the border's role is not only to demarcate two nation-states; it has the additional function of creating a rift between people that originally shared a common history, common stories and a space of communication. This border separates the once-connected social and cultural formations, peoples and spaces (see also Zlotnik 15). These pre-colonial social forms and the populations who once shared a common space found themselves in a territory designated by colonial authority. Ravi L. Kapil, in "On the Conflict Potential of Inherited Boundaries in Africa", observes that the political border is fundamentally "alien to the zone it bisects" (657). This shows in the novel in the way in which the transition from one geographical landscape to another does not imply a change in cultural makeup. The narrator describes the alienness of the border/boundary through the abruptness and arbitrary nature of its presence and form. The presence of the Angola-Zaire border is mostly suggested:

> As we climbed down from the bus, towels and toothbrushes in hand, I shaded my eyes with my hand and gazed down towards the border. The road sloped and expanded into a large bulldozed area. To the left of this area, stretching from west to east, was the lush, green-edged path of the Luvo River. Near the marketplace the river went into gorge and, at the edge of the gorge, I could make out a bridge. Beyond the bridge was a stretch of

[27] After Angola became independent in 1975, UNITA instigated a civil war which officially ended with the death of Savimbi in 2002 in a firefight against government troops. Kikamba fictionalises Angola's 1991 Bicesse Peace Accord which paved the way to presidential elections. However, when Savimbi rejected the electoral results, UNITA took up arms again against the rival MPLA and Angola was plunged into guerilla warfare for another twenty years.

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> tranquil, misty hills. Of the border I could see nothing and wondered if it was the bridge or the river.
>
> (Kikamba 25)

The narrator seems to expect a natural barrier. Mpanda shares his anxieties about the meaning of the borderland and the state boundary. The arbitrariness of the boundary affects the interactions at the border post, which stands as an abnormal growth on the ground: "the house with an iron roof", "a bamboo flagpole" and the sign "*Bureau d'Immigration*" above the door of the house (Kikamba 26; emphasis in original). The "bridge" and the "river" are not out of context in keeping with their surrounding and there is no obvious reason why either would constitute an international border. But the border also tells the story of continuous interactions between borderlanders, despite territorial demarcation.

Kikamba uses the medium of language and naming systems to emphasise the alienness of the border and to signify the commonality of the space of the African borderland. Language at the borderland plays an important role in establishing a rapport between the reality of the borderland, the arbitrariness of the demarcation, and a colonial and postcolonial history of displacement. The narrator as protagonist understands language to be a signpost that confirms and accredits his migratory adventure[28]. For instance, when he arrives in Kimpese, a village situated an hour's drive from the border, he decides to explore the market in order to appease his hunger. He buys a "loaf of boiled maize" which he eats with a "pinch of salt" (Kikamba 24). While resting, two people stride by "speaking Portuguese" (Kikamba 24). Kimpese is a typical African /postcolonial borderland village mostly because "it is said that one in two people in these towns are either Angolan or of Angolan descent" (Kikamba 24). These Angolans are a legacy of colonial displacements, triggered during the Angolan uprising against Portuguese rule, from 1961. The Portuguese language signals the approach of the political border and attests to the protagonist's presence in the zone of the borderland. It also represents a diasporic memory of earlier displacements, whereas Lingala reminds Mpanda of the country and people he is leaving behind. Languages, whether colonial or indigenous, are not circumscribed and can spill across borders. In this case however, the presence of Portuguese is due to forced displacement.

At the border itself, there is evidence of the overriding influence of official narratives on the way people interact. One isolated incident draws the reader's attention to the effect of

[28] I use the term diasporic adventure because Mpanda's life in Zaire is a diasporic experience; so is his return to Angola.

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the colonial history at the border. The author uses language as an analytical tool. For instance, when a Zairian customs official seizes an Angolan woman's merchandise, the text offers evidence of the friction between the colonial linguistic heritage and indigenous languages. The absence of a border lingua franca renders matters difficult: "They couldn't communicate because the woman spoke only Portuguese of which the Lingala-speaking Zairian officer did not understand" (Kikamba 27). This scene is not unique to the African border nor is it typical of all African borders. In fact, the colonial language often serves a as medium of communication between former colonies. But in this case, Angolans and Zairians do not share a colonial lingua franca since their respective countries were governed by different colonial powers. Moreover, language also constitutes a border and in this case, a barrier, between the official and the merchant. Although isolated, this incident has arbitrariness writ large. As Alvarez (referencing Asiwaju) observes: "boundaries … separate, marginalize, and create conflicts" (Alvarez 451). Alvarez's reference highlights the paradoxical nature of state boundaries which "split and maintain territorial imperatives through nation-state politics but at the same time regulate, constrict, and allow a natural movement of people" in border-crossing practices taking place across history (451). The border separates and discriminates between those with power and those without, especially in conditions of crisis. Whereas the borderland allows people to flow naturally, the border stands out as both unnatural and corrupted. In the text a long-bearded man with a scarf – a sign of opulence – bribes an "officer to let his tightly-sealed case pass unchecked" (Kikamba 27). Additionally, Kikamba's observation of the linguistic culture of both Zaire and Angola becomes part of postcolonial discourse, through cross-border circulations, that belies the presence of the arbitrary boundary. Kikongo is spoken in both Angola and Zaire, which demonstrates that the zone around the border/boundary often withstands the spatio-temporal divides of the colonial and post-colonial order.

The language phenomenon has a parallel in the naming system, thus providing evidence of colonial entrenchment. In both Zaire and Angola there are significant overlaps in the names of villages and rivers. In dividing the African continent according to their own agendas, the colonialists glossed over existing geographical, sociolinguistic, and cultural structures (Kapil 1966; Herbst 674-5). Here the reader finds a correlation between the cartography of the border and the caprices of the colonisers' division of the continent: "On maps, the Angola-Zaire border was drawn up as a sinuous line stretching from the Atlantic to Zambia, but what lay before me was simply a river below a bridge. How had they come up

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with such line? It made no sense that everyone needed a pass to go the other side" (Kikamba 28).

In his analysis of African pre-colonial states, Nugent explains that the colonisers did not consider the cultural (in addition to the political) aspect of the border. He further argues that at the time of the scramble for Africa during the Berlin Conference of 1884-5, pre-colonial African states were separated by mental rather than cartographic boundaries ("Arbitrary Lines" 36). The novel illustrates this through mentioning of names of two small towns. On the Angolan side there is Mbanza-Kongo – the former capital of the Kongo Kingdom – while on the Zairian side is Mbanza-Ngungu. The commonality indicated by the suffixes of both towns' names reminds the reader of the historical (territorial) oneness of this zone. The protagonist does not experience the passage from Zaire to Angola as a memorable transition, such as would have been experienced crossing the Congo River from the Republic of Congo to the DRC. Interestingly, as soon as political division is suspended and restrictions are lifted (though for a brief moment), fluidity of circulation between the two states resumes at the border: "When the border was left open for people to move freely I crossed back into Zaire and stood at the spot where the woman had been fighting for her sack of fish, wondering what happened to her. I went back to Angola, leisurely crisscrossing between the two countries" (Kikamba 28-9). The borderland resists the presence of its imposed border and allows people to circulate across the land.

Indeed, for the ordinary person, the borderland is a zone of exchange and reconnection. I have mentioned that the colonial border disrupts the natural movement of neighbouring peoples. However, the border zone becomes an organic space in which the dynamics of circulation and interaction between ordinary Zairians and Angolans seem to temporarily suspend the alienating effects of the border, thereby offering a semblance of normalcy. For instance, on the Angolan side of the border,

> The market place was bursting with people buying and selling – Zairians from Songolo, Kimpese, Lukala, Mbanza-Ngungu, Kirishasha and Matadi, and Angolans from Mbanza-Kongo, Cuimba, Tomboko, N'zeto and Luanda. Most people from Angola spoke Portuguese and a few spoke Kikongo, while people from Zaire spoke French, Lingala or Kikongo. As was customary people were shaking hands, enquiring about their respective families.
>
> (Kikamba 28)

It should be noted that what stands out in the narrator's observation is not on which side of the border the market is located. Two important aspects of border life do stand out . On the

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one hand, the narrator zeroes in on the conviviality and jovial atmosphere of the border(land) market. The shaking of hands and exchange of *Salam Alayk* indicate a particular mood that disregards and transcends the restriction imposed by the laws of border crossing. As if the border does not exist, life seems to take its normal course. The lively atmosphere of the border makes the narrator forget for a moment his dread at the prospect of going to Angola. It seems that both sides of the border have reached consensus on how to circumvent the arbitrariness of the boundary. There is only one border market. On the other hand, and strangely enough this market is mobile and transnational. By virtue of its mobility, the market becomes part of a subversive force revealing what Wood notes elsewhere as "the futility of physical and political boundary to human migration" (607), whether forced or voluntary. The market is held on either side of the border. On the day Mpanda arrives at the border, the "market was being held on the Angolan side" (Kikamba 27). Therefore, despite the temporary suspension of the border and the incident with the woman merchant, the Zaire/Angola borderland falls within the third of Oscar Martinez's four models of borderlands: this is the interdependent borderlands which permits a stable flow of migrants and goods across the border and in which borderlanders on both sides of the line enjoy symbiotic relationships (8). The mobility of the market reminds one of the shuttle of a machine, sewing together two sides of the border supposedly separated by the arbitrary boundary.

The shift in mode of transportation begets a fictional redefinition and redrawing of the borderland and of the political border. Mpanda travels by bus from Zaïre to Angola. He reaches the border and crosses it on foot. This entails a sensory experience of border crossing: he is in touch with the reality of the border. The borderland is a concrete, interactive space. It connects both worlds, the familiar and the prospective. A boundary is a zone of demarcation that is located and can be physically identified within the borderland, although it is hard to physically pinpoint on the ground. Not only does Mpanda traverse the physical and cultural borderland, he also experiences the transition physically. When three years later Mpanda is forced to flee Angola for fear of a political witch-hunt against him, he decides to try South Africa rather than go back to Zaire. In this second displacement, a mature Mpanda travels by air in December 1994. This aerial route from Angola to South Africa raises a number of questions: if a borderland connects two nation-states at the boundary, how would one describe the aerial space crossed by the plane en route from Angola to South Africa? How does one describe the process of departure and arrival? Does one still speak of crossing?

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As he takes a flight from Luanda international airport to OR Tambo International in Johannesburg, Mpanda becomes physically disconnected from the boundary as both a dividing line and connecting bridge between countries of origin and destination. The airport represents the end and beginning, that is, entry and exit of the boundary which remains physically non-existent. There is neither boundary nor borderland. Officially, the same rules apply: the passenger still needs a passport and visa to cross over. The traveller still experiences the sentiments associated with the crossing: anxiety, trepidation, and heightened expectations. The boundary preserves its auratic presence although this new experience of crossing contrasts with the crossing of the Zairian-Angola border: there is no thread that links Angola and South Africa, as was the case with the bridge in the Zaire-Angola borderland, where the familiar meets and literally connects with the unfamiliar. In lieu of the buzzing market life and the "leisurely" walk across the bridge, the plane now becomes the only connector between place of departure and the intended destination. The following extract both evokes a contrast with the Angola-Zaire border crossing and expresses Mpanda's hopeful attitude on arrival in South Africa:

> Johannesburg International – what a magnificent airport! [...]
> I went through immigration . . . The air outside was pure. It carried none of the unpleasant smells that polluted the air in Kinshasa and Luanda . . . I caught a taxi to town and momentarily my anticipation of a glittering life in Johannesburg smothered the loss I had been feeling.
>
> (Kikamba 125)

The stark difference in levels of development between South Africa and Angola attests to the absence of connection between both countries. Nothing has prepared for or eased Mpanda into what he finds over the border (this preparation is a function of the borderland). Thus, although the two countries do not share a border, I argue that Mpanda traverses a frontier which does not manifest itself physically. But his arrival puts him in a zone which is then the space of negotiation of belonging, or rather of the experience of transition from Angola to South Africa. This transition is not smooth: Mpanda's attempts to integrate into the country are thwarted on the one hand by global political discourses on the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers, and on the other hand, by the wall created by the status of "otherness" – represented by xenophobic speeches and verbal attacks from both local civil servants and ordinary people that he encounters.

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In absence of a physical dimension, the concepts of borderland and border acquire new meaning. In fact, Mpanda's passage from Angola to South Africa is largely motivated by his pan-African connection to Mandela who symbolises freedom and promising opportunities for black Africans. In this instance, this connection is more significant than that of Mandela's representation as a world icon. Mpanda wants his share of the South African dream. At the moment of crossing the Angola-South Africa border, Mpanda does not identify himself as an Angolan: rather he seems inclined to adopt Africanity as the identity from which to make his hopeful comment: "A better life awaited me and my family. I would lay the foundations, preparing for Isabel and Mansanga to join me later. Together, we would make this country our home" (Kikamba 125). Earlier, Mandela had represented a metonym for boundary, namely the thread that is to connect fellow Africans. Mpanda relates to Mandela at a crucial moment of his life, when he seeks to escape the political witch-hunt in Angola. The text reads:

> "You are indeed in great danger," [Isabel] admitted. "You have to leave. I think you should go to Zaïre until things settle down."
>
> "I am going to South Africa." I said.
>
> "South Africa?"
>
> "Yes, the country of Mandela." I said. "South Africa is the ideal place. It's a country with a lot of opportunities. They've just held their first democratic elections. Apartheid is no more. I will get a job . . ."
>
> (Kikamba 121)

Although Mpanda is forced to part from his wife and new-born child, his impulse to migrate to South Africa derives from the firm conviction that the absence of physical connection between Angola and his desired place of relocation can be compensated for by claiming his Africanity. Mpanda's Africanity is a subject position from which he aims to engage with forms of boundaries and borders that transcend the nation. The description of physical spaces of demarcation in *Going Home* has laid the ground for an examination of socio-ethnic and inherited interpretations of the self and of communal identity. I utilise the metaphors of border and boundary to read Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter*.

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Intra-national boundaries and the paradox of community

After the outbreak of ethnic war in Rwanda, Umutesi and hundreds of thousands of other Rwandans fled the country and crossed the border with Zaire. In this section I use the concepts of border and boundary to read the ethnic divisions in Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter*. I investigate how the ethnic boundary/border is imagined in literary texts with reference to Umutesi's biographical accounts of the horror of the genocide of April-June 1994. The author points out that as a result of the many human lives lost during the war, Rwanda as a country mourned the dead, Tutsi and Hutu alike. He therefore prefers to refer to the Rwandan (rather than to the Tutsi) genocide (see also Umutesi 2006). Umutesi's text presents the problem of identity politics and shows how competing ethnic groups have entrenched official colonial borders between people and perpetuated cycles of violence. It needs to be established that colonial enterprise rigidified ethnic borders, as Christopher C. Taylor and Mahmood Mamdani suggest in their texts (see also Glassman and Farrier on the ethnic crisis in Zanzibar); my reading, however, focuses on how these borders become part of Rwandese identity. Scarcely any effort was made to iron out or mitigate official discourses of enforced ethnic difference. Umutesi's book captures the disintegration of a people's socio-ethnic structure and its impact on African identity. The imagined (read mental) "barrier" between different ethnic groups succeeded in creating transient identity forms which were either chosen or forced on victims. Here, the concept of border signifies a barrier, whereas boundary and borderland will stand for the possibility of connection, or in Stephen Clingman's phrasing, for a pre-condition for connection.

The socio-political crisis in Rwanda cannot be classified as the failure of independence and democracy. Rather it represents the inability of a postcolonial state to account for and learn from past mistakes. This reflection derives from the fact that the genocidal violence of 1994 had deep historical roots reaching back to pre-colonial Africa. The Rwandan problem with its objectified otherness is at the extreme end of the spectrum. I seek to understand what we can learn from contemporary African literature, especially with regard to the meaning of the ethnic division as a concept predicated upon a spatio-temporal junction between colonial history and the postcolonial enforcement of established differences. Christopher C. Taylor's article "Mutton, Mud, and Runny Noses: A Hierarchy of Distaste in Early Rwanda" is helpful in contextualizing the Rwandan problem. Taylor argues that ethnic difference in Rwanda predates colonialism. It is worth quoting Taylor at length in order to fathom the social, geographical and economical distribution of pre-colonial Rwandan society. Taylor elaborates:

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> Names used for groups of people in early Rwanda were numerous and did not constitute a single semantic domain… The ethnonyms employed in late pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Rwanda that were eventually marked on everyone's national identity card during the twentieth century—Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa—do not have a single semantic or historical origin, nor did they come into vernacular usage at the same time. During the seventeenth century, before Ruganzu Ndori's foundation of the kingdom of Rwanda, the term 'Hima', 'Tutsi', and 'Twa' were employed… These terms were used to distinguish certain groups from the agricultural majority who were not yet a specifically designated category... These people, who all later came to be called 'Hutu', apparently did not possess any consciousness of themselves as unified group in either social or political terms. 'Twa' was the term applied to people living in the forest…who subsisted by foraging. As for pastoralists, most were considered 'Hima', while the term 'Tutsi' was reserved for an elite group among them . . .
>
> (Taylor 222)

The fact that the names referring to Rwandese ethnic groups "do not have a single semantic or historical origin" problematises the very notion of ethnic identity in Rwanda and supports Mamdani's thesis, in *When Victims Become Killers* (2001), regarding the politicisation of ethnic identities. Rwandan history has known two major "tendencies" which encompass ethnic differentiation; these can be categorized as "cultural integration" and "political differentiation" (Mamdani 59). According to Mamdani, it is not so much the politicisation of Rwandese ethnic identities that constitute the crisis: he argues that the "real challenge . . . is to go beyond understanding Hutu and Tutsi as *politicised identities*, and to [grasp] the process whereby they have turned into *polarised identities* with no middle ground between them" (59; emphasis in original). The lack of "middle ground" translates into the erasure of the boundary as a space of communication and strengthening of differences by "turning them into values" as Walter D. Mignolo suggests elsewhere (71).. Not surprisingly, cohabiting a space where each group is, politically-speaking, like a fenced island without boundaries as connectors of identity begets the feeling of encroachment. This section is concerned with the consequences of such polarisation, and with how it manifested during the violence of the 1994 genocide and the large-scale uprooting that followed.

Surviving the Slaughter is a story of disintegration of the original home. Marie Béatrice Umutesi contests the term "Tutsi genocide", for even though the majority of those who perished during the genocide were Tutsi, there is evidence that the Hutu lost thousands of lives. Umutesi tells readers about the horrific massacres of Rwandese by fellow Rwandese.

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With vivid, gripping images of violence, death, or helplessness, she retraces her 2000 kilometre route between 1994 and 1997 from Rwanda across the border to the DRC. The text seems sometimes to linger on the author's fear and on her reflections with regard to the many contradictions in Rwandese socio-ethnic identity. In particular, she considers the reasons for the recrudescence of ethnic violence which I see as part of an historical heritage of competitive ethnicities attempting to seize political power (see also Nagel 94-96). Her journey – on foot – reveals how as a woman she survived the odds by hanging on to the thin threads of hope for survival that characterised the ordeal of Rwandan refugees. "War," Umutesi bemoans, "isn't just about armies and bombs, but about human lives, personal tragedies, common men and women" (Holmgren 5).

There are dissenting views among postcolonial scholars with regard to the meaning that is to be given to Africa's past. This dissertation questions whether former colonies and various racial and ethnic minorities should continue to blame present ills on slavery, colonialism and Apartheid. Achille Mbembe would argue that most ethnic conflicts in Africa result from clinging to the identity of victimhood (see also Chikwava "Writing the Story", n.pag). Umutesi makes many references to clashes between ethnic groups, and the ways in which political identity was largely buttressed by allegiances to particular ethnic identities. What is of concern here is identity politics rather than political identities[29]. Umutesi points to the 1959 social revolution by Hutu who "rebelled against the feudal power of Tutsi, which was based on servitude, exclusion, and contempt" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 7). Umutesi's book is populated with examples of ethnic competition in the race for power, starting in 1959 and continuing through to the "guerrilla attacks" that began in 1961. However, she suggests that (rather than the Tutsi commoners) it was "some of [the nobles] *that were exiled who led* guerrilla actions against Rwanda" (Umutesi 9; emphasis added). The feuds in Rwanda's history, whether represented at the political or social level, are about one ethnic group trying to dominate the other. These rivalries culminated in the horrific massacres of fellow Rwandese; these implicated all Rwandans, regardless of whether they personally took part in the violence or not.

This vicious cycle of violence in Rwanda can be seen as resulting from a cult of victimhood and vengefulness. Waves of forced migrations in Africa often derive from what Simon Gikandi calls the "failure" of postcolonial states (23); this results from the inability of

[29] In the early 1970s, the author became aware of "regionalism" whereby the country was divided between southerners and northerners. These factions were often concomitant with the development of the elites wielding political or military power (Umutesi 12-14). It remains true, however, that regionalism is no more than a subset of ethnic division relative to the ethnic character of the elites.

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political leaders to overcome past divisions by putting the interests of the nation first. The failure to breach political borders between population groups within the same nation-state can be explained by reference to a sombre desire for "vengeance" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 23). This quote from her book is relevant to this discussion: "Among the dead were my cousins Bizimana Laurent . . . He . . . was killed and left a wife and two little girls. His only crime was that he was Hutu … even though he was too young to have hunted Tutsi in 1959 or 1963, his father must have" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 25).

This extract speaks to lack of accountability of generations of Rwandese power wielders. The cycle of vengeance is triggered by a collective memory of past subjugation and victimization. The reification of barriers between Rwandese population groups was fuelled by what Mbembe would call the insidious grip of victimization. In his thought-provoking essay "African Modes of Self-Writing" (2002), Mbembe discusses African thoughts regarding self-representation and the relation of Africa to the rest of the world, especially its history of subjugation. He establishes that African political philosophies are based on superficial analysis. He argues that in claiming the uniqueness of the African experience, African politics participated in identifying the continent with suffering and underdevelopment. Thus, by reifying a history of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, Africans supposedly cultivated an identity of "victimhood" – instead of engaging the present from a sufficiently critical point of view in order to claim responsibility for wrongs done in the present (Mbembe, "African Modes" 243-245). Mbembe's third proposition in this essay is particularly relevant to my argument that nationalist and Marxist narratives seem to underlie African politics of self-representation and auto-determination by emphasising "victimhood over subjecthood", a position that is "derived, ultimately, from a distinctively nativist understanding of history – one of history as sorcery" ("African Modes" 245; emphasis added). Therefore, the manufacturing of an alien 'other' in opposition to a genuine 'one' can thus be explained.

Here it seems that it is the collective memory rather than actual victimisation that sustains ethnic or group barriers. For instance, the barriers between Hutu and Tutsi emerge regardless of the commonality of language and the sharing of a single national territory: "Rwandese share the same language and culture, and there is no specific region that is identified as 'Hutuland' or 'Tutsiland'" (Umutesi 2). Hutu and Tutsi are neighbours and at a more private level, spouses. And yet, political barriers continue to influence Rwandese people's identity. What adds to the tragedy of Rwanda's ethnic violence is that the massacres were also perpetrated by neighbours. Umutesi would later propose that the future of unified Rwanda rests on understanding the

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> difficulty of writing a history in which Hutus and Tutsis acknowledge one another. However, it is important that all sides overcome their hatred and fears to construct together a history that relates the facts and draws out the consequences, not only for each group, but even more so for the various groups to live together.
>
> (Umutesi, "Reconciliation" 165)

From the Rwandan example one understands that it is not so much the politicisation of identity that challenges ethnic cohesion; rather it can be argued that ethnic borders become rigid when ethnic groups are politicised to the extent that they are turned into what Taylor terms the pole of "negative alterity" (Taylor 215) or into "values" as Mignolo puts it, when objectified identity forms are accepted as natural. These reflections are evident in the way violence and war were carried out, during displacements.

The politicised ethnic difference resulted in a paradox that manifested in real-life experience, through chaos and the reduction of human beings to "bare life"[30]. Barriers were built on shaky ground. The notions of hybridity and "passing" help illustrate the paradox. The analogy of the physical boundary between two nation-states illustrates that these "superimposed" lines are do not apply in real life, and only tend to complicate peoples' interactions (Kapil 657). Political ethnic borders are imagined: much like Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an imagined community, (Rwandan) ethnic groups are imagined fragments of national identity. The existence of a border depends on the power exerted by political treaties, which in turn are rarely in keeping with the reality and the "interests of the populations in the frontier zone" (Kapil 658). In the case of Rwanda, colonial rule did not force ethnic groups to adopt a single national identity, as was the case with most ethnically diverse African colonies. They needed to manufacture differences in order to fall in line with other colonial powers (Mamdani 43-50). The marking of Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa on identity cards enforced divisions between Rwandese; by the same token, by capping this *marking* of identity with a single national identity, colonial rule created the conditions for an implosion. The crisis of identity in Rwanda went beyond this forced merger: there had been over the decades – centuries even – sustained inter-marriage between the ethnic groups which rendered futile the marking of ethnicity on identity cards.

I refer to hybridity[31] in the context of mixed blood and imperviousness to the hard limits imposed on Rwandese ethnic groups by official and politicised discourses. For Homi K.

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[30] The phrase "bare life" is borrowed from Giorgio Agamben; it means the human body reduced to the status of site of political power and devoid of political rights.

[31] Hybridity is a biological concept, but one that has deep socio-cultural foundations.

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Bhabha, "a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, [is] where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics" (*Location* 25; original emphasis). Bhabha's hybridity is here described as a positive space. My concern is: what happens when instead of reading it as a space that dissolves oppositions and allows for translation, one reads this space of interaction in the light of the Rwandan society's context that is, against the grain? I justify my use of hybridity with regard to the Rwandan genocide because of the reflection of a racialised ideology in that society. In effect, for Bruce S Hall, the Rwandan genocide cannot be thought critically without referring to the "role played by racist ideology in the framing of that conflict" (317). He also makes an interesting point against the tendency in academic scholarship to maintain that race should only be conceptualised as a "European-american ideology" (2). In addition, Mamdani observes that the popular revolution of 1959 and the Hutu Power propaganda after 1990, constructed Tutsi as an alien "settler" presence that needed to be neutralised while Hutu saw themselves as the true "native". This binary of native/settler is for Mamdani steeped in a racialist colonial ideology. Thus, Rwandan genocide can only be construed as a racial rather than an ethnic cleansing (*When Victims* 14).

Hybridity, here, is a product of the ambiguity of ethnic differentiation and intermarriage. By focusing on ethnic *metissage*, the idea is not to gloss over the (faint) reality of ethnic/phenotypic differences, but rather to express the limitations of such a division. Ethnic hybridity – the result of mixed marriages between Hutu, Twa and Tutsi – and "passing" are ways, as Paul Meredith puts it elsewhere, of "calling into question established and invented categorisations of culture and identity" (3). Ethnic differentiation during the genocide was ambiguous, and the means of differentiation unreliable: a Hutu could be killed for looking like a Tutsi and a Tutsi could be spared for resembling a Hutu, and vice versa. Clear definitions of identity on official documents did not deter wrongful killings – and Rwandese people commonly breached these barriers in the privacy of wedlock. Mamdani explains that the incorporation of ethnic identity in official narratives was made possible by colonial agendas to objectify the native in order to accommodate Western discourses (43-50). In fact, in order to save themselves from the trouble of understanding native state systems, colonialists "adopted the simplest rules to divide the territory" (Herbst 674). In the first pages of the book, Umutesi has this to say about the cartography of Rwandese ethnic distribution:

> All Rwandans share the same language and culture, and there is no specific region that is identified as "Hutuland" or "Tutsiland". The colonial authorities, in order to make things

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> simple, tried to differentiate between three ethnic groups, using a system based on morphology. The Tutsi are tall, slender, and have refined features. The Hutu are medium built with negroid features. The Twa are small and have pygmoid features. In reality, these are just generalisations. There are short Tutsi and tall Hutu and Twa.
>
> (Umutesi, *Surviving* 6)

Mamdani further argues that colonial scholarship took differences of class between the Tutsi aristocracy and Hutu commoners and deduced from this that Hutu and Tutsi were indeed to be distinguished as separate ethnic groups (see also Taylor 216-20). Thus, colonial scholarship established what Mamdani refers to as the "*migration hypothesis* that the ancestors of the Hutu and the Tutsi migrated as different peoples" (*When Victims* 44; emphasis in original). The counter argument advanced by anti-colonial scholarship advocates that current configurations of Rwandan population groups are amongst others a result of socialization processes over many generations or dietary behaviour (Mamdani 44; see Taylor). It remains true, however, that post-independence bickering over the status of Rwandese citizenship only ended up with more entrenched politicised identities.

During displacements Rwandese identity became even more challenged. Being Rwandese and identifying as such became dependent upon two incompatible positions which challenged national identity. The ethnic distinctions enforced by official narrative quickly proved ineffective. Consequently, massacres were carried amidst the constant fear of being identified on the one hand as Hutu or Tutsi, and on the other as "pro-Hutu" or "pro-Tutsi". "Pro-Tutsi" came to define those who espoused the thesis that all Rwandese where the same, that is, one people; whereas "pro-Hutu" described those who believed in ethnic differences. These views, that emerged in political and scholarly arenas, also influenced popular consciousness (Mamdani 44-45). Mamdani comments in this regard: "If postgenocide sobriety can teach us one thing, it is how colonial power has become etched on the pages of scholarly books no less than on the surface of public life in the region" (43). The ethnic consciousness induced by colonial power had become entrenched as part of the national imaginary in the political, the scholarly and social spheres. If, subjectively, Rwandans knew which ethnic identity they were born into, it was not an easy task to distinguish between Hutu and Tutsi, however entrenched this distinction might appear to be. The blurriness of the line between Hutu and Tutsi added to the arbitrariness and the "orgiastic"[32] nature of the

[32] This term is borrowed from Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* (2001). It best suits the situation, especially when used in parallel with Taylor's reference to the intimate nature on the massacres such as use of machetes. A term that is also unhappily reminiscent of *Heart of Darkness.*

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genocide. In fact, there was no clear-cut means of drawing the line between who was Hutu or Tutsi especially since ethnic differences "became even less pronounced" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 6) as a result of intermarriage, especially after the 1960s[33].

Hybridity represents these zones of uncertainty which attest to the fallibility of a morphology-based system. Hybridity makes it difficult to distinguish between ethnic groups. Hybridity is apt for examining the "complex" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 73) nature of Rwandan society and the tragic genocide, particularly with regard to self-representation. Phenotypes are unreliable as indicators of ethnicity: the attribution of ethnicities was a social practice in which children of mixed-couples Hutu/Tutsi) became either Tutsi or Hutu at birth. In this sense it is not phenotype-based, but resulted from the interplay of power and gender politics: the group that claimed superiority had the right to claim progeny. The attribution of ethnicity here is a social phenomenon. Unfortunately during the ethnic pogroms social identity was erased and political identity emphasised. One sees emerging a paradox in the Rwanda's identity politics, which it can be argued was opportunistic in nature. "Passing" was used a means of facilitating integration or evasion. In this case, the notion of "passing" offers an interesting perspective from which to read displacement during the genocide: it took both passive and active forms.

Through the act of *passing*" an "enemy" was indiscriminately invented. During the killings the RPF[34] (Rwandan Patriotic Front) and Hutu militia eschewed ethnic ambiguity and carried out the cleansing of both Hutu and Tutsi. The ambiguity showed in the inconsistency between physiological features and ethnicity on identity documents. An individual could be "passed" by those in a position of power. This objectified representation could be demonstrated at roadblocks: many Rwandans were victimised on the basis of generalisations. Umutesi refers to this as follows: "At the time of the Tutsi genocide, in 1994, Hutu with refined features were killed at road blocks, whereas Tutsi with Hutu features remained safe" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 7). It appears then that these falsely imposed generalisations aggravated the crisis of ethnic identity. The acts of being *othered*/*passed* opened up spaces for untold tragedies, such as happened in many regions in Africa. As a Hutu, Umutesi becomes an object of suspicion in the refugee camps: her fellow Hutu refugees suspect her because of her Tutsi name and features. Many such victims who are similarly objectified end up losing their lives.

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[33] The Rwandan problem parallels the Zanzibari ethnic crisis that culminated to racial pogroms during the revolution (see Chapter 1).

[34] The Rwandan Patriotic Front "was composed largely of Tutsi refugees and their children who had fled from Rwanda decades earlier" ("Preface" xii).

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"Passing" was already present in Rwandese popular narratives in the 1970s as part of the colonial legacy (see Youé). For instance, when the Hutu-Tutsi conflicts reignited in 1973, identity documents were crucial to the narrative of nationhood. During the conflict, students were "selected" and "expelled" for resembling Tutsis. Later, they "could not return to school unless they had identity cards issued by the Germans to their parents or grandparents" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 10-11). Umutesi emphasises the colonial objectification of Rwandese identity, which could only be authenticated by a paper document: "This document was the only one that, according to the students, gave authentic information on the ethnicity of Rwandans" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 11). Documents issued by German officials overrode self-representation. Paradoxically, these official documents could not verify identity in 1994. There were already cases of Rwandese being deprived of the right to claim identity and affirm personhood. However, the document had no absolute authority. The Hutu students were still "looking at the end of our noses to decide" on the ethnicity of those being *passed* (Umutesi 10). Although the situation could be said to have been circumstantially resolved, a closer reading of this incident suggests that it only succeeded in further entrenching ethnic polarities in Rwanda.

On the other hand, "passing" is used by subjects in *Surviving* as a survival mechanism. In these particular circumstances, the authenticity conferred by official authorities has little value: subjects chose to "pass" in order to avoid torture and death, which was a daily occurrence during the genocide. For instance, travelling to Goma (DRC) Umutesi observes: "To minimize the risk, I could not wear a chignon, which made me look like a Tutsi. Speciose had to take out her braids, because popular opinion held that Hutu women did not braid their hair" (Umutesi, *Surviving* 67). Both intellectual argument and popular opinion played an important part in the ways violence was carried out, especially as a result of radio transmissions. "Passing" (in active mode) remained the refugees' way of throwing themselves a lifeline. Umutesi would often "pass" for a Congolese to Kabila's soldiers and Rwandese rebels. The outcome of either form of "passing" is left to fate. Umutesi tells a tale of the fragmentation of national identity based of the paradoxical notion of Rwandese ethnicity. The sacralisation of ethnic identities, not to mention the existence of obviously hybridised socio-ethnic fabrics, put Rwanda at the forefront of examples of uneasy cohabitation in the postcolonial African nation-state. Ethnic division is one factor that reveals the fantasy of national identity. Phaswane Mpe also develops this theme in his novel by moving away from ethnicity and focusing on the boundary between rural and urban spaces.

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Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* examines different threads of intra-national boundaries and barriers. In this novel, the author chooses to situate his characters in the context of modern, post-apartheid South Africa. The boundaries which Mpe describes are not ethnic, as in Umutesi's book. The boundaries (dis)connect rural and urban landscapes, urban and traditional belief systems, as well as local and foreign subjectivities. These subjectivities are not just a matter of opinion: both urban and rural communities act on the basis of their supposed uniqueness. Two main characters, Refentsĕ and Refilwe are from Tiragalong, the rural village. They move to Johannesburg to further their studies. They are caught up in the frenzy and unforgiving hypocrisies of both city dwellers and rural villagers. There are other forms of intra-national borders beside ethnic difference. Mpe chooses to focus on individual interactions rather than ethnic friction to examine interpersonal boundaries within the nation-state.

Tiragalong appears to present a unified front when engaged with Hillbrowans. However, from the stories that circulate among the living and from beyond the grave, the reader is confronted with a community that is prone to violence of many sorts. Witches are invented and then burned and anything that villagers cannot explain belongs to the realm of the mysterious. For instance, lighting strikes and "[m]ysterious diseases, in Tiragalong's view, could only result from a mysterious cause: witchcraft" (Mpe 45). In spite of witchcraft or the horrible acts of burning, the people of Tiragalong still seem to regard themselves as unique, pristine. In addition to erecting borders between members of the community – between the powerful and the powerless – Tiragalongians are notorious for their repugnance to anything urban. The novel does not shy away from describing Tiragalongians' *purely* prejudiced resentment of the urban "other". When Refentse mentions his girlfriend Lerato to his mother, before the latter is burned for falling into the grave at a funeral, the text reads:

> You had quarrelled with your mother because you insisted on being in love with Lerato, a Hillbrowan woman – as Tiragalong insisted on labelling her. Your efforts to explain that she was from Alexandra, a township twelve kilometres north of Johannesburg, did not help to ease your mother's relentless hatred for this Hillbrowan that she had not even met yet.
>
> (Mpe 38)

The reactionary behaviour of people from Tiragalong is at odds with the philosophy of *ubuntu* which they claim is the source of traditional wisdom and basis of human communion. They do not practice what they preach. For instance, it is believed that the "true insides of a

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person are hidden in the dark corners of their chests and breasts, where our naked eyes cannot penetrate" (Mpe 77). Yet Refentse's mother does not attempt to engage the boundary between the urban Lerato and herself, which would be the only possible way she could reach the "true insides" of another. Hillbrow displays similar sentiments with regard to Tiragalong. Carrol Clarkson observes that the "cultural traditionalism" of Tiragalong and the "frenetic hedonism" of Hillbrow are presented as people's proxy-responses to place (452). Indeed, these behavioural markers become borders erected by the respective communities to hide behind stereotypes.

In "The Desire for Community: Illusion, Confusion and Paradox", Jeremy Brent argues that communities do not exist, they are aspired to. He represents community through four connotations: illusion, confusion, paradox of definition, and paradox of desire. With regard to the second, confusion, he argues against the commonly assumed correspondence between place and community. This is a "confused relationship" since "community does not exist in every place, and the differences between places are not necessarily based on the differences between them as communities" (Brent 217). In the novel, both Tiragalong and Hillbrow claim their respective differences. Villagers are leery of city-dwellers and vice-versa. Tragically this wariness does not derive from with how individuals behave; rather their urban or rural provenance is the source of inimical sentiments towards each other. In terms of intra-national boundaries, it appears that Mpe satirises a sense of national identity that borders on the homophobic and the xenophobic.

Thus the individual is left with no sense of agency if s/he is bent of hiding behind communal belief. Rob Gaylard makes an interesting point with reference to Okonkwo's character in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart.* Okonkwo's murder of Ikemefuna is meant to illustrate the individual's lack of self-criticism and sense of responsibility. Hatred for villagers or Hillbrowans, much like "Okonkwo's choice is also a personal choice for which he [or they] must take responsibility" (Gaylard 269). The building of a community starts with a desire to engage with difference, in other words, to enter a boundary which is a channel of community between self and other. In a sense borders are defined by the kinds of differences that allow them to exist. A dynamic of border interaction that comes to the surface when we move from intra-national differences to intra-continental borders and boundaries. Mpe's novel remains an important theoretical and analytical tool to engage with the borders and boundaries of migrant communities. This is the focus of the next section.

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Intra-continental boundaries: a challenge to Africanity

Intra-African migrations differ from inter-continental movements not only in the nature of boundaries that migrants cross but also in how these boundaries are defined from historical, racial, individual, as well as ethnic standpoints. Intra-continental migrations result in migrants asserting their Africanity, especially as an approach to negotiating a space of acceptance in host communities. Mpe's *Welcome* is central to the fictional study of intra-African social identity and cultural forms. Although the novel's reception as a description of post-Apartheid society is an important aspect of my analysis, my focus is on the author's ability to map out human relations in terms of positionality, that is, who and from where one makes an enunciation. My understanding of place involves not only the physical space but also the position of enunciation. For instance, Johannesburgers have pre-formulated opinions about people from Tiragalong and vice versa; this is an additional challenge for black South Africans' self-representation as well as for their relationship with (especially) black international migrants. It is important here to expand on the notion of space (urban and rural), the historical context of migration, and the relationship that the author establishes between the mapping of the city and transnational connections. This analysis is made possible by looking at the correspondence between the relationships between city maps and the transnational, and the role of boundaries in shaping them.

Although the plot revolves around Refentse, a child of Tiragalong, the novel examines the community life of which the particular lives of individuals form a part. My reading of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is that it is not only about South Africa as a nation but also about a people confronted with an impression of the imposed and *unsettling* presence of Africa at home. The novel describes Africans congregating in this tiny, vibrant, and mostly unwelcoming space that is Hillbrow. Refentse is a young South African who comes to Johannesburg from the village – Tiragalong – after obtaining his Matric. He arrives in Johannesburg to register for the Bachelor of Arts and later obtains his Masters at Wits University. He falls in love with Lerato, a young black woman, thought to be the child of a Nigerian traveller and a local South African woman. Refentse resumes an old affair with his former lover, Refilwe, from Tiragalong. After Refentse has an affair with his friend Sammy's girlfriend, he finds his lover Lerato and Sammy in bed. "The shock of that discovery had caused [his] mind to sink into its swamp of melancholy" (Mpe 25) and he jumps from the twentieth-floor of his building. The novel's contribution to the study of African diasporic formations in newly democratic South Africa is linked to the metaphoric reading of border,

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boundary, and borderland. Mpe successfully imbricates these notions to engage the fraught relationship between individual and space.

The argument that boundaries are social, cultural, political, and racial inventions does not deny the fact of their existence. Indeed, as Stephen Clingman posits, boundaries always exist (4). Thus, boundaries exist in zones of multiplicity and of difference. The emergence of barriers – in boundaries – preventing viable connections between multiple groups presents a challenge to the formation of socially diverse and harmonious communities. In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* Mpe describes communities that are entangled in multicultural and multi-national relationships and that very often reluctantly share a common space. Difference is fetishised and this results in barriers that deny access to a common space. For group populations with boundary-consciousness, creating a viable space of communication is fraught with tensions that challenge individuals' allegiances to place, community, and the nation. The novel weaves a narrative that questions the level of the individual's commitment to social ideals (Clarkson 452). When boundaries become obvious, not only do differences stand out, but people also become fenced selves. The novel represents this in two intertwined sets of relationships on the intra-national and intra-continental levels. I represent this bipolar relationship in a triangular set: urban, rural, and African. The main question that this section poses is: what is national identity and how is Africanity understood or represented in the novel, while Johannesburg is engaged in the formation of an intra-national community?

As an inner-city neighbourhood of Johannesburg, Hillbrow occupies less than 1 square km, yet it is a critical space in the novel's engagement with an international and multicultural population. By the year of South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, over eighty-five per cent population of Hillbrow was black, and the concentration of foreign Africans was already significant (Clarkson 452). As a place of convergence of identities and cultures, Hillbrow poses a question: how does one identify as an individual and as a member of a community? Hillbrow is a diasporic space by configuration; a diasporic space which, as Avtar Brah rightfully explains, hosts migrants from here and there, both indigenous migrants and foreign nationals (180). What is particularly arresting is the way in which Mpe describes his characters as strangers to the place, whether they are South African or foreigners. Hillbrow is presented as a location that no one can claim to originate from and yet that everyone attempts to make their home:

> Anyway, there are very few Hillbrowans, if you think about it, who were not originally wanderers from Tiragalong and other rural villages, who have come here, as we have, in

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> search of education and work. Many of the *Makwerekwere* you accuse of this and that are no different to us – sojourners, here in search of green pastures.
>
> (Mpe 18)

Clarkson emphasises the challenges of belonging in Hillbrow and the particular cultural and geographical mosaic of its dwellers (452). In addition, Massey has observed that, much like Argentina, South Africa is "historically a country of immigration". South Africa is also the "only sub-Saharan nation to have undergone a significant process of industrial growth and development" (57). These two factors help to explain South Africa's attraction for other African nations, who are often still economically challenged. The post-apartheid years brought with them "the resurgence of immigration", mostly from neighbouring African countries, following networks established decades earlier (Massey 57). According to Massey post-apartheid South Africa has witnessed the emergence of "a new migratory regime" (59) with foreign-born populations not limited to migrants from poorer African nations (57-9). *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is set around this period of the resurgence of old migratory trajectories and the development of more recent migratory practices from southern African nations and from beyond regional boundaries. Johannesburg is at the crossroads of transnational networks of temporary migrants as well as of those seeking more permanent residence. Through the presence of international migrants these networks of intra-continental boundaries and border lines, according to Michael Kearney, "effectively undermine the whole idea of statehood and national boundaries" (qtd. in Baud and Schendel 221). Hillbrow is indeed a place of many faces where notions of nationality and alienness are put to the test of the historical narrative of its construction and development. Foreigners fight to secure a place while locals claim this city-space for themselves, as rightful citizens.

On reading the novel one's first impression derives from endoscopic description of the place in the opening pages. The unknown narrator's description, particularly of streets, soon serves a specific purpose. Sarah Nuttall notes the lack of concordance between the evolution of the South African city and the way it has been read. She observes that the city "has been read largely within the framework of the political economy of urbanisation, segregation and underdevelopment. Far less attention has been paid to its cultural dimensions as *city life and city form*" (740; emphasis in original). It is her phrasing of "*city life and city form*" that captures my attention, along with the link that the author makes to the cosmopolitan and transnational aspect of the city in South Africa. It is my understanding that Nuttall's insight helps to shed light onto the way in which Mpe structures his narrative. Mpe's mapping of

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Hillbrow links the form of the city – *city form* - to the arrangement of its streets and buildings, and city life. *City life* seems to refer more to an internal function that allows the place to exist, along with and the experiences of the people who live in it and across its borders. Interestingly, Nuttall refers to Michel De Certeau's mode of reading the city space, by pointing out the relationship between people's construction of their identities and their lack of insight as to how "their individual paths affect the city as a whole" (741). Mpe seems to draw a parallel between the form of the city – in his description of Hillbrow – and the nature of the various ways in which people interact.

Each street is presented as an organ of the city. The beginning and end of a street does not just designate a point of origin or destination; the journey is equally important. Places of business and trade such as shops, banks and hypermarkets are spaces of interaction between inhabitants of Johannesburg from Hillbrow and beyond. The "map" of Hillbrow, as indicated in the title of the first part of the novel, allows for a comprehensive walkthrough of the neighbourhood. The naming of buildings and other trading establishments allows the reader to see past these structures to the people who patronise or inhabit them. The text reads:

> If you are coming from the city centre, the best way to get into Cousin's place is by driving or walking through Twist Street, a one-way street that takes you to the north of the city . . . You will then cross Van der Merwe and Goldreich Streets. Your next port of call is Caroline Street. Just cross to the other side of Caroline. On your left-hand side is Christ Church, the Bible Centred Church of Christ . . . . On you right-hand side is a block of flats called Vickers Place . . . (Mpe 6)
>
> Vickers Place struck you as a fairly quiet building. You never expected any quietness in our Hillbrow. But the Caroline Street, where Vickers was situated, was not at the centre of Hillbrow. The centre was Kotze Street, where OK Bazaars shared the pavement with the rather quiet pub, *The Fans*, and the louder one, *The Base*. Cutting across Kotze at right angles was Twist Street.
>
> (Mpe 7)

The streets seem to represent the veins of the neighbourhood. In Mpe's Hillbrow, streets exist only in relation to other streets, and neighbourhoods are not isolated: the crossing of streets and neighbourhood boundaries creates networks that link what would otherwise remain separate locations. Here, Mpe's minute detailing of the "Map" partakes in shedding light on how the city functions. However, if one takes Hillbrow as a whole, then it becomes evident that its borders with other neighbourhoods are not clear-cut, but blurred. The names of streets

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function as markers of separation. The limits of Hillbrow are important for unpacking and retracing boundaries. Initially the narrator adopts a laidback attitude in describing the transition between Hillbrow and Braamfontein, a contiguous quarter. This attitude conceals a deeper meaning. Boundaries do not absolutely separate: they also suggest a passage, and herald possibilities of transgression or recoil. The narrator strives to demonstrate that through its obvious connection with other localities, Hillbrow is not isolated. I argue that boundaries are designated as such only in order to maintain the fantasy of uniqueness of experience or location. In this passage from the novel territorial demarcation becomes ambiguous:

> Now we're heading for Braamfontein, Cousin intimates.
> Almost immediately after turning right into Kotze, you stop at a traffic light; Hospital Street, you read. The robot goes green and you cross.
> We are now in Braamfontein, I think, Cousin says. I never really know whether Braamfontein begins here or in the next street.
>
> (Mpe 11)

Thus, boundaries cannot be as absolute or clear-cut as they seem on (street) maps. Boundaries become spaces of their own and do not only serve as connectors. For instance, Hospital Street in Hillbrow is not a barrier but rather the boundary shared by Hillbrow and Braamfontein. Hillbrow and Braamfontein have well-defined designations only when taken in isolation from the rest of the city: put side by side, they become one unidentifiable zone, at the specific location where they are connected. Individuals inhabiting the boundary zone should also feel this anxiety of belonging or not belonging to either neighbourhood. I argue, however, that whether they are located in both spaces or inhabit a third space depends not on a clearer specification of the boundary, but on their preference for choosing one or the other (whichever is more convenient). The text disavows the existence of clear-cut boundaries and suggests acceptance of contiguity. The analogy of boundary delimitation here – to which I will return shortly – proves useful in examining how people (both local and foreign nationals) and cultures come to construct barriers between one another based on tractable notions of national or ethnic identity which are then turned into impenetrable fortresses. This is reflected in the description of the boundary of Hillbrow and:

> Caroline Street was not visible from this vantage point. Nor was it near Catherine Avenue, the boundary of Hillbrow and Berea, where Checkers competed for our financial attention (when we had any) with what happened to be a terribly noisy

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> shebeen, *Jabula Ebusuku*; which in turn competed for our spiritual commitment with its neighbour, the Universal Kingdom of God.
>
> (Mpe 8)

The use of the verb "competed" suggests active and lively forms of interaction across neighbourhoods. It is this textual analogy that I use to examine how Mpe narrates the multiculturalism and transnational connections in Hillbrow, in contrast to the cultural conservatism of Tiragalong.

Welcome engages with definition of the self as an individual and citizen. After Nelson Mandela's release in 1990, South Africa organised its first democratic elections in 1994, thus hurtling the nation toward new horizons in the creation of national identity and the promise of better days to come for the previously disadvantaged majority. If the end of apartheid signified, politically, as Michael Green argues, the threshold of a new "united post-apartheid South Africa" (333), this confluence signalled the emergence of other challenges related to the efforts of black South Africans to gain access to the promised better life. For instance, by early 1991, when Refentse's story begins, Hillbrow, as part of Johannesburg, had become a national and transnational "melting pot" with its accompanying "threatening realities": xenophobia, Aids, prostitution and all sorts of crimes such as murders, muggings, and rapes (Green 334, 333). *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* shows that the unity referred to by Green is mythical and yet significant, but intangible in daily interaction. There is no inclusive national identity embodied by the citizenry. Internal contradictions with regard to representations of self and community give way to another form of antagonism: national versus continental identity.

The triangular form of transnational relationships in the novel epitomises the intra-continental connections. It has been established that for Tiragalong, people of the city are corrupt, and the contagion spreads to the village. In fact, for Tiragalong, the city's vileness is due in large part to the influence of the corrosive behaviour of foreign Africans whom they offensively call *Makwerekwere*[35]. The origin of the name refers to the unintelligible language spoken by a foreigner. The presence of the foreign African has been seen in terms of "Africa" coming to South Africa, such as the image of John Western's article title, "Africa is Coming to the Cape" illustrates. As a manifestation of "fear or hatred of foreigners," xenophobia, in the words of Lindiwe Sisulu (in 2001 Deputy Minister of Home Affairs), was a "misnomer" for the challenges that local nationals faced and were unable to recognise or deal with (9). In

[35] Makwerekwere is a term that is infused with racialised nationalism against foreign blacks from other African countries.

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retrospect one can read the xenophobic attacks on black foreign Africans in April and May 2008, as the culmination of the racial pogroms that have been brewing in South Africa. Mpe warns the reader in the novel's epigraph that *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is no fiction. It represents xenophobia as being fuelled by the presence of rigid borders between locals and foreigners. The novel strives to show that boundaries are constantly stressed in order to maintain difference; it also shows how some boundaries straddle others, thus redesigning the nature of interpersonal relationships amongst local citizenry on the one hand, and between local citizenry and foreign nationals on the other hand.

In an interesting conversation between Refentse and Cousin, it transpires that border construction is a social process. Social and cultural situations justify the necessity of conjuring barriers. Cousin is a policeman; he knows that crime (rape, mugging, drug-use, murder) is not the sole responsibility of foreigners. Refentse reminds him: "And while we're blaming them for all our sins, hadn't we better also admit that quite a large percentage of our home relatives who get killed in Hillbrow, are in fact killed by other relatives and friends" (Mpe 18). In fact, while this allocation of blame to both foreigners and locals seems to have been met with silence, and perhaps acknowledgement, Cousin draws Refentse's attention to what he calls "more pressing concerns, like the AIDS that *they* transport into the country" (Mpe 20; emphasis in the original). As the conversation reveals further areas of disagreement, it becomes clearer that Cousin's emphasis on AIDS is a narrative strategy that he uses in order to correlate the seriousness of the pandemic with his power of persuasion: he seeks to persuade the reader that, indeed, the barriers that supposedly separate locals and foreigners should exist and be maintained. Here again, Refentse argues that expansion of Aids is not a result of presence of African immigrants in South Africa, but rather a result of the lack of a coherent national political strategy to deal with the pandemic.

On this note I wish to refer back to the false binarism that divides villagers and city dwellers. With regard to transnational connections, the presence of foreign Africans at one's backyard significantly redefines the nature and trajectories of boundaries: boundaries between locals, between locals and foreigners; this also redefines people's relations with the nation. It is not surprising that the novel starts with a reference to the 1998 World Cup when France beat South Africa. Cousin is vocal in his support for "black non-South African teams" (Mpe 17). Cousin's position with regard to soccer contrasts with his views on black non-South Africans in South Africa. While his support can be said to be compensatory (to make up for Bafana-Bafana's lack of performance), I argue that it reveals a deep anxiety as far as Africanity is concerned. While an African subject engages in intra-continental migration by

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claiming Africanity (which in turn becomes a means of levelling boundaries), the local – it seems – is bent on rejecting this Africanity, by claiming nationality and citizenship as more legitimate identity forms. In this case, the local easily relates to the African who is not at home. This essentialised connection is severed when the foreign African suddenly finds him/herself within the autochthon's national boundary.

The question of what constitutes the nation engages various debates and issues about the subject and subjectivity. The nation is a concept that encompasses within it other notions, such as nationality, citizenship and subjectivity, not to mention the encounter with "otherness". "Otherness" is a term which I use advisedly because, in this novel, Mpe problematises the relations between subject and space and subject and community (see Gaylard; and Green). Xenophobic (re)actions to the presence of black foreigners in South Africa are not isolated. If in Bhabha's formulation the "strategies of cultural identification and discursive address" that put forward the nation as representational body, become narrativised, then the nation remains an allegorical reference (140). What is often missed by the "people" or subjects of the state is that these narratives are woven in ways that often miss the failure of the state to "act for the good of the people" (Chatterjee 164). Nationality and citizenship are evoked as a shield that the citizen thrusts in the face of the foreigner to claim right of place and belonging. As Clingman aptly presents it, "[t]he national always holds out the idea of the Promised Land" (246) – from which, I posit, the alien is proverbially excluded.

Self-representation corresponds to the notion of multi-identity or what I wish to call multi-consciousness. The confrontation between the local/village and the local/urban is such that individuals pledge allegiances to localised cultural forms and beliefs. Multi-consciousness testifies to the nature of identity as intimately multifaceted. I am reminded of Clingman's important mapping of identity, which he situates in a "landscape [which] is confusing and cross-cutting", with different forms of identity represented in overlaps and subsets (5). Because migrants are defined by the very fact of their movements from roots and through routes, it goes without saying that their identities are constantly shaped by their itinerancy. The boundaries between village, city, national identity, and transnationality are in perpetual flux (see Clingman 2). Subject positions are primarily and progressively defined by social experiences. Therefore, multi-consciousness addresses more aptly the experience of the migrant – or anyone who has been exposed to the presence of the other. Furthermore, Mpe shows that allegiance to place tends to remain situational, called upon only to justify particular agencies/acts. These allegiances to community tend to isolate the subject by

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privileging the law of the community. The community does not serve the subject; but rather the subject is subjected to collective censure. If the community of Tiragalong pledges allegiance to the ideal of purity and the normal, it quickly excludes the subject who does not belong or who strays from the norm; the latter is thus deprived of the comfort and protection of the communal. In contrast to Hillbrowians, the people of Tiragalong subscribe to some idea of homogeneity, not in the practice of cultural forms but in the social ideals that (supposedly and metaphorically) tie the community together. The novel is an unforgiving critique of community ideal. Communities cannot be trusted; they do not have a monopoly over truth. In his paper, "A Community without Truth", John D. Caputo examines "Derrida's equally bottomless dislike for [the] word [community]" (25). Derrida believes that the idea of "communitarian unity" is opposed to the unity of singularities (Caputo 29). He wishes for a kind of deconstructive democracy that allows for viable boundaries and in which "our differences communicate" (Caputo 26). Derrida resists the notion that differences are a ground for separation. Rather differences are the vein of community life, and the community needs to be "something sufficiently loose and open-ended" (Caputo 27).

Communal xenophobia does not equate with unity amongst xenophobes. The blaming of black Africans for the ills of South African society is an important factor to consider. What Mpe seems to show is that boundaries between people or cultures are organic, adaptable and malleable, and depend on the circumstances that create them. Similarly, the boundaries of the blocks of buildings of Hillbrow are represented by street names and these boundaries are in turn subsumed within the bigger boundaries of Hillbrow and other neighbourhoods. This also applies to transnational boundaries. Neither the people of Tiragalong nor those of Johannesburg refer to themselves as South Africans except when in the presence of the foreigner. Indeed, identities are mostly based on exclusion and opposition: it is Tiragalong versus Johannesburg. I do not overlook the novel's focus on the creation of an African community (to which I will return later). South Africa's invocation as a nation occurs when the foreign national makes his/her appearance. The zone of non-distinction between nationals does not yet exist. The maintenance of transnational boundaries puts a veil over intra-national differences, while these differences erode human relationships.

The novel can divided into three main parts: "Hillbrow: The Map" (Earth: Part 1), "Notes from Heaven" and "The Journey through Alexandria" (Heaven: Part 2), and "Refilwe", "Refilwe on the Move" and "The Returnee" (Back on Earth: Part 3). "Part 2" offers a moral and educational view of the existing boundaries between the different actors of the narrative. As such Mpe contests the maintenance of boundaries as barriers and suggests

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that these boundaries be accepted as spaces of celebration of trans-ethnic and trans-national interrelations. This echoes Gaylard's point that the novel "can also be read as a (somewhat despairing) plea for the acknowledgement of a shared humanity" (278). The novel disavows the belief that differences are made to separate. In fact, they only indicate varieties of idiosyncrasy – social, cultural, or ethnic variants. The future of South Africa also depends of how local citizens engage with difference – difference from across the national border (see Gaylard 278). This will only be possible through the dissolution of barriers, which according to Clarkson is impractical because of people's attachment to traditional and local modes of existence: "[t]otal erasure of an allegiance to these places and their people is not possible" (455). I speak of dissolution of barriers while acknowledging and maintaining the communitarian value of the boundary. The second-person narrative is meant to not only "underscore the novel's overtly post-apartheid status" (Green 337), but it also invites a community of readership, both here and there, within and outside South Africa, a community of "places not reducible to geographic coordinates" (Clarkson 457). "Welcome to Our all" does just that: inviting Africans, locals and foreigners alike, to accept each other as part of a community of selves which exist through the presence of "others", according to the African humanist principle of *ubuntu*: "A person is a person through people".

The above structure, which is triangular in form, represents the nature of the community in the African city. If Hillbrow has not succeeded in bringing down barriers, and if Tiragalong remains in a cocoon, the solution is perhaps to be found in Heaven, the ultimate utopic place. From Heaven's perspective, the narrator seems to pull both locations on earth up to that level of understanding. Green argues: "'Welcome to Our Hillbrow' rapidly expands beyond the Hillbrow of the novel's title to subsume all locations included in the narrative", and the "expansion continues until all literal location is left behind and we are welcomed to 'our All'" (336). This leads me to suggest that Refilwe's return to Tiragalong is meant to be understood as an appeal for individuals to remain open to possibilities of expansion and diversity and compassion. Heaven remains, in a transcendent realm, the beyond experience that the reader needs to aspire to, not after death but while still in Tiragalong or Hillbrow, potentially places of terrestrial togetherness. The marriage of a Nigerian migrant with a Hillbrowan girl from Tiragalong pleads for recognition of difference and for dropping the racial, ethnic, or nationalistic veils that turn these differences into barriers. Meg Samuelson observes that the novel allows for

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> the city being remade in popular and literary culture as a space in which borders are explosively visible and yet rendered permeable in gestures of hope and longing for a South African nation that will be radically other to its predecessor, which was based on exclusion.
>
> ("The city beyond" 253)

In *Welcome*, Mpe presents a vision of the future of South Africa's relationship with its African "other". His appeal to the reader to transcend bounded forms of identity signals that the novel has a realistic dimension which needs to be considered. The description of Hillbrow's map which I have quoted above has an instructional tone. The narrator needs to remain anonymous and ubiquitous to be able to point to the ways and means of crossing boundaries and breaking down barriers.

In conclusion, border crossing in Africa is a process that necessarily revisits the continent's colonial and pre-colonial history. The borderland is host to cultural and linguistic data of a history disrupted and dramatically reshaped by colonial expansion. What is interesting in Kikamba's text is the revelation that the human body and psyche cannot avoid being influenced by the presence of the borderland. The borderland is both a border zone and an experience of migration. The feelings of trepidation on approaching the border as well as the experience of detachment from the familiar are part of the human experience of migratory movement. These feelings also constitute a precondition to entering a boundary and crossing a border. Interestingly, the border, boundary, and borderland prove valuable in the study of human relationships, whether between locals or between locals and foreigners.

Umutesi's *Surviving the Slaughter* provides an examination of the human boundary and border in the context of national identity. It becomes evident that the identity crisis of Africans in living together is first a national – read leadership – problem. The real barrier to Pan-Africanism is the nation state. The colonial imagination – a product of colonial political borders – has caused indescribable chaos to African people and the way they seek to engage the dynamics of modernity: urbanisation, mass migration, and scramble for power. Personal accountability emerges as the main contemporary culprit of the colonial legacy. The AU and other international institutions are obsessed with the notion of African unity, while glossing over more pressing issues such as national unity and understanding, without which Africanity

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remains but a utopian concept, or, to refer to Brent's paradox of desire, "a desire for community, not its achievement" (221).

Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* puts the reader at the centre of the contemporary African diasporic experience. The novel presents the city, or more precisely Hillbrow, as a microcosm of the city. Hillbrow is the epitome of postcolonial experience with its enmeshed, crisscrossing, and entangled borders. Confronted with the harsh reality of xenophobia and sectarian communities, Mpe has to transcend the world of the living in order to present human experience as a slideshow: he provides a posthumous lecture on the value of boundaries as indispensable connectors for living harmoniously with difference. Indeed, the transnational map also signifies that being on the cusp of a continuing influx of migrants might require learning to live with differences, both local and transnational. With its "transnational makeup" Johannesburg already "exceeds the notion of the nation" (Samuelson 248). This "transnational makeup" has an ambivalent text: it seeks to accommodate the African while at the same time, it occludes intra-national tensions.

However, Mpe gives a wider scope to his text. For instance, what completes the "terrestrial togetherness" mentioned above is the crossing of the intercontinental boundary. Refilwe's Oxford trip constitutes a turning point in her life. In London, she comes to the painful realisation that the crossing of the national (and intercontinental) border can be an objectifying act. Through this protagonist, Mpe suggests that borders or barriers are of a universal nature. For instance, a xenophobe at home, Refilwe becomes the object of xenophobic slurs outside the comfort zone of her national borders, where she undergoes the experience of being objectified as an "*African*", the English word for (the South African) "*Makwerekwere*" (Mpe 102; emphasis in original). She effectively experiences "otherness" and prepares herself to open-up. She is transformed: "She had learnt a lot, more than the degree in her bag implied" (Mpe 118). In fact, Oxford can safely be construed as a school of life by way of her exposure to multiplicity of encounters with various *others* abroad.

These texts lay bare the racial nationalism and intolerance of difference which almost negate the dynamic history and processes of interregional and intra-continental migration. Barriers or borders still obtain between nationals and foreigners and amongst the local citizenry, and seem to forever defer any hope of realising an inclusive Africanity, a sort of Derridian *différance*, of community building. Umutesi's, Kikamba's, and Mpe's books represent a colossal interrogation of the nature and future of intra-continental boundary/border crossings. These books stir the pot of reflection by suggesting that allowing the interplay of differences is a way of celebrating these differences. In this way they open up

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various possibilities, one of which is the open-ended boundary. In the next chapter I explore the notion of a "return" to Africa and the types of boundaries and borders that Africans from England engage with in contemporary African fiction.

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Chapter Four

Looping the African Journey: New perspectives on migrant heritage

"Yes, it was that email that set in motion my resolve to come back
and speak my truths with everyone" (Dibia 225)

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which Jude Dibia's *Unbridled*, Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* and Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe* describe the experiences of living in exile or diaspora and the return to Africa. In *Unbridled*, Ngozi lives with her Nigerian-born boyfriend in Leicester; when she hears the news of her father's demise, she is compelled to return to Nigeria. In *Admiring Silence* the unnamed narrator has lived in England with a white Englishwoman for seventeen years. When he hears of the deterioration in his mother's health, he decides to return to Zanzibar. He is finally able to return because of the recent amnesty that is proclaimed by the political elite. Chester, in *The New Tribe*, is a young, black British man whose visions of an African homeland galvanise his search for his African roots. The characters' lives in the three novels are characterised by the constant friction of subject positions. They negotiate between multiple identities – black, African, exile, man, woman – in an attempt to claim a space in which they fight to belong. They often carry the burden of being representative of the black continent (Njubi Nesbitt 70; Fanon 84).

I will be examining intra- and interpersonal relationships in characters' attempts to engage the boundaries and borders affecting selfhood and identity formation. I divide the chapter into three interrelated sections. The first section describes the diasporic experience of subjects' attempts to carve themselves a space in societies where race and colour consciousness determine modes of interaction and being. In these subjects' migrant spaces, Africa remains a hovering presence. The second section assesses migrants' intentions to return in relation to the play of metonymies of home – that is, the physical connectors that breach spatio-temporal boundaries and kindle the necessity to return. The last section describes characters' physical journeys by retracing their round trip to Africa as they confront their troubling personal stories. Thus, border/boundary crossing, transition and translation entail processes of identity formation through which a reading of the narrative of return is possible. I aim to explore the nature of the contemporary boundaries and borders which African migrants from Europe – in particular, from England – navigate in their attempts to reconnect with their African pasts.

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The narrative of return governs subset narratives that justify, question, or assess the value of returning to the African homeland. It introduces the temporal boundary that manifests itself through memories of the homeland. For Marianne Marroum, nostalgia is the condition of "living in the hyphen" (491). In other words, nostalgia creates or maintains the link between places of origin and receiving spaces. Nostalgia reminds one of the exilic conditions of transnational migrants as they attempt to create new homes in relation to their old ones. The "hyphen" is the constant whereas cultures, identities and selves are dynamic: the conditions that shape them cannot be predetermined, nor are they homogenous. Seen in this way, a correlation emerges between the notions of boundary and nostalgia. In fact, I propose to read nostalgia as a condition of the boundary: the boundary has the capacity to affect remembrance as well as the ability of nostalgia to breach boundaries and borders.

Unbridled, *The New Tribe*, and *Admiring Silence* interrogate the significance of memories of places of origin. This is an intentional rephrasing of Pierre Nora's "site of memory" (*lieux de memoire*) (Legg 2004). I have intentionally reversed Nora's phrasing, not as critique but rather because it speaks to my analysis of the centrality of memory in the narrative of return. I intend to look at descriptions of locations of origin and residence in order to examine the function of memory in stories of return. In these texts, memory links to return in terms of affinity with subjects' historical past. These three texts are at the centre of the debate on how memory either curbs or reconfigures transnational identities in productive ways. I focus on how memories (real or invented) give various types of meaning to the characters' journeys. Nora's argument that memory "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects" (qtd. in Legg 2004, 495) is aimed at retracing sites of memory. In addition, the places and "images" or "objects" serve as triggers of memory and nostalgia; they are at the "root" of nostalgic reactions. The novels challenge the thought that cultural, familial, and other forms of alienation that migrants have experienced are likely to sever their "emotional bond" to the homeland – whether imagined or lived. People migrate for diverse reasons, all of which are inscribed within a historical continuum. Their movements could have been "forced, chosen, necessary or desired" (Lawrence Grossberg in Muteshi 38). The study of memory and nostalgia suggests that spatial displacement does not necessarily entail severance of affinity with the homeland. It is this affinity that I take to be central in providing the impulse to return. It is important to emphasize that the nostalgic element is not presented the same way in these texts. However, the three texts have compelling commonalities with regard to what triggers the "return". "Return" takes multiple forms. Each narrative is informed by the

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specific reasons for the initial displacement: these range from economic migrancy (*Unbridled*), to pursuit of excellence (*Admiring Silence*), to (fictitious) exile (*The New Tribe*).

In a recent study entitled "The effects of Integration and Transnational Ties on International Return Migration Intentions" de Haas and Fokkema review theories of migration and offer insights that place migrant trajectories in a new light. The 1960s and 1970s[36] were two decades during which international migration was an economic blessing for both sending and receiving countries. Western European countries were experiencing a serious shortage of manpower, and initiated policies that encouraged international migrant workers (de Haas and Fokkema 756). What stands out during this period is that migration was meant to be "temporary", something on which both sending and receiving countries agreed (756). Receiving countries needed to control the migration flux, while sending countries expected migrants to return home and "invest their savings" (de Haas and Fokkema 756). Interestingly, the fiction describes situations where neither settlement nor return behaviours can be predicted. In this sense migrant behaviours determined by life circumstances seem to sip through the frames of current theoretical considerations such as integration and assimilation theories as well as transnationalism and the new economics of labour migration (NELM) as discussed by de Haas and Fokkema. In addition, the temporary migration of Africans to Europe has another dimension which works of fiction reveal in their characters' personal tales, and this depends on their individual politics of self-representation as well as on more objectified forms of identity.

This chapter examines how works of fiction respond to the notion of return – as both intention and actualisation of the journey. The fictions selected for this chapter all deal with actual return to the homeland, where the migrants' stay in the diasporic space is not perceived – at least by the migrants themselves – as a temporary migration. However, the condition of living in the third space in England makes residing in the diasporic space a transitional phase in migrants' lives. The chapter is divided into three closely related sections. Firstly, I explore the novels' description of their characters' lives and conditions of migrancy or dispersion in the diaspora. Secondly, I examine characters' liminal positions – between the migrant space and the memory of the homeland. In the last section I look at the actual return and the ways in which the narratives end with a memory of Africa as not forsaken by diasporic subjects.

[36] The narrator's migration from Zanzibar in *Admiring Silence*'s fits within this period of postcolonial educational migration to Europe.

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State of extra-continental migration and diaspora

The authors' descriptions of how characters negotiate identities and memories of home in their places of residence in England aim to shed light on their individual experiences. For methodological purposes, I distinguish between two sets of conflicts and/or relationships in performing identity in exile – these tensions are not exclusively exilic phenomena. Tuomas Huttunen refers to Stuart Hall who argues for a "reconceptualisation" of identity as "the relationship between subjects and discursive practices" (57). The subject is either an agent or an object in the construction of his or her identity (Huttunen 57). This said, the first set of conflicts concerns intrapersonal relationships: it features individual characters negotiating and transitioning between their internal selves and their subject positions. A person's identity is made of a succession of selves, which do not necessarily operate smoothly. The second type of conflict engages with interpersonal relationships. The supposed transition from one self to another and between one self and another can be influenced by both intrapersonal and external (interpersonal and other) factors, sometimes simultaneously or interchangeably. Interpersonal relationships (and also intrapersonal relationships) determine the nature and function of boundaries, especially when the power dynamics favour one side, thus establishing a subject who objectifies the other and an object who occupies the other end of the power relation. These two sets of conflicts can either constrain or assist a subject's process of transition. Dibia, Gurnah, and Emecheta narrativise these complex webs of relationship in their texts.

Marroum's notion of "living in the hyphen" reminds one of cultural translation as the condition of oscillation between cultural identities. In her book *Translated People, Translated Texts: Language and Migration in Contemporary African Literature*, Tina Steiner offers an analysis of the processes of cultural translation as a viable mode for the negotiation and performance of identity in transnational spaces. Steiner argues that translation should not be taken only in its literal sense as the passage of meaning from one code to another: the author extends her definition to include various ways of "living and writing"; in this sense, translation "encompasses the adaptations and processes in which people" try to make sense of their lives as subjects influenced by both the "cultures and country of departure and as well as the cultures of their new place of residence" (Steiner *Translated People*, 4). With regard to the function of the boundary, I see the process of translation and transition between selves in Steiner's terms; that is, I am intrigued by the "oscillation between aspects of past and present" (*Translated People* 4); in other words, by the oscillation between old and new selves

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and by extension of various types of identity that migrancy imposes on the individual. I begin by placing the unnamed narrator of Gurnah's text in his diasporic space.

Gurnah's *Admiring Silence*

Admiring Silence is about an African man who travels to England in the early days of Zanzibar's independence. Three years after his arrival, he meets Emma, a young white English student. They soon become involved and have a baby girl, Amelia – aged seventeen at the time of narration. The unnamed narrator of the novel has not written home about either Emma or Amelia. When he receives a letter informing him of his mother's deteriorating health, he feels compelled to reconnect with his past by travelling back to Zanzibar. This letter forces him to return. He is struck by how much his native country has changed. There is a mismatch between his memory of his country in general and his family in particular. He rejects his parents' proposal that he marry a younger woman who aspires to study medicine at an English university. He flies back to England where he soon becomes despondent when Emma leaves him to be with another man.

The narrator is lost in the transitional space of the boundaries between different subject positions. This space often influences the ways in which the subject comes to inhabit/perform certain forms of identity. The narrator seems unable to communicate effectively between his various subject positions in order to feel comfortable with his exilic identity. For instance, despite having lived in England with Emma for over seventeen years, he resents both his African origins and the English culture. He does not fully accept his Africanity because of the history of colonialism and the trauma of not having known his father; he resists English culture by virtue of England being the evil coloniser. By granting particular attention to the tensions that arise from the friction between these subject positions, Gurnah describes the postcolonial condition of restlessness. In this case this is not limited to place but, I argue, extends to spaces of transition between the selves. The narrator inhabits various subject positions, resulting in tensions that make him uncertain of his identity. In his much cited article, "The Politics and Poetics of Exile: Edward Said in Africa", Paul Tiyambe Zeleza makes a distinction between exile and other forms of estrangement such as that of émigré, emigrant, or refugee. He suggests that exile "is a metonymy for various forms of dislocation from a physical and psychic homeland" (Zeleza 11). I contend that "dislocation" can also take the form of ineffective navigation between subject positions. As will soon become clear, the narrator of *Admiring Silence* is stuck in the transitional boundary.

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In the novel, Africa and England do not represent mere locations: Africanness and Englishness become metonymic representations of these particular locations. These locations are represented in an unending cycle of oppositions, which Abdul JanMohamed calls a "Manichean allegory . . . a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object" (JanMohamed 63). The narrator insists on maintaining the colonial order that sees whiteness as superior to blackness. He maintains the racial metonymies that he and Emma both inhabit. For instance, the narrator more often than not invokes the coloniser/colonised binary in support of his feeling that he remains the victim of what Achille Mbembe designates as the "brutal aspect of the Western grammar of alterity" ("The Power of the False" 635). On this note, Said in "Reflections of Exile" brings to mind the unpleasantness of exilic condition which often bring to the fore "the kind of narcissistic masochism that resists all efforts at amelioration, acculturation, and community" (146). Thus, Emma who – according to the narrator – embodies England, argues against his "narcissistic masochism": dwelling on the past "does not stop [the horrible deeds] from happening again" and feeling and acting like a special victim of history will not help him shake free from the shackles of colonialism. Meditating on the current state of African affairs in "African Modes of Self-Writing", Mbembe frames the discourse of victimhood in these terms: "[O]n the level of individual subjectivities, there is the idea that through the process of slavery, colonization, and apartheid, the African self has become alienated from itself (*self-division*)" (241; emphasis in original). As Emma responds that England's role in colonizing Africa is justified by Europe having first developed the "steam engine" (*Admiring* 16), the narrator, predictably, chooses to occupy the position of the victim, claiming: "And our part of the deal was to be colonised, assimilated, educated, alienated, integrated . . . " (Gurnah, *Admiring* 16). By remaining a victim, the narrator is unable to surmount the barriers erected around his Africanness and Englishness, so to speak. The narrator chooses not to perform what Steiner understands as the renunciation of "the monologic terrain of subject-object relations in favour of a dialogic intersubjectivity" where "moments of freedom become possible" ("Writing 'Wider Worlds'" 127). Such dialogue between individual selves – intrasubjective communication – can provide similar kinds of possibility for a harmonious identity.

Gurnah blurs the line between passivity and agency as well that between resistance and complacency. The narrator is not passive, nor is he a completely complacent character. In fact his use of mimicry as mode of resistance is a suitable tool to convey his sentiments and states

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of mind. He is caught in a complex web of social and cultural realities. However, his particular use of mimicry runs alongside a determination to deny himself a voice. Mimicry loses its capacity as a shield against racism and the condescending remarks he receives from his in-laws and pupils. The narrator is caught in his own narrative web. He falls prey to what Steiner aptly refers to as the trap of mimicry: "Mimicry contains the possibility of resistance while at the same time constricting the narrator" (Steiner *Translated People*, 105-6). Mimicry becomes an ineffective mode of agency; it is a strategy that fixates the narrator in the boundary, the "space of transition" (see Clingman 22). In fact, the narrator uses mimicry in telling false and ludicrous stories from nativity. If, as Steiner suggests, "Gurnah's characters only come close to home in their storytelling" (*Translated People* 23), and since the narrator in *Admiring Silence* becomes ensnared in the maze of his lies, then the stories (or rather the lies) he tells become some kind of transitional space in which he remains frozen. His active refusal to accommodate to the English culture maintains his restlessness and yet also, his fixity. Storytelling becomes emblematic of the narrator's entrapment in the transitional space.

Moreover, the telling of stories provides insight into other forms of reductive boundary. First of all, there is a distinction between types of stories. With Mr Willoughby, Emma's father, the narrator uses mimicry by invoking stories of Empire. However, he uses mimicry in an inventive way when he concocts ridiculous stories about the postcolonial condition of his homeland. By thus captivating the listener, the storyteller carves himself a space of belonging, however briefly. The stories produce a "poignant enthralment" (Gurnah, *Admiring*, 74) only when he dresses them up. The tragic anecdote of how he almost died as a child does not produce the same effect – in fact it is anticlimactic. For the narrator, mimicry is a way of seeking acceptance. However, when Emma pressures him, he feels concerned and is forced to share his stitched up and romanticised life story. Thus, he chooses to "rewrite" his life story (Gurnah, *Admiring* 62). Instead of trying to bridge the "rift"[37] of estrangement from the homeland, the stories he invents prevent him from integrating into the host society. In fact, he successively reduces the possibility of connecting or translating himself into a future-oriented self (Steiner *Translated People,* 103). In intrapersonal communication, the narrator nullifies the possibility of transition.

Gurnah's depiction of the effects of external attribution on a subject engages with race and ethnicity. The author uses the subtlety of language to convey the implications of these attributions for the character's self. Additionally, the passage from one position or moment of

[37] See Edward Said's "Reflections of Exile" (137).

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identity to another is not always easily perceptible. For instance, on the opening page of the narrative, the narrator is visiting his personal doctor, which he describes as one of the perks of being on the metropolitan side of postcolonial modernity. The doctor's diagnosis is that the patient has a "buggered" heart, which he assumes is the condition of all Caribbean migrants. The narrator's silent reaction to the doctor's assumption is also a reaction to the latter's tone. The narrator is silently angered by what Fanon, in the chapter "The Negro and Language", refers to as language slippage in the doctor-patient interaction—especially an interaction involving a white doctor and black patient (20). By not correcting the doctor, the narrator's silence incriminates him as compliant in inhabiting a disabling subject-position. Gurnah compellingly presents the character's passivity: the latter's silence turns (racial) difference into a fenced border, thus not allowing the doctor the possibility of knowing him beyond his willingness to be fallaciously *othered*.

In order to have a comprehensive picture of these racial and ethnic metonymies, it is necessary to quote from the text:

> Of course, after all this drama, I did not have the heart to tell him that I was not Afro-Caribbean, or any kind of Caribbean, not even anything to do with the Atlantic – strictly an Indian Ocean lad, Muslim, orthodox Sunni by upbringing . . . still unable to escape the consequences of the early constructions.
>
> (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 9-10)

The text further reads: "He didn't mean *Afro-Caribbean people* anyway. He meant darkies, hubshis . . . say-it-out-loud-I'm-Black-and-I'm-proud victim of starvation and tyranny and disease . . ." (Gurnah 10; emphasis in original). The rhetoric presented by this willingness to being othered suggests that the boundary, as a space of possibility, is stretched to the point where the borders demarcating the doctor and the patient are closed on both sides. Neither the doctor nor the narrator is willing to enter the boundary and acknowledge it as a space of possibility of transition.

The character's passive acceptance of this Caribbean-ness is complacent and denies the possibility of setting straight the record of his provenance. Despite his undeniable knowledge of world geography, he chooses not to correct the doctor or to guard against the danger of racial and ethnic essentialism. Interestingly, the narrator's silence only serves to fix him in a position of unattainable "otherness". Moreover, this silence is consistent with the author's strategic use of mimicry as an ineffective rule of thumb. Here, the narrator chooses not correct the doctor and open himself up to the possibilities of connecting with the other: "I did

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not have the heart to tell him" (*Admiring* 10). The admirer of silence would prefer not to amend the doctor's assumptions, thus maintaining the barrier of ignorance.

This very ascription of self implicates the trajectories of navigation and processes of transnational identity formation. One is tempted to ask: who is the narrator really? At this very moment in the doctor's room, the unnamed character becomes Zanzibari, African, Indian, Arab, etc. He is not just black. Being deeply immersed in the history of colonisation, the narrator is aware of the crossing of different kinds of boundary that lead to the various identity clusters he is being forced to inhabit and accept. The narrator, like Fanon, is triply objectified by having to account for his "body", his "race" and his "ancestors" (84). At that moment, not only is the narrator being made to criss-cross racial boundaries, at the same instant he has crossed oceans and seas: the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. Both Zanzibar and the Caribbean isles were heavily influenced by oceanic trade and migration, which resulted in the production of a multi-racial population in both locations (King 88). In Emecheta's text, the narrator is born in England and accepts his Englishness.

Emecheta's *The New Tribe*

In turning to the engagement with interpersonal factors in Emecheta's text, I want to examine the function of the boundary, where in place of self-representation, the ascription of identity comes to regulate the process of transition and translation. Emecheta's text depicts a case of a (literal) attribution of identities, where the subject is left to discover the categories of self that have been bestowed on him/her by others. *The New Tribe* sheds light on Stuart Hall's argument that "identity shifts according to how the subject is addressed or represented" (280). The type of racial and ethnic essentialising represented in *Admiring Silence* is also reflected in *The New Tribe*, where boundaries and differences are uncontested. Chester knows he is black and does not dispute this, even as it makes him feel that he does not belong. There is a particular way in which Emecheta dismisses the importance of skin colour in understanding Chester's sense of unbelonging. This anxiety of belonging has a precedent: while trying on his costume for the Nativity play, Chester becomes deeply troubled by Ginny's playful revelation that his "people" come from the East – that is, from Africa. Despite his blackness, Chester had always believed that his current (English) family were his people.

The New Tribe tells the story of Chester who becomes the victim of metonymic attribution. Chester is given up for adoption by his Nigerian-born mother, Catherine Mba, to a white English family, which had previously adopted a white baby girl, Julia. In the absence

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of a clear history of his origins, the only reference to Chester's past is the story that his adoptive mother, Ginny, produces for him. As Chester and Julia grow up, his identity crisis deepens. When Julia decides to run away from home on account of her pregnancy, Chester feels betrayed. He sets out on a journey that leads him to an older Nigerian man who teaches him, through cooking, "the first step[s] of being an African" (Emecheta 84). The latter attributes him a Nigerian name, Iloefuna. Eventually he decides to board a ship to Africa – after swapping passports with a dubious Nigerian man, Jimoh – in search of the kingdom that his mother's story has made him believe is waiting for him (Moudouma 33).

Emecheta does not engage with a case where conflicting cultural identities are a condition of the in-between: Chester is not entering a new culture, such as would be the case with a migrant exile. Here the ascription of identity operates at the level of the unconscious, both real, unbidden, and elusive. In this text difference is a constant, something that already exists, which one cannot choose to cast away, for instance, in the name of multiculturalism and diversity. *The New Tribe* presents the reader with the *fait accompli* of racial difference. Emecheta thrusts Chester into the diasporic world in a way that interrogates both diasporic identity and African heritage. Chester has no apparent social or cultural link to Africa. When Chester experiences difficulty in adapting to his new family, Ginny, worried about the child's welfare, decides to visit what Mudimbe would call the "colonial library", an archive cataloguing the history of Empire. Ginny imprints on the child the "memory of where he came from" (*The New* 8). In a sense her knowledge of history and geography is informed by her cultural heritage. In fact, her creativity as Mudimbe would put it "is not epistemologically inventive"; rather, "[i]t follows a path prescribed by tradition" (16). Chester is introduced to an Africa invented from library material. His awareness of another (African) self besets his (Black) British identity and cultural heritage. Chester does not navigate between these identity forms of his own accord. The passage from exclusive Britishness to inclusive Africanness is an objectifying act that makes him an object of colonial fantasy. Ginny herself is (indirectly) a colonial product – she is the daughter of a retired colonial administrator. In the end, the metonymic connection between the child's race and his birth mother's origin as well as her own colonial heritage can be read as the determining factors in Ginny's decision to enter the colonial library.

Emecheta strives to show that this natural fact of difference pales in the comparison with the metonymies of representation to which Chester is subjected to as a child. Clingman refers to Appadurai's notion of "metonymic freezing" where the object, "come[s] to represent the group as its quintessence"; in this sense metonymy becomes a prison of the self (Clingman

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12). Emecheta's introduction of the visit to the library appears benign at first, until the reader is puzzled by Chester, who conveys a "sense of unbelonging". Later it becomes clear that the sense of unbelonging is tied to the effect of racial metonymies. The story conveys an anxiety about the relationship between Chester's own sense of self and (later) his delusion about his heritage/knowledge of being an African prince: "Chester could not remember the exact moment when he knew he was adopted. . . . However, even at the age of four or five, he felt a sense of unbelonging (Emecheta 9). Remy Oriaku points to Chester's gradual distancing from his home, that is his family (19).

After Chester and Julia learn of the particular circumstances of their births and admission into the Arlington family, the former's sense of unbelonging deepens, and he starts "to have a recurring dream" (*The New* 16). The dream features a detailed description of an African village. Apart from the precolonial atmosphere of the village compound, the most curious aspect of the village is that there is no male child; Chester identifies this village as his own, and subsequently edits the dream and adds personal touches to the narrative. Chester does not "doubt its existence" (*The New* 17). It follows that later Chester prepares a secret trip, a quest for the compound of his dream, whose features and details would later become crystal clear in his consciousness.

A tension builds between himself and the rest of his family. When Chester meets an African family at the holiday resort in St Simon, where he happens to find a holiday job, he is elated. Being the first black people he has ever seen, the Ugwus become the confirmation of his distant origins and his affiliation with the world of his dreams. As the anxiety between his two subject positions (as an Arlington and as a lost prince) deepens, Chester navigates more frequently and urgently between Africanness and Englishness, rendering precarious his place in the family in the process. During the holiday in their last year at school, Julia disappears and the Church funds that were in the care of Mr Arlington go missing. The following morning an anxious Chester is mistakenly convinced that the parents will see him as the primary suspect. The fledging ritual (leaving home for college) is disrupted: unlike Julia who has her private moment with the mother, Chester does not experience this critical moment of leaving with the expressed blessing of the parent. He arrives in Liverpool and moves in with the Ugwus. Here, he learns how to be an African under Mr Ugwu's tutorship. After meeting Jimoh, Chester actively prepares for his trip to supposedly his kingdom. In Dibia's text, ascription of identity operates in the domain of unbalanced intersubjective power relations in the domestic space.

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Dibia's *Unbridled*

Unbridled is the story of Ngozi, known in England as "Erika". She had left Lagos five years previously in order to unite with her husband-to-be, James, whom she had met online. Ngozi had escaped from Nigeria because she was "afraid" of her family: the male figures in the family inflict continual physical and psychological violence on her. However, the tragedy of Ngozi's story lies in her betrayal by her first guardian, her father. In stories of sexual abuse, Augustine H. Asaah notes that "the rapist is often associated with moral authority, and an enabling masculinist environment" (337). Mr Akachi is a sexual predator who repeatedly assaults Ngozi at the age of thirteen. Afraid to confront the truth of his depravity, he sends her away to his brother after his eldest son, Nnamdi, indicates to him that his little sister feels the need to speak out about the abuse. Through sheer perseverance, Ngozi finds herself in England as James' wife. However, James is unable to provide the kind of life that Ngozi was hoping for when still in Nigeria: a life of romance and one where she would enjoy improved social conditions. The relationship is disastrous and Ngozi's escapes from James nearly cost her her life. The divorce is finalised. Ngozi follows Providence with whom she had had a brief sexual encounter when the three of them were sharing the flat.

Contrary to the male character in *Admiring Silence* (who has lived in England for twenty years) and *The New Tribe* (who is a nineteen-year-old English-born and bred) , Erika's stay in *Unbridled* spans only some five years. Her marriage arrangement with James has placed her in a dependent position, which determines her mode of negotiating belonging. James dictates the terms on which Erika can stay. His decision to change her name to Erika (as it almost rhymes with Africa) – limits the possibilities of effectual self-representation for her. As she enters James' space, epitomised by the flat, Ngozi realises that the door to this domestic space can only opened from the outside. James invites Erika into his fenced environment.

In this text, possibility of escape comes in the form of transnational bonding. Conscious of being locked in a duplicitous and loveless relationship, Ngozi tries to find solace in a diasporic transnational relationship by supplementing her writing in her diary with direct human contact. Bessie, her neighbour, becomes the indirect catalyst of her freedom. This relationship establishes a link with Erika's open-mindedness and her possible emancipation from the shackles of domesticity. In fact, as Dibia presents it, what causes concern for James is assumed by Erika to be natural behaviour (the common space she shares with her Ghanaian friend). Dibia shows how attractive this migrant solidarity is for Erika. Erika realises she has become bound in a subject position that denies her the kinds of connections she has wanted to

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establish either with Providence (also from Nigeria), or her "sister", Bessie. James threatens Ngozi because of her relationship with Bessie. Although boundaries exist whether we want them to or not, Dibia shows that what is a border for one is not necessarily a border for someone else. In other words, the choice of putting up barriers or bringing them down belongs to the individual who takes the route of transnational or human community building.

Transnational connections may be either positive or negative, depending on the nature of the boundary. For instance, James invokes transnationalism when it suits him. Erika inhabits a position where, as a woman, she is supposed to stay in her place. She grew up in an environment where womanhood carried culturally and socially assigned roles, duties and expectations, most of which were regulated from the domestic space. This explains why Ngozi's mother is unable to speak out against Ngozi's molestation. The author shows how James subverts this transnational linkage in order to justify his machismo and his racialised treatment of African women, who are his objects of fetish (see Chapter 1). He thus bridges continental, cultural and ethnic boundaries in order to have his (selfish) transnational moment, relishing his position of the dominant male in the relationship. Erika recounts a scene shortly after they were officially married:

> Early in the morning, before he left the house for work and before Bessie and I left for the market, he had woken me up to make him breakfast. The time was 5:45am.
>
> "James, what is going on?" I asked.
>
> "I want something to eat." He said.
>
> "You never want something to eat at this time." I said.
>
> "What has got into you? You treat me like I am some slave."
>
> "You are my wife now." He said. "Wives serve their husbands. Is it any different in Africa?"
>
> (Dibia 175)

Not only does James make assumptions about the condition of women in Africa, but he also purposely bends the narrative to his advantage, thereby ruining the potential productiveness of transnational transition and translation. Dibia's depiction of James's condescending comments about Ngozi's cultural heritage suggests that, for this character, Africa remains the "other" – perceived through the lenses of what Mbembe calls the "grammar of difference", which "not only sets Africa apart, but also claims to determine the conditions under which Africa could become part of the universalizing project of modernity" ("On the Power" 632). Ngozi realises that she needs to force herself out of her current subordinate position and thrust herself into the realm where change is possible. She finally resists being a "fetish": as

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an agent, she gathers the strength and resolve to hit back and leave. It becomes evident that to Ngozi, the name "Erika" has become the "patina"[38] of her younger self. By hitting James, she frees herself from her past and divests herself of all versions of her object-position. The novel reads as follows:

> I had never been confrontational all my life. . . . So when James struck me [again], it occurred to me that I could strike back . . .
> It was not just him that I fought that night. It was all the men who had damaged me all throughout the years.
>
> (Dibia 190-1)

This act of liberation is also her way of resisting being an object of fetish. Elsewhere, Brenda Cooper speaks of the effects of breaking the metonymic prison. She points out: "After the fetish has been de-fetishized, or the symbol reduced to its fleshy ordinariness, the African writer, the refugee, stranger, parvenu, exile or nomad, might construct a new metaphorical language liberated from the tentacles of imperial power" (*A New Generation* 23). Once "the fetish has been de-fetishized", then the subject can start being himself or herself.

It is useful to think of the boundary as a pertinent tool in the examination of diasporic spaces and migrant lives. The diasporic condition is a state of permanent oscillation between two or more subject positions, in time and space. The breaking of metonymic prisons could be beneficial for the subject if the boundary is understood as an inclusive space, and if the differences are daunting only insofar as the subject defers to their power. In addition to racial, cultural and ethnic boundaries that are visible in praxis and understood via historical conditions, individual borders can also exist because people often will them into being. Gurnah, Emecheta, and Dibia purposely trouble the process of racial and ethnic identification and categorisation. The texts present the ways in which characters inhabit different clusters of subject-positions in which boundaries are either impermeable or navigable. Self-representation and the ascription of identity have a dual role in the formation of identity in *Admiring Silence*, *Unbridled*, and *The New Tribe* by making characters inhabit either subject or object positions. In the next section, I explore the way memories of home or the homeland complicate the process of translation and transition, while at the same time shedding light on the nature of migrant or transnational identities in relation to the homeland.

[38] See Boym (41).

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Thinking of the homeland while making home in the diaspora

Being and remembering, as the title of this section suggests, are not two mutually exclusive processes. Remembering is inherent in being: it is to bear witness to history and one's existence in time and space. Emecheta, Gurnah, and Dibia interrogate the condition of migrant subjects and the influence of the past on the construction of their identities in their places of residence. I choose to read *The New Tribe*, *Admiring Silence*, and *Unbridled* in the light of the concept of nostalgia and its resonance with diasporic and transnational identity, and with Africanity. The word "nostalgia" was coined in 1688, by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, but etymologically, nostalgia derives from the Greek roots *nostos* (to return home), and *algia* (pain and longing). In the seventeenth century, the word was used in the medical field to describe the condition of mercenaries who yearned to return home. Nostalgia then was, as Daniel Cross Turner aptly puts, "literally a state of homesickness" (Turner 183). Nostalgia underwent shifts in meaning throughout history, until in the twentieth century it is used to signify instances of "emotional disturbance" caused by the memory of home and the sense of loss in the displaced person (Marroum 497). Nostalgia is a useful term in thinking of the experience of displacement and the presence of home or the homeland in diasporic spaces. I seek to disturb the traditional vertical orientation of nostalgia by suggesting an alternative, horizontal orientation.

In her seminal book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym offers new ways of understanding how nostalgia has become, from the twentieth century, an "incurable modern condition" (xiv). Boym distinguishes between two kinds of nostalgia: "restorative nostalgia" and "reflective nostalgia"; the first "puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up memory gaps", while the second "dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance" (41). Besides its description of the mental and emotional states of the subjects it refers to, nostalgia engages with locations, and thus presents the nostalgic subject as straddled between two locations, with a temporal divide between the world of the past (concrete or imaginary) and the present. Boym cautions readers that "restorative nostalgia" and "reflective nostalgia" "are not absolute types [...] but ways of giving shape to meaning and longing" (41). Inscribed within Boym's two "tendencies" (41), I propose to read nostalgia in terms of trajectories or orientations of nostalgic connection. I use Amin Maalouf's notion of the "vertical heritage" (qtd. in Marroum 495) to foreground my argument about the place of origin and the place of residence as determining our understanding of different kinds of nostalgic experiences. Maalouf links the past to traditions

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and ancestry, and explains that what makes up our past also influences how we live our present. In the vertical tradition, the notion of nostalgia refers to pain and longing for a home in the location of origin[39]and establishes a rapport between land of origin and place of residence. This kind of nostalgia features culture, tradition, or ancestry (the ideal home), and family as exerting a gravitational pull on the migrant. There is a second orientation, what I want to call *horizontal heritage*. In this orientation, nostalgia is not concomitant with the notion of return to the homeland: here the nostalgic subject is basically diasporic or transnational; he or she does not look to the homeland as a restorative or healing place and does not contemplate return *per se*.

Nostalgic reactions are due either to the subject's contact with the objects that haunt the boundary between the homeland and England, or are simply due to the existence of these objects. In *The New Tribe* this object is the sketchbook about Africa; in *Admiring Silence* and *Unbridled*, it is the letters from Africa. I shall explore the literariness of these objects in the next section. Emecheta, Gurnah and Dibia introduce these material objects as a way of suggesting that homeland remembrances are linked to real-life experience, and should not be too easily dismissed as romanticised processes. Nostalgic reactions have signatures of their own, whose shapes are moulded by the particular tales of subjects. In this section I aim to examine the meaning that Gurnah, Emecheta, and Dibia attribute to nostalgic orientations. "Reflective nostalgia" is the appropriate term to describe these authors' expressions of loss and longing in their novels. They demonstrate that nostalgia is mostly induced by external factors, but it can also be prompted by the reflection or surfacing of sentiments that had lain dormant in the subject's psyche. The (often) inimical relationship between homeland and present place of residence should not be underestimated. Exilic experience forces the subject to reflect on the past – on family, old connections, values, and the nation – represented in the vertical heritage. The vertical heritage recognizes the linkages of past and present, and by extension, of origin and location, as well as the weight of tradition. In addition, it is useful to read nostalgia alongside the notion of temporary migration, especially in order to understand whether nostalgia confirms or challenges temporary migration. Nostalgia, boundary and border are intertwined in the acts of remembering and being in the diaspora. The authors tell stories which show what it means to remember the past as it happened, or to romanticise it. The romance of the homeland is more strongly represented in *The New Tribe*.

[39] But this place of origin, as I will show, does not necessarily entail tradition and ancestry.

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Emecheta's *The New Tribe*

In this text, Emecheta interrogates the intention to return as an innate desire and complicates her reader's understanding of the notions of Africanity and diaspora. It seems she aims to unsettle the reader regarding issues of transnationalism, migrancy, and the potency of migrant spaces to produce an unwavering sense of belonging or fluidity of identity. Chester appears as the quintessential liminal character. He is also someone who is living a borrowed life, neither migrant nor African, nor comfortably English. However, notwithstanding his adoption, being an Arlington is the only constant Chester knows, even as this identity is troubled and threatened by various types of narrative. I understand the process of diasporisation – being in the diaspora – to mean that Ginny leads Chester forcefully by the hand across a temporal, cultural, psychic, and spatial boundary. The form that Chester's nostalgia takes is a result of this forced translation. This type of nostalgia counts as *vertical* precisely because it links Chester's daily reality – his sense of loss, unbelonging, homelessness – to a putative lost home and royal duties, in Africa. Chester's nostalgia is invented. He pains and longs for a past he did not physically experience. This nostalgia can be viewed tragically, in borrowing from Boym, as a "marketing strategy" in the "global entertainment industry" (38). She argues: "One could speak of 'inculcation of nostalgia' into merchandise as a marketing strategy that tricks consumers into missing what they haven't lost" (38). In *The New Tribe* Ginny's trick is not meant to be harmful; yet it fits into the narrative of the invention of Africa to which Mudimbe and Ali Mazrui attest.

There is a sense in which blackness and Africanity are at the centre of the novel's engagement with homelessness and Africa as the putative land of origin. Emecheta thus interrogates blackness and Africanity through two intertwined narratives: the story of diasporic transnationalism and the story of contemporary diasporic linkages to Africa. The former refers to Esther's situation: as a young woman her blackness does not constitute an essential link to Africa; as a black Englishwoman, she identifies with the culture and society in which she was born and asserts herself. She provides additional insight into the assimilationist theory that regards integration and assimilation as factors that decisively reduce the desire to return – although Esther did not initially migrate to England (see de Haas and Fokkema 757-8). Esther is rooted in the diaspora and does not relate emotionally to Africa. Her unwavering Englishness – her personal and cultural identity – puts her on a different plane from Chester. In fact Chester and Esther are puzzled by each other's positions regarding blackness and Africanity.

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On the one hand, Chester's puzzlement is revealed when he encounters Esther at City Hall where he and a concerned mother, Suzy, plead for the reopening of the youth centre. He had always thought that being black signified permanent struggle and a position of inferiority. Esther, however, works at the Council office. He meets with what he had thought was unachievable by a black person in England: instead of an "older woman with grey hair" to oversee the community project, a "young woman rose behind the desk"; but the "chief source of his amazement was that she was black" (Emecheta). Chester has not met many blacks in his life and his own prejudice is exposed here. His mentor, Mr Ugwu, appears not to be the best influence, since his tutorship of the young boy is influenced not only by his Afrocentric perspective but also by years of hardship. Chester's childhood, spent in seclusion in St Simon, has both separated him from the rest of the world and intensified his longing for Africa. Chester's intention to return is fuelled by his childhood dream and the need to discover his African self. The intention to return is justified by the collective unconscious that buttresses the idea that Africa ought to be the root of the identity of all black people in the world. What gives weight to this idea is the fact that at the time of the Nativity play this connection between blackness and Mudimbe's notion of "alterity" is made explicit (see Mazrui 69).

On the other hand, however, no circumstance has prepared Esther for the possibility of return: she has her roots in English society as a Black British woman, and therefore her narrative follows a different trajectory. Esther is engaged in diasporic identity formation: she has taken ownership of the modes of construction of her identity, unlike Chester. She does not understand why Chester is adamant about going to Nigeria and "find[s] it so painful to accept the fact that he was raised by white adoptive parents" (*The New* 115). This predicament confirms my argument that Emecheta strategically denies the reader any information about Esther's mother's race or ethnic provenance, in order to purposely trouble the reader's acceptance of Esther's position as not purely diaspo-centric or Afro-pessimistic. In the case of Chester, return is begotten by the invention of an essentialised African origin. Esther, in contrast, opts for a kind of diasporic existence which does not look to a past that is unconnected with place for answers to the dilemmas of the present. Esther moves between her blackness and her Englishness. Returning for Chester is not a possibility, but a necessity. The metonymic link to his memory of Africa and thus the catalyst for his intention to return is the sketchbook that Ginny puts together when she adopts Chester. If the metonymic link to Chester's nostalgia is apocryphal, the metaphor to which this invented reality refers to is a concrete space – Africa. I turn to Gurnah's *Admiring Silence* to examine how nostalgia

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features in fiction when the character's experience of the past is not imagined, but physically lived.

Gurnah's *Admiring Silence*

In *Admiring Silence*, the unnamed narrator is nostalgic for a past that he could have had, and is unable to let go of his past as a colonial subject. Moreover, he clings to the past not because he wants to return but because he suffers because of it. His situation fits Boym's description of "reflective nostalgia", nostalgia that "thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately" (xviii). This nostalgia rejects the past while obsessively clinging to it. The *algia* in nostalgia means that "pain and longing" loosely attaches to the narrator. However, I argue that Gurnah describes the urgency of a nostalgia that is triggered by the presence of material objects (see also Marroum 497). In this novel refusal to integrate into the host society paradoxically parallels refusal to maintain ties with the homeland and begets a situation of permanent temporariness in the migrant space.

The condition of restlessness is reinforced by the narrator's choice not to reciprocate by sharing his own truthful diasporic stories with his mother. I think this is what Steiner refers to when she points out that in "translation, as in migration, the processes of departure and arrival are never complete, and it is in the temporary enunciations between them that meaning emerges" (*Translated People*, 100). By extension this means that the connection between arrival and departure is found in the process of translation and that these two points regulate translation. The narrator is reluctant to confront his present self. This is also a matter of moral accountability, as he does not want to lie to his mother. When he receives the final letter about his mother's deteriorating health, his sense of loss becomes even more acute. The letters become the link to the home that he longs for but with which he does not want to reconnect. The final letter evokes the nostalgic reaction that produces the necessity of return, even though he has not harboured any intention to return. He has also felt nostalgic from Emma's intimate moment with her mother (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 21). In the vertical plane of nostalgia, this letter becomes the hinge that supports the door opening to his historical heritage. He adopts silences, lies and mimicry as survival strategies, a nostrum for the pain of failure and for the effacement of traumatic childhood memory.

Perhaps, beyond the concoction of lies about the narrator's past, the silences that pervade it have deeper meaning. Lying about an event can have many explanations, among them: (1) the need or desire to adorn the story with false addenda; (2) the impulse to invent content, or

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(which concerns me here); (3) the fear of revelation, hence the silence surrounding the truth. Here is a textual description of the first two explanations: "I realized with small stabs of shame that afterwards I had embellished my story to make it less messy, and had fabricated details where these had escaped me. The shame was intense for a few minutes but it soon passed . . ." (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 33) The third kind of explanation is also found in the text: "and I became used to my lies *and found it complacent to dwell on them with a shameful awareness that I was choosing not to give her true accounts of my past*" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 33; emphasis added). In fact, the narrator remains stuck and wallows in the subject positions he has created for himself.

As a writer, Gurnah is fond of moments of retraction or avoidance of commitment. The narrator chooses not to share his true past; this is a way – so he thinks – or making a smoother transition into the present: "I confess that my fabrications were generally to repay her interest, although some were obviously to make us appear less petty to each other, to make our lives seem noble and ordered" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 33). This is stark reminder of a later text, *By the Sea*, in which the novelist reveals the creative source behind this narrative strategy (see Chapter 2). As a survivalist stance, the narrator prefers not to speak the truth. This strategy later costs him dearly because Emma starts suspecting him of lying. The narrator fears his audience's reaction should he unveil his troubled past. But there is also a sense in which the narrator fears to be the audience of his own tales. Indeed, the reason he prefers not to share his past with Emma is precisely because he is strategically avoiding mention of the fact that he has no memory of his father. Therefore one wonders what the function of the silencing and modelling of stories is. Firstly, Gurnah zeroes in on the narrator's storytelling process. The embellishment and repetition of stories seem to sustain the visibility of his bounded selves: these are like islands of identity between which he denies any connection or navigation every time he revisits his lies. The boundary is not taken to be a permanent dwelling space; its function would become to permanently defer transition and translation. The subject settles himself in a condition of permanent temporality that rejects integration and denies return as a compensation for failure. By revisiting his stories, the narrator entrenches the silences and his trauma: "[he is] unable to surmount the loss experienced through his displacement and therefore repeats stories of an old world; *stories which are inimical to his new self in the new world* (Steiner *Translated* 100; emphasis added). It is useful to quote at length from Kearney, who explains the possible links between the title of the novel and the narrator's behaviour regarding his past:

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> If 'silence' is taken as subject, then the phrase "admiring silence" extends to the narrator's severed relationship with his family during his initial two decades of life in England . . . "Admiring," here, would have the ironic force of a complacent, self-indulgent readiness to sustain the rift and deception, *thus fixate the admirer in the liminal space of the boundary*.
>
> (Kearney 53; emphasis added)

In addition to silence being a subject, it features as object of power, thus aligning with the point I make in the previous section about the ascription of identity. For Kearney, silence as an object is loaded with political meaning, like the silence imposed by a dictator, as the epigraph at the opening of the novel suggests. I want to argue that, due to his "narcissistic masochism", the narrator might as well be the dictator of his own narrative, preying on the ignorance of his audience, and admiring the silencing of his own voice. This position is clearly questionable, since the narrator fabricates stories in order to gain some sense of agency and control over his life[40]. The creation of an identity that is consistent with his/her new locality depends on the success of the process of translation, which Steiner maintains *Admiring Silence* lacks.

Theorising the viability of the horizontal orientation of nostalgia allows for an alternative or complementary understanding of "reflective nostalgia". It also locates nostalgia in the migrant space as a possibility of looking forward to the future. The ending of *Admiring Silence* seems to suggest just that when, after his trip back home, the narrator sits on the fence, dithering with the telephone on his lap, wondering whether he should call the migrant woman he had met on the plane. This journey is facilitated by a metonymic link that makes return a contingent rather than a constitutive part of migrant experience – in this case, the experience of temporary migration.

Dibia's *Unbridled*

In this novel, Dibia also suggests that migration and the road to diasporic formation beget a new form of "heritage"[41] which spreads across migrant spaces – the horizontal heritage. Identity is made of the succession of selves as well as navigation between selves. Personhood thus becomes defined by the nature and trajectory of one's routes. As I have suggested in previous chapters, conditions and circumstances of departure from the homeland as well as of arrival in the new home regulate the process of identity negotiation. The binary consisting of

[40]Cf. Felicity Hand's essay, "Story-telling as an antidote to disempowerment".
[41]Cf. Maalouf's notion of "vertical heritage".

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place of origin and place of new residence still obtains, whether the transition is successful or not. It is more meaningful to consider roots and destinations not in terms of homelands and host-lands but in terms of old homes and new homes. The Country of origin may not constitute a single place, neither does leaving the country of origin for Europe mark one single journey. There are internal as well as intra-national migrations. The primary impulse in Ngozi's migratory journey is to escape, with no thought of return. London is where Ngozi attempts to make a new home, but fails. Therefore in the migrant space, London becomes the old home, the point of departure to new destinations. When, in the second migration, she finally takes a stand and walks out on James, Ngozi indicates Leicester as her new destination and potential home.

This venturing movement across the new world is the starting point of my analysis of a horizontal-oriented nostalgia, one that has roots in a place of positive memory, rather than exclusively in the homeland. Dibia's endeavour to provide ample details of Erika's journey to Leicester is significant marker of a new migration stage:

> Here I was at St. Pancreas, at King's Cross Station, saying goodbye, to my king, James King. Now, there was an irony, one of too many. Everything in my way seemed to cut two ways.
> "Goodbye Mr. King." I said from King's Cross, St. Pancreas. "Goodbye, Mrs. King." . . . A one-way ticket to somewhere that was nowhere. . . . All that I knew was out in the whirlwind. And that, yes, that had to be good.
>
> (Dibia 193)

The above quote describes a translocation, that is, it signifies migration across diasporic spaces, a useful tautology of sorts. Here, the distance travelled is less important: "But how far gone was I?" Only the trajectory seems to matter. London is positioned as familiar and Leicester as unfamiliar. Erika's longing for Providence is a response to a nostalgic reaction. In effect, Providence is part of Erika's past, and it marks a new dawn in her painful existence. Longing for the past is not necessarily inimical to the self. Ngozi longs to return to a past which is real in terms of sensory experience, an ideal past perhaps, but a concrete one. One speaks of a diasporic past – in which the homeland does not figure. By seeking Providence, Ngozi attempts to reconstruct her diasporic past.

In *Unbridled* return links to nostalgia in a different way than it does in *Admiring Silence* and *The New Tribe*: its object is the migrant space, not the homeland. The metonymic link with nostalgia is mediated here, too, by concrete objects. When Ngozi arrives at Providence's

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in Leicester, it becomes clear that Ngozi is returning to a past she wished she had and is now looking forward to having. As soon as Providence takes her to his home and leaves for work, Ngozi cannot wait to snoop around in his drawers. She immediately succumbs, following Maalouf, to the pull of the "associationist magic *of concrete objects*" (qtd. in Marroum 497; emphasis added) when she "ventured into his bedroom" (Dibia 201):

> As I shut the door behind me, memories of the last time I snuck into his bedroom in our London flat flooded my head. . . . I panicked. . . .
> His bed was made . . . As I now expected, everything in there was well organised—ironed shirts in one corner, in order of ascending hues . . . and in the corner he hung his trouser. I pulled out one of the drawers . . . and I grabbed a pair of his boxer shorts and pressed it against my nose.
>
> (Dibia 201)

Evidently, Ngozi's actual new beginning does not stem from Nigeria; rather, it has its immediate and more meaningful "roots" in London, the diasporic space. Horizontal nostalgia makes clear the risk of lumping migrant lives into broad categories such as the "homeland" and the "diaspora". These broader categories are significantly layered and episodic. The stops and starts in the migrant's journey also determine identity and cause the places of memory to shift. Although nostalgia is located in a place where Ngozi is abused, it also coexists with a positive experience of worth that she is longing for.

In *The New Tribe* Emecheta assesses the idea that Africa is the home of all black people. The boundary between myth and reality in the novel is blurred by the feeling of lived experience. Emecheta blurs the boundary between reality and fiction, where Nigeria as nativity is both reality and fiction. However, return is a matter of chance and depends on the subjects' emotional links (or the lack thereof) with Africa. Nostalgia in *Unbridled* becomes *horizontal* and can thus be taken as a starting point for understanding how an individual negotiates between old and new selves in the exercise of his/her diasporic regeneration. In *Admiring Silence,* Gurnah shows that time does not heal the rift of migration unless one engages with and confronts one's past. In *Unbridled*, nostalgia does not adhere to the vertical heritage, which is characterised by trauma; the novel suggests a nostalgia that is horizontal in orientation and which thrives on longing for the migrant space. The question is not whether one must return but rather, what are the underlying conditions behind the impulse to return? And how is the self affected by the crossing of various forms of boundary and personal border? I also interrogate the ways in which protagonists' identity formation are informed by

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the journey back to the homeland, across the intercontinental boundary. The following section sees migrants returning to their original places of departure, their African homelands.

Looping the African journey and returning home

In *Unbridled* Ngozi receives a letter about her father's death and resolves to travel to Nigeria. In *The New Tribe*, because of the images of the sketchbook, Chester decides to confront his recurrent dreams of being a lost prince by taking a trip to Nigeria. In *Admiring Silence* the narrator receives a letter informing him of his mother's illness and travels to Zanzibar. "Return" is predicated on two main factors: a strong sentiment of unbelonging and the gravitational pull by the homeland on the diasporic subject. This shows that subjects who are returning "home" are not migrating to make their homes elsewhere. The characters in these novels have chosen England as their country of residence. It is crucial to note that their journeys back home are prompted by events that relate to the centrality of family. These narratives of return differ from the historic narratives of return of the descendants of slavery. Characters' trips to Africa are inscribed within the larger narrative of migrant identity formation and movement. My concern here is to read "return" as a fraught and unpredictable process. There is no uniform narrative of return to Africa: each text represents a particular example of a particular journey. I propose to read these movements as characteristic of migrant life in the light of Bhabha's notion of liminality: the characters' anxiety is related to being both from *here* and from *there*, to the transition between cultures.

The phases and contexts of return to Africa are not predetermined. Here Charles Taylor's notion of a "space of concerns" (see Bhabha 213) accords well with processes of identity formation and performance. Contrary to first appearances, these processes are not always causes of concern. They remain troubling zones that redefine identity in unpredictable ways. Indeed, the migrant is characterized by the condition of "irresolution, or liminality, of 'translation'" in terms of which the process is never complete or exhaustive (Bhabha 224; see also Steiner *Translated People*, 106). The "self" navigates spaces of concern because the transition from one subject position to another is not necessarily "smooth" (Bhabha 226); it is subject to particular circumstances. The types of concern I am interested in are those that relate to the subjects' condition of simultaneously being *in the present*, *influenced by the past*, and *aware of the cultural differences between place of origin and place of residence*. These "concerns" are often responsible for migrants' return. Bhabha argues that the condition of liminality or belonging in the "third space" is, for the migrant, one in which "the past

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dissolves in the present, so that the future becomes (once again) an *open question*, instead of being specified by the fixity of the past" (Bhabha 219; emphasis in original). Bhabha seems to argue for a relationship of dependency, where the past would be immersed in the present. Unlike Bhabha, however, I suggest that instead of dissolving, inhabiting the third space (especially for subjects who have to go back) necessitates accepting the past as constituting part of one's identity. If the past contains one or more aspects of one's identity, then there is need for a smooth transition between present and past selves. Gurnah, Emecheta, and Dibia seem to be arguing that some such negotiation is crucial for survival in the transnational world. Returning, both as contingency and (though not exclusively), necessity, demands this transition.

The return to Africa depends on characters' personal and specific ties to their homelands. This emotional pull overrides transition and integration in the host society. These texts are trying to make "return" apply to the everyday, private spheres of African social and cultural modernity, that is, the family. They represent family as an alternative possibility to that of the nation. In this way, the authors shed light on what it means for a contemporary black British African to "go back". Emecheta's *The New Tribe* differs from the other novels in that it connects the trope of historical return of the historic African diaspora[42] and to that of contemporary African migrants. Her text becomes a (re)visiting of the Middle Passage. In contrast, *Admiring Silence* and *Unbridled* represent situations of return to locations of *lived* and *experienced* origin. My reading of return to Africa takes into consideration Stuart Hall's argument that it is not possible to "literally go home again" (qtd. in Muteshi 40). Nevertheless, these texts figure real places and people as sites of return. As Cooper puts it in "New Essentialism versus Multiple Worlds", the "material" realities of Africa become threatening to tropes that tend to essentialise the continent ("The New Essentialism"). I regard these authors' use of remembered places of origin as a potent trope for understanding "return" and the ways in which memory and/or nostalgia transgress boundaries and borders of the past. The reverse journey towards sites of original departure has a dual function: it is bound to either awaken traumatic memories, or to force the subject to engage with new social formations and the unstitching of old scars.

The familiarity of England is disrupted by the (re)discovery of Nigeria and Zanzibar. The theme of return has three focal points: (1) I debate the texts' aesthetics of return by looking at the contrasts in terms of economic development between England and Nigeria or Zanzibar;

[42] The diaspora of Trans-Atlantic Slavery.

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the thesis argues that developmental differences are not a constitutive factor in inducing return. (2) I explore the literariness of the metonymic links which trigger the journey to the homeland and the manifestation of nostalgia in characters' physical journeys to Africa. (3) I link literary metonymies with a (re)visiting of the Middle Passage. I choose a different thematic approach to reading return in this section since the novels provide a variety of similar and salient textual situations.

Economic and structural discrepancies

In *The New Tribe*, Chester plans to travel to Nigeria. He informs Esther: "I want to go to Nigeria." Esther condescendingly comments: "'Oh, I see, you are looking for your roots' " (*The New Tribe* 113). Esther's perspective offers an apposite criticism of return, viewed from the vantage point of socio-economic integration and horizontal heritage. Added to the absence of emotional pull toward Africa, the author associates Esther's rootedness in the diaspora with the comfort of material possessions. From Esther's point of view, Africa has nothing to offer to her diasporic wellbeing. For Esther, Chester is only chasing after a dream, despite having no link to Africa but his blackness. She takes comfort in her social standing to drive her point home. Emecheta weaves together material possessions and realities with the significance of place. Esther is socially, economically, and culturally rooted in England. This shows when after a conversation, Esther leaves on a promise of meeting up the next Monday with Chester. Upon leaving, behind her "rich black leather steering wheel," Esther "sat back, relaxed, and swayed to the rhythm [of reggae] as she drove" (*The New Tribe* 115). Reggae, as a form of music associated with Jamaica, becomes a significant marker of her rootedness in the diaspora, forming what I have called a horizontal heritage (see also Gilroy *The Black Atlantic*). Structurally speaking, this diasporic rhythm of navigation across the streets of London speaks to a fluid diasporic identity.

This smooth navigation is contrasted with the chaotic traffic in Lagos, which indicates that Chester has arrived in a so-called third-world country, Nigeria. Not only is the scenery new, but it is unlike anything Chester has ever experienced: "There seemed to be no rules, apart from the fact that all the cars drove on the right. There was no road system. . . . Chester saw cars mounting the pavement to get round an obstacle rather than waiting" (*The New Tribe* 118). In addition, evidenced mostly by the backward state of the real kingdom (in contrast to the folktale from which Ginny drew Chester's story), there is reason to question Chester's adventure: "Chester knew better than to expect something like Buckingham Palace,

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but he was not prepared for what he found [at] the palace" (*The New* 125). The discrepancy between the two sites suggests that Chester is indeed unlikely to leave the comfort of the so-called First World for the obvious chaos of his postcolonial homeland. Indeed, what he finds "[is] not his kingdom, nor anybody else's" (Emecheta 122).

In *Admiring Silence*, Gurnah describes the state of developed England and underdeveloped Zanzibar in similar terms. It is a given that England, positioned in the northern hemisphere, does not compare with Zanzibar in terms of development. But the fact that the author restates this point is relevant to my argument. In the opening page of the novel, Gurnah makes this contrast when the narrator visits *his* doctor: "So I went to see my doctor in the end. I became afraid for my pitiful life and went to see my doctor. You can say that in England. My doctor. Here everyone has a doctor to themselves . . . (Gurnah, *Admiring* 3-4). This opening scene of the novel links significantly with the reason that prompts the admirer of silence to return to Zanzibar after twenty years of voluntary exile and silence. He returns after receiving news of his mother's declining health – (perhaps) nursing her illness at home instead of visiting *her* doctor. Added to the developmental contrast between England and Zanzibar is the state in which the narrator finds his childhood home. Interestingly, the decrepit state of the house is also a reflection of the state's failure to provide services to its citizens. The text illustrates this when the narrator goes to the bathroom: "[t]he toilet was blocked and nothing in that bathroom gleamed. I had already been warned that there was no running water anymore, so I washed as quickly as I could out of the bucket and ran out, revolted to the pit of my stomach by that blocked, stinking toilet." (Gurnah *Admiring* 120). The narrator would rather be in his London house than in the parental home in Zanzibar.

In the third text, Dibia's depiction of Nigeria and England does not depart from Emecheta's or Gurnah's. He fictionalises the same dichotomy between a developed England and an underdeveloped Nigeria. For the first time since she arrived in England, she "felt so at home and welcome [in Providence's home]" (Dibia 209). Here her need for social security is met (this was the primary reason for her leaving Nigeria). The material comfort she starts to enjoy in Leicester contrasts markedly with life in Nigeria: "His apartment [was in a much nicer neighbourhood; it] was small, but very well put together. There was nothing out of place. The living room looked clean, almost sterile" (Dibia 200). As it turns out, the Nigeria of her memory has not changed. Beside the humidity and the current power shortages that she remembers, the reality on the ground reveals the discrepancies between Lagos or Ezi (her parents' village) and Leicester: "I was not surprised that after all those years, life in Ezi remained almost the same as it was in my childhood – static, resisting ferociously any outside

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influence of modernity" (*Unbridled* 225). Here her sardonic comment reflects her emotional state: She sounds unforgiving since this village is the site of her past trauma. Returning to Nigeria seems, at first sight, counter-productive to her own desire of liberation and emancipation. However, as she makes clear, she is coming back to bury her father.

As these descriptions reveal, each novel questions the "influence of modernity" in playing any significant role in the journey of return. The status of under-development might sometimes be what causes displacement northbound to Europe, but it does not determine her "return" nor does it become a prerequisite for return on the part of the characters in these novels. In other words, the state of underdevelopment of Africa cannot hold back the flood of memory or the particular affinities that are responsible for setting in motion the journey to the homeland. Emecheta, Dibia, and Gurnah show that their characters' emotional bonds become what maintain the connection between original homeland and current location of residence. These bonds break down the barrier created by the disparities in technological and infrastructural advancement, rendering them irrelevant in characters' choices of return. The texts, however, zero in on their literariness mingled with a nostalgic element as triggers of return.

The literariness of metonymic links and nostalgia

The written text has a way of actualising the return, even when it has not been intended. Incidentally, the three novels signify that, as the product of creative engagement, the written text is what actualises the journey. It not only triggers the physical journey in the fiction, it also forces the reader to engage with instances of people beating the odds and (re)visiting the homeland. In "Story-telling as an Antidote to Disempowerment", Felicity Hand refers to Madan Sarup who posits that "the concept of home is closely linked with the notion of identity" (n.pag). According to Sarup, Hand argues, the impulse to return or "search for roots" often derives from a sense of unbelonging and "the difficulties newcomers encounter [here] rather than [from] a sacralisation of [there]" (n.pag). Dibia, Emecheta and Gurnah suggest that a sense of unbelonging by itself is not sufficient to trigger return, nor does the emotional pull alone succeed in inducing subjects to reconnect with the homeland. Return in these texts seems to fall outside of the scope of the theories of migration that de Haas and Fokkema cover in their study.

The novels use the written text as a material catalyst. The letters and sketchbook invite reflection on their provenance. Speaking elsewhere on the origin of travelling objects, Bhabha refers to their "postcolonial provenance" which affects the meaning objects have

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when these are received in the metropolis: "the familiar things of everyday life and letters are marked by an irresistible sense of their genealogical difference, a 'postcolonial provenance'" (213). The literature of return – understood as the texts that induce return – cuts across the three novels and sets in motion the characters' journeys to their homelands in search of understanding. In these three texts, returning constitutes a confrontation with something lost, forgotten, dreaded or dreamt. These letters or texts, like the literature that contains them, come to bridge what Dennis Walder, in *Postcolonial Nostalgia*, calls "the no-man's land of time" and space (2). However, the boundaries that the characters cross in these texts are of different natures and shapes. The reception of letters from Africa is followed by a feeling of dread in *Admiring Silence* and by tears in *Unbridled*. In *The New Tribe* the sketchbook too has a postcolonial provenance: that of a Nigerian folk-tale (see also Cooper, "The New Essentialism")[43].

When, in *Unbridled*, Ngozi receives confirmation from James that she can join him, she is excited by the prospect of leaving Nigeria. However, news from Africa does not have a similar effect. Ngozi reflects on the letter she receives from her friend Princess in Nigeria: "All I could really think about was that letter from Princess and how it had led to my eventually returning home. Yes, it was that email that set in motion my resolve to come back and speak my truths with everyone" (Dibia 225). Returning to Nigeria seems counterproductive. Going back might only stir up traumatic memories. But Ngozi is aware of the nature of the boundaries she intends to cross. Her plan of going back to Nigeria includes making sure that her father and tormentor really is dead. She literally goes to bury him. I suggest that Ngozi intends to stare down her past self and to assert herself as a woman who has found a real home in England. Here she breaks down the barriers erected around her old self. In this particular case, Dibia does not intend his character to negotiate: the breaking down of the barrier needs to be a forceful act since the fluidity of her identity depends on her liberating this imprisoned part of herself. She *breaks into* the prison of her past, re-appropriates and restores her identity as a free, transnational (Black British) woman[44]. When Ngozi weeps on hearing the news of her father's death, she sheds tears not out of grief, but rather because his death means the death of her "silence". In Nigeria, even when she is shocked to find out that her mother had known about the sexual abuse, she holds onto her new-found voice: "My whispered confessions continued deep into the night. I hid nothing. I spoke my truths, holding nothing back. For once unafraid. For once, *unbridled*" (Dibia 230;

[43] I explore the literariness of metonymic links in *Unbridled* and *Admiring Silence* only.
[44] She obtains British nationality after marrying James.

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emphasis in original). Her return to Nigeria unfreezes her childhood "self", setting her free, breaking the chains – in her case – of the vertical heritage.

In *Admiring Silence* the narrator is forced to break twenty years of "transformations, the silences" (Gurnah, *Admiring* 93) upon receiving a letter from Zanzibar. He dreads the voyage: "When I thought about it this morning I had to rush and sit on the *clean and sterile* toilet for a good few minutes afterwards. But I have to go – soon, I think" (Gurnah, *Admiring* 93; emphasis added). Gurnah contemplates the return to the homeland as a process of negotiation. In this case the boundary is blurred and daunting. The narrator is surrounded by multiple facets of his identity, and each facet makes its own demands. He is shedding the skin of his present identity, which he has spent almost twenty years fabricating. In England, he is the narrator of his own tale. As storyteller he is in control over the texture of his narrative. However, in Zanzibar he loses this privileged position and unwillingly switches places with his mother. She becomes the (true) storyteller of his (true) narrative and he is forced to inhabit the object-position of a listener. Compared to the incapacitating effects of the falsified narrative in England, I suggest that it is his involuntary transitioning from *narrator* to *listener* that confers on him a new sense of agency. As a listener he is able to understand his subjectivity from a new perspective. He is now able to look at his "failures" with fresh eyes.

Nostalgia is a useful concept for thinking about the ambiguous relationship of the individual and his/her liminal position between past (African) selves and present (English) selves. In *Admiring Silence*, nostalgia and return seem to function in similar ways. Boym's "reflective nostalgia", which best describes the narrator, has no particular destination because it has *algia* (longing) as its object rather than *nostos* (returning home) (*nostos* is reflected in "restorative nostalgia") (Boym 43). The narrator's aim is to return to Zanzibar to his estranged family. The narrator is able to return only after the barriers have been brought down by the arrival of the letter in England (Barasa and Makokha 216). However, this is only possible because the new political elite proclaim a general amnesty for all those who had illegally fled the country during the years of political turmoil. I suggest that the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Culture offers a job to the narrator as a strategy to co-opt him to join in the effort at nation (re)building. It seems that he is appealing to the narrator's "reflective nostalgia"[45] in an attempt to turn it into "restorative nostalgia", which is inscribed into political agendas and holds the nation as its object (Boym 20). The text illustrates the Prime Minister's request: "Do what you can to persuade him to return. We need people like

[45] Pain and longing for family without desire to return.

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him to come back, to rebuild the country to something like it was and to move it forward into prosperity" (Gurnah, *Admiring Silence* 155). However, among the reasons the Secretary gives the narrator, family comes last, after nation, religion, and language (154). The narrator declines the offer and flies back to England. Ironically, his new-found agency will be of no use to him: Emma leaves him as soon as he returns to England. Yet again he has to bear the consequences of his Bartlebian act: he could have phoned while in Zanzibar and found out about Emma's affair; perhaps if he had accepted his parents' marriage proposal he would not have been left stranded with a telephone in his lap.

On another note, the narrator finally accepts Zanzibar as part of the past by refusing to start afresh from this original home. Later he is finally able to write back to "speak his truths". This letter is decisive in freeing himself from the prison of silence and deception. The rejection of the marriage proposal is meant to keep the *English lie* alive, until he finally speaks. In the end he is able to reconcile with his past self since, as Barasa and Makokha suggest, the narrator's "traumatic visit banishes fearful silences within himself and his family, as he overcomes the obtuse resentments of childhood" (227). Only then is his identity able to achieve a completion that enables him to start contemplating other possibilities, by looking to alternative spaces (Steiner, "Writing Wider 'Worlds'" 126), such as the horizontal transnational plane.

Remembering the Middle Passage

The sketchbook, as a metonymic link, has a deeper historical significance in *The New Tribe*. Chester learns only upon leaving Nigeria that the idea of his African princedom was given to him in the form of a sketchbook. Esther remarks to him: "Chester, Ginny gave you your dream!" (*The New Tribe* 154) The sketchbook is not a catalyst; it is the essence and spirit of the desire of return. By forcing Chester to cross boundaries and negotiate between a variety of subject positions, Emecheta interweaves the narrative of return with narratives of the Middle Passage and contemporary relationships between Africans (on the continent and abroad) and members of the external African diaspora. When Chester and Jimoh's cousin Karimu go on the quest for the lost kingdom in Benin, in Nigeria, and Chester is caught looking at the Oba's palace without being invited to; he is apprehended and a crowd of women and men gather around. Alarmed by a display of terror that reminds him of the Atlantic Slave trade, Karimu whispers to Chester: "I hope they no wan sacrifice us again" (*The New Tribe* 129). In (re)visiting of the Middle Passage, I refer to Caryl Phillips' *The*

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Atlantic Sound. Phillips is resentful that an African should call a diasporic subject "brother", because they are "the same 'brothers' they [Africans] helped sell into slavery" (*The Atlantic* 114). By having Karimu, the African, call Chester "my brother", while articulating his concerns about being sacrificed by the Oba, Emecheta achieves a double purpose: she marks her disagreement with the attempted transference of responsibility for the trans-Atlantic slavery to contemporary Africans, while at the same time condemning the enterprise of slavery altogether. This view resonates with the larger movement of diasporic Africans between adoptive countries and Africa, as suggested by Muteshi's point that narratives/journeys of return "are made in order to negotiate and forge cultural identities out of multiple geographic spaces" (Muteshi 41).

While Phillips' trip to Ghana, as represented in *The Atlantic Sound*, "is not a return home but rather an exploration of the impossibility of seeing Africa as the centre of cultural gravity for people separated by centuries of experience in other worlds" (Birat 64), the trip undertaken in *The New Tribe* is neither a "return home" nor the displacement of Africa as a "centre of cultural gravity" for the diaspora. *The New Tribe* points out that Chester's trip to Africa is what enables him to adopt his diasporic identity as a member of a "new tribe" in which Africa does not take centre stage, but remains a significant historical presence. Chester's mythical kingdom allows him to confront his imaginary self and achieve balance between past and present, not by "resist[ing] a bondage to either of them," as Isidore Okpewho might argue (*Myth* 156), but rather by adopting a position of liminality which, as in the case of Emecheta herself, enables the subject to feel rooted on both sides of the continental boundary (see Moudouma 47). Chester becomes disillusioned with the harshness of life in Africa, and by the realisation of the discrepancy between the idea of Africa – Africa as fiction – and the reality of everyday life in Africa. When he falls ill in Nigeria and Esther comes to help him home to England, Chester recovers his repressed affection for his adoptive parents, reconnects with his white sister, Julia, and gains a sense of equilibrium in the space he had previously consigned to "an irrevocable past" (Emecheta 68). Instead of finding and claiming a non-existent inheritance in Africa, it is in England, from his white English father that Chester receives a considerable sum of money as his rightful inheritance (Moudouma 33).

The New Tribe gestures towards the creation of a *new tribe* from a new generation of Africans in the world. On the one hand, Emecheta suggests that children born in the diaspora have to face challenges relative to their own generation and societies. In this sense, the novel suggests that the nuclear family is not the only viable model. In this new tribe, race is

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superseded by personal, individual, and social responsibility. On the other hand, the "new tribe" of the novel is one that does not impose a schism between black people in the diaspora and continental Africans. Patrick Manning's book, *The African Diaspora* advocates such connections (see also Mbembe, "Afropolitanism" 28-29). Dibia, Emecheta, and Gurnah suggest that contemporary understanding of Africa's relationships with the larger world should take the notion of return as a counter-discourse to nationalist, ethnic or racial essentialisms.

To conclude, the three authors figured here end up returning their characters to familiar sites in England. In fact, these novels suggest that return does not have a destination: as they present it, the journey back to the homeland is a round trip that ends in the diaspora. In other words, they deny that contemporary Africa is a destination and site of return for migrants who are unable to survive in the African space. These authors do not inscribe return in destinations but rather in the journey itself. The journey itself does not link sites of departure and arrival as origins or destinations. It becomes a continuous journey, an unending loop. England represents both departure and final destination, while Africa remains an open possibility. Africa enables subjects to appreciate life in the diaspora through new lenses. For Chester, Ngozi and the admirer of silence, (the reality of) Africa is not the space of new beginnings: Africa is rather a nativity that reconciles subjects with their migrant identities. Interestingly, this journey entails looking back as what bestows the ability to move forward, by looking down on gremlins of past selves. Subjects find a new sense of equilibrium whereby the past and its myths become enabling for present identities through a rhetoric that "debunk[s]" the way Africa is represented, through its "material culture and the everyday [life]" (Cooper, "The Rhetoric" 20). The navigation between African self and diasporic self becomes fluid.

Emecheta, Gurnah, and Dibia describe the journey back to 'roots' as empowering, as trying, but also self-affirming. With regard to the relationship between Africa and the diaspora, these novels represent the viable, on-going interconnection between Africans on the continent and Africans in the external diaspora. This shows in the way in which the novels end, with an open connection: Jimoh's letter to Chester testifies to a continuous fraternity; Ngozi's reconnection with her friends/sisters Prudence and Uloma roots part of her in Nigeria. And in *Admiring Silence*, the narrator receives an open invitation from his mother. Interestingly, even decentred as a site of primordial return, Africa has not been forsaken by

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the subjects of these three novels. The remedy in these narratives of return lies not in going back to the homeland, but rather in being able to return to places of residence in England.

The authors tell stories of men and women who aspire to become transnational, a status that confers "fluid, flexible" identities (Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri 212). The fluidity of identity however is not a condition of migration: fluidity of identity crowns the efforts made by African migrants who have resolved to accept both worlds, the diasporic and the homeland. As I have shown, the novels considered in this chapter resist, as Michael Peter Smith argues, "essentialist and unchanging notions of identity" (in Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri 212-3). This resistance is revealed through the crossing of various types of boundary and border both in the diaspora and in the original homeland. In contrast to the (looping) intercontinental trajectory, the texts engaging intra-continental migrations describe return as relocation, whereby the original home is targeted as the new home.

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Chapter Five

Expressions of Africanity en route to the homeland

"I look at my own people thinking they'll do the right thing
by me and allow me to live peacefully by right in my country.
My parents are here".
(Agyei-Agyiri 151)

In *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* Alex Agyei-Agyiri narrates the story of Nii Tackie and his companion Aaron who set out from Ghana to Nigeria in search of greener pastures; at the same time Mama Orojo, Nii's sister, returns to Ghana in the hopes of bringing her brother back to Nigeria with her. The siblings, however, do not cross paths. Nii narrowly escapes death and like a deus ex machina at the end of the novel, the siblings jump into each other's arms in a euphoric "unexpected joy at dawn" as the novel's title indicates. This story of return to the homeland fictionalises the Ghanaian government's issuing of the Aliens Compliance Order on 18th November, 1969, as well as Nigeria's own Aliens Expulsion Order of 1983. Both government edicts led to the forced repatriation of legal and illegal immigrants to their homelands.

In *Going Home*, Manuel Mpanda, fed up with enduring constant humiliations in the host country, the former Zaire[46], decides to cross the border back to Angola, his homeland. He brings with him his cousin's old address, hoping to gain a foothold on arrival. Mpanda's return is set within the framework of imagining the homeland as one's true home, the only space in which the self is meant to flourish, in contrast to the isolation of exile. Mpanda leaves his parents and siblings and sets outs to help rebuild his country, Angola. The novel retraces the saga of the young migrant, and is set in late 1991, following the signing of the Bicesse peace accords by Jose Eduardo Dos Santos of the MPLA and Jonas Savimbi of the UNITA.

In "Discovering Home", a young man first takes the short aerial route from South Africa to Kenya, then the terrestrial route to Uganda for a family reunion. The unnamed narrator takes advantage of a call for a family reunion in Uganda to (re)discover his roots. It is a story of an African family, where "African" is understood in the sense of an international family which has benefitted from migration and transnationalism: the father is Kenyan while

[46] I will be referring to the old name, Zaire; it is the name used in the novel.

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the mother is Ugandan-born. The visit back home takes place in 1995 – a year after the first black South African was elected president. "Discovering Home" features in *Discovering Home*, a collection of short stories selected for the 2002 Caine Prize for African Writing.

These narratives of return challenge in various ways notions of identity, home, and cultural heritage. They engage with a reading of African identity that encompasses skin colour, autochthony and difference, across spatial and temporal realms. The trajectory of return to the homeland shows how African identity in these texts defines itself beyond race, ethnicity, region, nation, and continental boundaries. But what is of concern here is the manner in which fiction foregrounds the notion of Africanity in specific (socio-historical) contexts and situations. The three texts seek to demonstrate what it means to cross a political border and what this crossing means for the conceptualisation of Africanity. I focus on the notions of boundary and border and their capacity to inform the dynamics of movement across spaces of concern that fictionalise migration back to the original (African) homeland.

Most common in modern African nation-states is the regretful realisation that the security of citizenship status depends on political and economic stability. The crisis of citizenship in Africa can also be linked to the advent of modernity, which in a sense "focused on civil society reforming and developing the African state rather than the state developing (agricultural) society". This resulted in an abrasive interest in building strong armies. Priority was given to equipping the military to secure national borders rather than to securing individual and civic rights to safety and economic emancipation (Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels, "Introduction" 1). Conversely, Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels suggest that the advent of democracy provided the opportunity for the people to re-examine what was meant by the rights of the newly independent people. They argue that constitutional amendments of citizenship status are often dictated by political agendas and popular disillusionment with the state.

In the colonial experience of Africa, borders often crossed over peoples. This disregard of human demographics created rifts between and within clans, tribes, families, kingdoms, chieftaincies, etc. But these lines could not prevent reverse-violations by migrants who continued to move and connect across transnational and national borders. In his paper, "The 'diaspora' diaspora", Rogers Brubaker argues: "diasporas have been seen to result from the migration of borders over people, not simply from that of people over borders" (3).[47] What is interesting in this formulation is that it leads one to think – also echoing Clifford's "discourse

[47] Here Brubaker specifically speaks of Hungarian and Russian "ethnonational communities". (3)

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that is travelling" (306) – in terms of travelling borders and boundaries. In fact, the notion that borders crossed "over people" gives support to the argument that borders are not static; meaning that as a constitutive part of migrants' identities, borders and boundaries become travelling entities along with the subjects with whom they are entangled. To address the violence of political borders is to understand the politics of identity and citizenship in sub-Saharan Africa, especially – and redrawing borders is unlikely to solve the conundrum of identity politics (see Gutto 64). Incidentally, the narratives of return revisit these notions of the crossing of borders and the entering of boundaries by looking at the ways in which fictional texts represent returnees' engagements with the routes to their ancestral lands. I argue that history (time) and space (border demarcations) crisscross and pervade the identities of migrants and diasporic subjects in multiple ways. African borderlands are ambiguous spaces. They challenge political norms by allowing migrants to traverse and subvert them, but they also disrupt people's movements: "borderlands are distinct in that they presuppose a territory defined by a geo-political line: two sides arbitrarily separated and policed, but also joined by legal and illegal practices of crossing and communication" (Clifford 304). African borders are not impervious to transgression.

Taking into consideration the causes of displacement, this chapter posits utopian desire as a constitutive part of return narratives. In "The Ambiguous Necessity of Utopia: Post-colonial Literatures and the Persistence of Hope"", Bill Ashcroft states that postcolonial African literature's interest in nostalgic memory is founded on the "desire to retrieve some essential authentic cultural identity" (10). African literatures that narrate the "myth of return" are mostly concerned with resisting European cultural and critical hegemony (10; see Simonse). The narratives of return that I am concerned here are those that depict characters' physical journeys. Utopia is born out of disillusionment with the diasporic space. In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail M. Bakhtin introduces the concept of chronotope which I use as a canvas for thinking about the relationship between time and space in intra-continental migrations of return. Bakhtin's application of the notion of the chronotope in literature derives from its expression of "the inseparability of space and time" (84). He defines chronotope in these terms: "We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). My intention is not to revisit the history of the novel or its ramification in contemporary African literature. What interests me here is the moment of encounter which determines the centrality of time and space as inseparable entities.

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Alex Ageyi-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* and Simão Kikamba's *Going Home* are two novels that document the particular experiences of individuals who attempt a definitive return to the homeland. "Discovering Home" narrates the round-trip to his roots of a young man who has spent ten years in South Africa. Thus, in order to have a better grasp of the characters' journeys to their homelands, it is important to first place them within their diasporic spaces and communities, and then examine the causalities of their relocation (permanent or temporary), before concluding with each novel's expression of Africanity.

Picturing contemporary intra-continental migrations and diasporas

A picture of contemporary Intra-continental migrations and diasporas aims to situate the theoretical debate on the meaning of diaspora and to contextualise my use of the term in relation to African diasporas. This is done by way of a mapping of contemporary migrations across borders. I then explore how each text represents diasporic or migrant subjects in relation to their receiving communities, starting with *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, followed by *Going Home*, and ending with "Discovering Home".

Mapping contemporary migrations across borders

Brubaker reviews "classical" and contemporaneous definitions and conceptualisations of diaspora. Since the "paradigmatic case" of diaspora – the Jewish and Armenian diasporas – the term has been increasingly used in diverse fields of study to designate conditions and processes of dispersion and belonging in places that are often read in contrast with a putative original homeland. Thus, diaspora indicates a "proliferation of terms . . . designating a *collectivity*", "a *process*", "a field of study", "a *stance*", "an *attitude* or modality", etc. (Brubaker 4; emphasis in original). There are two major trends in the definition of the term diaspora: the traditional definition and the social sciences' definition. Robin Cohen detects nine characteristics which a group or population should have in order to constitute a diaspora in the traditional sense of the term (Cohen 16). These characteristics make salient the importance of both the homeland and the receiving communities, but the processes of creative transformation and settlement of diaspora are equally evident. The contemporary definition has been associated with that of the social scientists. In his recent book, *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* (2009), Patrick Manning observes: "Social scientists today use the term 'diaspora' to refer to migrants who settle in distant lands and produce new generations, all the while maintaining ties of affection and making occasional

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visits to each other and their homeland" (2). Manning's observation relates to transnational immigrants located in the diaspora who often retain homes in their country of origin. This diversity of approaches accounts for an increased interest in "multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity" (see Knott and McLoughlin 4). I intend to use the "classical" definition in order to read the textual representation of intra-continental diasporas. In addition, I will be referring to the definition of diaspora produced by the social sciences, by keeping track of the subtle differences between both group populations.

I intend to foreground my examination of diasporic subjects' settlement in and movement from their receiving societies through the processes of boundary/border crossing, transition, and translation of the self. My reading of *Unexpected Joy At Down*, *Going Home*, and "Discovering Home" focuses on the way in which the authors fictionalise the presence of members of the diaspora or immigrants in the diaspora[48]. The paradigm of border crossing represented in the political border crossing contributes significantly to the textual rendering of cultural or historical boundaries and the way in which these are negotiated.

My approach to the analysis of the texts is buttressed by James Clifford's representation of diasporic populations and immigrants in the host nation or state. He observes that "[d]iasporic populations do not come from elsewhere in the same way that 'immigrants' do" (307). In other words, the diasporic populations encountered in a designated location are born in that space, whereas immigrants are "en route to a whole new place" (307). Nii Tackie and Mama Orojo are born in the diaspora (in Ghana) – and are of the fifth generation – whereas Mpanda, born in Angola, is a child of Angolan immigrants in exile in the former Zaire. The narrator of "Discovering Home" is the child of a first-generation Kenyan and a second generation Ugandan[49], living in South Africa. It is important to emphasise that these diasporic and/or migrant characters are individuals that the narratives single out from among groups or populations with similar historical backgrounds and statuses. Their experiences are, however, not to be taken as representative of these populations or groups to which they belong; rather one gains insight through their experiences into the forces, as well as the historical and cultural dynamics, that inform their diasporicity. An emphasis on the difference between members of the diaspora and immigrants brings up the fraught question of citizenship in the African context, in situations of political turmoil and civil unrest. The returnees' modes of negotiating acceptance among autochthonous populations can be hindered by the latter who

[48] This reading engages the political/colonial border as one of the main aspects which dichotomise extra-African and intra-African diasporas.
[49] His father is Kenyan and his mother is a Ugandan (immigrant) who married in Kenya where she made her home.

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regard the performance of national identity as the criterion for claiming belonging in the original homeland.

The study of African diasporas within Africa is a recent academic interest. In his paper, "In Search of the Diasporas Within Diaspora", Oliver Bakewell prefers to group the diasporic features listed by Robin Cohen into four categories: (i) movement from an original homeland, (ii) embracing a collective myth of an ideal homeland; (iii) possession of a strong national or ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long period of time; and (iv) access to a network of social links sustained over time with other co-dispersed people in different locations (5). It soon transpires through Bakewell's analysis that intra-continental African diasporas are very different from the other extra-continental dispersals, mainly in terms of the dynamics of movement and relation to space. This distinction is based on an understanding of Africa as "a continent on the move" (Bakewell 13). A book edited by Marta Tienda et al., *Africa on the Move* (2006), exemplifies not only global migratory trends but also migrations from Africa and within Africa. The reading of *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* presents a challenge in terms of applying the traditional definition of diaspora to the African context. I argue that there is sense in which some of the criteria used in the traditional definition can be applied to intra-continental migrations, within the narrative of return.

Colonial subdivision of the continent produced border lines with ramifications beyond national borders. If as Anthony K. Appiah has suggested, we should speak of "African identities" rather than "African identity"; these "African identities" (88-89) are distributed among nationalities, tribes, clans, regions, and individual and continental modes of being. The configuration of modern African nation-states is such that one can find similar clans, tribes, and family on either side of the national borders. The African boundary is both divisive and proof of interrupted but on-going relations between people on either side. It emerges that the boundary often creates difference in sameness, as in the presence of members of the same clan who have different nationalities. Similarly, postcolonial African nations have a common history. It is, however, undeniable that history did not happen simultaneously all over the continent, nor did African peoples experience it in an identical manner. However, nations share the experience of the colonial boundary and its consequences – exploitation and acculturation.

I argue, following Brubaker's notion of border diasporas, that some of the nationals of postcolonial African nation-states which share borders are essentially diasporic, separated by the colonial boundary (cf. Brubaker 3). Hana Zlotnik reflects on the manner in which colonial borders were implemented, commenting that migrations that would have been intra-national

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have become international (15). By extension I wish to argue that migrants who move to regions or countries governed by the same colonial power constitute border diasporas or groups of migrants, mediated by the cultural and linguistic apparatus of colonial administration (cf. Brubaker 12; Kobo 81-2). Contemporary movements of Africans across the continent reflect long-established patterns of migration, although with different and more challenging dynamics (Brubaker 3). The diasporic communities (especially those who migrate across shared borders) maintain a strong sentiment with regard to their homeland. In *Going Home* Mpanda's decision to return is galvanised by the proximity of Angola, just across the border. This explains to some extent why, although his return is voluntary, he does not adequately prepare for the trip and travels with hardly any money. Here the homeland is not imagined as a remote place located in the past, but as a concrete location, within easy reach.

Identifying intra-continental African diasporas in the traditional sense of term is a difficult exercise. Bakwell addresses the absence of identifiable group populations within Africa that fit the usual description of diaspora. It seems that every likely group fails the test, because of the lack of some qualifying features. For instance, the Kabre of Ghana and Togo fail on account of their transnational practices: for a large number of Kabre, "we are not dealing with a 'myth of an ideal ancestral land'" (Bakewell 11). In addition, Bakewell refers to the Hausa people, one of the largest groups to have roamed the continent (apart from the Bantu, the Fulani, etc). One reason why they would not qualify as diasporic in the traditional sense is because "the migrants concerned were not members of the same ethnic group" (Bakewell 11). The presence of these irregularities makes it even more difficult to examine and categorise Agyei-Agyiri's characters, Mama Orojo and her brother, Nii Tackie. Are the two siblings members of the Nigerian diaspora in Ghana, according to the traditional sense of the term, or do they only fit within the social sciences' definition of diaspora? Any answer to this question can be framed within a dynamics of dispersion and return of intra-continental.

Migrants and members of the diaspora – as migrants of a later generation– even when they are identified by the label of their country of origin, still "constitute invisible nations outside their origin countries" (Beine et al. 1). This invisibility of migrant groups can also be accounted for by the processes of integration, assimilation and dispersal. Shadrack Gutto's observation regarding the character of refugee-ness in Africa since the time of the pre-colonial wars is relevant to the process of integration (and represents a much more forceful form of integration than labour migration): "the majority of the African refugees in African countries have been settled and integrated not only or mainly by the states but by the ordinary

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citizenry" (67). He goes on to cite the cases of Mozambican refugees in Malawi, Ugandans in Kenya (a product of Idi Amin's regime), and Ethiopians and Eritreans in Sudan (67). Crush and McDonald point to a "vast majority of Mozambican refugees produced by the civil war of the 1980s and who successfully have "integrated into South African society" (8). This invisibility of diasporic communities is accounted for only in so far as they do not always live in huddled communities. But in truth, I argue, members of the diasporas are marked by their legal and sociological visibility, which is made even more salient in times of dire economic scarcity, when they are targeted as scapegoats (see Kobo 68).

Conversely, members of the extra-African diaspora enjoy more stable conditions of residence, due particularly to what Knott and McLoughlin refer to as "the national context of settlement", in which "the extent of citizenship rights; the nature of immigration/security legislation" (10) are determining factors. According to Bakewell's research, one of the features that marks the difference between extra-continental and intra-continental diasporas is their respective relations to place and history: history is as important to Africans (migrants or autochthons alike) as place. There is evidence that migrants are constantly engaged in processes of transformation and in the creation of "new identities" and "ethnicities" (Bakewell 14). Their attachment to land is somewhat ambivalent: while history remains part of migrants' identity, there is no "affective bond" with the homeland or "myth of return" (Bakewell 14). Migrants tend to adopt their receiving communities, and try to carve a space for themselves in their adopted country. These diasporic formations often have distinct allegiances to their cultures of origin but they create new forms of cultural and linguistic expression (Bakewell 14).

Let us turn to the socio-cultural and geographical situations of diasporic or migrant communities in host nation-states, as depicted in the literature.

Agyei-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*

In this novel, Agyei-Agyiri fictionalises a period of economic and political crisis in the region of West Africa, especially in Ghana and Nigeria, between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s. The narrative as it unfolds is set in 1983, the date of Nigeria's declaration of the Aliens Expulsion Order. The novel is set in Ghana and Nigeria, and on the road between both countries. In the homeland, Nigeria, Mama Orojo – affectionately called Mama – is in her late twenties; she is depicted as a successful woman entrepreneur in Ijase, a suburb of Lagos. She left Ghana fourteen years earlier, following the issuing of the "Aliens Compliance Order"

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by the government of Ghana, which required all illegal immigrants to legalise their status or leave the country. Nii is left behind, as a child; the parents believed he would not have survived the ordeals of the journey. Ousman Kobo refers to this forced repatriation as a "botched attempt" to deport illegal aliens in 1969-70[50]: the timeline was impractical as documentation could only be delivered to a few "aliens" (68)[51]. Mama has settled in Nigeria and integrated into Nigerian society; Nigeria is now her home. In the diasporic space, Ghana, Nii Tackie, Mama's brother, is an assistant bank manager in Accra. He can barely make ends meet with his salary; he teaches part-time at a private secondary school and collects the Union's contributions from merchants. His wife, Massa, is severely ill, with no hope of recovering. The two siblings have not been in contact for fourteen years.

For these unfortunate dispersed people, the category of "illegal" is also one into which somebody can be forced. The siblings are born in Ghana and belong to the ethnic group Ga, but they bear Nigerian surnames. It is reported that their father, the late Mr Nii Tackie, did not have any children of his own; all were adopted. Their stories and statuses reflect a complex web of narratives and historical shifts engaging the movement of people across regions, states, and times. The authors seem to be dismissing blood relationship as the basis of family-building[52] or condemning outright the idea that the right of blood is the basis of citizenship. The two main protagonists are children of Nigerian diaspora in Ghana. Shedding light on this complex web will enable a better understanding of the status of intra-continental African diasporas or migrations. Significantly the novel opens with Ghana as diasporic location and ends in Nigeria, the ancestral land.

Placing characters in their diasporic habitats informs the context of their removal from their homes in the diasporic space. Firstly, on the Ghanaian side, the novel starts with a scene of impending death, signalling the kinds of concern inherent in boundary crossing. Massa, Nii's wife, is extremely ill, at the boundary of death and life. Her condition takes a toll on Nii's social, emotional, and professional life. Massa is his only family (in Ghana). Massa's illness, which has her "looking like a grandmother at twenty-two" (Agyei-Agyiri 8), is paralleled by the disintegration of socio-economic, political, and psychological strata. Of Nigerian parentage, Nii Tackie is a Ghanaian-born and bred. He has come to terms with "his upbringing [that] had made him entirely Ghanaian" (Agyei-Agyiri 28), despite his awareness

[50] The Aliens Compliance Order was issued in November 18, 1969. All textual references I have consulted place the period of the "expulsion exercise" in 1969-1970 (Adjepong xv). These references appear in contrast to the date – 1970-1971 – supplied by the publisher on the cover of the novel.
[51] "Aliens" had only two weeks to legalise their status.
[52] See also Emecheta's *The New Tribe*.

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of his Nigerian origins. He is at home in the diaspora. He can be seen to some extent – because of his tribal marks – as an example of what de Haas and Fokkema describe as structural and socio-cultural integration (759). Nii has stayed for longer in Ghana at Massa's request, even as harsh economic conditions were urging him to migrate to the more prosperous Nigeria. Nii has fully embraced his Ghanaian identity. However, when news of the deportation of aliens is propagated by the media, Nii becomes deeply concerned. His sense of belonging falters.

These events describe a period of acute economic crises in Ghana. While Ghana is in shock at the Nigerian state's determination to deport illegal aliens back to their countries of origin, the "vertical stripes" he bears on his face become charged with historical and cultural meaning. Nii's body bears the marks of his ancestral origins: "three vertical stripes" – tribal Yoruba marks – on his cheeks (Agyei-Agyiri 25; Adjei 321), even though he bears his adoptive father's ethnic identity. Meanwhile, in an attempt to indigenise himself, he has tried to efface the tribal marks in order to become less conspicuous, less dark skinned. The marks open up a space of concern in which "blackness [is] not enough . . . as defence against deportation" (Agyei-Agyiri 25)[53]. In this situation of concern, his whole personal history is erased: the history of his and his parents' birth in Ghana as well as his Ghanaian nationality become weightless, meaningless. Nii's colleagues' indirect comments on his origins, based on the palpable proof (the stripes) of his distant Nigerian origin, lead him to think that Ghana might have ceased being home.

In the ancestral land, Nigeria, Mama Orojo, Nii's older sister, is a successful business woman. Unbeknown to her brother, the parents did not survive the journey and died en route in 1969-70. One morning Mama's emotions at having returned to Nigeria surface, as does her consciousness of her diasporic identity; this happens when she is undertaking the tedious task of crossing a bridge in a border town between Nigeria and Benin. The previous day, the bridge had been under water: "the water had swelled up and spilled onto parts of the road spanning the bridge" (14). One of the most significant aspects of the narrative here is the noticeable presence at the scene of an immigration officer, guardian of the border. The man's uniform makes Mama relive the moment of her earlier departure from Ghana. Her memory of a not-so-distant past becomes proof of her enduring sense of displacement, even as she now belongs in Nigeria. The images of the embattled bridge and of the officer lead Mama to revisit her past, which she shares with her companion and sister in faith, Ibuk. Like Nii,

[53] Nii dreads a second deportation of "aliens" from Ghana as countermeasure for the current deportation from Nigeria.

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Mama was born and bred in Ghana. Since it was not her choice to return and "start life all over again", Mama laments the fact that she was uprooted from "a country we had come to regard to be our home" (Agyei-Agyiri 15). The connection between the crossing of the physical bridge and the temporal bridge (to the past) shows both in the difficulty of crossing these bridges and in the invocation of a difficult past. But now Mama is determined to return to the diasporic land and to bring her family with her to Nigeria.

Kikamba's *Going Home*

In *Going Home* Kikamba narrates a story of postcolonial displacement from Angola to Zaire, colonised by Portugal and Belgium respectively. Mpanda and his family are visibly postcolonial immigrants. He is twenty-four years old when the narrative opens. One day, he informs his parents of his decision to return to Angola. His parents had left Angola when he was small: "I left Angola with my parents when I was only two years old" (Kikamba 36). The emphasis on the personal "I", demonstrates his insistence on being an agent in his departure, and this underscores how he views his status and identity in the diaspora – as not being home. Mpanda is raised in the former Zaire and has no memory of having been in Angola. His return is "like traveling to a foreign country altogether" (Kikamba 36). Raised and educated in Zaire, Mpanda is familiar with the culture and mores of his adoptive country[54]. However, he feels strongly about his Angolan origins, as his parents are still alive and constitute his first-hand knowledge of their estrangement from their native land. This is what Femke Stock refers to when she speaks of diasporic subjects inheriting diasporic memories (27).

Added to his parents' tales about "home", Mpanda's cousin, Maria – the connector – has visited them from Angola. Furthermore, the fact that that Angola and Zaire share a border plays an important role in manifesting the presence of Angola to Mpanda. The text alludes to a strong presence of Angolan nationals in the diasporic space, especially in towns closer to the border. Mpanda and his family are constantly reminded of their status of exile, the shame of which is exacerbated by the poverty which they endure. The evening before his departure, Mpanda breaks the news to his parents. Against the informed view of the parents that Angola is still a war zone, Mpanda expresses his exuberant optimism. Mpanda is not going on a quest: he sees his venture as one of "making home at home"[55].

[54] Later in Angola he will be shocked at seeing that a woman has hung her underwear outside on the washing line, which is not something one would see in Zaire.
[55] This is an interesting turn of phrase that contrasts with the description of emigration as making home away from home.

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Contrary to what one often encounters in the literature of return, Kikamba reverses the positions of enunciation of parent and child. Instead of the parents forcing the idea of the homeland upon the child, it is the child who is critical of the parents' resistance to "help[ing] build [their] country" (Kikamba 33). The parents do not wish to re-open old wounds by returning: for them Angola has become the "private property" of political belligerents who have an utter disregard for individual human rights (Kikamba 33). However, Mpanda believes that the Zairian people's scorn for foreigners is worse than the political chaos "at home". In fact, the impulse to return converges with a sense of duty. Rather than being "reviled as refugees" (Kikamba 33), Mpanda chooses to be adventurous.

The conversation between him and his father has an aesthetic value, especially when it is buttressed by a proverb. For the father, Mpanda chooses to be the crocodile that "ran away from rain only to dive in water" (Kikamba 33). Here the novelist not only attests to the conflicting views of two generations of immigrants, father and son; but he also juxtaposes the African proverb of the crocodile and the rain with the Chaucerian "nothing ventured, nothing gained". The author proves his mastery of the narrative in making Mpanda a mediator between two generations and two literary traditions: "They say if you risk nothing you gain nothing", Mpanda suggests (Kikamba 33). This means that one cannot hope to cross a border without first entering a boundary. Mpanda's intention to return to Angola has been brewing for some time. African migration experiences are not uniform, and the migrant can feel at home in the space of residence.

Wainanina's "Discovering Home"

The third text, "Discovering Home", is a first-person narrative about a young man who uses the call for a family reunion as an opportunity to travel and discover his roots**.** The story is cosmopolitan in nature and character. The journey to Kenya is inscribed within the perspective of a journey of return: Kenya is the protagonist's birth place and place of memory. He differs from Mpanda, who left Angola in his parents' arms, and from Nii and Mama, who were born in the diaspora. Indeed, he returns as a tourist. In this sense, the character resembles Chester in *The New Tribe* who does not want to lose his job in England while away in Nigeria. In "Discovering Home", the diasporic space – South Africa – where the narrator has lived for a decade, is not characterised by any remarkable sense of unbelonging. Observatory is a suburb of Cape Town, situated 7 km from the central business district. The protagonist has worked for two years in Observatory, where he feels at home.

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The story starts in June 1995, a year after the first democratic elections in South Africa. The opening statement of the short story, "There is a problem" (Wainaina 9), forces the reader to pause. At first glance, this statement leads the reader astray as s/he would expect the "problem" to be related to the historical and economic situation of the Mother City in the context of the new South Africa. But the sentiment of the narrator is factual, more ordinary: it reflects the everyday occurrences of young life. Here the "problem" signifies (aspects of) life stripped of racial, ethnic, and historical resonance: "the problem" is that "[s]omebody has fallen asleep in the toilet" and the "upstairs bathroom is locked". It is a "problem" because at a party a bathroom is essential. Wainaina seems to suggest that the mundane (in the case of the "locked" bathroom) is a normal everyday occurrence: a testimony to belonging in the migrant space. Therefore, in Cape Town there is a sense of normality in the narrator's life. This apparent sense of belonging is initially concealed by the statement: "There is a problem".

The narrator's sense of being at home in the diasporic space is beset by the apprehension he feels at the prospect of going home: "I have . . . rarely breached the boundary of my clique. Because of fear, I suppose, and a feeling that I am not quite ready to leave a place that has let me be anything I want to be" (Wainaina 9). It seems that he is at home in the exclusivity of his "clique". Nonetheless, he expresses the desire to escape the bounds of the clique. The narrator is "returning" (so to speak), after receiving an invitation to a family reunion that seeks to bring together about four generations of African relatives and families – locals, intra- and extra- migrant Africans – all the way to the ancestral land[56].

Even after the arbitrary drawing of colonial borders Africans have travelled to other African countries – as migrants in search of other opportunities (or prompted by the need to survive), but also as cosmopolitan travellers seeking to discover life beyond the confines of the national borders. Migration is a human phenomenon, regardless of whether it stems from the need for survival or the desire for change of milieu. Migrant Africans are not always products of civil and political unrest in their countries of origin. Narratives of return pose the challenge of negotiating identity in the homeland and of defining citizenship. Returning to the original homeland is, for better or for worse, a transformative experience. In the next section, I review the notion of the intra-continental return as touristic (re)discovery of the homeland

[56] Here ancestry does not refer to a remote past and land of forefathers. Ancestry means roots in the sense of being linked to living persons: the grandparents.

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(in "Discovering Home"), as forced repatriation-cum-labour migration (in *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*), and as labour migration-cum-restorative return[57] (in *Going Home*).

Unbecoming diasporic: returning to roots

At the time of the narrative, return is seen as a voluntary uprooting. I use the adjective "voluntary" advisedly, since none of the characters at the time of the narrative is being actively pursued – except, in retrospect, Mama. Nii's return is voluntary in an historical context of involuntary dispersals. It can be argued, however, that in his case the historical, social, and psychological conditions of diasporic residence confirm the idea of necessity and involuntariness. This explains the need to understand the causes, conditions, and circumstances – seen in their contexts – of the subjects' displacements. The stories of Mama in *Unexpected Joy* and of the narrator of the short story portray return as a journey, resulting in a spiritual reawakening.

The search for the causes of displacement necessitates exploring the status of citizenship and examining the migratory movements of diasporic people and migrants; this will explain why their status remains insecure in the diaspora (Kobo 67). Periods of relative peace and economic security provide immigrants and members of the diaspora with a sense of belonging to their new nations. However, it is the occurrence of "seasons of anomy"[58] – the social exclusion of both indigenous and foreign populations as a result of social and political turmoil – that undercuts any sense of secure citizenship rights. Scapegoating of the "alien" is presented as a response of forsaken autochthons seeking to address the violation of their rights as citizens; it also indicates the failure of states to deliver on promises made to their citizens (Kobo 68). This is perhaps what Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels describe as the "gap between people's dreams of a better life, and their actual disconnection from the structures on which the materialisation of this dream [of freedom and a better life] depends" (1). In the new postcolonial regimes the nation and the state become superstructures that seek to prioritise communal rights to the detriment of individual rights, thus emphasizing the importance of the nation, the ethnic group, and political elite, whose rights take precedence over the rights of individuals (Mbembe, "The New Africans" 108).

Return is enmeshed in the tensions surrounding the notion of citizenship. The advent of democracy in Africa revitalised postcolonial "disputes over the private accumulation of

[57] Following Svetlana Boym's notion of "restorative nostalgia", my concept of "restorative return" has the nation and sense of citizenship as its object.
[58] A tribute to Wole Soyinka's *Seasons of Anomy*.

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wealth and its corollary, social exclusion" ("The New African" 108). As Mbembe argues, this redefinition of the status of citizenship sought to capitalise on the politics of exclusion, founded on the premise of citizenship being defined through the "principle of anteriority", whereby "only autochthons would be entitled to access the local civic space and its citizenship" ("The New African" 108). Referring to this judicial and civic inequity, Mbembe explains: "On top of the distinction between nationals and strangers, internal differences are set up; the most decisive of these is supposed to be the opposition within the same country between autochthons and *allogènes*[59]" ("The New African" 109). This culminates in the exclusion of the "aliens". Nativism and anteriority emerge as some of the most devastating aftermaths of the (colonial) political division of the peoples of Africa (Mbembe, "Afropolitanism"; "The New African"; "African Modes"). Among the causes of relocation, as described in the texts, are loss, economic precariousness, the "homing desire" (to use Avtar Brah's enticing phrase) and perhaps also patriotism. Three main tropes which explain the process of return hold this section together: (i) leaving the diasporic space; (ii) imagining the homeland as utopia; and (iii) the chronotope of return.

Migrant literature includes a recognition of the principle of utopianism as "fundamental to human consciousness because humans are always striving forward, anticipating, desiring" (Ashcroft 9). In the narrative of return, utopia is based on the idea that having (tangible) ancestral roots in the homeland guarantees belonging and life improvement. However, utopian desire is sometimes kept in check early at the national border. Notions such as citizenship and ancestry cannot resist the test of autochthony and the insistence on the performance of national identity. In this section I explore the process of *un-becoming* diasporic.

Agyei-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*

In *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* intra-continental reverse migration is characterised by a loss of security in the private sphere in the form of the loss of a loved one. Loss is also related to socio-economic precariousness. Nii's salary as assistant manager in a major bank in Ghana is insignificant. He rents a single, rundown room, within a stone's throw of the Atlantic Ocean, in which his wife Massa is bedridden. Nii's story corresponds to the period when, as Deborah Potts observes, the "majority of the population of nearly all sub-Saharan African towns and cities, experienced a massive decline in their living standards" (245). The neighbourhood is

[59] "Allogène" (French) is an antonym of autochthonous.

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full of unspeakable insalubrities and the proximity of the Ocean – as openness and vastness of possibility – is a significant contrast, evoking his entrapment in the current social, economic and emotional situation. His financial predicament coincides with the acute physical deterioration of his wife.

At Massa's death, Nii alters the nature of his journey and at the same time, Nigeria changes its significance: it ceases to function as the economic motor of West Africa and becomes the historical location of ancestry, a change which is enforced by the presence of his sister, Mama Orojo. Massa dies on the way, shortly before their arrival at the religious healer's establishment. Nii fails to come up with the money to bury his wife and abandons her corpse at a hospital morgue. Distraught, he nevertheless consults the spiritual advisor regarding his "cleansing: a spiritual, cultural, and bodily bath" (Agyei-Agyiri 130). After confessing his shortcomings and sins (read misfortunes), "he was free! Free!" (Agyei-Agyiri 131). He prays: "I want to see my parents. I want to, my Lord" (Agyei-Agyiri 132). Thus, the physical journey to Nigeria – removed from the socio-historical context – becomes a return to roots.

Read through the lenses of return, citizenship in *Unexpected Joy* appears as an unstable category for both migrants and autochthons, as it is subject to the vicissitudes of national identity politics (Kobo 77; see also Gaidzanwa 45-46). For instance, prior to the issuing of the Aliens Expulsion Order in Nigeria and the subsequent propagating of this on both Nigerian and Ghanaian radio stations, Nii's Ghanaian identity is not a cause of concern for "indigenous" Ghanaians and his Nigerian origin is treated as though this were a trivial matter. It suddenly occurs to Nii that those close to him had known all along of his distant origins. His (late) wife Massa was puzzled by Nii's (and the nativists') fixation on foreign tribal appearances when Ghana itself consists of hundreds of ethnic groups. Now that Nii has lost his footing in Ghana, Nigeria becomes his utopia, the place where his citizenship – on the basis of right of blood – represents the first step towards self-fulfilment. However, making claims to essentialised pockets of identity can be inimical to the self. Nii's utopian journey is soon challenged by the autochthonous institution of what I call a "rite of passage".

The plummeting economy of the homeland compromises diasporic subjects' claims of belonging and citizenship. Identity papers are first regarded as evidence of citizenship but these can also easily be discarded in favour of more complex forms of performance of identity. Amidst this chaos, difference translates into otherness, which in turn invites exclusion of the other, who is believed to be "radically different" (see Geschiere, Meyer, and Pels 2). At the level of the nation-state, alienness corresponds to what is excluded in terms of

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legal provisions regarding citizenship. Therefore, difference is manufactured, reinvented, resized and contextualised to fit current political agendas and socio-economic conditions. Agieyi-Agyiri connects both orders of expulsion of aliens, and describes what happens to Nii as a repeat of the earlier rhetoric of exclusion practised in Ghana fourteen years earlier. Due in part to the instability of multi-ethnic nation-states (see C. Young qtd. in Kobo 67), African diasporic/immigrant subjects in Africa have fragile roots in the receiving countries. Prior to the events that forced Mama Orojo out of Ghana, migrant and diasporic communities from Africa and abroad enjoyed the status of citizens. As the economic crisis becomes more severe, Kobo explains that "'indigenous' became the defining characteristic of a 'true Ghanaian', based on claims to ancestral provenance within the country's territorial space" (77). Mama and Nii's parents are among those who, because of the time constraints, did not or could not produce proof of their Ghanaian citizenship. At the border, Nii becomes the victim of historical poetic justice.

Ageyi-Agyiri represents return as a "rite of passage" instituted at the national border, and pitches it against the returnee's claim for a "right of passage" into the homeland. When he finally arrives at the border town of Illere, on the Nigerian side of the Benin/Nigeria border, and Nii is asked to verbally identify himself, he gives his Ghanaian name, "Nii Tackie Moses Akong Na bi" (145). Nii's posture and attitude do not match those of Ghanaian aliens, and the immigration officer feels encroached upon and insulted:

> "Fool," the officer said, "you're Ghanaian and smile and pose like an Oga now".
> "Look at the tribal marks on my cheeks," Nii replied.
> "Oho! You speak grammar, now; let's see.' He held the waist section of Nii's trousers and pushed him towards the border post"
>
> (Agyei-Agyiri 145).

Nii has no absolute proof of his Nigerian-ness. He is apprehended and treated like any other "alien". But Nii quickly sets himself apart and demands to know why he is being harassed when he is a Nigerian citizen, like the immigration officers holding him. Nii claims "right of passage" while the immigration officer rebukes him for claiming Nigerian citizenship. Firstly, in order to attests to his Nigerian-ness, the officer asks, "Can you speak any of the language of our people?" (145). Nii fails the language test. He and other "aliens", who are detained at the border, are crammed into a vehicle and driven away from the border towards the town. Secondly, because Nii speaks colonial English as opposed to Nigerian Pidgin, the officer replies: "You are every inch a Ghana man now, proud, rattling grammar like a white

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man. Why do you want to change your citizenship? Aren't you shamed?" (Agyei-Agyiri 145-6). Nii falls short of performing the common colonial identity that the officer requires if he is to let him through. Thirdly, when he is compelled to produce identity documents ("passport, certificate…") the officer in charge, Paleo, examines them and falls into what can only be referred to as approving silence. Nii is not released, but after he squeezes in the story of how his parents were deported back to Nigeria, fourteen years earlier, Paleo swiftly changes from officer to businessman. He detains Nii and his companions and requires them to undertake forced (paid) labour as alternative to being sent to jail. He threatens to "turn them over to the Immigration" if they cause trouble (Agyei-Agyiri 148) Nii and his friend are arrested and subjected to forced labour.

The search for roots enters the discourse of identity politics: Nii has to adopt the same exclusionary discourse that seeks to deny him "right of passage". He evokes the nativistic right of blood to claim citizenship. In addition (which is more troubling for the reader) he also erases his own history, thus perpetuating the erasure of diasporic people who are forced to return. The categories that stand out as fundamental to the politics of exclusion – history and culture – prove to be the same categories that affect the returnee's claim to citizenship. History and culture initially serve as factors of exclusion for "aliens" and inclusion for indigenes. Abombola O. Adesoji and Akin Alao argue that as long as migration is a continuing phenomenon, autochthony and locality remain subject to uncertainty (155-156). Mahmood Mamdani explains that the core challenge of the fragility of citizenship in Africa is the prevalence of the nominal "native" over "settler":

> So long as the distinction between settler and native is written into the structure of the state, the settler becomes a citizen, but not a native. To say that is to say that the settler can be a member of the civic space, now deracialised, but not the customary space, still ethnicised.
>
> (qtd. in Omotola 274)

Nii seems to contradict himself when he refers to the same rhetoric of native/settler to claim "right of passage":

> I'm not asking to be given citizenship. I am claiming it as a right. Look at my tribal marks. I've told you of my sad story, how I have been deprived of parental care due to a barbaric un-African, unconscionable law over there … I look at my own people thinking they'll do the right thing by me and allow me to live peacefully by right in my country. My parents are here.
>
> (Agyei-Agyiri 151)

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In his rant against his mistreatment Nii fails to realise that what he calls "a barbaric un-African, unconscionable law over there" (in Ghana) is exactly the perspective of history and identity being used by the officer. This interaction between Nii and the officer reveals a central concern: the meaning of time and space.

Bakhtin's chronotope is useful for conceptualising the meaning of time and space for both the indigene and the diasporic subject in this text. I contend that there is a sort of "extra-temporal hiatus" that is revealed in the narrative of return, whereby the encounter of ancestry and diasporic subject seems to indicate that both parties their own purchase of the meaning of historical time. As one of the most salient characteristics of the chronotope, the "encounter" between autochthon and diaspora troubles the notion of citizenship (see Steiner, "Navigating Multilingually" 51). This "extra-temporal hiatus", reflected in the encounter of autochthons and diasporic subjects, indicates a dual understanding of history. The immigration officer, as an autochthon, seems to be suggesting that history happened *here* and that any event that occurred outside the confines of national boundaries is "alien". For the autochthon, history as continuity can only be localised. In retaliation, Nii claims that history also happened outside of Nigeria and that spatial separation should not erase the stories of those previously dispersed. The autochthonous position echoes Mbembe's critique of nativism as in essence exclusivist. Displacement from the diasporic space is depicted similarly in *Going Home*, but follows the different dynamics of the returnee's encounter with the homeland.

Contemporary conversations on diaspora seem to follow a pattern of analysis that only confirms the complexity of this term. There is a tendency among academics to first define diaspora according to the classical definition before contextualising it to serve the purpose of the particular research theme (Clifford; Brubaker; Bakewell). Nii and Mama are fifth-generation Nigerians born in Ghana; that is, they are Ghanaian Nigerians, and they are Ghanaians from Nigeria. Neither Kikamba nor Agyei-Agyiri touches on relationships and connections between diasporic subjects. However, a closer reading of the characters' personal stories in *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* reveals some aspects that can allow for an alternative reading of diasporic and migrant trends. In the end, the narrative of return suggests that some categories that make up the traditional definition of diaspora become part of a process of objectification and the forced essentialising of diasporic subjects. For instance, there is a forced connection between the subject and his or her homeland. And return becomes an actual behaviour of subjects, even though they may not have contemplated return. In *Going Home* Mpanda is left stranded in South Africa, and fits in the aspect of traditional definition

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of diaspora about dispersal to two or more countries. In a sense, the utopian impulse can prompt a reading of the homeland as myth.

Kikamba's *Going Home*

In *Going Home* Kikamba depicts displacement from the diasporic as a result of the inability to make a decent living. In this text, return is motivated by homesickness[60]. In contrast to Nii, Mpanda has decided, in actuality, to return to the land of his birth and his parents' country of origin. In this case, the return journey is instigated by a representation of the homeland as utopia, unlike Nii's utopian desire in *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, which develops en route. Here the returnee regards the homeland as his birth place, but it is not a place of lived memory. The novel explores the connection between immigration and home-citizenship. Mpanda lays emphasis on the place of his birth rather than the place of memory, using this as the basis for proclaiming his Angolan citizenship and belonging. The accent is on Angola as both destination and homeland, as an alternative space in opposition to the blatant poverty in the former Zaire. Mpanda longs for an (original) connection with his birth place. His longing for Angola is a result of separation from a familiar space; rather it is constituted by his desire to participate in the supposed reconstruction of the country, following the signing of the latest (Bicesse) peace accord. If he is indeed nostalgic then the connection that Mpanda feels with Angola stems from inherited loss or what Ashcroft refers to as a "utopian impulse" (13). Mpanda desires a home, which he lost when his parents became refugees. The returnee experiences the loss of the desired object, his country of origin. Boym speaks elsewhere of nostalgia for things that never existed. Here the loss of the desired object occurs when subjects feel deprived of a location that they have never visited, a home they have never inhabited; they also feel cut off from things they have never possessed (see Boym 38).

Mpanda's exilic loss does not take into account the memory of the homeland as fundamental in what Edward Said calls the "unhealable rift" (502). Mpanda somehow experiences this "rift". Here Mpanda's status of immigrant and refugee in Zaire is transferred from his parents, the ones who physically suffered the exodus from Angola. Although his parents feel estranged from their country of origin, they do not express a desire to return.

In *Going Home* it is assumed that the categories of citizenship and nationality are not problematic. The search for utopia is not challenged by these categories, but the ideals of nation-building and of a common national destiny drive the migrant to return. In reality,

[60] This can mean, in other words, a sentiment of having had enough of the diasporic space.

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however, the nation is imploding due to the scramble for political power. It is a return to the nation, not a quest for roots. From the perspective of the young, naive returnee, the war in Angola has been the result of political dissonance. In his view the signing of the Bicesse peace accord represents a milestone towards real peace in Angola. Having crossed over to Angola, Mpanda feels ever closer to his objective. However, reality soon sets in on hearing the staggering news that "a truck-load of passengers had just been killed by an armed gang in an ambush [on] the very road [he]'d be travelling" (Kikamba 31). After crossing the border, the utopian dream is kept in check by the cruel reality of war and road piracy. Mpanda's Angolan identity and citizenship are not questioned. Mpanda does not need to prove that he is Angolan. The encounter between homeland and returning migrant culminates in a way that is similar to that in *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* – in an "extratemporal hiatus", but with a difference. Mpanda returns as an Angolan. He is granted entry at the border upon presentation of his passport: almost as if time has stood still and his parents had never left the country. Eager to participate in rebuilding the country, Mpanda becomes involved in politics, against the advice of his wife, Isabel. Rebuilding the nation requires the performance of his political self. Unfortunately for the protagonist, the opposition rejects the verdict of the presidential elections and the winning party tracks down active opposition members. Mpanda finds himself, yet again, crossing borders in flight from the homeland. He is forced to abscond to South Africa, abandoning his wife and child, who are not directly threatened by the political witch-hunt. The journey to the homeland is much anticipated when return is voluntary; it is expressive of one's migrant attitude.

Wainaina's "Discovering Home"

In "Discovering Home", the journey to the homeland is a testimony to belonging and being bonded in dispersal. It is about claiming a piece of one's story, rooted in the past but extended into the present across borders (continental and intercontinental). Wainaina's short story is about the reclamation of one's life history. In this respect, Shailja Patel's performance and political memoir, *Migritude* celebrates displacement and proclaims the importance of "set[ting]" in the search for a missing half" (7). Patel recognises people's ambivalent positions vis-à-vis history; she recognises history as a duality made up of both negatives and positives. Her lyrical journey is about (re)discovering the past. In a conversation with her readers, she inquires:

> Have you ever set out to search for a missing half?

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> The piece that isn't shapely, elegant, simple. The half
> that's ugly, heavy, abrasive. Awkward to the hand. Gritty
> on the tongue.
> Migritude. (Patel 7)

"Discovering Home" engages return differently than the other two novels, and the depicted borders have a different impact on the traveller. We have seen so far in this chapter how leaving one's country for the first time turns the boundary between two nations or the borderland into a zone of trepidation: to leave or not leave, that is the concern. For instance, this story distinguishes itself from *Going Home*: when Mpanda flees Angola for South Africa: the boundary that is the airport-plane-airport does not impact on the migrant in the same way that the terrestrial boundary does. This boundary has no borderland to speak of. This aspect of border-crossing resembles what happens in "Discovering Home". The narrator flies from Johannesburg airport to Nairobi without experiencing the apprehension inherent in borderland crossing. The voyage to the homeland does not evoke concerns over citizenship. His return to Kenya poses no legal impediment, which the text illustrates as follows: "After the soft light and mellow manners of Cape Town, Nairobi is a shot of whisky" (Wainaina 10). As in *Going Home*, there is also an "extratemporal hiatus" here. The narrator left Kenya in his teenage years, which means that his visit to Kenya is one of recollection and assessment of memory. This places him in a transnational moment.

In this story, the journey of return becomes an aesthetic discovery, a transcendental leap from childhood to maturity, from things taken for granted to the appreciation of beauty and art from a cosmopolitan point of view. The journey is mostly a (re)discovery of old things, especially in Kenya, as well as the discovery of compelling new mysteries in Uganda. The narrator can now appreciate the beauty of the "completeness of the old [generations]" (Wainaina 11). The narrator learns to look at faces and objects of art which heavily influence his new-found appreciation for roots with fresh eyes. The painting that still haunts the corridor of his childhood home provokes ambivalent feelings. As a child he can attest to its beauty, but still dismisses it as undeserving of an accolade. The painting has an allure which he cannot resist. During this trip, he realises a dimension of travel which reflects the idea of home as both real and (re)invented or imagined. The narrator rediscovers the meaning of family, roots, dispersal, and history. Moreover, as Evan Mwangi puts it, the story "discusses its relation with earlier African literature such Okot p'Bitek's poetry and Negritude art" (174). After the painting, the narrator rediscovers his mother from a grown-up perspective:

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"She has never seemed frail, but does so now. I decide that it is I who is growing, changing, and my attempts at maturity make her seem more human" (Wainaina 11). It is en route from Kenya to Uganda that he realizes how little he knows her. He is in awe of his mother's instant bodily and cultural transition from her migrant location to the land of her birth (which the narrator has yet to discover since he has not yet been to Uganda). The transition is noticeable in both language and dress as performative expressions[61]. The narrator is puzzled by the beauty of the Banganda women and by the décor of pubs, but mostly by his mother, whose beauty stands out in Kenya but blends in with the landscape, in Uganda. The foreignness and magic of the landscape seems to match his mother's transformation. The colour green in Kenya differs from the "mountain green, cool and enduring" of Bufumbira: "Mum looks almost foreign now; her Kinyarwanda accent is more pronounced, and her face is not as reserved as usual. Her beauty . . . seems at home here. She does not stand out here, she belongs. The rest of us seem like tourists" (Wainaina 22). The mother is at home and blends into her country of origin, while the narrator, a second-generation Ugandan in Kenya, can only pause and look at the unfamiliar, but welcoming/welcome scenery.

This return home is cheerful and life-affirming. The narrator seems to be open to the various possibilities that travel can bestow, through every step of the trip, from his present residence in Cape Town, via his father's country in Kenya, to his mother's country of origin in Uganda, the place of the celebration of his grandparents' 60th wedding anniversary. He has had an incorrect image of Uganda: "This is the country I used to associate with banana trees, old and elegant kingdoms, rot, Idi Amin, and hopelessness" (Wainaina 18). Now he admits, "Reality is a better aesthetic" (19). Rather than theorise from afar about the decadence or beauty of things back home, the narrator realises that being in touch and engaging history and roots are a far better way of learning about oneself: returning is the key. Patel's words capture the essence of life through her lyrical rendering of a history of colonialism and postcolonialism. Most of all for her, *Migritude* is an attitude toward that history. Wainaina's story of return as (re)discovery of home privileges both family and culture. The movement of family members across borders and continents becomes an "attitude", a "tongue"[62] that laps at and absorbs social reality in order to produce (following a Négritude stance) words that celebrate migrant life, the status of the immigrant, and one's attitude with regard to history (see Patel 143). Wainaina's narrator embraces and lyrically describes the experience of discovery.

[61] The narrator's mother differs from Nii Tackie, whose ignorance of Nigerian languages targets him as alien.
[62] See Patel (7).

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Return is celebrated as a spiritual reawakening. It is a reawakening because the narrator's memories of Kenya are lived memories. In addition, he has preserved inherited memories derived from story-telling, which adds to the aesthetic of discovering home: "My mother, and the many guests who came to visit, always filled my imagination with incredible tales of Uganda"[63] (Wainaina 18). This is a story of a return to familial roots. The family is evidently scattered across national and continental spaces, but they have maintained the connections that make them transnational. The reunion represents a significant occasion for reaffirming belonging in the ancestral home. It is an encounter between the transnational and the local which, according to Yeoh, Willis, and Fakhri, confers on the former "fluid, flexible" identities (212). Return is also a spiritual awakening, as the narrator expands his knowledge and love of his diasporic map to include his mother's homeland, on the boundary between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* and *Going Home*, return is represented as a manifestation of a desire to represent the homeland as a utopian space. The homeland becomes the only place in the diasporic imaginary where the diasporic subject can achieve self-fulfilment through attaining the privileged status of citizenship. In "Discovering Home", return becomes a mode of self-exploration. It is an attitude of being in the world, both locally and in the diaspora. The origins of the impulse to migrate back to ancestral land can be found in textual descriptions of characters' lives.

Roots and routes of Africanity

Migration within and from Africa brings out the migrants' continental identity through what I call contextualised spaces or situations of concern. These spaces/situations engender an awareness of Africanity. This is to say that Africanity is always present in the African subject, but also that it often requires certain situations for the subject to become aware of this form of identity. *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, *Going Home*, and "Discovering Home" depict return in different contexts, generations and trajectories. It seems that in both trajectories of migration (intra- and extra- continental) Africanity is a subject position that is often inhabited consciously in particular circumstances. Migration within and from Africa allows Africans to come to terms with their continental identity. As the thesis has demonstrated so far, African identity can be an asset for negotiating travel to and belonging in foreign places. For instance,

[63] In *Going Home* the presence of Angola in Mpanda's imagination is reinforced both by sharing the border and the tales of Angola told by his parents, his cousin Maria (visitor), and inherited as collective imagination of Angolans in Zaire.

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Mpanda's evocation of Mandela as the future of Africa illustrates the use of (black) Africanity as boundary breaker. However, African identity has double meaning. As Anthony A. Appiah observes: "'African' can surely be a vital and enabling badge; but in a world of genders, ethnicities, classes and languages . . . it is hardly surprising that there are times when it is not the label that we need" ("African Identities" 91). The concept of Africanity poses a definitional conundrum. The thesis addresses this problem through an examination of situations in which Africanity becomes an existential category in border/boundary crossing.

There are no required, specific situations where one becomes African. In this sense Africanity is presented as a subject's statement that s/he is aware of his/her continental identity. The subject is aware that s/he is more than a national citizen who belongs to a particular ethnic denomination or region. I want to argue that a Gabonese, Nigerian, Ghanaian or Angolan, for instance, recognises the fact of and accepts an African identity as part of his/her self. This is a mode of which co-exists with other localised modes of being. African identity, like any form of identity, is not fixed; it is dynamic and its emergence is prompted by context and by particular situations (see Appiah, "African Identities" 88-89). Looking forward and anticipation are characteristic of the imagining of space as utopia. Thus the journey back to the homeland places the travelling subject in transit, and he or she is straddled between a familiar diasporic space and an unfamiliar homeland. In all the texts, the traveller subjectively conceives of him/herself as a diasporic subject returning to the homeland, the country of origin. Here, Africanity remains an implicit category. In addition to situating returnees in their new communities as well as vis-à-vis their diasporic spaces of origin, I aim to explore textual representations of Africanity as a routed and rooted phenomenon, and I examine *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* (mainly) and "Discovering Home".

Ageiyi-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*

In *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, Massa adopts Africanity as a mode of being at home, in Ghana, and especially in her conjugal relationship with Nii. Through Massa, one reads Pan-Africanism as one of the nodes around which African identity comes into being as a subject position. Indeed, the union of diasporic subject with an autochthon is proof of understanding and undercutting notions of origin and ancestry, as well as affirming the possibility of being at home in Africa and not just in one's home country. That Nii bemoans that he and Massa "boasted of no blood relation" (*Unexpected* 11) demonstrates Massa's willingness to live a larger life in her country, to breach territorial boundaries. It is only after her death, that the

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reader learns that Massa has had a family in Ghana all along. When Mama Orojo takes responsibility for transporting Massa's body for burial in her village, Massa's mother and villagers agree, at the impending signs of a storm at the funeral, that indeed "Massa was different" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 205). The narrative adds to her difference the fact that she was adopted and had not visited the village for a long time, thriving in the comfort that Pan-Africanism might be the solution to racial and territorial bigotry. She did not just preach Pan-Africanism, she lived it. Bedridden, Massa proclaims her African self: "We're Africans," she insists, "and where one finds peace, there is one's home too" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 45). Massa belies the relevance of skin colour and tribal marks as criteria for finding a home: for her, being African should be enough – as a non-racialised, permeable, and inclusive form of identity.

Africanity as a local phenomenon is practiced in transnational and international hubs such as markets. The market, as represented in *Unexpected*, is the local/national hub of Africanity. Katamaro market in Accra, Ghana, is one such hub. One day while on his errands as contributions collector, Nii Tackie laments the state of the market, which has lost its colourfulness, its "many good features" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 37). It has become a sad picture with "broken [and cracked] walls" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 37). These cracks and pieces of wall represent one of many examples of the disintegration of the early Pan-African ethic of togetherness and non-exclusive citizenship. Kantamaro used to be the "nerve centre of commerce" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 37); but also the place where Africanity was celebrated, through the configuration of its merchants and client base. Sections of the market bore the name of foreign dealers who specialised in certain types of produce: for instance, the "Gao Onion" was managed by Malians who specialised in onions. The market was patronised by Africans and Asians alike: it had a cosmopolitan makeup**.** In the early years of independence, Kantamaro epitomised a space without barriers; in those days it was African citizenship that was the governing identity. The text illustrates this: "Kantamaro gave expression to African unity. One could, standing at one spot, sample the diverse races and tribes in Africa and Asia. . . . The Syrian and Lebanese[64] stores overlooked the streets . . ." (Ageiyi-Agyiri 38). Central to the issue of Africanity, this type of market which brought globalisation in pre- and postcolonial West Africa, "successfully wiped away tribal barriers" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 39). In days when citizenship was not politicised or tribalised, such hubs proclaimed Africanity. Similarly,

[64] See Akyeampong for a comprehensive analysis of Lebanese diaspora in Ghana.

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Going Home describes the Angola-Zaire border markets as meeting and crossing places of African identities.

Ageiyi-Agyiri craftily weaves a narrative of Africanity that is not professed from the rooftops but subtly expresses itself through extroversion. I am reminded of June Jordan's definition of identity, which Shailja Patel reports: "I will call you my brother, I will call you my sister, on the basis of what you do for justice . . . for equality . . . freedom, and not on the basis of who you are" (Patel 145). For instance, at the time of Mama's forced return, Nigerian citizenship and nationality were not stable categories since the country was in the throes of a civil war. The boundary between local and alien is blurred or simply pales in comparison to national ethnic differences. Fourteen years after her forced return, she and those who have integrated into Nigerian society experience a semblance of acceptance among Nigerian nationals. In a sense acceptance by ordinary citizens is the mode of integration (see Gutto 67). In the novel civil society proclaims her acceptance when Mama saves a child from a burning building. Mama saves the lives of the child and wife of Paleo, the immigration officer, who at that time is at the border, hunting down aliens. The rescue probably happens at the same time Nii is arrested by Paleo. After her heroic act, Mama is hailed as a true Nigerian. She is awarded what Frantz Fanon refers to as "honorary citizenship" (25). Thus, diasporic spaces are also home to countless members of the diaspora, until situations arise that beset the relationship between the latter and the autochthonous populations. The citizenship status of members of the intra-African diaspora thus appears as if it had been lent to them by the political and legal institutions of the receiving nation. In addition, Africanity can also be expressed in routes.

The political border is perhaps one of the most compelling spaces that brings out Africanity in the returning migrant. It is a place that exacts somatic and conceptual violence on those who cross borders. The theme of violence demands an examination of (illegal) border-crossing dynamics. For instance, on his way to Nigeria, Nii has to cross Togo and Benin. Borderlanders make use of their common space, in which the border is irrelevant: "farms . . . straddled the border of the two countries" (Agyei-Agyiri 137). The text does not specify whether the farms belong to Ghanaian or Togolese borderlanders. The farms complicate the conditions of border crossing for people not familiar with the borderland or coming from countries further afield. This Ghana/Togo border has no marker. Although this borderland constitutes a common living space for the locals, for migrants this poses a problem. The text reads:

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> Nii looked out for fresh instructions from the leader of the group. […] The leader of the group had crossed the border. Another person followed. Nii could not tell which way the Togo side of the border was, but he was shown a small tree ahead of him that he was told was on the Togo side of the border.
>
> (Agyei-Agyiri 137)

This passage clearly shows the arbitrary nature of the border: its marker, the "small tree", indicates the proximity of the border but nothing clearly demarcates the borderline. The "small tree" that is said to be on the Togo side of the border is the dividing reference; one that designates and produces difference across sameness. In this instance, there is conceptual and grammatical violence heaped upon words and phrases that translate border crossing: "he was shown", "he could not tell", and "he was told". It reads: "[t]here was no visible mark which showed the border between Ghana and Togo" (Agyei-Agyiri 135) and yet also "[t]he leader of the group had crossed the border" (Agyei-Agyiri 137). There is room to wonder whether "cross" is the correct expression. The colonial border is both a negation and a "presencing" (to use Martin Heidegger's phrase) of Africanity: "A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing" (qtd. in Bhabha, "Introduction" 1). It is a negation because it forces a wedge between communities of people who share culture, traditions, religion, and modes of being – as is the case in most African borderlands. The border/boundary becomes a "presencing" of Africanity by virtue of the invisible presence of a territorial, physical division of the bordering territories.

The climax of the surfacing of African identity in the novel occurs at the improvised camp at a Nigerian airport where the deportees await transfer to their "original" homelands. The airport shows that African identity manifests itself in situations of dire concern where the African subject is reduced to what Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer* describes as "bare life", the human body reduced to its basic expression. Nii, Aaron, and other "aliens" have been left stranded there, witness the deaths of their fellow detainees, who succumb to thirst, hunger, and the cramped conditions of their detention. To protest against this inhumanity, Nii and Aaron undertake to cut themselves on their fingers and use their bloody fingers to write on a piece of paper which they use as a makeshift placard: "Here we plant the African Unity flag" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 282). Nii's harangue to the crowd of deportees is an appeal to rise above the categories of race, nation, and ethnicity. The boundary between the immigration officers and the "aliens" is breached as both parties lose their humanity in this unfortunate encounter. The

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planting of the "African Unity flag" suggests that the spirit of Africanity is being reified in this very sombre situation. African identity is being embraced and the African self is inhabited as a subject position from which to address the "native" peril – seen from the migrants' perspective. Africanity is made real by the blood and cries of the deportees on whose behalf Nii speaks:

> We're holding [the flag] between us for the martyrs . . . As I was saying, it's also in memory of those who are already dead in the course of the struggle for African Unity, including Massa . . . It's also in memory of all those who have fallen victim to hatred and bad laws and those undergoing all forms of degradation and persecution.
>
> (Agyei-Agyiri 283)

When the speech is given, Nii is contemplating going back to Ghana that is, accepting deportation, since he has not been given the citizenship he hopes for. Nii's harangue does not fall on deaf ears, and he and his fellow sufferers create an opportunity for continuing the journey.

Interestingly, in the statement that follows Nii does not refer to state or nation as an exclusive space. Nor does he argue that "identity" or "proof of citizenship" is bestowed by someone in authority. "Identity" and "citizenship" are a "state of mind" held by people with a common destiny who "can point proudly to [their] country" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 284). After deconstructing the national border and nativity as guarantees of citizenship and identity, the character makes a concession to what he refers to as "love of country". In his view, being a citizen translates into a personal relationship with the nation; it does not constitute a barrier to alien-ness. Instead it is a vantage point from which to appreciate diversity, and the historical, social and cultural movements that bring human beings together in the sharing of living spaces: "A sense of love for your country is a sense of pride. Pride is an improved ego, which is not hateful. Look around . . . Same people same reaction to pain" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 284). The right to citizenship is not basis for and does not justify hatred and cruelty to foreigners. In addition, Nii argues: "Race is important but being human elevated one above all base acts of hatred" (Ageiyi-Agyiri 284). As harbingers of difference, boundaries have always existed and should be accounted for, but they do not constitute absolute barriers.

If the African self is part of the collective unconscious of Africans; borders and other forms of "spaces of concern" force the travelling subject to become aware of his/her Africanity as a constituent of his/her identity. Therefore, the travelling subject is transformed and translated in the act of crossing the border. Thus, reverse migration understands hospitality as a crucial aspect of both displacement and integration. *Going Home* and

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Unexpected Joy at Dawn situate migrating subjects between two worlds in crisis, while the migrants flee economic scarcity, suffer the loss of loved ones, or endure a debilitating sense of unbelonging. For Jacques Derrida, hospitality starts at the critical moment of the encounter between host and guest. The exchange between host and guest is determined by a decision. Derrida observes that what one knows in European history as traditional hospitality is conditional since it is associated with the law, rights, and duties. Here, the host holds the power of decision to host and exercises control over the guest. The guest in turn decides to acknowledge the control of the host. Against this traditional form, Derrida proposes an unconditional hospitality which demands a welcoming of a guest without conditions or questions (*Of Hospitality* 32). This new form of hospitality poses a paradox: it leaves the host vulnerable to threats. Derrida recognises that if unconditional hospitality is impossible, it still marks the grounds for an ethics of hospitality. It is a paradox because this hospitality "needs the laws" that it strives to deconstruct (*Of Hospitality* 79). As an ethics, genuine hospitality becomes an unconditional welcoming of the guest. In the context of this dissertation, the encounter happens between diasporic subject (guest) and the autochthon (host); both lay various kinds of claims on, and entertain different types of relationships with the ancestral land or homeland.

Hospitality has a varying significance in the narratives of return for members of the diaspora and immigrants. For the latter group, who often distinguish themselves from the "native" group by retaining a familial anchorage in the homeland, integration happens much more smoothly. De Haas and Fokkema acknowledge that family reunion is a force that motivates and assuages the (outgoing and return) behaviour of migration (757). The family in the homeland help to create a welcoming space, physically and/or emotionally. By "physically", I mean that a relative in the homeland can provide housing or serve as a stepping stone. It also means the assurance of having a concrete destination in mind on one's return, like having specific geographical coordinates for one's destination, such as the name of a village. By "emotionally", I refer to the subjective assurance of being welcome in the homeland, thereby emphasising the value of roots and origins. The value of roots accounts for the tendency to imagine the homeland as a utopian space. Nii is still en route to his ancestral land, he has not yet been officially recognised as a child of the diaspora, nor has he started the process of settling himself in the ancestral land. In *Going Home* Mpanda has no problem integrating in Angola: although he speaks (rather rusty) Portuguese, he manages to find his cousin a few months after his arrival; most importantly, he befriends a school principal and reconnects with Isabel. Mpanda builds a family with Isabel, thus putting down his roots more

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deeply. There is a strong possibility that Nii will attach himself to the roots already planted by his sister, Mama.

Mama has gone through the ordeal of forced return. Even though the narrative says nothing about the role of their parents in Mama's own story of return, one can only speculate about her having inherited memories of the family history. She had arrived fourteen years earlier and found Nigeria in chaos. The question here is: what use would a family history have been at a time when the country was imploding with ethnic warfare? Mama's return to Nigeria coincided with the Biafran war of 1966-70. This crisis helped galvanise and consolidate Igbo identity (Bakewell 12). Elsewhere, Chinua Achebe uses the example of the emergence of Igbo identity to theorise the rise of African identity, which he concedes is still in process. Achebe remarks: "after the experience of the Biafran War, during a period of two years, [Igbo identity] became a very powerful consciousness. But it was real all the time. They all spoke the same language, called 'Igbo', even though they were not using that identity in any way" (qtd. in Appiah, "African Identities" 90; see also Bakewell 12). Telling her story to Ibuk, Mama confesses: "A civil war raging in Nigeria, you know . . . we were being trapped" (Agyei-Agyiri 15). Mama is "trapped" between Scylla and Charybdis: between deportation from Ghana and the Biafran war in Nigeria. Over the years, she managed to establish herself as a successful businesswoman, competing in a strongly gendered world. Now that she is thinking of settling down and getting married, the need for family arises and she seeks to return to Ghana to fetch her brother. The historical circumstances are different: one can only assume that Nii will not face the same challenges integrating in Nigeria as did Mama. Hospitality[65] –or favourable historical conditions – are conditional on the historical context of the encounter between returnee and the ancestral land.

The efforts to integrate into the homeland are determined by the returnee's experience of the host-land. The narratives suggest that return does not bring guaranteed belonging and integration in the homeland. The host-land or the most recent home remains a constant presence in the memory of the returnee. Thinking back is a consequence of displacement: it involves reflecting on diasporic space and lived history. When Mama Orojo suddenly feels the need to reconnect with her family back "home", she travels to Ghana. She is not going on a quest but on a mission to bring her brother with her to Nigeria. This journey back home differs fundamentally from her first arrival in Nigeria. This time she has a map of her native place: "A new building stood on the site where her father's house used to be, and the village

[65] Hospitality here does not mean that the returnee is supposed to be accepted as child of the diaspora or that he should be granted citizenship on that basis.

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had become smaller in her estimation" (Agyei-Agyiri 168)[66]. Her visit is inscribed within transnational border crossings, and most of all she does not disavow Ghana. On the contrary, she considers Ghana to be her spiritual home. Returning to the diasporic space rekindles her spirit. The text reads: "A new stage in her life was dawning: a meeting with her brother at last! Welcome home to Ghana. She giggled at the thought. Was Ghana home? She mused at the thought. It was a second home. Welcome!" (Agyei-Agyiri 68) This journey in search of her lost brother (whom she does not succeed in locating) becomes a "spiritual reawakening" (Agyei-Agyiri 83). Mama's return – read relocation – to Nigeria is not a forsaking of diasporic space. If anything, this space becomes part of her. Due to the difficulty presented by her adoptive status, Mama's Africanity enables her to refer to both Nigeria and Ghana as home. The resolution by Agyei-Agyiri's of this situation exhibits interesting similarities with Wainaina's story.

Wainaina's "Discovering Home"

Wainaina's text presents a facet of Africanity that none of the other primary texts do: a family reunion of three generations of Ugandans scattered around the world. In this story the political border plays a different role than in the novels. Return is described as a celebration of cosmopolitan Africanity demonstrating the importance of roots in maintaining a balance between history and present modes of being. The narrator's expression of Africanity happens at the "intersection of different cultures as a blending of one's own multiple sense of belonging. The more the narrator moves away from what he considers to be his home and roots, the more he discovers strands of his identity in other cultures" (Mwangi 174). From the configuration of the family tree to the spatial distribution of diasporic subjects, the text depicts movements across boundaries and borders, and the transition and translation of identities across subject positions as evidence of and a tribute to contemporary forms of African identity. Crossing national borders leads to stories of the allegiances and connections that travellers have with their places of departure and arrival. The crossing of continental, regional, and national borders in returning to the original homeland presents Africanity – and in particular family – as a global phenomenon. In the story, family members are known to depart from two continents: Africa and North America. The narrator flies from South Africa, an aunt is expected from the U.S, while other relatives hail from within the East African region (from Kenya and Uganda). The narrator's mother and many other relatives left

[66] Unlike Mama's and Nii's departure for Nigeria, and Mpanda's for Angola, for the first time, the diasporic home is here a concrete place on the map; a much more living memory than the ancestral land.

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Uganda in the 1960s and it is the first time that the family is reuniting. The dispersion of this family suggests the formation of an African family across nationalities and ethnicities: this is an Africanised family. The aunt from America – who, though it has not been mentioned, may or may not have children of her own, suggests an "Americanisation" of the family. The expected hundred or so members are scattered around the world, but all of them are connected to a single root: the grand-parents in Uganda.

To conclude, the awareness of African identity becomes its performance. Because the journey of return challenges returnees' allegiances to particular forms of identity and definitions of home, African identity becomes the common space that negates divisive modes of being and expression. When the diasporic space becomes dystopic, the homeland becomes the longed-for destination of disillusioned migrants and members of the diaspora. African identity, when latent or downplayed, has a way of forcing its emergence in situations and spaces of concern. However, by and large, Africanity is, for an African, a way of being in the continent and the world.

However, national borders remain unpredictable zones in turbulent times, especially when issues of nationality and citizenship are used to regulate the flow of migrants. The narrative of return, through the crossing of various borders, foregrounds the tensions that accrue during the encounter between diaspora and ancestry, through the confrontation between "rite" and "right" of passage to the homeland. This process reveals the limits in Africa of culture, tradition, politics, and laws as guarantors of secure citizenship rights for migrant populations and diasporic subjects, whose history of migration constitutes a counter-history to that of indigenous peoples.

To use Ngugi wa Thiong'o's analogy of fiction as language, one can arrive at the conclusion that African identity is not something that is, but rather an identity that needs to consciously be worked on. Like the ideal African fiction written in African languages which is then translated, published, and read by willing participants (Ngugi 85), Africanity needs intellectual, political, and popular willingness to embrace translation and exchanges. This willingness would allow for entering the various boundaries – across nations and regions – whose daunting presence often enforces reading difference with a magnifying glass, turning "alien-ness" into otherness. Citizenship is not a stable category for intra-continental African diasporas because of the lurking threat of forced returns. Contemporary extra-continental African diasporas – in the Global North – benefit from more secure judicial provisions

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regarding citizenship and nationality. Members of extra-continental African diasporas are rooted in the West whereas those located in intra-continental diasporas can expect the eventuality of a forced return – or worse, they may encounter massive hostility from autochthons. The xenophobic attacks of 2008 in South Africa remain a point of reference for the problems that Africanity has yet to remedy.

Neither *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* nor *Going Home* are utopian novels. The theme of utopia is inscribed within the narrative of return and posits the host country in opposition to the homeland. The diasporic space is an unfulfilled dream, whereas the home country represents the possibility of a better life. Ashcroft argues that in "contemporary utopian theory Utopia is no longer a place but the spirit of hope itself, the essence of desire for a better world" (8). In these texts, utopian impulses are born out of dispersal. Nii's utopia is born in dispersal and out of despair. The author maintains that Nii's utopia is a state of hope, as the latter lunges into the arms of his sister. Mpanda's utopia is more of a project, a desire for a better society in which the individual takes centre stage against postcolonial elites. His utopia has Marxist roots (see Ashcroft 8-9). Wainaina's narrator is en route to discovering himself through travel around Africa. His utopian dream perhaps lies in the journey itself. Migration is part of the human condition. People's (voluntary or involuntary) displacements are intended to move them forward, in the search for ways of expressing their desire for better opportunities. This means that migration is not a unidirectional trajectory; more interestingly, to migrate is also a process of inscribing oneself in building the local.

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Chapter Six: Conclusion

Self-knowledge and "migritude": bringing Africa to the diaspora

Nostalgia can be a positive sentiment that helps to alleviate painful moments in the present. Jacob Dlamini's *Native Nostalgia* testifies to how reflecting on one's past, even a past plagued by the apartheid regime, can become a reaffirmation of the self. Referring to Svetlana Boym's notion, Dlamini contends that reflective nostalgia "can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another" (18). Although both can be triggered by the same objects and symbols, reflective nostalgia remains antithetical to traumatic memory. Both however, regulate in profound ways the lives of subjects who are detached from their place of memory. Memory of the place of origin is a fundamental aspect of migrant experience. The relationship of the migrant to the countries of residence/origin can, for heuristic purposes, be represented in two ways: as a dialogic or an oppositional relation.

In the case of an oppositional relation, the subject is engaged in an adversarial relation with the space of traumatic memory or of overall unhappy experience. In this relation, return is not contemplated as a possibility since the impulse to migrate derives from the need to escape. Migrating here is seen in terms of settling elsewhere, as a permanent relocation. For instance, as far as the oppositional binary is concerned, in *By the Sea* Latif Mahmud leaves newly independent Zanzibar on a scholarship to East Germany to study dentistry. After a brief sojourn in the GDR, he escapes to Britain, and switches from studying medicine to reading literature at university. His travel to the GDR is inscribed in the framework of temporary migration. However, for personal and intimate reasons, the student decides to change the nature of his metropolitan sojourn, going from a temporary situation to seeking permanent relocation. The migrant does not contemplate returning to the site of painful memories. Similarly, Ngozi in *Unbridled* leaves Nigeria with the hope of improving her life in Britain. Nigeria is the site of trauma. She has opted from the start for a permanent relocation. These two texts depict oppositional relationships between migrants and their homelands.

The dialogic relation refers to the migration impulse where the travelling subject plans his or her return or has no qualms about the possibility of return. This binary is dialogic because of the relation of dependency that the homeland has with the receiving country. This

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relation is established from the outset and influences the reason for travel. I call it a dialogic relation because both places remain "in conversation" through the person of the migrant or sojourner. The efforts of the sojourner in the migrant space are aimed at resolving some situation back home. This is the case with the admirer of silence (in *Admiring Silence*)and with Noname in *Harare North*. In the latter novel, Noname takes advantage of the asylum system by migrating to England with the intention of saving enough money to perform his traditional obligations at home and to try to mitigate the chaos of his life in Zimbabwe. Home is a constant presence in his mind and the homeland is the final destination of his migrant journey.

The two binaries presented above are not absolute categories. In *Going Home* Mpanda is disillusioned by the migrant space and decides to return to Angola, following a utopian impulse. He leaves the Zaire where his parents reside as refugees in order to participate in rebuilding Angola, where he hopes life will offer better prospects for him. His separation from his parents in the diasporic space is seen as neither temporary nor permanent: there remains the possibility of establishing transnational ties between Zaire and Angola. His parents and siblings are still in Zaire and he is the first-born. Later, he finds himself stranded in South Africa, with no identification papers[67] and no employment, and this leads to a dialogic relation with Angola, where his wife and child remain; at the same time he still maintains contact with Zaire. Mpanda's memories are rooted in Angola where the uncertainty of the political situation leaves him with doubts about his temporary status as a refugee. Here we have a triangular relationship where the migrant maintains a conversation between two locations of origin.

The boundary between a dialogic and an oppositional relation can often be blurred, especially when the protagonist has little choice about either remaining in the diaspora or returning home. In *Going Home* the protagonist's dilemma with regard to returning to Angola is a result of his status as a political refugee. In *Surviving the Slaughter* Umutesi describes a similar story of the impossibility of return. As a space of trauma the homeland is not necessarily in opposition to the receiving country. In the years following the abating of the violence in Rwanda, some Rwandans returned voluntarily; however, some felt that it was too soon to return, while others no longer regarded Rwanda as home. The oppositional/dialogic relation is rendered void in cases where forced return of refugees was encouraged by the UN Forces – even when the massacres had not yet ended (Holmgren 5). Umutesi's text elucidates

[67]His papers are torn to pieces by police officers.

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the experience of mass dislocation where the individuals' relation to the homeland – as in *Going Home* – is left to fate, regardless of whether return has been planned or not, or whether return is even possible.

Return to the country of origin is not always dependent upon the oppositional binary or on the dialogic relation that migrant subjects might entertain with their past. As the fiction has illustrated, return to the homeland is set in motion by an emotional pull, regardless of whether the home country figures as place of trauma or of desired relocation. Objects of what Bhabha refers to as having a "postcolonial provenance", due to their imperial origin, may induce return (as travel or visit)to original sites of departure (as in *Admiring Silence*, *Unbridled*, *How We Buried Puso*, and also *The New Tribe*). These objects – the letters as well as the sketchbook – force migrants to reconnect physically with their countries of origin. The metonymic links represented by these objects rekindle the strong emotional pull that migrants with relatives back home experience, and cause migrants to revise their original intentions (not to return), especially in those cases where the homeland is a site of trauma. In the novels in which return actually takes place, the function of such metonymic links is limited to re-establishing dialogic relations by providing migrants with the possibility of embracing what Shailja Patel describes as "Migritude", an attitude that celebrates the present by owning and staring down the past, usually in cases where there are painful memories (whether physical or psychic). Many of the texts in this thesis thematise this act of bravery that constitutes a threshold in subjects' migrant experiences. By establishing a dialogue between present and past selves, subjects are able to re-affirm the viability of the migrant space. For extra-continental migrants, Africa is where they used to live, and the memory of Africa is accepted as a part of their present selves. As I have shown in my reading of *Unbridled*, the dialogic and oppositional binaries do not figure only in the "vertical heritage" of cultural and individual identities. Movements within migrant spaces produce similar kinds of relations.

The oppositional relation entertains the possibility of return, especially when contact with the homeland has been maintained. In other words, where ties with relatives have been severed (that is, in absence of metonymic links) return is highly unlikely. Therefore, severance of ties is influenced by an oppositional type of relation. In situations where return is not considered – even though the migrant's journey had initially been planned as temporary – the dialogic or oppositional relations are determined by the type of homeland memory. Latif Mahmud in *By the Sea* envisions his relations with Zanzibar through his distorted memories of his childhood. However, unlike Chester's dreams in *The New Tribe*, Latif's

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memories are part of his past experience and derive from having lived in the place of memory.

In the third chapter of *By the Sea*, entitled "Latif", Gurnah introduces Latif Mahmud, whose migrant experience is characterised by self-imposed exile and a determination to relinquish his past. As the novels have shown, the contact of migrants with their African pasts does not easily conform to set theories. Here the migrant reconnects as a result of the influence of circumstances beyond his control. Someone from a past that he had wilfully forgotten arrives in the migrant space, England, bearing the name of his dead father. On being introduced, Latif characterises his migrant existence as one made up of hurry and fear of disappointing others: his "mind churning with the usual crap, work, unspoken regrets, [and] neglected duties" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 71). Latif has always dreaded coming into contact with anyone from his native land. When he is contacted by the refugee council, it takes him months to decide to ring them back and inquire about their request for his translation services. He reminds the reader of the message on the answering machine and how he exhaled with relief for "[he] didn't, after all, have to do penance for [his] treacherous absence from nativity" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 74). The phrase "treacherous absence" reveals deliberate behaviour on his part –he chooses not to keep in touch with his roots. Latif does not want "to do penance" as a way of avoiding the opening of old wounds. His psyche is deeply scarred by the dual memory of his parents' suffering and of the person who was the cause of that misery, Saleh Omar. In effect, Latif is looking at one side of the coin: his memories of the past are partially constructed through the influence of his parents.

In lieu of a letter – or text – it is the presence of a postcolonial migrant figure that re-establishes the link with the homeland. Saleh Omar brings "home" back to life in the migrant space. The presence of Saleh in England awakens Latif's first concrete memory of his homeland: Saleh is a ghost from the past; his presence *here* shakes the jinn's bottle and memories come flooding in. These memories have shaped the migrant experience of the character. However, as the interaction between Saleh and Latif unfolds, both the reader and Latif come to terms with the apocryphal nature of his memories of home. Through the process of storytelling, Latif's traumatic childhood spins out, episode after episode. He blames his father for the disappearance of his brother and the loss of their familial home; he admits, however, that he ignored the way his father lost (the attention of) his mother. Both his ignorance of the circumstances of the failure of his parents' marriage and of the elopement of his brother with the Persian merchant, Hussein, are powerful catalysts of the pain that is ingrained in him. In Latif's memory, Saleh Omar represents the source of his family's

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misfortune, although his own father's negligence could be considered the chief source of the family misfortunes.

Latif was raised to despise and dread Saleh. Saleh is anathema to Latif. Thus, when he learns from the social services that someone named Rajab Shaaban needs assistance, Latif admits that only Saleh could have come up such a joke. He confesses to Saleh: "I thought it would be you" (Gurnah144). As a child, Latif had lived through the dispossession of their house and the collateral damage this caused, especially the worsening of his father's dependence on alcohol. When his brother, Hassan, disappears, in order to mitigate the loss of her son his mother instructs Latif, then a child, to ask Saleh to return the small mahogany table that is among the belongings he confiscated on repossessing the house. The table was a gift Hussein offered to Hassan before they eloped. Saleh refuses to comply and Asha is distraught and becomes embittered with Saleh. The sentiments that Latif harbours towards Saleh are rooted in lived experience. His determination to sever ties with his native land is rooted in these experiences and memories. Thus, the oppositional relation between homeland and receiving country becomes the source of the character's construction of the homeland, as a place situated in the past. In this novel, Africa is constructed by the African migrant through the prism of lived experience. It turns out in the end that the migrant's impression of the African homeland is distorted, blemished by years of silence and his resolute refusal to establish contact.

The arrival of the source of Latif's trauma in the metropolis becomes an opportunity for the migrant to reassess the past through a forceful establishment of a dialogic relation. Through this "postcolonial provenance", Gurnah seems to suggest that perhaps stories about Africa and from Africa need being told by Africans who leave the continent, carrying little actual luggage but burdened with various personal narratives. Experienced migrants, such as Saleh, cannot be considered as a repository of wisdom but rather as a library of experience. Saleh is the evidence from Africa that confirms the trauma, then dissipates it, while at the same time permitting the correcting of memory: by resorting to narrative, they become the veritable interpreters of the African experience. Saleh accepts the responsibility for being both author and subject of stories from home, as does Latif. In *How We Buried Puso,* to take another example, Lefe resents his representation in the diasporic imaginary as the "original thing, genuine from the source" (Morojele 34). In *By the Sea,* Saleh is an agent who brings stories from Africa; he would not object to being called the one from the source. Latif's representation of Zanzibar turns out to be erroneous, construed by someone who has constructed himself as victim. Saleh is a genuine storyteller who recognises his past mistakes.

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He admits to Latif that he did not need the mahogany table and could have returned it to Asha, but he had acted in response to his pride – perhaps.

The migrant, Latif, has held onto an apocryphal image of his homeland. By using the initial perspective of Latif's story, the narrative suggests that it is not enough to be an African from Africa in order to adequately or genuinely represent the continent's experience. For instance, Nesbitt reminds us that on arrival in Europe Africans were given the title of "representatives of the black continent" (70). However, being representative is not equivalent to being an expert in African affairs. Three decades of silence have kept Latif in ignorance. Ironically, Latif is regarded in London as a specialist on the East African Indian Ocean rim. Latif's knowledge of the socio-political history of Zanzibar in particular and East Africa in general cannot be easily dismissed; he is an academic. However, there is little doubt that his published poems reflect both the subject and object of his trauma. He may have avoided teaching them in order to avoid having to talk about himself; he dismisses his own poems as his "bits of offal" (Gurnah, *By the Sea* 74).

Saleh Omar's account – the view of the other side of coin – helps to remedy Latif's lopsided memories. Saleh informs Latif of the death of his parents. Although the news about his brother's return delights him Latif does not contemplate returning himself. Through the escape of Saleh, Gurnah offers Latif the opportunity to rediscover Africa. Thus, in contrast to other texts (*Admiring Silence*, or *The New Tribe,* for instance), instead of him journeying to Africa, it is Africa that finds him in the diasporic space. In this case of the refusal or impossibility of return, the protagonist's self-knowledge is genuinely flawed. He may be a so-called "expert" on the East Africa, but his knowledge of himself has been seriously challenged by the errors of his migrant attitude.

Latif had completely forsaken his past, wished it dead, because of the pain associated with remembering it. He admits: "I wanted nothing to do with [my parents], and their hatreds and demands" (Gurnah 239). Although it can constitute the saner choice of a place in which to improve one's life condition, the migrant space alone is not enough to heal Latif's wounded self. Thus, despite being a place of traumatic memory, the homeland has an essential role to play in the healing of the migrant subject. Latif embraces Saleh whose "postcolonial provenance" opens the possibility of a new, fresh, and more balanced beginning. He is no longer alone: the company of these two men, who both experience loneliness, is the first community to which Latif has felt he belonged since arriving in England. Gurnah understands the value of the past in the process of the identity formation of migrant subjects. Forsaking the original homeland does not necessarily help the self, but by

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understanding the past and how one has come to be the person that one is, the migrant subject can embrace a "migritude" that permits a fluid identity.

Migration versus localness: defining home

Notions of origin and destination have multiple connotations, which problematise the notion of location and fixedness. Whether or not migrants have a choice to relocate, migration, like exile, remains an "existential and epistemological condition" that reshapes and transforms the lives of migrants (Zeleza, "The Politics and Poetics" 1). In instances of forced migration, there may be an opportunity to make a choice of destination when the threat of danger to one's life is imminent (*By the Sea*; *Going Home*). Where migrants choose not to migrate and/or have no preference regarding their place of relocation, they are literally pushed from their homes. *Surviving the Slaughter* tells us that leaving one's country of origin can be the condition of survival, whereby the subject has no choice of destination. Mass displacement has the capacity to deny choice, and displacements caused by ethnic cleansing illustrate this very well. Individual cases of migration can be viewed in the same light when a subject's displacement is part of a mass displacement or removal. However, when subjects express the need or desire to look for greener pastures elsewhere, there is some choice with regard to both the impulse to migrate and the designated destination. Here the texts demonstrate that the destinations that migrants choose when leaving the home countries are not final or exclusive choices: that is, England, Angola, South Africa, Ghana or Nigeria, are not the only countries able to provide the kind of opportunities or safety that migrants seek. I argue that migration from the country of origin does not necessarily lead to life improvement, nor is it necessarily a consequence of crises in the homeland. Thus, the fiction also represents the choice of living – staying or returning – in the home nation, instead of relocating.

I chose to focus on texts in which characters leave their particular homelands in the hope of improving their life condition elsewhere, and in which they exercise a degree of choice over their destination. I have discussed various categories of people who migrate or are forced out of their homelands. There are those who manage to improve their life conditions and/or realise their dreams (*By the Sea*; *Unbridled*); there are those who fail to realise their dreams (*Going Home*; *Harare North*); and there are the fortunate ones for whom the migrant space is a refuge from persecution and/or threat of death (*By the Sea*; *Unbridled*). In all these cases it is debatable whether displacement is a means of survival or betterment: surviving and finding greener pastures do not always result directly from arrival in the

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migrant space. If anything, arrival is part of a process that is meant to lead to the attainment of the migrant's objectives. An examination of the results of migration or displacement from the homeland supports this view.

With regard to successful migration stories, in *By the Sea* Saleh Omar is able to escape persecution in the homeland; he successfully arrives in England where he finds safety and peace of mind. The younger immigrant, Latif Mahmud, is settled and is a renowned lecturer and published author. In *Unbridled* Ngozi escapes the daily struggles of life and the threats of subjugation from her family in Nigeria. She finally meets Providence and finds a home with him in England. This is another success story. In these texts, protagonists leave their homelands with the hope of improving their life conditions and finding places where they can express their freedom. These fictions also describe migrants who have chosen to make the migrant space a permanent abode, even when they have the choice to return and travel to Africa. Latif in *By the Sea* and Ngozi in *Unbridled* look on England as their country of residence. Saleh's story sets itself apart because even though he manages to benefit from his migrant experience (by finding a refuge) there is no possibility of return for him. For him, being successful requires residence in the migrant space, while his status as asylum seeker can only guarantee him a temporary respite (see Farrier).

However to speak of successful settlement in the migrant space is to overlook an essential aspect of migrant experience, namely, the process of integration. Success is a nuanced and unreliable term for two main reasons. The first is that the fictions simply describe one life cycle in the experience of migrants and displaced subjects. A common characteristic of exile literature is that protagonists' stories are framed according to where they come from and are going to, and at what stage of their migrant life they currently are. They are still in the process of "being and becoming" migrants (see Zeleza, "The Politics and Poetics" 1). Their stories are not complete. To illustrate the contrast, in his most recent novel *The Last Gift*, Gurnah lets the reader in on the protagonist's last life cycle. A dying Abbas tells his version of the story of his abandonment of his family in Zanzibar. *Admiring Silence* also explains Abbas' disappearance from his homeland. In this respect success, until otherwise proven, is of a temporary nature; and as I shall discuss later, a result of the migrants' struggles.

As for the second reason, the earlier stages in the lives of migrants are characterised by moments of grief, disillusionment, pain (physical and emotional), caused by (among other things) racism, bigotry, and the very process of relocation and integration. In these cases the migrant space produces its own kind of oppression, danger, and economic difficulty.

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Migrants are mostly up against the walls of their migrant spaces. Nonetheless, receiving countries offer different kinds of opportunities, and this is reflected in the utopian impulses of hopeful migrants. For this reason the phrase *receiving countries* rather than host-countries, is a better term, as migrants are hardly ever *hosted* or welcomed.

Stories of unsuccessful migration and failure abound. In *Harare North* Noname flees Zimbabwe and asks for asylum in England in order to evade criminal charges. He also hopes to make his stay in England temporary and to save enough money to return home. After months of expecting his condition to change, the story ends with Noname going back to the drawing board (still hoping). In *Going Home* Mpanda decides to return to his natal land, Angola, where he thinks he can improve his austere existence. His utopian dream collapses when the results of presidential elections are contested by the opposition and violence is rekindled. Mpanda then hops on a plane to flee a political witch-hunt and lands in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet again Mpanda finds himself rolling the proverbial boulder up the steep mountain of alienness and otherness. At the end of his short and yet ponderous story, Mpanda has not seen the light at the end of the tunnel. Thus, a pattern emerges: the texts agree in representing the temporariness and precariousness of the migrant experience, especially with regard to the concepts of success or failure. Here the novels are fragments of protagonists' stories, where only the initial cycle is revealed to the reader. Therefore, it seems that migration does not necessarily lead to improvement or the realisation of hopes, nor is failure a necessary condition of migration.

From this summary of the general stories of protagonists, it emerges that leaving one's country of origin is not necessarily followed by an improvement in one's life condition. Therefore, there is a sense in which migration loses the allure it had at the outset of the migrants' travels. The question then becomes: is remaining a solution to the (probable) failure of migration? The obvious response is a negative. However, for the African subjects, staying in the home country does not mean being doomed to perpetual struggle and scarcity. There are alternative narratives that describe the value of the local space: they tell of return migrations as well as the possibility of not migrating. I will thus look at Morabo Morojele's novel, *How We Buried Puso* (2006) as a way of comparing stories of migration with those of localness.

In this book, the migrant subject interrupts his exilic sojourn and feels compelled to return home. The return journey becomes possible as a result of the play of external circumstances – the death of a relative, this time a brother. This is a story of unsuccessful migration where the protagonist is not only unable to sustain living in the diaspora, but also

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lacks both the means and the courage to confront the homeland. I choose this story to represent an alternative story of migration and to provide a more nuanced notion of "success" and "failure". Interestingly, temporary migrations which conclude with migrants returning to their homelands (whether or not they have attained their goals) may be seen in terms of their contribution to the development of the home country. By looking at the variants of what it means to be local, the fictions show that the dynamics of movement within the home country are not very different from the journeys found in the diasporic spaces.

When home is seen as threatening to the emancipation and wellbeing of the self, the solution to this predicament may well be to migrate. However, in terms of quality of life, migration can prove a disappointment. For those who relocate permanently and for returnees, places of origin retain their significance for the processes of identity formation. Molefe realises the futility of enduring a precarious existence in Europe and prolonging his agony unnecessarily. His return to his natal country is an attempt to negotiate space and belonging. Migration is part of the condition of being and becoming in the world, and so is localness. Return migrations should not always be viewed as regressive: they may in fact represent an enabling decision by a migrant who is stifled by the stagnation of the migrant condition – especially when home has a spiritual and emotional pull on the subject. The opening statement of *How We Buried Puso* suggests that returning burdens the protagonist: "My brother's death has been the only thing to bring me home in seven years" (Morojele 9). However, as the narrative unfolds it becomes clear that home is truly where his heart and soul are. On arrival, 'Lefe admits: "Here, in the teeming press and hustle of the station, I had known the power of origin, and knew exactly that I could never return to Europe" (Morojele 29). Once back home, despite the "shock" he experiences at "arriving", 'Lefe realises that the place of origin may be the ideal place to start afresh. The decision to return home or stay in the migrant space is dependent upon personal relationships and the affinity that the protagonist has with his country of origin, with friends, relatives, or simply with the idea of being home. It is important to emphasise that although the news of his brother's death prompts his return home, this is also a choice he makes. The narrator reflects on his return as follows: "Thembi could see that I had returned home only because I had to" (Morojele 35). He decides to face up to his fears of failure and returns.

For migrants who have chosen to settle in Europe, the journey back to the familial African homeland loops back to the diasporic space, but the choice to return to the country of origin is a result of different kinds of allegiances. Puso's death is presented by 'Lefe as an occasion for returning: "the final push, to escape an image constructed for me, which

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however embellished, whether by anger, or nostalgia, or by an equally fanciful idea of the future, had little to do with the truth of my origin" (35). In Europe he is the "original thing, genuine, from the source" (Morojele 34). In this text, the protagonist has had enough of being regarded as a representative of Africa in Europe.

'Lefe thinks that the image that members of the diaspora have of African migrants is unbecoming. In *Harare North*, for instance, Noname describes these constructions as hyperbolic. Here, as soon as he arrives home, 'Lefe starts to write himself back into the local narrative. This process is reflected in the structure of the narrative of the novel. As if sewing aspects of his life together, the storyteller moves between the moment of return, memories of his childhood, imagining how his brother's life might have been, all through the prism of the present. 'Lefe's life, since childhood, has been marked by recurring visions of a valley and mountain, and there is a smooth transition between the world of the living and the alternative reality of his vision, which seals his inscription back in the local space. Wherever he maybe – in a pub, at the funeral, or when he is having his visions – the protagonist does not feel out of place even as returning feels rather strange; he claims these aspects of his life as part of his world. He is able to put his life in perspective:

> In all the people about me, I recognised myself as I had been, disrobed of the imprints and trappings of Europe and now reconnected to an inevitable and inescapable history, an undone and refuted future, but a future that nevertheless has to be cajoled for whatever hope it might offer.
>
> (Morojele 29)

Through 'Lefe's story, Morojele juxtaposes returning with belonging both at the socio-cultural and at the domestic levels. Accepting the reality of the present and being "reconnected to an inevitable and inescapable history" becomes his way of negotiating identity in the homeland. It is a process whereby the protagonist becomes home to– read welcomes – his relatives and the place of his childhood.

For the author belonging and home become reciprocal concepts. A definitive return, brought about by failure to succeed in the diaspora, can complicate the process of reintegration into the home society and culture. Gurnah shows the way in which in *Admiring Silence* the unnamed narrator resists and almost spurns his country of origin and justifies this by claiming to have found a new home in England. As for 'Lefe, failure to succeed abroad leads to a new kind of vision for his natal land. He needs to belong to his home. Morojele imagines an interesting scenario where the subject who is seeking to belong and the culture or

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the people who are supposed to welcome and host him/her cooperate. For Morojele, hospitality is reciprocal: as the English saying goes, "Charity begins at home". 'Lefe presents himself as a host for the local community. He makes the first move towards a zone of understanding, the boundary between localness and his migrant self. As he says, he cannot forget Europe even if he wanted to: Europe remains a "beacon" in his life (Morojele 33). He recognises and welcomes the old rituals of libation to the ancestors. Most of all, 'Lefe is prepared to embrace his family and his late brother's wife and children: "The engaged thing to do would be to avail myself to [my brother's widow] Miriam and her children, to divert them from themselves a little. I would help in every way I knew how, though Miriam would probably not want me to" (Morojele 224). He wishes to be there when his family needs him. 'Lefe has understood the meaning of home through what Sarah Allen has described elsewhere as its "multiple manifestations . . . in various degrees and combinations of meanings that exist in real and ideal forms for one's self and others" (qtd. in Skey 235). On returning, the narrator is disenchanted with a cultivated egotistical individualism. After the shock of arrival, he realises the various possibilities that are open to him. He could return to Europe, this time with enough determination to beat the odds. But a reformed 'Lefe would rather stay and start picking up the pieces of himself, unabashed:

> Nothing left except hope and prayer as action, as genuflection, as opening myself to whatever would come, so that finally I can walk amongst men, to be of them, asking nothing of them but bread, water, their time and company and the little comforts that anybody else would ask for, so that I can live this life I have been bequeathed.
>
> (Morojele 227)

If anything, the author is suggesting that 'Lefe is prepared to turn his life around, but would rather do it at and from home. Back home, 'Lefe has found what Michael Skey has referred as "ontological security" (234). As is the case with most migrant tales, Molefe's story is still being told. Thus his new-found commitment to the local space may be a temporary sentiment, since migration remains a possibility, at the boundary of *here* and *elsewhere*.

African identity and the future of intra-continental migration/diaspora

The crossing of boundaries and borders not only affects people's allegiances to culture and space, it entails a process of identity formation. For the travelling subject, the crossing of an inter-continental boundary and/or an intra-continental (national) boundary can be a matter of choice, opportunity, and possibility. Whether framed as voluntary or involuntary

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displacement, migration theories and narratives tend to generalise the notions of destination and origin I argue that this is a misrepresentation of migrants' personal stories. These generic locations occlude intimate details of migrant lives and stories that tell of their origins and movements in space (both national and international). In *Unbridled* Ngozi leaves Nigeria for England. After a closer look at her life story one sees the character as affected by internal displacements. She is sent from her natal village to Lagos and from Lagos she is thrown out into the street before she finds refuge. These different stages form cycles in Ngozi's life. It would be an inaccurate representation of the character's migrant experience to describe Nigeria, let alone Africa, as the location of origin. Moreover, even describing England as her destination does not accord with Ngozi's actual story. When she walks out of James' life she relocates to Leicester, to her new boyfriend Providence. This is another internal displacement that is crucial to her identity formation.

The view represented by these generic locations also sees Africa, and more specifically the country of origin, as "underdeveloped" and England, or the country of destination, as "developed". Granted, the development of England explains Ngozi's choice of it as a place of opportunity. However, a reading of her internal displacement in the diasporic space offers a better insight into migrant experience in the Global North – as not necessarily that different from what Africans endure in their homelands. Consequently, passports that allow passage across the channel are not to be considered as Aladdin's lamps because as we have seen success in the migrant space is never guaranteed. In *How We Buried Puso*, the narrator, 'Lefe, takes stock on his return to his home country: "Coming home has made me weary of myself. It has forced me to reckon with the fundamental differences yet copious similarities between Europe and this unforgiving place here in Africa" (225). It would seem that individual success is not entirely dependent upon the socio-economic privileges offered or denied by the place of residence.

Intra-continental boundaries and borders have much to say about African identity. The thesis has shown that the terms "Africa" and "African identity" have a long history of conversation between continents. I have explored the situations in which the texts problematise African identity through the way in which this identity is reified and exteriorised through what I want to call the modes of being African. "Mode" denotes a sense of performance and agency. *Going Home*, *Surviving the Slaughter*, and *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* all describe situations in which being African becomes a potent mode of negotiating passages or circumventing danger. In *Going Home*, Mpanda plays the African card to clarify his intention to improve his life; he identifies with Nelson Mandela, the first black president

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of post-apartheid South Africa. In *Surviving the Slaughter*, Umutesi and her companions dress up as Zairian women in order to deceive soldiers and militia at road blocks. In *Unexpected Joy at Dawn* Nii Tackie invokes the concept of African identity and the flag of the OAU[68]in an attempt to redress the wretched conditions that the immigrants endure at the detention camp. As a form of agency, Africanity is invoked to make a point about a collective, continental identity.

In the context of inter-continental boundary crossing, African identity can be an object-position, an identity form used by the speaker to point to the generic provenance of the migrant. Even as an object-position, this identity form is not necessarily rejected by the addressee. What migrant protagonists find offensive are the metaphors which construct identity in condescending ways –through the association of being black and being African. In *By the Sea* Gurnah evokes this through the character of Latif, who declares: "Of course I knew about the construction of black as other, as wicked, as beast, as some evil dark place in the innermost being of even the most skinless civilised European" (72). Reading past the hyperbole and the generalisation of the white European subject, the metonymies of blackness and Africa remain. This construction however is not the sole production of white subjects. In *How We Buried Puso* the narrator is reminded of the moment he engaged in conversation with a black woman in Europe. At the mention of his African-sounding name, the young woman, immediately changes her mind and rejects 'Lefe's invitation. In *Harare North*, Noname rebukes the attitudes towards Africa and African identity displayed by black African migrants and members of the diaspora who over-perform their Africanity. This over-performance however implies a double acceptance, a kind of double consciousness. In a manner which is reminiscent of Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy's works, for instance, African cultural heritage as performed by members of the diaspora is not meant to be defined, in an essentialising sense, as a pure African cultural identity. The "Africa" that is present in musical expressions, dance, and dress is not *genuinely* an African expression. Hall argues:

> The original 'Africa' is no longer there. It too has been transformed. History is, in that sense, irreversible. We must not collude with the West which, precisely, normalises and appropriates Africa by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitive, unchanging past. Africa must at last be reckoned with by Caribbean *as diasporic* people, but it cannot in any simple sense by merely recovered.
>
> (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 231; emphasis added)

[68]Today referred to as the AU (African Union).

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The different modes of being African available to African subjects are, I argue, constitutive of their regional and cultural identities, and suggest an appeal to larger forms of representation than their individual selves. As such, African identity is mobilised at the crossing of various existential borders and boundaries.

Conversely, the inter-continental boundary participates in confirming what I want to call the fact of being African. The fact of being African does not stand in opposition to the mode of being African. The fact of being African does not rely on an appeal to race. It relates to Appiah's statement that "We are already African" ("African Identities" 89). The fact of being African differs from having an African cultural identity – which in any case is distinguished by its plurality. It also differentiates itself from essentialism by virtue of race or skin colour. To be African is not the privilege of a particular race, ethnicity, or skin colour. In *The New Tribe*, the young black British woman, Esther, does not relate to Africa as the source for the performance of her diasporic identity. For the African diaspora, what constitute the "essence" of cultural identity are the forms of representation that Hall understands as reflective of "the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" ("Cultural Identity" 223). Indeed, the fact or essence of being African needs to be understood as an identity form that is not imagined or regulated by identity politics: to make this claim would be to reinforce the metaphors which objectify and misrepresent Africa and African people – metaphors that Brenda Cooper, for example, dismisses (*A New Generation*).

Contemporary migrations within the African continent follow old patterns of movement. The major interruption to these patterns has been the defining of political borders and their adoption by modern African states that follow the European model of citizenship. *Going Home*, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, and *How We Buried Puso* represent unique cases of migrant and diasporic populations. For instance, *Going Home* depicts immigrant populations whose foreignness is made visible by the newness of their migrant formations. Kikamba makes it clear that Mpanda and his family appear unmistakably Angolan in the eyes of Zairians. In *Unexpected Joy,* despite decades spent in the diasporic space, Nii and Mama's family have maintained cultural identities formed in the homeland. These are made evident by the Yoruba tribal marks that Nii bears on his face. Retention of the culture of the country of origin helps to preserve Nii and Mama's visibility. However, back in the homeland, the diasporic subjects are absorbed into and comingle with the local population. This is what the author seems to suggest with regard to the character of Mama.

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Nii who is culturally a Ghanaian Ga, is undeniably also traditionally Yoruba. Therefore, one can speculate that it will not take him long to be identified as a native Nigerian when he finally returns "home".

In *How We Buried Puso*, conversely, migrant subjects do become invisible by virtue of social and cultural integration. Morojele fictionalises the puzzle of migrant formation in sub-Saharan Africa, which I link to nativism. The fiction has shown how ethnic and cultural boundaries become spaces of concern in times of socio-political unrest. Morojele's novel supports and puts in context Mahmood Mamdani's work on the dialectic of native and settler, discussed in Chapter Five (see also Youé; Odhiambo). *How We Buried Puso* demonstrates that there is no existential foundation for nativism and citizenship, and that these two notions are forms of opportunism. In the novel, Puso, the deceased, and Molefe are brothers from the same parents. When the protagonist, Thembi, is introduced early in the narrative, she is said to come from "the country neighbouring ours", over the national border. Thembi is dropped one evening by a couple of men at the house where 'Lefe and Puso live with their grandmother. It turns out that Thembi is 'Lefe's half-sister; but he grows up thinking of her as a distant relative. Morojele undercuts the claims of nativism by way of satire. Molefe is appalled by the ugliness of the neighbourhood, which he attributes to the presence of vagrants and migrants: "A once-proud, tree-lined avenue is now the domain of sedentary vagrants, migrants from places with unpronounceable names, which we used to claim as our places of origin, then" (Morojele 131). What stands out in this observation is that the narrator recognises that not only is he a diasporic child, but his becoming native seems to have bestowed on him the power of locality, in contrast to new waves of migrants. In *Unexpected Joy* Nii Tackie and Mama Orojo are born in Ghana, and so are their parents and grand-parents. Suddenly the country is afflicted by economic crisis and their Ghanaian citizenship is questioned and nullified. An original identity is forced upon them while their current citizenship is abrogated. The question becomes, after five generations of black immigrants residing in a nation-state, when is the alien accepted as "one of us"?

It is important to discuss the relation between being African and African identity. In his essay, "African Identities", Kwame Anthony Appiah declares, "We are African already" (89). What I call fact of being African interrogates the fixation on race as the determining factor in the designation of Africanity. According to Appiah "an identity is a coalescence of mutually responsive (if sometimes conflicting) modes of conduct, habits of thought, and patterns of evaluation; in short a coherent kind of human social psychology" ("African Identities 88). Therefore, African identity has a larger reach and designates an essential part of the self that

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ties an individual to the continent and/or its people in a particular way, rather than one that essentially ties *some* Africans while excluding *others*. Extra-continental members of the African diaspora can claim an African identity in this sense. Moreover, one speaks not of an African identity as it is shown in the objectification of the African subject, but of African identities, as a way of paying tribute to the cultural plurality of the continent. This idea allows a deconstructive reading of identity which signifies, according to Diana Fuss, that "[i]t is not so much that we possess 'contingent identities' but that identity itself is contingent" (104). African identities can thus be conceptualised in relation to the continent, regardless of internal contradictions that may be present. Hall suggests for that matter that identity needs to be viewed "as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" ("Cultural Identity" 222). The frame of representation here is Africa.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Pan-Africanism and Negritude were mobilised to promote race consciousness and the emergence of the black subject from colonialism-induced mental slavery. These movements raised the consciousness of the colonial subject to embrace a common identity, always in relation to the rest of the world. In his article, "The Invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, and Beyond", Ali A. Mazrui, observes that Africa and African identity are the product of centuries of interaction with other continents. Even though the exact origin of the name Africa has not been pinpointed, "African identity" remains a social and historical phenomenon. Mazrui argues: "Europe's supreme gift was the gift of African identity, bequeathed without grace or design – but a reality all the same. Islam and the Arabs awakened Africa's Black consciousness, but a continental identity was still dormant" (74). African identity as a mode of expression has been summoned as a "sense of shared African identity" for projects such as Pan-Africanism (Mazrui 75). From the mid-twentieth century however "African identity" was a response by Africans to pressing needs such as decolonisation or political and cultural emancipation. In addition, in an interview with Appiah, Chinua Achebe draws a compelling picture of the existence of "African identity": "It is, of course true that the African identity is still in the making. There isn't a final identity that is African. But, at the same time, there is an identity coming into existence. And it has certain context and a certain meaning" (in Appiah, "African Identities" 88). I understand the adjective "certain" to mean both particular and incontestable. African identity remains a conundrum of representation with which both fiction and criticism still grapple. Notwithstanding, the literature has demonstrated that the encounter with situations of concern questions exclusive identity forms such as nationality and ethnicity, and thus opens up

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possibilities for the emergence of an inclusive continental identity. In journeys across borders and boundaries, Africanity then becomes strategically vested as potent tool by those who negotiate passages across. Therefore, Africanity does not appear outside of the condition or situation of its emergence. Viewed in terms of a continental identity, Africanity is still steeped in challenging internal contradictions. Diana Fuss's book, *Essentially Speaking*, is pertinent to my position on de-essentialising Africanity. At the onset of her book, the author stipulates that "essentialism is neither good nor bad"; for Fuss the appropriate behaviour when faced with a mode of representation that is deemed essentialist is to interrogate the motivation behind "*its deployment*" (xi; emphasis in original). I have examined how Africanity as continental form of representation is deployed in fiction.

Furthermore, like Appiah who downplays skin colour or race as core characteristics in the conceptualisation of Pan-Africanism ("African Identities" 89), Mbembe disavows the essentialised identification of blackness with being African. Mbembe refutes the idea that what he interestingly calls 'African citizenship' can be founded on "raw racial difference" ("Afropolitanism" 26). Mbembe emphasises the relation of interdependency between Africa and blackness and the rest of the world and other races, through inward and outward migrations, or what he refers to as movements of "immersion" and "dispersion". Posing a provocative question, Mbembe asks advocates of a race-based Pan-Africanism: "how can we not see that this so-called solidarity is deeply harmed by the way in which the violence of brothers against brothers, and the violence of brothers against mothers and sisters, have occurred since the end of direct colonisation?" ("Afropolitanism" 29). Mbembe's Afropolitanism suggests "an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world" wherein Africans' openness to the world is crucial if we are to take seriously the task of promoting the development of the continent ("Afropolitanism" 29).

For Appiah, to be cosmopolitan is to be prepared to encounter difference and disagreement. Therefore, the curious mind of the cosmopolitan seeks multiplicity of experience through conversation. In this way, he argues, "We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by the alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting" (*Cosmopolitanism* 97). Appiah's stance speaks to Walter D. Mignolo's concept of "border thinking" which stipulates that border thinking deconstructs "the categories created and imposed by *a hegemonic* epistemology" (in Delgado and Romero11; emphasis added). Cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism seem to suggest a more inclusive politics of representation and interconnection, beyond race and notions such as nativism and atavism. Pan-Africanism (when divested of its Afrocentrism), cosmopolitanism, and Afropolitanism

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are all useful canvases for promoting understanding, conviviality. In my view these modes of thinking can become more productive through an understanding of processes of border/boundary crossing such as have been described in the dissertation. Thus, by examining and having a firm purchase on the nature of zones of interactions in the texts, a literary theory of border, boundary, and borderland crossing does start to take shape.

Without a doubt, Gurnah, Emecheta, Agyei-Agyiri, Umutesi, Kikamba, Morojele, Chikwava, Mpe, Wainaina, Dibia have succeeded in portraying the contemporary realities of Africans in movement outside and within spaces of origin. In response to Morala Ogundipe-Leslie's questions, "Who speaks for Africa? Who will speak for Africa?" (33), I would answer that these writers have spoken and will continue to speak not only for Africa but also for the individuals whose particular lives contribute to an understanding of African experiences and identities. The textual exploitation of various borders, boundaries, and borderlands (spatial or human) allows one to contemplate alternative ways of thinking about identity and place, and about how one should relate to the "other" in times of crisis or of quietude. A literary focus on the private lives of characters is a canvas for challenging the definition of asylum provided by the Geneva Convention. In narratives, a focus on the particular experience of an asylum seeker provides a wealth of knowledge that shows the limitations of law making processes in defining asylum seeking and refugee-ness. Literary narrative recognises domestic violence or family related feuds as roots of persecution. Beyond the family ties, the authors make the journey back to Africa a literary adventure. Indeed, it is through letters (in *Admiring Silence* and *Unbridled*) and the Africa-themed sketchbook (in *The New Tribe*) that the authors render possible their protagonists' journeys back to the homeland – across the continental boundary. Return is not dependent on returnees' essential ties to their continental identity. This dissertation has explored the ways in which an aesthetic of the border or boundary sheds light on the interactions between individuals.

The nature of intra-continental diasporas depends on and is threatened by two main, correlated factors. On the one hand, the viability of intra-African diasporas is dependent on the willingness to do away with privileging ancientness in the attribution of citizenship. Although in Morojele's novel, Molefe, his siblings, and their grandmother are citizens of their nation, they refer to newly arrived migrants from the "country neighbouring ours" as "foreigners" – in contrast to themselves, the autochthons. On the other hand, it is the power of the colonial border that disturbs the relationship between diasporic subjects and their

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spaces of residence. Intra-continental migrants/diasporas cultivate a special relation to space. Migrants tend to want to acquire "citizenship and permanent belonging" (Bakewell 14). Having a strong belief in a common continental identity, they settle in African countries other than their own, not thinking of themselves as foreigners, but as Africans. Currently African countries are struggling to make sense of the power transferred from their (former) colonial masters; seasons of anomy trouble the relationships between autochthons, on the one hand, and between autochthons and foreigners on the other. This thesis contributes to an understanding of an aesthetic of border/boundary crossing. It suggests that in order to promote conversation within "sameness" and between "difference", boundaries and borderlands need to be considered as being naturally inclusive, even though borders as differences are purposely put up to prevent this permeability; it proposes that, when unfenced, differences meet and interact. Within this frame Africanity—characterised by ethnic, racial, and individual plurality—becomes the quintessential boundary, the space of conversation.

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