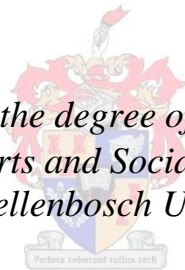# Imagining the City in Zimbabwean Literature 1949 to 2009

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is on the literary imagining of the city in Zimbabwean literature that emerges as a re-visioning and contestation of its colonial and postcolonial manifestations. Throughout the seven chapters of the thesis I conduct a close reading of literary texts engaged in literary (re)creations of the city. I focus on texts by selected authors from 1949 to 2009 in order to trace the key aspects of this city imagining and their historical situatedness. In the first chapter, I argue the case for the inclusions and exclusions that are evident. In this historical span, I read the Zimbabwean canon and the city that is figured in it as palimpsests in order to analyse (dis)connections. This theoretical frame brings out wider relationships and connections that emerge in the (re)writing of both the canon and city. I adopt approaches that emphasise how spaces and temporalities 'overlap and interlace' to provoke new ways of thinking about the city and the construction of identity. I argue for the country-city connection as an important dynamic in the various (re)imaginings of the city. Space is politicized along lines of race, ethnicity, gender and class in regimes of politics and aesthetics of inclusion and exclusion that are refuted by the focal texts of the thesis. I analyse the fragmentation of rural and urban space in the literary texts and how country and city house politico-aesthetic regimes of domination, exclusion and marginalisation. Using tropes of the house, music and train, I analyse how connections in the city are imagined. These tropes are connected to the travel motif found in all the chapters of the thesis. Travel is in most of the texts offered as a form of escape from the country represented as a site of essentialism or nativism. Both settlers and nationalists, from different ideological positions, invest the land and the city with symbolic political and cultural values. Both figure the city as alien to the colonised, a figuration that is contested in most of the focal texts of the thesis.

Travel from the country to the city through halfway houses is presented as a way of negotiating location in new spaces, finding new identities and contending with the multiple connections found in the city. The relentless (un)housing in Marechera's writing expresses a refusal to be bounded by aesthetic, nationalist and racial houses as they are constructed in the city. In Vera's fiction, travel – in multifarious directions and in a re-racing of the quest narrative in Lessing – becomes a critical search for a re-scripting of gender and woman's demand for a right to the city. The nomadism in Vera's fiction is re-configured in the portrayal of the marginalised as the parvenus and pariahs of the city in the fiction of Chinodya and Tagwira. In the chapter on Chikwava and Gappah, in the contexts of spatial

displacement and expansion, the nationalist nativist construction of self, city and nation comes under stress.

I interrogate how ideologies of space shape politico-aesthetic regimes in both the country and the city throughout the different historical phases of the city. In this regard I adopt theoretical approaches that engage with questions of aesthetic equality as they relate to the contestation of spatial partitioning based on categories of race, gender and class. In city re-imaginings this re-claiming of aesthetic power to imagine the city is invoked and in all the texts it emerges as a reclaiming of the right to the city by the colonised, women, immigrants and all the marginalised. I adopt those approaches that lend themselves to the deconstruction of hegemonic figuration, disempowerment and silencing of the marginalised, especially women, in re-imagining the city and their identities in it.

OPSOMMING

My tesis se onderwerp is die literêre voorstellings van die stad in Zimbabwiese letterkunde wat ontstaan as 'n herverbeelding van en teenvoeter vir beide koloniale en postkoloniale manifestasies. Regdeur die sewe hoofstukke van die tesis voer ek deurtastende interpretasies van literêre tekste aan, wat die stad op nuwe maniere uitbeeld. My fokus val op tekste deur geselekteerde skrywers van 1949 tot 2009 ten einde die sleutelelemente van hierdie proses van stadverbeelding en die historiese gesitueerdheid daarvan te ondersoek. In die eerste hoofstuk bied ek die argument aan betreffende die voor-die-hand liggende in- en uitsluitings van tekste. Deur hierdie historiese strekking lees ek die Zimbabwiese kanon en die stad wat daarin figureer as palimpseste, ten einde die (dis-)konneksies te kan analiseer. Hierdie teoretiese beraming belig die wyere verhoudings en verbindings wat na vore kom in die (her-) skrywe van beide die kanon en die stad. Ek gebruik benaderings wat benadruk hoe ruimtes en tydelikhede oormekaarvloei en saamvleg om sodoende nuwe maniere om oor die stad en oor identiteitskonstruksie te besin, aanmoedig. Ek argumenteer vir die stad-platteland konneksie as 'n belangrike dinamika in die verskillende (her-)voorstellings van die stad. Ruimte word só verpolitiseer met betrekking tot ras, etnisiteit, gender en klas binne politieke regimes asook 'n estetika van in- en uitsluiting wat deur die kern-tekste verwerp word. Ek analiseer verder die fragmentasie van landelike en stedelike ruimtes in die literêre tekste, en hoe die plattelandse en stedelike ruimtes tuistes bied aan polities-estetiese regimes van dominasie, uitsluiting en marginalisering. Die huis, musiek en die trein word gebruik as beelde om verbindings in die stad te ondersoek. Hierdie beelde sluit aan by die motif van die reis wat in al die hoofstukke manifesteer. Die reis word in die meeste tekste gesien as 'n vorm van ontsnapping uit die platteland, wat voorgestel word as 'n plek van essensie-voorskrywing en ingeborenheid. Beide intrekkers en nasionaliste, uit verskillende ideologiese vertrekpunte, bekleed die platteland of die stad met simboliese politieke en kulturele waardes. Beide verbeeld die stad as vreemd aan die gekoloniseerdes; 'n uitbeelding wat verwerp word in die fokale tekste van die studie.

Reis van die platteland na die stad deur halfweg-tuistes word aangebied as metodes van onderhandeling om plek te vind in nuwe ruimtes, nuwe identiteite te bekom en om te leer hoe om met die stedelike verbindings om te gaan. Die onverbiddelikke (ont-)tuisting in die werk van Marechera gee uitdrukking aan 'n weiering om deur estetiese, nasionalistiese en rassiese behuising soos deur die stad omskryf en voorgeskryf, vasgevang te word. In die fiksie van Vera word reis – in telke rigtings en in die her-rassing van die soektog-motif in

Lessing – 'n kritiese soeke na die herskrywing van gender en van die vrou se op-eis van die reg tot die stad. Die nomadisme in Vera se fiksie word ge-herkonfigureer in uitbeelding van gemarginaliseerdes as die parvenus en die uitgeworpenes van die stad in die fiksie van Chinodya en Tagwira. In die hoofstuk oor Chikwava en Gappah word die nasionalistiese ingeborenes se konstruering van die self, stad en nasie onder stremmimg geplaas in kontekste van ruimtelike verplasing en uitbreiding.

Ek ondervra hoe ideologieë van spasie vorm gee aan polities-estetiese regimes in beide die platteland en die stad regdeur die verskillende historiese fases van die stad. In hierdie opsig maak ek gebruik van teoretiese benaderings wat betrokke is met vraagstukke van estetiese gelykheid met verwysing na kontestasies oor ruimtelike verdelings gebaseer op kategorieë van ras, gender en klas. In herverbeeldings van die stad word hierdie reklamering van die estetiese mag om die stad te verbeel, bygehaal in al die tekste as herklamering van die reg tot die stad deur gekoloniseerdes, vroue, immigrante en alle gemarginaliseerdes. Ek maak gebruik van benaderings wat hulself leen tot die dekonstruksie van hegemoniese verbeelding, ontmagtiging en die stilmaak van gemarginaliseerdes, veral vroue, in die herverbeelding van die stad en hul plek binne die stadsruimte.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents; my children, Fadzai, Enoch, Makomborero, Ruramai, Paida and Zivanai; and my grandchildren, Gamuchirai, Natalie, Watifadza and Tafadzwa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the literary imagining of the city in Zimbabwean literature from the period 1949 to 2009. I emphasise the historical situatedness of this imagining from colonial times to the postcolonial period to posit the literary city's derivation from and opposition to the historical one. Most of the texts portraying the postcolonial city deal with its founding and with the politics of fragmentation of physical space and racial exclusion. The colonial city started as a military fort, as evinced by some of the names of Rhodesian colonial towns. For example, Fort Salisbury and Fort Victoria are now Harare and Masvingo respectively. A history of conquest and the close surveillance of the vanquished are captured in the focal texts of the thesis. In Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning* the narrative of the city is framed by the hanging tree by the River Umguza and violence in the form of the conflagration that engulfs the work is never far from the surface of the new city. In Doris Lessing's *A Ripple from the Storm*, the township is fenced off from the city and treated like a dormitory for working bodies. The political imagination that mapped the colonial city was undergirded by violence, as is shown especially in literary texts that deal with the colonial urban experience in a racially divided city. The founding of the colonial city and the political imagination that maps it are captured by Dambudzo Marechera in his succinct characterization of the city of Harare: "The white settlers had created it as a frontier town for gold and lust, lurid adventures and ruthless rule. The black inheritors had not changed that – just the name. From sin-city Salisbury to hotbed melting pot Harare" ("Grimknife" in *Mindblast* 91). Here, in his characteristic iconoclastic trashing of ossified and simplistic notions of Africanity, Marechera suggests a continuation in the structures of power in the city regardless of the colour of the ruler. His figuring of the city has a bearing on any rethinking of postcolonial theory that celebrates rupture with the colony. This sense of rupture is contested in some recent articulations of postcolonial theory, especially that which focuses on the persistence of the colony and of imperial ruins (Stoler 192) and which questions the presumed epistemic breaks offered in conventional postcolonial theory. Achille Mbembe conceives of stubborn colonial remains as "guilty secret and accursed share" (27). I also read ruins in the context of the layered city as theorised in Andreas Huyssen's *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003), in which the layers of the city are connected horizontally and vertically.

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This layering is reflected in the specific chapters and in the organisation of this thesis, in its analysis of citiness there is an on-going conversation between the fictional city and the real one. I also place the remains of past layers of the city in an active register of "losses of bodies, spaces, and ideals, psychic and material practices of loss and its remains" as "productive for history and for politics" (Eng and Kazanjian 5). Attending to city remains such as the spatiality of the colonial city allows one to theorise the township in diverse ways. I read it simultaneously as a site of trauma and as site of refashioning of both the city and the self. Its persistence reflects a refusal to acknowledge the postcolonial project as one of failed re-inscription of the city in official postcolonial re-imaginings of the city. This failure as reversion to and persistence of the colony receives a literary articulation especially in Marechera's text, as indicated above, in which both the colonial and postcolonial cities are portrayed as shaped by the same imagination. The greed, exploitation, moral turpitude and violence of the colonial rulers are shared by the postcolonial former liberators, who have turned into oppressors.

Violence produces the trauma of black urban (un)belonging. The colonial city starkly inaugurated the spatial politics of dispossession, displacement and exclusion that has (within the changed dynamics of state power) maintained the same logic and come to shape the postcolonial city. The violence of the colonial city and the trauma it produces are captured in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*. Despite the advent of flag independence, township violence and trauma persist in the postcolony. In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, *An Elegy for Easterly* and *Harare North* the ramifications of state-sponsored displacement and un-housing produce fictional characters that are not at home in the postcolonial city. This unhomeliness receives a metafictional treatment in Marechera's *Scrapiron Blues*, where the fragile boundary between the fictive and real city is rent by a violence that mixes the two worlds. This irruption of the imaginary into the real exposes the limitations of the real city and reveals how it can be revitalised. This use of aesthetics as critique, revitalisation and re-imagination is a feature of Marechera's writing, and is enacted in different styles, in all the fictional texts considered in the thesis.

I argue for a consideration of cities as "spaces of the imagination and spaces of representation" (Bridge and Watson 7) and explore how they relate to cities of fact. Imagining the city is a literary engagement with the lived-in city. Jonathan Raban makes a distinction between the city of imagination and the historical existential city: "The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real

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than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture" (2). Peter Brooker views this city duality as "the 'imaginary' and the 'actual'... existing in a constitutive dialogue" (1). The focus of my thesis is on "the human experience, both individual and collective, contained by the city" (Preston 1) that occurs as a result of this dialogue. I locate this dialogue between imagined cities and actual cities in the context of various binaries that have been deployed in official constructions of the actual city to limit the concept of citiness and to separate the urban from the rural. I argue that the hyphen in each binary gives room for literary contestation and a more complex conceptualising of cities than that found in official narratives.

In the focal texts the city of imagination is a literary representation of the historical one. Lessing's *Children of Violence* novels are an evocation of colonial Salisbury. Marechera's *House of Hunger* uses vivid images to create the provincial dorp of Lesapi while his other texts are engaged in literary recreations of Harare, London and Oxford. In Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* it is the colonial city of Gwelo that is evoked and that becomes a reference point for the entry of the colonized into the city. In later fiction by Chinodya it is Harare that becomes the focus of his writing. In contrast to the privileging of the capital city in Zimbabwean fiction, Vera's fiction shifts literary focus to the city of Bulawayo. While most of the texts deal with the city that is delineated by historical and national boundaries, most narrations of the literary city make reference to the "city beyond the border" (Samuelson 251). This suggests a disavowal by the literary texts of a self-contained national city as shown in the complex relationship between the local city and the city in the diaspora in Chikwava and Gappah's fiction. In *Harare North* and *Elegy for Easterly* ("Something Nice from London", "My Cousin Sister Rambanai" and "Our Man in Geneva") this disavowal comes with a simultaneous blurring and a re-inscribing of city boundaries.

1.2.   Texts and theoretical departures

Following Flora Veit-Wild's seminal critical work with its historical/biographical approach located in a postcolonial paradigm, most local literary critics on Zimbabwean literature have tended to focus on rehearsing the sociological approach. Since the publication of her co-edited book on Marechera, Veit-Wild has moved away from this approach and her research interests have subsequently focused on transgressions of various kinds – corporeal, gendered and mental. The publication of *Emerging Perspectives on Dambudzo Marechera* is an important milestone in the history of literary studies in Zimbabwe, with its acknowledgement

of formal and ideological dissidence in the literature. This ran counter to the nationalist and Marxist approaches to Zimbabwean literature driven by Emmanuel Ngara in the 1980s. In this approach there was a manifest pre-occupation with the replacement of the Eurocentric grand narrative of the colony by a monolithic nationalist version of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle as located in rural sites. This led to an under-theorising of struggles that occur in less iconic spaces than the rural land. The land is figured as the site of national history and the construction of the modern Zimbabwean subject. It has come to be associated with an excess of history, noted by Terence Ranger in Zimbabwe's "rhetoric of patriotic history" (220); this emphasises a narrow nationalism that claims and celebrates a supposed autochthony.

Primorac's *The Place of Tears: The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe* uses Bakhtin's chronotope regarding "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (184). This is illuminating, especially her analysis of the Rhodesian chronotope and how it locates race-bound identities "in the cities and countryside" (171). By focusing on the way literary texts avoid the deployment of the Rhodesian chronotope as they simultaneously contest the narrow imaginings of the postcolonial nation of Zimbabwe, Primorac sets the stage for critical responses to silenced voices and less visible and less privileged spaces – like the city. However, in my reading the assumed demise of the Rhodesian chronotope needs to be re-examined without recourse to the postcolonial binaries. I argue that this chronotope is reformulated and re-raced in official postcolonial narratives.

A number of assumptions explain my focus on the city. The first assumption is that in Zimbabwean cultural and literary studies there has been a pre-occupation with the land, associated with colonial conquest and dispossession and postcolonial repossession. This is reflected by the absence of a full-scale critical study on the city. Graham, with literary texts and current history adduced to support his claim, asserts that "the history of land ownership and the struggle over it have been vital for the political project of both anti- and post-colonial African nationalism" (14). In his analysis of Zimbabwean literary texts he shows how fiction contradicts the official hegemonic meanings that flow from the treatment of land as both "signified" and "signifier" (14). In the creation of a nationalist cultural mythology the power of the land lies in its potency as a signifier of autochthony and the liberation struggle. The ideological and symbolic inflation of this signifier by nationalists shifts attention away from the city, whereas I argue in this study that this is a critical arena for the production of the modern African subject.

A second consideration is that space is fluid and plays a critical role in the formation of the concepts and lived experiences pertaining to the urban and rural populations. I invoke this fluidity to argue for the inextricability of the city and the country, the city and other cities and the national and the transnational – an inextricability that is denied in official colonial and nationalist imaginings. Underpinning this view of fluidity is the assumption that space determines the racial, gendered and class construction of the subject. Fragmenting space and the construction of spatial borders place conceptual limits on the city as it is figured across national and transnational borders.

Using concepts from a variety of theoretical frameworks, this study seeks to disrupt the normative conceptions of Africa as rural propagated by African nativists and outsiders with reference to the Zimbabwean literary case study. The thesis contests essentialist notions of Africanity and autochthony as located in the land and argues for the place of the city in the making of the modern Zimbabwean subject. By avoiding any insistence on its separateness, I place the city within a network of connections where routes rather than fixities are central to constituting its identity and that of its inhabitants. This enables me to analyse the city as "an alternative cosmos for collective identification, recovery of other temporalities and reinvention of tradition" (Boym 75). These routes along which the city and its subjects are produced are places of the ongoing anchoring and unmooring characteristic of modernity, of which it has become a prime arena (Bauman 24).

Throughout the analysis I place special emphasis on the centrality of location in the construction of the modern Zimbabwean subject as portrayed in the literary texts. I argue that race, gender and class are important in both colonial and postcolonial ideologies in limiting or expanding fictional characters' experience of the city. On the city's capacity to shape the categories of race, gender and class, Elizabeth Grosz posits the city as "the condition and milieu in which corporeality is socially, sexually, and discursively produced" (104). She goes on to establish the importance of "the constitutive and mutually defining relations between bodies and cities" (104). In pursuit of this mutuality, I adopt Rancière's thinking on politics and aesthetics in order to attend to the politics of imagining and inhabiting the city; to some extent this entails a contestation of both political and aesthetic power. In Marechera's writing those who cannot imagine the city differently from its official imagining live in someone else's description of it. The political and aesthetic implications of living someone else's description of the city are explored in different ways in all the chapters of the thesis. One of the implications is that the official or authorised version of the city constrains both residents

and outsiders. A literary imagining of the city offers alternative descriptions of the city. In Vera's novel *Without a Name*, the main character, Mazvita, in a re-working of the Marechera motif of city description, searches for a language to re-describe the city of Salisbury and to insert herself in it as part of her self naming. This re-description is an important aspect of a re-imagining of the real city that takes many forms; these are explored in each of the six chapters of the thesis that I introduce below.

Chapter Two examines the beginning of a literary imagining of the colonial city, portrayed by Doris Lessing as "half a modern city, half a pioneers' achievement" (*Proper Marriage* 12) and the short story "Hunger". The colonial city is a racially divided one, but it also reveals what the feminist geographer Massey describes as the "deep and multifarious . . . intersections and mutual influences of 'geography' and 'gender'" (177); these also manifest themselves in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Three examines city making and belonging through the lens of the halfway house as a journey in which the rural and urban are connected. The halfway house is the space of transition for fictional characters in search of a new sense of location and belonging. The boarding school and the mission house, especially in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, are significant sites in which rurality changes as the city comes to it. The halfway house concept also includes looking back to the country by the new and unsettled residents of the city. The key texts used in the analysis of the halfway house *are Perfect Poise and other poems* (1993) by Zimunya*; Waiting for the Rain* (1975) and *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) by Mungoshi; *Ancestors* (1996) and *Bones* (1986) by Hove and *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Dangarembga.

Chapter Four places Marechera at the centre of the production of literary houses in Zimbabwean literature. The chapter looks back to previous chapters and anticipates the use of the house trope in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Its focus is on houses as they include and exclude. The chapter explores the significance of a relentless transgression of borders and how this (dis)connects the national and transnational city. The focal texts of the chapter are *The House of Hunger* (1978), *Mindblast, or the Definitive Buddy* (1984), *The Black Insider* (1990) and *Scrapiron Blues* (1994).

Chapter Five analyses the way Vera rewrites woman, the land and city, writing back to a writing out and misrepresentation of women's place in both the land and the city by men. Her novels *Without a Name* (1994), *Butterfly Burning* (1998) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002)

re-gender Marechera's city writing as they re-incorporate the city-country binary that is bracketed in his texts.

Chapter Six uses Bauman's concept of the nomads, parvenus and pariahs of modernity to analyse the unsettled nature of city belonging as represented *in Harvest of Thorns* (1989), *Chairman of Fools* (2005) and *Strife* (2006) by Shimmer Chinodya and *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2009) by Valerie Tagwira.

Chapter Seven focuses on the imagining of the city that occurs within and beyond the limits of the nation state in Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* and Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009), as well as in selected stories. The texts discussed are Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) and Chikwava's "The Fig Tree and the Wasp", "ZESA Moto Muzhinji", "Seventh Street Alchemy" and *Harare North*.

The main justification for the selection of focal texts is that they not only have a city setting but set out to make the city their subject. In the chapter on Doris Lessing I have omitted the short story "A Home for Highland Cattle" because I wanted to focus on the township–city relationship in "Hunger". In any case this short story, together with "Black Madonna", in spite of their urban settings, use art to present a different kind of argument on culture – rather than on city belonging proper.

In Chapter Three I have elected to include the poetry of Zimunya because it articulates in a compelling manner the nativist aesthetic that figures the city as foreign space, and in the figures of Jikinya and Loveness, women are used as tropes of the country and the city respectively. The foreign nature of the colonial city is explored in the novels and short stories analysed in this chapter. For lack of space, I have excluded Mungoshi's short stories in his *Some Kinds of Wounds* (1980) and *Walking Still* (1997) and Irene Staunton's collections (*Writing Still: New stories from Zimbabwe*, 2003 and *Writing Now*, 2005). Also excluded from the purview of the thesis is Dangarembga's *Book of Not* (2006), a sequel to *Nervous Conditions* and the second instalment of a planned trilogy. Its focus is not primarily on the city but on the "unhu" ("Ubuntu") ethics of relation.

In Chapter Four, cognisant of the corpus of Marechera's writing, its generic range and the writer's Tristram Shandy style of dealing with subject matter, I decided to focus on those texts that deal with the city in a more sustained manner. I have for reasons of space also decided to exclude his poems and plays that also deal with the city.

In the chapter on Vera, *Nehanda*, the novel that launched the novelist's writing on women, is omitted because of its primary focus on the woman-land-nation figuration. I concede, however, that it is this novel that sets Vera on the aesthetic journey of writing women in urban spaces. Also excluded is *Under the Tongue*.

I have for reasons of space also excluded the novels of John Eppel from the thesis. I acknowledge that Eppel has made a significant contribution to white writing in Zimbabwe. Like Vera, he writes about the city of Bulawayo (see *Holy Innocents* and *Absent: The English Teacher*). Although Ndlovu, cited in Shaw (105), places him in the category of "angry jesters" along with Marechera, his consistently satirical outlook differs from the earnestness with which the city is imagined in texts by Marechera and other writers whose texts I discuss.

1.3 Cartography, subject construction and urban exclusion

The map reflects the initial but important official imagining of the city. It is a political blueprint of the actual city and often reflects how space is parcelled and how the politics of inclusion and exclusion is practised. The categories of inclusion and exclusion are race, ethnicity, gender and class. These spatial categories of urban inequality result in a differential cartography of affect in the city, explored in the texts under study. City exclusions in the colonial city are based on what Deana Heath describes as somatic imagining of nations "as gendered and racialised bodies" (9). This somatic imagination erected boundaries based on fear of contamination and the construction of the colonial other as dirty and immoral so as to justify the denial of spatial privileges to the colonised.

I explore the question of spatial rights through the lens of Gayatri Spivak's subalternity, marked by (in)visibility, silence and lack of agency. The subalterns of the city are the invisible, unspeaking and unspoken men and women without the power of agency. These are in the main confined to the township, though subalternity characterises the condition of women in the city whatever their spatial location. Subalternity is associated with struggles for the right to the city as articulated David Harvey (25) that I find pertinent in the construction of the urban subject in the texts selected for study. These categories of inclusion and exclusion vary in their articulation from colony to postcolony. For instance while race influences the mapping of the colonial city, in the postcolonial city its influence is muted or perhaps even irrelevant. Although productive in the critique of the colonial city and its

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disturbing ghettoising of the colonised, Fanon 's racial profiling of the colonial city obscures other cleavages that fracture city spatiality: an emphasis on the Manichaeism of the city ignores the contributions of gender, class and ethnicity as categories of spatial exclusion. A more holistic approach to urban spatial politics and practices attends to all these categories in their intermeshing and in their revelation of the power dynamics of space. Sibley claims that "power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments" (ix). Though this claim is made in the context of cities in the West, it offers a more nuanced approach to exclusion in both the colonial and postcolonial city than that offered by Frantz Fanon (30). While most writers considered in this thesis evoke a Manichaean aspect of the colonial city, they also reveal the limitations of the Fanonian paradigm of the city, marked by stark racial division.

Irrespective of race, most writers, particularly women, portray the impact of gender on access to the city. Among the many surprising complicities between coloniser and the colonised that surface in this thesis, both settler patriarchy and indigenous patriarchy work hand in hand to assert the patriarchal production of women as the subaltern of urban space. In Lessing's texts, white patriarchy is represented by various male characters with a masculinist settler agenda who want to keep public space in the city male and domestic space feminine. In black nationalist aesthetics, as evinced in the poetry of Musaemura Zimunya, bad girls go to the city and the good ones remain in the country. Zimunya's poetry is considered here as it reproduces the discourse of the city as foreign. In the Zimbabwean discourse of cultural nationalism that the poetry articulates the marginality of the colonized in the city is re-inscribed. The poetry also foregrounds gender in imagining spatialities as it uses women as tropes and not as subjects in their own right.   This subalternity is contested in all the focal texts as they portray women as co-producers (with men) of the city.

1.4 (Dis)connections: land, township and the transnational

In both the actual and imagined city in Zimbabwean literary texts there are (dis)connections in the form of binaries – the urban and the rural, city and township, the city and other cities, the past and the present, and the colonial and postcolonial. In all the chapters these binaries are evoked and collapsed as each term in a binary reconstitutes its supposed antithesis. The disconnections that are harnessed when normative place and subject identities are invoked through these binaries mask the connections inextricably linking the separated items. I adopt

the concept of entanglement as articulated from different disciplines by Nuttall (*Entanglement*) and Ingold (1) to analyse the connectedness of the binaries noted in the focal texts of the thesis. Ingold's fluidity of space is apposite here as it reinforces Nuttall's theorising of entanglement, as demonstrated in what she elsewhere reads as the manner in which the township and the city recompose each other.

This recomposition features most prominently in the urban-rural (dis)connection as it complicates and deepens the portrayal of the city. Migration, in both colonial and postcolonial times, is characterised by an exchange of population, goods and cultures. This exchange defies the construction of separate spatial and conceptual boundaries as it enriches and complicates the imagining of the colonial and postcolonial city. In most chapters of the thesis, it is shown that both colonial and postcolonial governments use administrative instruments to maintain boundaries and to determine the exchanges that occur between rural and urban spaces. Colonial regimes, in terms of the politics of racial exclusion, imagined urban space as white and rural space as black. In the colonial city, the colonised were treated as temporary sojourners and consequently confined to the camp-like conditions of the township. Various impediments made entry into urban space by the colonised difficult, as portrayed in selected texts by Doris Lessing, Dambudzo Marechera, Shimmer Chinodya and Yvonne Vera. Settlers in Southern Rhodesia based their exclusion of blacks by claiming city space as white. This claim was based on figuring the city as foreign to the colonised. Nationalist nativism that seeks nourishment and validation in the land also endorsed the settler view of treating urban space as foreign to Africans. I argue that in figuring the land as a site of autochthony, nationalist politics and aesthetics unwittingly confirmed the exclusion of blacks from the city. In baffling trajectories of nationalist politics in the Zimbabwean postcolony, the Zimbabwean African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government has used the racial statutes of colonial Rhodesia to expel marginalised citizens from the city. Operation Murambatswina, nearly three decades after independence, validates this observation: the government of the day and the former liberation movement engaged in forced removals premised on perceptions of marginalised urban citizens as 'totemless' and divorced from the authentic patriotic history of the Liberation Struggle. Having lost credibility with urban voters in the February 2000 referendum on a new constitution, and having been thoroughly routed by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in parliamentary elections in June the same year, and having failed to secure victory in the Presidential Elections of 2002, ZANU (PF) adopted a strategy of vilification and

disenfranchisement of the urban electorate (Kamete 47). Using a medical discourse reminiscent of the colony, this party has justified the expulsion of those described as 'dirt' from what Muponde refers to as "the charmed circle of Zimbabweanness" (177). The last two chapters explore ways in which colonial discourse and spatialities resurface in the Zimbabwean postcolony.

The rhetoric of indigeneity that is located in the land as the sacred site of the Liberation Struggle and as the ancestral domain of the nation, masks and sanitizes the violence of exclusion. It also allows for viewing the postcolonial township as a place of inauthenticity, and thus occludes the critical role played by the township in imagining the city and in disconnecting it from the citiness portrayed in literary texts.

The township-city relationship, though fraught, is one of the important (dis)connections that shape actual and imagined cities in all the chapters of the thesis. Although physically and metaphorically fenced off from the city, conceived as white and founded as a camp, the township is inextricably linked to the city. The boundary that separates the two spaces is repeatedly disrupted in the practices of daily life. A key aspect of this disruption in most of the focal texts of the thesis is the travel motif that finds marginalised characters escaping from their spaces of confinement and insinuating themselves, no matter how precariously, into those spaces rendered inaccessible to them by legislation and administrative instruments. Brian Chikwava describes Bulawayo as "a city born of migration" where "the footfall across its street pavements has mostly been that of the migrant's" ("City Portrait" 61). Migration across a variety of spaces, the township included, contests official and often narrow colonial and postcolonial thinking about the city, bringing into critical focus what escapes the radar of statist and nativist management and policing. In a rethinking of city imaginary in Southern Africa, Nuttall (177) posits the concept of "assemblages of citiness" in a significant departure from the antimonies that continue to paralyse postcolonial theorising of African spatial imaginaries and the Southern African city. In a similar pursuit of the disruption of the Manichaeism of the city, Baucom rethinks city modernity in terms of "township modernities" that arise from Fanon's "zone of occult instability where the people dwell". Baucom reads the Southern African township as "the modernist zone of the present from which colonial societies will refashion themselves" (69). In both Baucom's and Nuttall's readings colonial and postcolonial city futures are made in the interaction between the township and the city. In the township incident in *A Ripple from the Storm*, the remaking of the city and the setting up of its transnational connections are

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made possible through the trope of music. Yvonne Vera reanimates this trope by conjoining it with that of invisibility in *The Stone Virgins* (7). The basement of a city hotel in Selborne Avenue, apart from representing the embeddedness of the township in the city, physically and metaphorically, stands for the suppressed spatialities and architectures of the city. As this thesis demonstrates, the township continues to be seen as the stubborn remains of the colony. In spite of Nuttall's invitation to scholars to shift away from apartheid and colonial binaries in theorising the city, in her "City Forms and Writing the 'Now' in South Africa" (740), the persistence of the township and the challenges this poses to rethinking the city have to be acknowledged. In a postcolonial state that has adopted ethnic and racial cleansing as a weapon of political revenge, it may be difficult to apply the new city forms that Nuttall sees emerging in the post-apartheid city to the Zimbabwean city. In the "entanglements that occur precisely within contexts of racial segregation and its aftermath, transgressions which may take various syncretic forms, at times including a certain racial porousness" (*Entanglement* 747), which Nuttall finds in a new cartography of the South African post-apartheid city, do not register in the post-2000 Zimbabwean city.

Although most of the writers portray the township as abject space "where the state of exception begins to become the rule" (Agamben 96) and where the logic of exclusion from the city proper prevails, this heterotopic space is figured as the space for the production of new city subjects and new art forms. The border that separates the township from the city is blurred as city and township flow into each other, especially as portrayed in the novels of Lessing and Vera. The inseparability of city spaces across national and continental divides becomes even more accentuated in Marechera's writing, where the transgression of city borders defines the experiences of his fictive and real characters.

The transnational threatens the creation and maintenance of autochthonic space and the national city. Most of the texts discussed in this thesis treat the city with ambivalence: there is no romanticising of transnational urban space, neither is there a negative sense of the transnational, expressed elsewhere in AbdouMaliq Simone's "worlding of African cities" that "involves the production of orientations to, and sensibilities about, the urban that seemed to posit that salient features of urban life and its accomplishments were always taking place somewhere else besides the particular city occupied" (18). This emptying out of the African city and "a totalizing sense of exteriority" (17) does not fully describe the reality of the African city evoked in the texts discussed here. In a less totalizing sense of exteriority, the African city has, since its colonial founding, been connected to an elsewhere imagined in

Lessing's and Vera's novels as (to use Meg Samuelson's conception of the transnational connections of the Southern African city) "the city beyond the border" (251). This echoes Jacobs's view that "the spatiality of city dwellers is stretched between here and there" (412) in the blurring of boundaries. This sense of elsewhere, without Simone's sense of an evacuated urban space overpopulated with the bush, provides the impetus to migration that has always been an integral part of citiness in Zimbabwean literature. This clears the ground for thinking about cities relationally (Jacobs 412). Migration, whether local or translocal, is connected to an incomplete abandonment of old places and the search for new ones; it is tied to the house/home trope in city imaginings. The literary twinning of cities breaches not only national borders but also conceptual and semantic ones. Vera's literary predecessors, Lessing and Marechera, use this motif as they imaginatively transgress various borders of the colonial city. Placing the city in relation to transnational circuits continues to shape postcolonial re-imaginings of the city in texts by Petina Gappah and Brian Chikwava. The travel motif in all the chapters of the thesis disrupts the city as either a colonial enclosure or nationalist one.

1.5 Troping the city: houses of hunger

The writers selected for study use various tropes in their literary rendering of affect and in placing these in the context of (dis)connections to theorise and contest the city. Tropes are concept metaphors that allow these writers to imagine cities as "rolling maelstroms of affect" (Thrift 57). The focal texts analysed in the thesis foreground what Thrift describes as "the ubiquity of affect as a vital element of cities" (57). Tropes allow the writers to explore how fictional characters in their everyday experiences feel and think about their location and unmooring in the city. These tropes, despite their sometimes entrapping character, capture how these characters imagine their escape from the here and now and their connection with elsewhere. House, land, water, train and music are the dominant tropes in most of the selected texts as they portray (im)mobility, (dis)location and (dis)connection in imagining the city and the place of the subjects in the city. I do not expand on each of these tropes here but leave this to closer scrutiny in the individual chapters that follow. For now, I wish to focus on the house, as articulated by Marechera, as the over-arching trope of much of the Zimbabwean canon.

Larson et al., in their introduction to an issue of *European Journal of English Studies* devoted to the house trope in Western literature, raise questions that are anticipated in

Marechera's writing: "how, when, where, is the house not (just) a space 'in four walls'? How is the inhabited dwelling both a lived experience and the image of an episteme, something produced through and producing subjective experiences of time and space? What do houses shelter or by definition exclude? What does it mean to be '(un)housed' or else placed in a metaphorical or actual halfway house in/of culture, writing, society?" (2). These questions receive a metaphorical articulation and are answered in the density and complexity of imagery in Marechera's use of the house trope. The house in Marechera has several layers and rooms and it stands for various structures of hunger. Referring back to Doris Lessing's writing and to her use of the suburban house with various rooms, and pre-figuring later articulations in the work of writers who come after him, the house becomes a metonym of the city that in turn becomes a metonym of the nation. Hunger stands for various deprivations, negations and exclusions associated with the city – material, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and political. Marechera's enduring contribution to Zimbabwean fiction, in addition to his post-modernist style, lies in the persistence of the house trope. In *The House of Hunger* he figures Vengere Township as the house of hunger, a microcosm of the black experience of the city and the colonial state.

Imaginings of the city and the township as houses persist in various reformulations in Zimbabwean fiction. In the contestations of belonging that occur in specific places and spaces figured as houses in the texts under study, a conflation between house and home occurs. The house becomes a metonym of the city and nation. An architectural contrast between rural and urban houses forms the basis of the plot of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, with the mission portrayed as a halfway house of colonial urban modernity. This contrast recurs in Vera's novels, especially *The Stone Virgins*. Writers extend this halfway house trope to the township that in most of the texts considered in this thesis is figured as the heterotopic space of the city. In further extensions of the house trope, most of the writers script houses as subject to various forms of transgression. The house metaphor is implicit in novels by Chinodya and Tagwira: they evoke the township as an abject space by portraying houses in which characters are both at home and not at home. Chikwava makes extensive and explicit use of the house metaphor in *Harare North* to refer to Zimbabwe as "the house of stone", while evoking various houses that are associated with the unsettled who belong in both the home city and the diasporic one. Although the last chapter points to a shift of focus in imagining the city, it links with the rest of chapters in its re-articulation of the various aspects of the city analysed in the thesis – the city and country connection, the significance of

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gender in the city, the motif of migration and the use of tropes. It also re-inforces the city as a place of (dis)connections. One such (dis) connection is the rural-urban binary that prevails in shaping the experience of exiles in the post-imperial city of London. The other is the recurrent motif of cities linked by routes that precipitate how cities flow into each other.

1.6 On posts and pasts

In this thesis I situate (dis)connections in the context of postcolonialism and modernity. I use the terms descriptively to refer to literary texts and periods, the state, nation and subjectivities. While both words have a temporal inflection it is the aspect of oppositional critique in postcolonialism that I wish to focus on. Throughout the thesis the emphasis is on textuality of the city and how it is re-imagined. This re-imagining of the city is an important aspect of the postcolonial critique. I argue that this re-imagining of the city is presented in the focal texts as a production of counter-cartographies and counter-discourses. I place imagining the city in the context of Tiffin and Lawson's conceptualization of how "imperial relations …were maintained in their interpellative phase largely by textuality" (3) as I broaden the scope of interpellation and textuality to include what comes after empire.

Postcolonialism is a broad field that is articulated from numerous locations around the world. My thesis is not the place to rehearse these various articulations but I want to focus on what some critics have identified as the postcolonial problematic and offer a very modest proposal on how the specificity of the text addresses some of the concerns raised. The prefix postcolonialism carries two primary meanings: one of a preposition meaning "after", "beyond", "subsequent to"; and, the other a transitive verb meaning "to send". Both senses of the word refer to spatiality, temporality and events. These meanings shape what Shohat describes as "the ambiguities of postcolonialism" (102) and McClintock refers to as its "pitfalls" (84). Although both acknowledge the extraordinary circulation and ubiquity of the term in current academic discourse both point out its troubling aporias while they acknowledge its validity as critique. Shohat points out its "theoretical and political ambiguities", "its ahistorical and universalizing deployments, and its potentially depoliticizing implications" (99).

Contemporary theorization and literatures from formerly colonised countries can be adduced to counter these charges. The different locations of postcolonial discourse and the literary texts work against the universalizing logic of postcolonialism. Although sharing many similarities with other texts on the colony and what supersedes it, a literary text

achieves its own a singularity and particularity. Each text within the broad field of postcolonial literature de-scribes imperial discourse in a specific way in particular historical contexts. Far from being ahistorical, the literature described as postcolonial, to adduce Frederic Jameson's mantra, 'always historicises'. The focal texts of my thesis engage in (re)imagining of the city in specific historical contexts. The politics and aesthetics of the (re)imagination surface in all the texts and my analysis acknowledges this historical situatedness of the text and the process of writing.

Some of the problems of postcolonialism are connected to expectations it raises concerning the shifts it signals in temporality, spatiality, epistemology and ideology. The postcolonial critique that is premised on rupture with the colony is, however, haunted by an intractable ambiguity. Like its postmodern counterpart, it "coexists with an equally real and equally powerful complicity with the cultural dominants within which it inescapably exists" (Tiffin 150). In this alleged complicity the shifts postcolonialism signals need to be re-examined. In the thesis I analyse, using new articulations of postcolonial theory, how specific texts problematize this sense of shifts. Texts by writers like Marechera, Vera and Chikwava, for example, complicate the aesthetic, ideological, epistemic and temporal shifts that are built into postcoloniality. Marechera's texts, despite celebrating a literary cosmopolitanism, do not privilege a single site in their various disruptions but offer a troubled if not insecure sense of being in and out of the world. The refusal to acknowledge a hierarchizing of spatialities characterises most of the texts considered in the thesis. Working against the positivist rationality built into a Eurocentric sense of progress that McClintock ("Angel of Progress" 85) critiques, Vera's *The Stone Virgins* in its time travel is a literary enactment of McClintock's problematization of the concept of temporal linearity.

Postcolonialism concerns itself, in the sense of shifts indicated above, with pasts and posts. The question of modernity comes in here. Postcolonialism signposts modernity in its various forms. I acknowledge that the modernity that is presented and critiqued in most of the texts is Western. Habermas posits two types of modernity, the aesthetic (40) and the cultural and social (42), both viewed in terms of the new superseding the past. The focal texts deal with both versions of modernity, not to affirm put to problematize them. Chenjerai Hove's *Ancestors* and Vera's *The Stone Virgins* complicate the antiquity-modernity relationship as they critique colonial modernity and its replacement by the nationalist order. Recent articulations of postcolonial critique sees this imbrication of the postcolony and the colony as a site of re-thinking postcolonial theory and troubling its binaries.

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CHAPTER 2

**"HALF A MODERN CITY, HALF A PIONEERS' ACHIEVEMENT":
(RE)IMAGINING THE COLONIAL CITY IN DORIS LESSING'S ZAMBESIA
FICTION**

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2.1 Introduction

> The small colonial town was at a cross-roads in its growth: half a modern city, half a
> pioneers' achievement, a large block of flats might stand next to a shanty of wood and
> corrugated iron, and most streets petered out suddenly in a waste of scrub and grass.
>
> <div align="right">--- Doris Lessing, A Proper Marriage 12.</div>

This chapter reads the colony and its city as in-between sites where new racial and gendered subjects emerge. I adopt Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall's conceptualisation of the emergent as "the power of the unforeseen and unfolding" ("Writing the world" 349) to analyse new subject formations in a colonial city whose cartography reflects stark racial and gender divisions. 'Race' and nation are entwined with issues of gender and class in Lessing's work, not merely at the level of content but also in her formal and generic choices. I posit the city in colonial Southern Rhodesia as portrayed in Doris Lessing's texts as a site for the production of new subjects and cultures that emerge from the rifts in its racial cartography. I concur with Chennells when he claims that Lessing "is at one with post-colonial theorists who proclaim cultural hybridity as the irretrievable condition of post-colonial modernity" ("Doris Lessing" 8). Lessing imagines the city as an arena for the production of new cultures and identities that take cognisance of the existence of the other, despite the Manichaeism of the colonial city. In colonial constructions the city proper, portrayed as white, is divided into public and domestic spaces, with most white women being confined to the suburban home. This logic of gendered space extends to the township and the coloured quarter. This division arises from its origin as "a pioneers' achievement" that places it within contested colonial narratives of conquest, home-making and marginalisation.

Zambesia is the fictional name for Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, which Doris Lessing uses as both setting and subject of her writing. The epigraph, taken from the second novel of her *Children of Violence* novel series, emphasises the smallness of the colonial town, but contradicts the narrator's dismissal of it since it provides a rich seam for the initiation of

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city writing. Behind the belittling of the colonial city of Salisbury in Lessing's fictional country is the imperial metropolis of London, distantly linked to the city on the veld in each of her first four novels in the Children of Violence series (*Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, *A Ripple from the Storm* and *Landlocked*), and becoming the focus of *The Four-Gated City*. Mrs Quest in *Landlocked* describes the city of Salisbury in the 1940s as a "shallow little town, that was set so direct on the African soil" (71), sharing momentarily her daughter's dissatisfaction with the colonial city, though for different reasons. The city's cultural and social impoverishment implied here, resonates with the other perceived limitations that emerge in Lessing's Zambesia fiction. Although Zygmunt Bauman (14) alerts us to the danger of explaining the city by any single factor, in that this "stops far short from accounting for the astonishing dynamics, twists and turns, and stubborn unpredictability of city history", this should not prevent us from acknowledging the effects of the fragmenting of urban space: throughout the history of the city in Zimbabwe spatial division has been politicised and deployed in the implementation and maintenance of racial, gender and class differences. This foregrounding of spatial division does not hide the character of city space as "a battle-ground of countervailing forces, and of incompatible yet mutually accommodating tendencies" (Bauman 15).

Writing the city for Lessing is in itself a contestation of its spatial regime through tropes that disrupt the tendencies that seek to naturalize gender and racial difference. Train, music, house, water and land tropes and dreams convey the city's "incompatible yet mutually accommodating tendencies" (Bauman, *City*). Dreams and epiphanies are invoked to contest the spatial regime of the colonial city and give shape to utopian cities and the ideal post-racial subjectivities. In *Martha Quest* the heroine comes up with a vision of "the ideal landscape of white cities and noble people which lay over the actual vistas of harsh grass and stunted trees like a golden mirage" (43). This urban utopia is described later on in the same text as "the white-piled, broad-thoroughfared, tree-lined, four-gated, dignified city where white and black and brown lived as equals, and where there was no hatred or violence" (157). Martha, who makes herself the custodian of the utopian city, would want to exclude from this imaginary the "false, cynical, and disparaging" men and the "fussy and aggressive" women (157) who happen to dominate settler society. A variation of this dream of the ideal city occurs in *A Ripple from the Storm*: "the future they dreamed of seemed just around the corner; they could almost touch it. Each saw an ideal town, clean, noble and beautiful soaring up over the actual town they saw" (35). The exclusion of those who perpetuate structures of racial inequality

and injustice is implied in the sweet dream. In the short story "Hunger", the seductive dream turns out be a yearning for African power and its potential to radically transform the city and herald the truly post-colonial. This recurring dream is deferred in *Landlocked* as Martha Quest and her creator shift their attention to the imperial city of London. More than half a century later, in *The Sweetest Dream*, this dream recurs in different forms. In one form post-colonial imaginary reverts to the dystopia of the colony, while in the other the many-layered cosmopolitan London house, despite the presence of some nasty characters, redeems the belief in the capacity of humanity to do good across racial, class, and gender divides. In Lessing's texts dreams can only erupt into the realist narrative without significantly changing the fictional city. By the end of *Landlocked* the gap between the real city and the utopian one is not narrowed as society reverts to positions found at the beginning of *Martha Quest*, and the city's capacity to produce the emergent is diminished.

I argue that in Lessing's novels and short stories considered here, train, music, house, water and land are key tropes in imagining the city as the site of the emergent. In Southern Africa in the 1940s and 1950s the emergent is associated with the Sophiatown Renaissance of the *Drum* decade. This saw a creative burst of music and writing which established a new register of citiness. Lessing's *A Ripple from the Storm* uses the jazz trope to link distant city spatialities and disrupt structures of containment in the colonial city. Susan Watkins argues that Lessing uses the image of the city as palimpsest in her work in order to suggest that the city is a multi-layered text capable of being rebuilt, re-read, revised, and re-interpreted in manifold ways" (249).

The epigraph suggests a city and its subjects in the making. The city's inchoate character gives it a transitionality and establishes a connection with local and transnational spaces. The structure of the *Children of Violence* sequence of novels closely follows the rhythms that are triggered by the (dis)connections. In her flânerie, Martha Quest is constantly making "transitions from one world to another" (*Landlocked* 42) as she (dis)connects with various city spaces to indicate subjectivity as a process. *Martha Quest*, in which the rebellious Martha comes to the city and marries Douglas Knowell, is very much about the country-city dynamic. *A Proper Marriage* explodes the Jane Austen narrative of gendered Englishness tied to marriage, fortune and tradition, while *A Ripple from the Storm* is about waiting for a revolution that would overturn the static colonial order. *Landlocked* portrays land-water tension as it suggests (im)mobility, and *The Four-Gated City* is about the ex-colonials' re-imagining of London rising from its World War II ruins. Each novel thus stages

transitions in the several phases of the city and represents the fictional heroine as simultaneously impelled and restrained by mobility and immobility.

This tension leads to the nervous condition of the settler within the artificial boundaries of the colonial city, erected from fear of racial contamination. A permanent sense of crisis gives rise to the Black Peril discourse (see McCulloch) that criminalises sexual intimacy across racial lines at the same time as settler men, as evidenced by the sexual exploits of Macintosh ("The Antheap") and McFarlane (*Ripple*), transgress sexual laws and taboos. This hypocritical conservatism suppresses new and deviant political and social orders as it maintains gendered and racial boundaries in the city. The racialising and gendering of space reflects Stoler's assertion regarding "how Europeans in the colonies imagined themselves and constructed communities built on asymmetries of race, class and gender" ("Making" 634). In contrast to this conservatism Lessing's novels celebrate the sense of being at the "crossroads" where the new is about to emerge. In Lessing's fiction the new pertains to (re)constructions of gender, class, and aesthetics that deconstruct the Manichean character of the colonial city. The *Children of Violence* novel sequence is structured round this tension in the colonial city, capturing its back-and-forth rhythms, while mapping a complicated path of flight for the heroine. The writer too (and her fictional heroine) find themselves in the space of transition and, as Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins observe, this results in "shifts across all kinds of borders – geographical, ideological and generic" (3).

One such shift is moving away from the male bildungsroman and replacing and re-gendering it. Lessing, in her conjoining of writing and the colony, portrays the city as it confirms and subverts the construction of the racial and gendered subject. Lessing writes a bildungsroman with a female heroine in the colonial city. This placement contests the figuration of land and women in colonial literature as illustrated in the fiction of Rider Haggard. Rosenfeld (43), Sizemore (133) and Arias (3) elide the African city, as they locate Lessing writing the city in her post-Zambesia fiction. This privileging of cities in the north consigns Lessing's earlier writing dealing with the emerging city of Salisbury to the anonymity and invisibility of rural Africa. I argue that Lessing from the very beginning writes about cities that co-produce each other – the historical city and the fictional one, Salisbury and Johannesburg, Salisbury and London. This study rescues the African city from insignificance by reading it as an arena for the emergent. The colonial city, in the words of Thomas Stern, Martha's lover, is "something in between", "neither, town nor country" (*Landlocked* 138). A number of tropes throughout the focal texts discussed in the chapter

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convey this in-betweenness of the colonial city that determines how subjects are constructed. In this and subsequent chapters I adopt Nick Mansfield's (4) approach to subjectivity and Jacques Rancière's concept of "political subjectivization", "the formation of a one that is not a self but is the relation of a self to another" (61), to focus on the relational and contingent of becoming and its political and ethical implications. Rancière's term captures what Mansfield's sense of the "social and cultural entanglement" of the self and of the four meanings that he associates with this entanglement. The first meaning relates to claims of autonomy and agency; the second places the subject in a system of constraints, obligations and responsibilities; the third meaning locates the subject at the centre of truth, morality and meaning. It is the last meaning, the human person "as the intense focus of rich and immediate experience that defies system", that is of special interest for Doris Lessing's fiction. Though the colonial structures give subjectivity to whites while denying it to the colonized, this denial is contested. Rancière's "political subjectivation" is relevant to the racial and gendered other of the colony. Rancière conceives of the subject as "an outsider", an "in-between", "between several names, statuses, and identities; between humanity and inhumanity, citizenship and its denial; between the status of a man of tools and the status of a speaking and thinking being". Rancière's subject is not fixed but is in a process of becoming, between affirmation and denial. This approach frees the subject from the rigid binaries that circulate in postcolonial theory while still accommodating a conceptualisation of the colonial subject that "demands an articulation of forms of difference –racial and sexual" (Bhabha 67). These forms of difference are inscribed in the colonial city: "From a single small window she could overlook at least three worlds of life, quite separate, apparently self-contained, apparently linked by nothing but hate" (*Martha Quest* 39).

The three worlds that Martha sees from the window of her room – the white city, the Coloured quarter and the Native Location – are as deeply fractured by hate as they are linked by it. The contested sites of the city are also linked by (in)visibility, the gaze and voice (or the lack of it). The quotation marks the construction of the subject as female, white and in possession of both the gaze and voice. The city's capacity to draw into close proximity characters from radically different backgrounds and to gesture towards the "unforeseen and unfolding" are features of Lessing's writing. The colonial town offers cosmopolitan possibilities in the mix of characters from different parts of the world, ironically made possible by World Wars I and II. These outsiders play key roles in shaping the movement of the plot. There are many encounters between new arrivals and long-established settlers who,

while treating natives under the category of flora and fauna, claim to have privileged knowledge of Africa. In their encounters with natives the new arrivals also subvert the racial and political codes of the colony. These encounters become indices of the emergent.

 In relation to the three separated worlds of the fictional city, part of the meaning of the emergent is produced through the transgression of borders that enclose these worlds. The sense of containment associated with borders is subverted in Lessing's use of tropes that convey a sense of a transgressive imagination at work in the colonial city.

2.2 Troping the city in *Children of Violence*

Lessing uses the land-water dyad, train, music and house tropes to capture various forms of (im)mobility across contested colonial geographies.   To unpack Lessing's use of the land-water dyad I begin with an extract from *Landlocked*:

> Somewhere was water, was rescue, was the sea. In this nightmare she was caught in, in which they were all caught, they must remember that outside, somewhere else, was light, was the sound of water breaking on rocks. Somewhere lay shores where waves ran all day with a jostling rush like horses racing. Somewhere long, fresh, blue horizons absorbed ships whose decks smelled of hot salt. (244)

Lessing captures through the poetic cadence of the sentences the rhythm of the ocean, in contrast with the "this plateau where sudden hot rains, skies of brass, dry scents, dry wastes of grass imprisoned its creatures in a watchful tension like sleeplessness" (244). The novel's title invokes a sense of entrapment, thus provoking in the main character a desire to escape. Placed between the dry plateau and a distant sea, the city's inland location suggests a metaphorical stasis that is contrasted with the fluidity of the sea. The sense of being cut off from the restless energy and possibility of renewal produces metaphors that continue to resonate in later Zimbabwean fiction.

The train trope runs through Southern African literature and music to evoke the ambivalence of colonial modernity. This ambivalence is illustrated in the extract below where the train is a symbol of a divided city and a divided nation:

> The train, that perfect symbol of the country, stood waiting. Behind the engine stretched the coaches; one or two white face showed from the window of each. At the

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extreme end, there was a long truck, like a truck for cattle, confining as many black people as there were whites in the rest of the train. In between, a couple of ambiguous coaches held Indians and Coloured people, who were allowed to remain provided no white person demanded their seats. (*Proper Marriage* 163)

Settler myths of racial inequality are reflected in the order of the coaches. The colonial other is viewed as both a lack and a source of contamination, thus allowing the settler to imagine the nation "somatically" (Heath 3). This somatic imagining is reflected in the moral panics that regularly erupt in the city in colonial Southern Rhodesia, expressing the fear of the black male body in the city. It also explains, in part, the racial cartography of the city and the spatial tactic of confining the white female body to the domestic space. The horizontal aspect of the train symbol does not mask the hierarchizing of races as this determines exclusion through the allocation of economic, cultural and social privilege. Between the train's extremes is a space of ambiguity occupied by coloureds and Indians. Although Lessing makes reference to the coloured question in her short stories and novels, the Coloured presence in the city, like that of the black woman, is marked by invisibility.

Apart from the overt train symbolism, the railway station occupies a special place in the city. The train tracks speeding from it function as connectors with the world beyond the city while the station itself functions as a social space, a place of both arrival and departure, thereby accentuating the sense of circulation of people. Despite its inland location, the city on the veld is connected to other cities beyond the border. The railway line acts as an umbilical cord linking this city with the imperial metropolis. Train travel, despite mobility determined by race, is an apt image of the divided but entangled collectives and subjects in the city. It also disrupts the image of the city as already made and suggests new cartographies of the city.

Through tropes the city is repeatedly remade, rendering the Manichean divide porous and unstable. One such trope of remaking is music that, like the train trope, is about movement. Music, like water, is about flows and transgressions. Jazz is a musical genre whose "movement from the margins to the mainstream" (Applerouth 226), is apposite here as it relates to various forms of border-crossing and self-fashioning. Lessing uses the jazz trope to open up a new register for imagining the city and the urban subject. This register illustrates, against the grain of the colonial spatial order in the city, Bauman's "incompatible yet mutually accommodating tendencies" in its linking of the Native Location and the white

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town. Lessing anticipates the theorising of the Southern African city that posits the entanglement of the township and the city:

> The white dance bands in the city played many kinds of jazz, but when they played wild it was fast, Chicago-style, white man's jazz – there were no Africans in the white town's bands. Here they played wild too, what these boys had heard from listening outside walls, outside windows while white people danced inside to the jazz born in the head of Chicago, the city on the river up from New Orleans. Sometimes, when the trumpet had time and space to sing, it sang slowly, more sorrowfully; and sometimes the drums beat, not from the memory of what the white man's drums did at the dances in town, but because drums had beaten through the childhood of all these dark boys, city boys now, but bred in the villages of a country where drums were seldom silent. In this small damp room now, and it was one of a couple of dozen similar rooms in this location, stood beside the hide-covered wooden drum from the villages, and it stood beside the metal-shining drums bought second-hand from a white man's band, and often, late at night, the two kinds of drum spoke together against each other, as if talking each out in argument. (155)

This extract is filled with contrasts: of cities, drums, black and white, city and village and styles of playing, all engaged in a complex entanglement of creativity. The city on the veld, through the migration of a musical genre, is entangled in the mutual production of two American cities, New Orleans and Chicago. These two American cities stand for two types of jazz, based on race and linked together by travel, a distinction that Lessing translocates to the colonial house of jazz, built on exclusion, as the location players work on what they have "heard from listening outside walls, outside windows". The black players hold in tension different rhythms, the "hide-covered wooden drum from the village" and "the metal-shining drums". This aesthetic tension has broader implications for the styling of the black urban subject. Lessing anticipates many postcolonial African writers in her figuring of the modern black subject, for example Gabriel Okara, whose poem "Piano and Drums" is based on the contrapuntal relationship of "the mystic rhythm/of jungle drums and the concerto" (in *The Fisherman's Invocation*). Lessing rejects simplistic binaries in the constitution of the urban subject. A later generation of writers, especially Vera and Chikwava, return to and elaborate this trope that can be traced back to Lessing's fiction. In *A Ripple from the Storm* contrapuntal techniques suggest ways of negotiating new identities, and surviving and resisting colonial inscriptions in the city:

…sometimes, because of the necessity for caution and secrecy, a soft music came into life that sang and questioned and hesitated, music born of secrecy, double-talk and brotherhood of oppression (155).

The "double-talk" is part of what James Harding (136) refers to as jazz's "overt" and "covert" aspects, double codes that bring out the aesthetic-political dimension of the music of the oppressed.

If some tropes foreground transgression, others, such as the house trope, emphasise containment. Throughout the *Children of Violence* series Martha imagines divided houses in which people live in separate rooms and speak different languages. The metaphoric house "consisted of a dozen rooms, each self-contained" and "the people in the rooms could not meet each other or understand each other" (*Landlocked* 103). The house as microcosm of both city and nation enacts the biblical babel that prevents the formation of a common community. In her recent novel, *The Sweetest Dream*, Lessing returns to the house trope to re-imagine the possibility of a post-imperial and post-racial society. The multi-storeyed London house represents a cosmopolitan order that contrasts sharply with the horizontal inequality of the colonial city.

The story "Hunger" stages the Fanonian envy produced by the Manicheanism of the colonial city: a gang of black youths operates from the black township to steal from the white town and, through forgery, to contest its oppressive bureaucracy. The darkly lit, crowded, and squalid "dolls' houses" (*Ripple* 154) are contained by a barbed-wire fence. Jimmy, the RAF officer, as colonial outsider adopts a metropolitan perspective that emphasises the smallness, insignificance and concentration camp aspect the township. Although he feels like "Gulliver in Lilliput" (ibid), the RAF airman who visits the township at night sympathises with the colonised whose nocturnal mobility is restricted to keep their "bodies ready for daytime exploitation" (*Ripple* 154). This night curfew infantilises blacks as colonial paternalism scripts a truncated black urban identity.

In contrast to the township, the white city is well-lit, spacious, unfenced and curfew-free. It gives a nocturnal mobility to rowdy members of the Sports Club and produces a new kind of gendered flânerie in *A Proper Marriage*, *A Ripple from the Storm* and *Landlocked* that debunks Black Peril myths. Martha Quest's flânerie is an escape from unhomely domestic space.

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The inability to cross boundaries accounts for the failures that lead to failed marriages, failed inter-racial communication, and failed politics in the city. The inmates of these rooms "did not know the languages spoken in other rooms". Although the colonial city of Salisbury attracts outsiders from different parts of the world, the cosmopolitanism it promises is not realised in *Children of Violence* as the racial and ethnic cantonments are stronger than the desire to cross borders. Consequently the colonial house turns into a site of intense claustrophobia that produces neurosis in characters like Mrs Caston, Martha's landlady, mother-figure, and possible chaperone, who barricades herself in her house as she reads signs of lasciviousness in every black male. It also gives rise to the disorderly Ku-Klux-Clan-like vigilantism that manifests itself in *Landlocked*. The Quest House, a powerful symbol of the nightmare of the past, the trauma of World War I and II and the conflict of generations, turns into a house of dis-ease. Martha finds the smell of her sick father's room, which is like an "interminable deathbed", over-powering; she "felt it cling to her clothes, damp and thick, like a fog" (*Landlocked* 242). Mr Quest's vice-like grip on his granddaughter's arm evokes the tyranny of the past. It is difficult to escape from "this nightmare house like a maze where there could be only one end, no matter how hard one ran this way, that way, like a scared rabbit". *Children of Violence* posits an escape narrative for both the individual and the collective.

2.3 Lessing's divided city: "Hunger" and African urbanity

The city that Lessing evokes in her fiction is a fractured one, divided into the native location, the coloured quarter and the white city. Using the house trope with many self-contained rooms whose inmates "did not know the languages spoken in other rooms" (*Landlocked* 105) and train compartments divided according to the racial ideology of the colony, Lessing portrays a city that develops at complicated and unequal speeds, moving in the same uncertain direction. If the novels portray the city as a contested white space that excludes the black presence or corrals it in the sanitary lane dwellings for domestic servants, her short story "Hunger", which has not received much critical attention, focuses on the black township and its connection with the city. It is a key text in Lessing's articulation of black urbanity during the 1940s and 1950s, which Alfred Mbaba also portrays in his short story "Rhodesia Road" (1951). In its titling, its township focus and use of metaphor, the story is a

precursor of Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of Hunger*. It also prefigures writing about the city from the township in the novels by later generations of writers.

John Reed claims that the "story stands apart from the rest of Lessing's work" (255), especially in its "deliberate imaginative attempt to see white Rhodesia from an African point of view" (256). It is the most daring of all her African stories in the way it deals with the aesthetics of representation. In "Hunger" she gives voice to the voiceless and imaginatively renders the "Native Location" in ways that had not been done before. In this story Lessing initiates the aesthetics of giving agency (Morales-Moreno, 2) to the slum and locating the postcolonial potential to transform the city. This story also reveals Lessing's "narrative anxiety" regarding the black experience in the city as she tries to pack into this story everything she knew at that time – the pass laws, the surveillance of black movements in town, the lack of adequate and proper accommodation for urban blacks, and a host of other racial injustices and exclusions. The pressure to document all these, in addition to the story's over-reliance on coincidence, its morality-tale structure and lack of deep psychological insight into other characters (apart from Jabavu) accounts for the aesthetic untidiness of the story. But even when these weaknesses are taken into consideration it is clear that the gesture of moving into unmapped territory for the writer is significant. "Hunger" exploits the Jim-comes-to-town plot that Alan Paton uses in *Cry, the Beloved Country* without succumbing to the temptation to moralise and to romanticise the country life its hero has abandoned. In another deviation from the Paton text, Lessing does not portray the township as a crime-infested space but as a place where its black inhabitants negotiate new identities. Experimenting with giving voice to the colonised, "Hunger" is Lessing's most sustained attempt to capture in fiction the emergence of new forms of black city belonging. In most of her novels black characters are not only few in number, they also speak very little or not at all. Her experiment in this story presents aesthetic, ethical and ideological challenges. The authority of a white writer who elects to write about the black other is often vigorously contested: the scandals of literary misrepresentation in the imperial library, is most obviously associated with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and texts like this raise the question of who owns experience and its representation. However, the narrator in Salman Rushdie's novel *Shame* (28) contests this copyrighting of experience in postcolonial writing: "Is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories?" Notwithstanding the fact that the narrator-cum-putative author in *Shame* shares the same cultural and historical background

as the people whose lives are narrated, these questions are pertinent in revisiting the fraught task of aesthetic representation of the colonial other.

In "Hunger", Lessing's description of the story setting deftly captures the appearance of the colonial slum of Mbare (at that time known as Harare) and populates it wholly with black characters schematically divided into two groups, those of light (the politically conscious) and those of darkness (belonging to the criminal world), although this excludes those who work in the colonial service. Jabavu, the main character in the story, leaves his rural home some considerable distance from Harare, impelled by an indefinable restlessness and hunger that can only be attributed to the anomie triggered by colonialism. Jabavu is the prototype of the autobiographical narrator in Marechera's fiction and of all rural and urban youths searching for print on the various dumps of colonial modernity (see *The House of Hunger, and other stories* and Vera's *The Stone Virgins*). Jabavu, like his creator, is a rural autodidact, dreamer, and rebel whose key link with colonial modernity is the Greek store in the village. He is born with a literal hunger ("a demanding hungry child" [387]) that lends itself to metaphorical articulations of dissatisfaction with life, excessive gestures, and restlessness. The temporal setting of the story can be extrapolated from the hints given by the narrator: "So in the villages there was a year of hunger" (387) and "the Long Hunger" (388). The expressions are almost literal translations from Shona, for the Shona 1947 emerges as the year of drought and famine. It also alludes to Indian independence and a hunger that Jabavu feels has political connotations. In the context of this story the desire is to leave all that is traditional in a voracious longing for the new. Jabavu's desire is difficult to name, thus giving a certain edgy inscrutability to his character. Expressed at times as a general wanderlust, it often turns into a yearning for a specific geographic destination: "A hunger rages in him for that town" (391). The colonial city for the rural migrant becomes a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Objects that represent colonial modernity, like the motor car, aeroplane and house, are fetishized as a result of Jabavu's longing: "He wants to be near them, to see them, touch them, perhaps serve them" (392).

Jabavu's hunger is conveyed through dreams. In one of the dreams a philanthropic white man professes friendship and offers hospitality and education to Jabavu so that he may become, like Mizi and Samu, a leader of the African people. This dream, a potent mixture of the rhetoric of education, power and nationalism that has come to dominate postcolonial Zimbabwe, is "so sweet and strong" that it bewilders the dreamer. It is also associated with the utopian quest that undergirds Lessing's oeuvre and resurfaces in her latest novel, *The*

Sweetest Dream (2001), where in its postcolonial manifestations it turns into a nightmare in the republic of Zimlia. Jabavu has not developed an appropriate vocabulary to articulate this utopian vision of a polis and his place in it, a future that requires a rigorous task of self-education: "He has taken the paper off all parcels of things he has bought from the Greek store. Some are all print, some have little coloured pictures, many together, making a story" (393).

Lessing's story makes a special claim for reading, in spite of the linguistic imperialism that is entailed in such a project, on the grounds of its potential to redeem the individual from the shackles of tyranny. However, elsewhere Lessing displays "an ambivalent attitude toward canonical authorities" (Franko 256). Part of this ambivalence arises from a recognition of the patriarchal and imperialist aspects of the canon. But in this story, in anticipation of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the importance of books and self-education for the marginalised is stressed. In her Nobel Prize acceptance speech Lessing returns to this motif of a hunger for reading material in postcolonial Zimbabwe. However, a reading of the story suggests a trajectory in Jabavu's life that is not followed through because the story becomes overloaded with so many of the pressing issues of living in the colonially constructed urban dystopia.

Although Lessing was close to some of the black political figures of the 1940s and 1950s, her representation of the key political figures in the story, Mzi and Shamu, is weak. Never one to hide her sources successfully, Lessing models Mzi in this story and in *Landlocked* on Charles Mzingeli, a liberal nationalist of the time, and "Hunger" may be read as a tribute to the man. However, the shebeen and the underworld offer competing ways of engaging with the colonial order, rather different from the milder form of nationalist struggle represented by Mzingeli. The underworld in the short story also provides a critique of what Scarnecchia describes as the politics of "accommodation" and points to the emergence of a less liberal township politics. Betty, a girl with links to the criminal gang, introduces Jabavu to a less respectable and less overtly political representatives of black urbanity. Through her, Lessing is able to map the colonial township of Harare that has given its name to Zimbabwe's postcolonial capital city. The shebeen becomes, from a less elitist perspective of national resistance, an important space for the performance of new identities. For example, Mrs Kambusi, the shebeen queen, is one of several images of the new black woman of the city as entrepreneur and cultural mediator. The shebeen is also a site of disconnection with the rural past, as Jabavu "looks at his village with impatient dissatisfaction". Lessing's role as a

precursor of Zimbabwean post-colonial writing that has abandoned the rural as it embraces the city is seen in the description of Jabavu as one "born with the knowledge that the village was his past, not his future" (391).

As Jabavu travels to Salisbury, the city that is constantly invoked along the journey is Johannesburg. On the road Jabavu meets unscrupulous recruiters for its mines. It is a danger that he narrowly escapes through his "native wit and violence" (he head-butts a black recruiting agent and escapes). However, the Johannesburg narrative persistently follows him to this local city where he meets a love-struck maid waiting for the return of her lover, long gone to Rand mines. This Johannesburg narrative is intended to underscore the economic and cultural ruptures prompted by a growing urbanism. Johannesburg suggests a different kind of migration that Jabavu deliberately ignores to allow him to engage with the emergent urbanity of colonial urban Rhodesia.

The township is a site for this complexity in which the black migrants from the country have arrived to stake a claim in the city. While the writer sketches the gender imbalances in the location, with women confined to the domestic sphere and men dominating the public sphere of politics and crime, there are no easy pointers to the kind of preferred new urban gendered subjectivities. Instead, Lessing places the hero of the story at the centre of conflicting demands and promptings. Although framed by Jerry for the killing of Betty, and languishing in prison at the end of the story, Jabavu shows a capacity for optimism in his ability to reinvent himself in the face of adversity.

2.4 Women in the city: white spinsters and memsahibs, black maids and mothers

Lessing's *Children of Violence* novels portray the colonial city as a space in which emergent gender roles are elaborated, residual ones reinforced and in which gender intersects with race and colonial cartography. Space, particularly urban space, has become a focus of interest for feminist critiques of space and gender. Doreen Massey (186) postulates a space-identity link in which "space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through", while Elizabeth Grosz (112) conceives this link in terms of regimes of gender (in)visibility that she describes as the "phallocentric effacement of women and femininity, the cultural refusal of women's specificity or corporeal and conceptual autonomy and social value" (186). While not

contesting this feminist view of patriarchal strategies regarding space, a broader approach that takes cognisance of the effacement of other marginalised groups is required. In "cartography's configuration of the subject and space" Kesby (45) contends that the mapping subject is "an exclusive structure encoded with a particular gender, class and racial positioning". This mapping of the city is consistent with Sarah de Mul's view of "Lessing's consistent focus on anti-colonial white female protagonists and… its implications for the literary representation of (colonial and postcolonial) Zimbabwe in her oeuvre" (34). This focus does not suppress what Appiah views as a distinctive feature of Lessing's moral imagination that "combines compassion with nuance" (32) in the portrayal of characters in a way that goes beyond the focus identified by De Mul. Lessing's compassion arises out of her realisation of the inadequacies of viewing gender through a racial lens or considering any one gender in isolation. Before I examine the women who dominate her fiction I want to point out that her fictional heroines are portrayed in relation to male characters. Masculinity in the city is complicated by race and the segregated public spaces and by a deliberate reversal of gender roles that finds black men in the very domestic spaces of the colonial memsahib. In both the short story "Hunger" and the *Children of Violence* novels, the domestic space is the domain of femininity. In the constant transgressions of boundaries that are signalled in these texts, this space also is intertwined with the urban slum and the black world in the form of the squalid servants' quarters adjacent to the sanitary lanes.

Hegemonic white masculinity is represented by Mr Maynard, the quintessence of Englishness and the imperial will to dominate. Mr Maynard's "large elderly face had the authority of a commanding nose, howled cheeks, strong hazel eyes" and shows an "impressive finality, an absolute rightness" (*Proper Marriage* 13). In *Landlocked*, he and his wife are described as "great, strong, heavy-jowled people in their plated armours of thick, stiff cloth" (267). Maynard officiates at Martha Quest and Douglas Knowell's marriage and takes an interest in Martha's divorce. Maynard who disapproves of Martha's connection with with RAF airmen during Douglas Knowell's absence from home arranges for their deportation on the pretext of suspected fomenting rebellion among blacks. An uncalled surveillance of Martha is also reflected when Maynard and his wife visit London in *The Four-Gated City*. While Maynard presents himself as a custodian of "proper marriage", like other colonial figures of authority such as Mr Talbot, he is a marriage that is not quite proper. Lessing portrays most marriages in her novels as sexless, loveless, and only maintained by mutual respect and tolerance.

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Alternative masculinities emerge that threaten heterosexual normality and racial borders in the city. Thomas Stern, a Polish exile, Martha's lover, horticulturalist, and married to the daughter of a Polish professor, describes himself as a person between country and city. He powerfully suggests this disruptive masculinity that can only be sustained in the confines of the suburban love loft. His nomadic movements express his search for a new masculinity and humanity. Martha's other lovers, like the Marxist Anton Hesse, who thinks that the affective plays a subsidiary role to Communism, fail to offer a new vision of masculinity.

The movement of Martha Quest from white spinster (*Martha Quest*), memsahib (*A Proper Marriage*), and eventually flâneuse (*A Ripple from the Storm* and *Landlocked*) points to different constructions of white female subjectivity in the city. The movement sketched here explores the ambiguous locations of white female power in the colonial city. The ambiguity attending a white woman's power in the city lies in the recognition that it is authorised by men and participates in the project of imperial domination. Lessing links white female subjectivity to a vilified and feared black masculinity and an inscrutable black femininity. Single women in the city are not as free as Martha expects when she first arrives in town. The Sports Club ethic renders single women as trophies to be displayed by men on dance floors and drinking places, and then directed into the roles of wife and mother. Although outwardly resisting the pressure to embrace marital domesticity, Martha rushes into her first marriage. After her divorce she marries Anton Hesse in the mistaken belief that revolutionary romanticism is synonymous with romance.

In *A Proper Marriage* Martha is reluctantly initiated into the role of bourgeois memsahib of the colony. Her rapid initiation into prefabricated subjectivity is facilitated by the unsolicited tutelage of a number of mother figures, notably Mrs Talbot, who ironically is in an unhappy sexless marriage. Using both focalized narration, irony, and sarcasm the viewpoint that comes through is that of Martha as she subjects to scrutiny "the spiritual hangers-on which every marriage attracts" (66). Martha reflects on the "circle into which she was marrying" (53) and she finds the effusive congratulations and attention suffocating. Three key events are important in placing the Martha–Douglas marriage in the context of the settler collective: the sundowner party at Colonel Brodeshaw's house, the movement of the newly-weds to a new suburban house, and Martha's visit to Mrs Talbot's room.

The party at Colonel Brodeshaw's house is Martha's initiation into white domesticity in the colonial city.   It shows that a key aspect of settler gender constructions in the colony is

the emergence of the "authoritative Englishwoman" (George 35-64), who develops new concepts of self and home in the colony. The colonial woman derives authority primarily from the "making of the memsahib", exerting control over the native in designated spaces of domesticity. The other source of authority is control over children, particularly daughters. The mothers and mother figures in the series of novels are very much like those found in Jane Austen's fiction, and in this we see the settler culture imitating the home culture. In the tropical version of the Jane Austen romance, ideologies of race and imperialism become important. Martha associates this imperial romance with the "tyranny of repetition", a deadening domesticity, a lack of love, and the oppression of the native. The territory of domesticity is constructed by two apparently contradictory yet mutually implicated ideologies of empire. One is the imperialist discourse that "has inscribed a vicious symbolic circle in which sexual and socio-economic dominance reflect and authorize one another" (Valente 189). The other is what George calls the production of the authoritative English woman: "This authoritative self was defined against a racial other in encounters that were located in space that was paradoxically domestic as well as public: the English home in the colonies" (97).

Martha has deep reservations about the justice of employing blacks in domestic service when they should be elsewhere. The pressure from white society triumphs for some time as "some instinct to conform and comply had dictated that she must quell the loathing of entering a trap". Martha "took every step into bondage with affectionate applause from Douglas" (277). The trap of a colonial white woman is the hearth, the symbol of domesticity, associated with reproduction and technologies of dispossession and domination of the colonial other.

The veranda, another feature of colonial architecture, though common to both rural and urban settings, becomes a place of gossip, sundowners, supervision, and contemplation of the African landscape. Mrs Maynard, a leading city matriarch, and Mrs Talbot, in their different ways, find themselves in proper marriages that are sexless and loveless. Mrs Talbot and Mrs Quest keep memories of dead lovers alive, thus betraying the fiction of romance in the colony. To maintain this fiction the suburban home is turned into a bustling space of philanthropic activity. Mrs Maynard and Mrs Talbot and Mrs Carson, notwithstanding considerable class differences, seek to define suburban white space and inter-personal encounters in public, and dispense prescriptions regarding what constitutes 'proper marriage' – they cannot conceive of a woman's identity outside marriage. Their inquisitiveness,

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officiousness, and insensitivity are without bounds. Mrs Talbot finds a room of her own but it is located in a divided, sexless and loveless house. Although Lessing's satirical prose destabilizes settler marriage in the city by also mocking city matriarchs who are the custodians of proper marriage, this mockery does not stop a grudging acknowledgement of the positive role played by the women in city affairs ("In every city there is a group of middle-aged and elderly women who in fact run it" [218]). This acknowledgement articulates the writer's agenda of contesting gender marginalisation in the city.

Lessing continues the fictional code of women writers who counter historical exclusion from the city and appropriate it for women, portraying in her novels women who have greater connective relationships with the city than men (Parsons 215). Parsons no doubt is writing about the European city in Lessing's fiction, but her concept of city writing in which women claim the spaces from which they were historically excluded offers an alternative view on female flânerie to the one offered by Janet Wolff. While acknowledging the attractiveness and cogency of the conceptual change from "the invisible flâneuse" to "the impossible flâneuse" (Wolff 37) in the Western city, I want to argue for the possibility of white female flânerie in the colonial city. This possibility, considering the racial cartography of this city and the working of patriarchy, produced conditions that allowed white women visibility. The visibility and freedom of white women, in specified spaces of home and places where families and groups enact white citizenship, is premised on the absolute absence of the black except as servants. In the context of both colonial and post-colonial urbanity I argue for the impossibility of non-white female flânerie in the light of the train symbolism in *A Proper Marriage*. In one of the in-between affairs that mark Martha's life, the narrator says, "and it was at night that she came awake and lived" (*Landlocked* 198). Jean Sudrann (1973) uses the "hearth and horizon" binary to conceptualize changing concepts of domesticity in *The Four-Gated City*. I want to bring this to bear on the beginning of Martha's unrestrained flânerie at the end of her second divorce to bring the contrasts it conjures into focus. The hearth is a space of fixity, homeliness, and nurturing; it becomes the uncanny that destabilizes the scripted role of woman while the horizon, for the endlessly journeying rebel woman, offers the prospect of infinite possibility and movement. In a passage that evokes the night beauty of the colonial city for whites, the actuality of white female flânerie is clearly stated:

> Martha walked, walked, down one street, up another, into the avenues, down one
> avenue, up another – one could hop from intersection to intersection like a child
> playing hopscotch, one could walk from the centre of the city to its edge in a slow

hour and see no one but an occasional patrolling black policeman. A quiet city this, here, in its white reaches, a city without violence, where an occasional policeman was enough to impose order on straight, regularly-crossing streets (*Landlocked* 198-199).

I read the possibility of this white flâneuse in the context of white subjectivities produced and authorised by the colonial order. Each of the first four texts in the *Children of Violence* series marks a particular phase in the growth of the colonial city and that of the heroine. The extract emphasises the smallness and whiteness of a city 'without violence' that allows unconventional women like Martha to walk at night. This night mobility is a response to the deadening subjectivity of the memsahib who is restricted to suburban houses and their verandas and gardens. Away from rooms of domesticity occupied by various women, female flânerie becomes a way of expressing Martha's rebelliousness and freedom; it becomes an aesthetic-ethical response to the rise of the white city on the veld. While enjoying the peace that comes about through the violence of exclusion, she places the city in the historical narrative of violence and genocide of WW2. White women belong to various groupings: mothers and mother figures, daughters, those at the edge of white respectability and those who are its epitome, the married and unmarried, the young and old. Mothers and mother figures, in addition to various roles associated with the memsahibs, want to police their daughters, thus revealing a deep generational conflict in Lessing's fiction.

Mrs Carson, Martha's eccentric and neurotic landlady, is an embodiment of the black peril myth (McCullock; Kennedy 128; Stoler "Making" 634-660; Stoler "Cold Blood" 151-189) as it shapes both female and male colonial subjectivity. The "fearful image of the dark-skinned rapist", posits Jenny Sharpe, "is not only an essential condition of the colonial psyche but contingent upon its discursive production" (3). This discursive production figures the white woman as pure and endangered womanhood. Catherine Nash (45) finds Irish nationalists using women as "signifiers of moral purity and sexual innocence" and in this they share a similar discourse with colonials who constructed a moral and political vigilantism out of this figuring of settler women. Mrs Carson's "life was a long drama played against fantasies about her servants" (26), "she went to sleep in a fortress" and used "heavy iron bars" and "steel screens" (27) to protect herself against imaginary rapacious black sexual assailants. Martha notes that Mrs Carson "was the product of a certain kind of society" (27). The obverse side is represented by McFarlane, the miner, the Casanova of both the veld and city, who transgresses the racial divide. MacFarlane "was famous for the ill-treatment of his African workers, and was probably not able to number the half-caste children who shared his

features in the compounds of the mines he owned" (*Ripple* 174). Colonial authorities are not interested in forbidden liaisons and miscegenation as these were defended as a "a necessary evil" to counter relations "deemed to be more dangerous still – carnal relations between men and men" (Stoler 2).

The black woman is a disappearing figure in Black Peril myth as this foregrounds white women and black men. But the figure of the black woman cannot be attributed to this single factor as traditional black patriarchy is also complicit in ensuring that black women are confined to the domestic sphere of the location. Lessing's novels and short stories are concerned with the recurrent problem of the representation of black women. Both the heroine of *Children of Violence* and the writer are acutely aware of the difficulty of figuring the black woman. When they appear in the fiction, black women are seen from a distance and depicted as silent. It only in *The Sweetest Dream* – after a lifetime of writing about Africa - that Lessing gives the black woman subjectivity and treats her with sympathy. In the earlier fiction, which is the focus of this study, the black woman remains invisible, voiceless, and peripheral. Masculinity, in both racial articulations, and white femininity produce this negative image of the unwritten, unseen, and unheard black woman in the colonial city. The white matriarchs of the city, in their ceaseless works of charity never extend their philanthropic concern to the black woman. Progressive groups of whites in the city seek to connect with black men, ignoring the presence of black women. This conceals the crossing of racial boundaries by white men. Black women's silence is more pronounced in the spaces of white domesticity. According to Watkins, "Lessing revises the notion of 'home' so that it becomes capable of both recognizing racial and national differences and moving outside them" (97).

It is only through Martha Quest that an attempt is made to make sense of the presence of black women in the city. Most of her friends ignore this presence and dismiss her concern as part of her politics. Although the black woman is nameless and is made to carry the burden of otherness she does not become a mere symbol. What results is an image that is not easy to read, as the passage below illustrates:

> Under the tree stood a native woman. She held a small child by one hand and a
> slightly larger one by the other, and there was a new baby folded in a loop of cloth on
> her back. The older children held the stuff of her skirt from behind... This woman
> summed up her uncomfortable thoughts and presented the problem in its crudest form.

> This easy, comfortable black woman seemed extraordinarily attractive, compared
> with the hard gay anxiety of Stella and Alice. Martha felt her as something simple,
> accepting – whole. Then she understood that she was romanticizing poverty...
> (*Martha Quest* 26)

This image excites conflicting thoughts and emotions in Martha Quest. This unspeaking black woman with a baby on her back and with a brood of children is frozen by the description into a painting. She becomes a black Madonna content in her role as a reproductive machine whose fecundity both attracts and repulses Martha. Martha reduces the black woman to an abject figure, something that is also powerfully captured in *The Grass is Singing* (Frampton 15-25). In her search for a complex figure of womanhood, Martha is dissatisfied with this focus on maternity. What is clear here and elsewhere throughout the series of novels is the presence of an unexplored register of female subjectivity, and Martha's inability to traverse that gap that separates her from black womanhood. Throughout her fiction Lessing's emphasis on the muteness of the black woman reinforces the will to dominate black femininity by both white and black patriarchy and to exclude black women from black spaces of the city:

> During those first few weeks of her marriage Martha was always accompanied by that
> other, black woman, like an invisible sister simpler and wiser than herself; for no
> matter how much she reminded herself of statistics and progress, she envied her from
> the bottom of her heart. (*Martha Quest* 75)

The black woman becomes Martha's doppelganger against whom she reads her own lack as a racial and female subject. The recurring image of the black woman in Lessing fiction shows the importance the writer attaches to the reading of the black woman's inaccessibility in a rejection of the reductive settler figuration of the black woman as maid and mother. The importance of the black woman in the aesthetics and politics of the future is underscored by the Italian artist in the short story "The Black Madonna"; as an outsider and prisoner of war he does not suffer from the myopic vision of settler society. In anticipation of black feminist aesthetics in the writings of Dangarembga, Vera, Tagwira and Gappah the artist makes an explicit political statement: "She [Mary, the mother of Jesus] was a peasant. This is a peasant. Black peasant Madonna for a black country" (9).

When considered together with "Hunger", "The Black Madonna", addresses the problematic question of black representation in Lessing's fiction. The story uses the motif of

an outsider looking into colonial society, made possible by the conjoining of ethnicities during World War II, to challenge the peripheral role of the black woman in the city. Lessing is also involved in a self-critique of her novelistic art, which has been complicit with this colonial exclusion. The writer is aware of the challenges posed by the inadequacy of her representation of black characters, especially women.

2.7 Conclusion

Ridout and Watkins identify a key aspect of Lessing's work as her "resistance to categorization and her persistent impulse to cross borders of all kinds in her work and life" (2). This is reflected in her fictional characters who are impelled by the desire to experience change in themselves and the collective. Lessing's fiction is grounded in an aesthetics of possibility that attempts to extend the boundaries of the colonial city. The city, a key site for the construction of the emergent, assumes a certain inchoate character in its various architectures – the physical, political, social, and cultural – to challenge the fixity of boundaries. In "Hunger" and in the *Children of Violence* novels, the writer and the protagonist are constantly faced by the limitations of realist fiction in dealing with the city. Dreams and tropes transgress the borders of realist fiction in their creation of a city of the imagination that re-genders and re-races the city. The heroine of *Children of Violence* escapes from a "proper marriage" in a parochial colonial city as she successfully heralds the onset of female subjectivity as an open-ended project of self-realisation, but the sense of the emergent as it relates to the colonial city collective fizzles out. As Martha Quest embraces the diaspora, her flight sketches the aesthetic challenges facing her creator. Exile reinforces the sense of failure in many of the colonial transitions suggested at the beginning of this chapter. Lessing, right up to the end of *Children of Violence*, presents the black woman as an unspeaking, largely unseen object of the white gaze. The black woman is portrayed as incapable of expressing full selfhood and is excluded from aesthetic and political endeavours, which are dominated by men. It must, however, be noted that even in the case of city masculinities, the few black male characters that appear in the fiction say very little and are often mediated through white characters. This chapter, which focuses on the emergent as the "unfolding and unseen", with specific reference to race, gender, and imaginaries in the city and nation, concludes with a troubling, if not insignificant, victory for Martha Quest, as she becomes a new white woman unfettered by the geography of the colony and its city. She anticipates the

woman of beginnings and no destinations found in Vera's fiction. Lessing tries to address the question of black visibility and voice in "Hunger" but in much of her Rhodesian fiction she does not follow up her experiment. Chennells gives a persuasive explanation for the muteness of black characters, as exemplified by Moses in *The Grass is Singing*, in Lessing's African fiction:

> Lessing, one of the least sentimental of writers, knows that Moses can speak while at the same time refusing to allow her art to shape the words he and through him other blacks will use. She refuses, in short, the temptation to advocacy (6).

In her refusal to usurp the role of black writers to with regard to the representation of black characters, Lessing avoids the weaknesses inherent in novelistic representations of Africa as rural, primitive and exotic. She makes the colonial city in Africa the subject and site of her writing. Though she evokes the colonial city as divided she goes beyond Fanon's Manichaeism by portraying how the divided spaces are linked. Although she evokes the township as a place of hardship, Lessing also figures it as a site of the emergent.

By locating the site of the emergent in the township, and by creating an articulate black male character and by searching for and creating the character of a black woman who is independent and charge of her affairs in "Hunger", Lessing clears a creative space for a later generation of black writers. Mrs Kambusi in "Hunger" is a fictional precursor of Deliwe in Vera's Butterfly Burning. Vera changes the geographical location of the slum from Harare to Makokoba, Bulawayo, and portrays how new women and men (re)create themselves in the city. Marechera, the master of literary citation in Zimbabwean literature, consistently elides any references to Doris Lessing's writings, but the metaphor of hunger and the carceral dimensions of the urban slum, as represented in *House of Hunger* and other stories indicate his debt to his predecessor. The slum in its realist and metaphoric dimensions continues to dominate contemporary Zimbabwean literature.

Lessing maps areas of future black writing that are quickly taken up by writers who write from where she left off; they write back to her with their literary constructions of gender and race in the city. Subsequent chapters will explore inter-generational and inter-racial conversations among writers to reveal both thematic and metaphoric connections.

CHAPTER 3

TRAVELLING TO THE CITY THROUGH HALFWAY HOUSES

3. 1 Introduction

Constructions of Africa, by both outsiders and Africans themselves, use lenses that essentialize, exoticize and romanticize as they maintain the country and city as separate antithetical spaces. Each space is invested with what is considered to be aesthetically, epistemologically and ontologically unique, thereby foreclosing any theorisation of the emergent as it links these spaces. Referring back to Lessing's conceptualisation of the colonial city as "half a modern city, half a pioneers' achievement" (*Proper Marriage* 12), I use the halfway house concept or metaphor to capture transitions that are experienced by fictional characters on their way to city modernity. The theme of the emergent, noted in the previous chapter, continues to be foregrounded here under different articulations in the various halfway houses. The texts examined in this chapter locate the emergent in different spaces without losing sight of the focus on the city as the primary site of its production.

The first generation of Zimbabwean writers is not considered here because their novels privileged the land at the expense of the city in their re-imagining of the nation. Using allegory and history in their fiction to subvert settler narratives of conquest, writers such as Solomon Mutswairo, Stanlake Samkange and Ndabaningi Sithole bequeathed to later generations a troubling patrimony of nativist aesthetics that privilege autochthony in the mapping of spaces and in the construction of the modern Zimbabwean subject. Writers of the second generation, with the exception of Dambudzo Marechera, who provides a direct challenge to nationalist aesthetics, re-define this aesthetic, especially with regard to the way their literary texts deploy the country trope. Zimunya's poetry of the 1970s and 1980s resonates with the nationalist character of the writings of first-generation writers, and sets the agenda for the spatial location of the transitional subject, as determined by the country-city binary. It is this transitional aspect that marks the difference from earlier writers.

In their writing about transition, the texts considered in this chapter subvert categorical boundaries to create the impression of a much more troubled and fluid country-city binary. Tropes of travel and houses in these texts are used to rethink the country and city. These two tropes are linked to motifs of (im)mobility, borders and fixity as they define

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fictions of bounded houses and stable cartographies. The house metaphor, popularised by Dambudzo Marechera, although also developed by his contemporary, Charles Mungoshi (with more modest flair), has continued to dominate Zimbabwean literature. The house trope evokes a sense of the boundaries of literal and metaphorical houses and the archives located in them. Nationalist fiction imagines houses with fixed, categorical boundaries, especially as they relate to the country and the city. Amin and Thrift (1) write about the futility of maintaining the country-city boundary when "the traditional divide between the city and the countryside has been perforated". This perforation is suggested by the mobility and circulation of people and goods. Mobility and circulation indicate the emergent that links the country and the city. Apart from their key connection with labour, capital, and consumption, goods, as they circulate, transmute into images that reframe the borders that the nationalist imagination seeks to make impervious. The biographies of fictional characters are often linked to the history of objects. As objects travel they carry a sense the emergent. Gosden and Marshall (1169) note that "objects do not just provide a stage to human action; they are integral to it". The texts considered here are about the fictional biographies of men and women and the "nervous conditions" that afflict them.

This chapter's focal texts explore the encounter between the worlds of the coloniser and the colonised and how this produces new identities. The texts present food, clothes, various material objects and new practices, and create specific senses of an emerging sociality. A growing interest in objects from a variety of disciplines attests to an increasing focus on the circulation of commodities. Burke's *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*, focuses on "the nature and role of commodities, consumption, and needs" (2) in ways that become relevant for the reading of the selected texts as characters negotiate colonial modernity; Woodward views domestic objects as epiphanic or pivotal (116) as they reveal critical aspects of the subjects who use them. In Zimunya's poetry, Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* and Hove's *Ancestors* a cultural essentialist position associates exotic commodities with negative aspects of colonial modernity. In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* the regurgitation of food is equated, in Hill's reading of the text (78), with the rejection of Englishness, viewed as toxic. I adopt Sutton's approach to food as "as the marker of epochal transformations" (159) and Jackson's position on "cultural complexities of commodification" (96) to complicate essentialist accounts of commodity circulation. The routes along which these commodities travel entail constant (re)negotiation of local and colonial modernity. These material objects,

often turned into fetishes, re-inscribe spatial, cultural, and psychoanalytic boundaries. In all the texts commodities and subjectivities travel, change, and shape each other in complicated ways. City commodities, through the truck trade, are brought into spaces of rural autochthony, thereby threatening its perceived fixity – as shown by Japi's fetishization of sugar, the new aesthetics of rural women, and the new media technologies represented by the transistor radio in *Waiting for the Rain*. Though there is a tendency to invoke what John Martin describes as 'ideological romanticism' (13) in urban perceptions of the rural, in Zimbabwean literature this is often used by writers who want to invest moral, ideological, and aesthetic ecologies in geography.

I use the term iconography here to refer to a cluster of images, symbols, and themes that writers use to imagine a particular place. These literary iconographies lead to the tension between allegory and realism found in the literature of the second generation writers. The country and city tend to be treated allegorically in depictions of the colonial encounter, creating complications in discourses of resistance and self-construction in the texts considered here. The literary production of the rural reveals claims of autochthony and an ambiguous attitude to colonial cartography. While contesting colonial cartography, some of the writers, in the same breath, affirm colonial ideologies of keeping the black population of the colony rural. In all the texts considered here clothes, food, and flora carry ideologies, script bodies, and shape subjectivities. In Zimunya's poetry, the contrasting iconographies reveal the emergent as it destabilizes both the rural and the urban. In Zimbabwean literature the emergent, associated with encounters with the outside world, has tended to privilege the 19th century colonial encounter at the expense of earlier encounters, thus revealing a disabling incapacity to rise above the postcolonial binaries found in contemporary patriotic literature.

In the Zimbabwean canon the first-generation black writers sketched this encounter in terms of confrontation and resistance that privileged binaries, essentialisms, and the freezing of time. Primorac (15), in employing Bakhtin's concept, argues that the chronotope of colonial Zimbabwean literature has tended to exercise a stranglehold on aesthetic and political discourses. Some of the writers considered here are transitional writers, emerging from a nationalist aesthetic, while others try to complicate the nationalist narrative of the nation that is essentially male, rural, and black. The nationalist aesthetic, from its origins in the writings of Stanlake Samkange, Solomon Mutswairo, Ndabaningi Sithole, and Laurence Vambe, has had several manifestations and articulations in Zimbabwean literature. The

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avowedly nationalist project of forging an aesthetic that would redeem the country's history and culture, and establish grounds for the development of a new nation-state and citizenship determines the rhetoric of the early writings of the 1950s and 1960s. The intersections of history and aesthetics often saw the country as the location of the authentic and the city as alien. This produces a number of problems, namely the figuration of woman as signifier and the site for writing national codes, representations of the city as foreign and a concomitant emphasis on an aesthetics of recovery that figures the rural as the source of African authenticity and autochthony.

Both first- and second-generation writers use woman as the signifier of the beauty and integrity of a homogenous territory, and of autochthonic subjectivity. Innes, in a comparative study of "discourses of nationalism and gender and the interactions between them" (1), examines how both Ireland and Africa are figured as feminine and how the sexual tropes that are generated reveal a "convergence of mistress, mother and land" (3). She notes that these discourses lead to oversimplifications and the misrepresentation of both women and the land. Zimbabwean male writers, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa and in the formerly colonized world, reflect this tendency to turn woman into tropes.

Of the second-generation writers considered in this chapter is Musaemura Zimunya, one of the most prolific poets emerging from the 1970s (and still writing today), who in *Kingfisher, Jikinya and other poems* (1982), *Country Dawns and City Lights* (1985), and *A Perfect Poise and other poems* (1993) provides a barometric reading of the cultural and ideological life of postcolonial Zimbabwe. The volumes *Kingfisher, Jikinya and other poems* and *Country Dawns and City Lights* capture the ideological and cultural confidence of the 1980s while exorcising the ghosts of colonialism. These two texts reveal Zimunya's role in the creation of rural-urban iconographies in Zimbabwean literature based on two women figures, Jikinya and Loveness, and goods that are produced and circulate in and beyond their places of production, which represent the rural as autochthonic and the urban as Western. The persona in the poems looks at the country with nostalgia and with a desire for the recovery of a complex rural imaginary. The poetic persona overtly uses woman as a trope and turns her into a carrier of aesthetics, ideology, health and disease. In his post-1990 poetry, Zimunya moves away from some of the essentialisms of the nationalist aesthetic, but without losing his initial dystopian view of the urban.

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In *Coming of the Dry Season* and *Waiting for the Rain*, Mungoshi, who belongs to the same generation as Zimunya, reveals himself to be averse to the creation of ready-made postcolonial metaphors. He complicates the country-city dynamic, though he associates colonial modernity with disempowerment and the migration of the young to cities. The country as a site of indigenous archives faces threats of erasure and rescripting. The city travels to the country as the country simultaneous travels to the city. Texts by Zimunya, Mungoshi, Hove and Dangarembga attend to this mutual co-production embedded in the country-city binary. Both city and country are in transition. The temporal setting of their texts is in a period associated with the intensification of settler rule and its subsequent decline. There is sense of paralysis associated with the crisis in the nationalist struggle during the first half of the 1970s and muted hints at the eventual demise of the post-UDI settler rule. This demise is evoked in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* to portray how the Liberation War narrative has shaped, and continues to shape, the modern Zimbabwean subject. In the previous chapter we saw how Lessing portrays Martha Quest, the protagonist of her *Children of Violence* series, as a child of the two World Wars and the Quest family as living in the vicious grip of post-traumatic stress disorder. The Quest family is a synecdoche of the settler community suffering the trauma of both war and colonialism. This double suffering resurfaces in Chenjerai's *Bones* and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.

3.2 Rural-urban poetics in Musaemura Zimunya's *Country Dawns and City Lights* and *Kingfisher, Jikinya and other poems*

In the two collections considered here structural and thematic oppositions are prominent. In *Country Dawns and City Lights*, part one focuses on a rural universe nostalgically evoked by the poet, while part two evokes a dystopian urban imagined with ambivalence, if not dislike. The country poems negotiate a difficult line between romanticism and realism, nature poetry and poetry of discontent as the poet elaborates epistemic and aesthetic claims from the earlier *Kingfisher, Jikinya, and other poems.*

Zimunya's poetry is particularly emphatic in depicting how colonialism separates characters from the sites that mediate the process of becoming in complex ways. The city depicted as foreign and Western is where the trauma of colonialism is most deeply felt. Old registers of sexuality, gender, and sociality are put under stress as the city separates people from their immediate pasts. As with most texts by male writers in the Zimbabwean literary

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canon, this transition is conceived from a male perspective. In Zimunya's poetry the male perspective is made very clear in poems that deal with two women figures – Jikinya and Loveness (especially in "Jikinya (A Dancer)" and "Have You Seen Her"): these poems represent two opposed male constructions of African womanhood. It was noted in chapter two that black women lack visibility and are victims of the white gaze. In Zimunya's poetry the women are subject to the black male gaze, and the poet neither hides nor complicates this. This gaze, exuding a confident gender normativity that expects and demands the clear performance of heterosexual roles, deploys nationalist tropes that use women to represent national aspirations and identity. Zimunya posits the country and city as sites that carry different moral, aesthetic, epistemological, and ontological ecologies. At each of the two sites a woman is made to carry the burden of representing the nation, showing the poet's inability to see women as individual subjects rather than as symbols of either a pristine, autochthonic pre-colonial imaginary or a grotesque colonial one. In turning Jikinya and Loveness into signifiers of imaginaries he makes them lose individuality. They become icons of the country and the city who influence different ways of producing male subjectivity.

Kingfisher, Jikinya and other poems, although not directly reverting to the discourse of nationalism as articulated in Solomon Mutswairo's Shona novel, *Feso*, returns to a celebration and validation of female beauty as a metaphor for the desirability of an autochthonic national polity that has to be defended. Jikinya, a figure taken from folklore, is muse of the arts (poetry, music and dance), love and healthy sexuality. The poems that deal with Jikinya in this volume are "You Were", "Jikinya (Dancer)", and "Jikinya (An African Passion)". These poems portray the black woman primarily as a signifier, thus affirming McClintock's (63) critique of nationalist discourse for figuring women as "biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities", as "active transmitters and producers of the national culture", as " symbolic signifiers of national difference" and as "reproducers of the boundaries of national groups". "You Were" frames the poet's postcolonial critique of the West's reading of Africa and African literature.

> Ben is the one who made the claim:
> the African cannot write a love poem,
> he said,
> And that was two years after Mrs Whitehouse
> Strained her back creaking from an old nationalist's
> assault

to say we cannot write poems

Countering Western claims of the inability of the African writer to love poetry, Zimunya posits the figure of Jikinya to contest the primacy of Western poetic muses and icons of love like Dante's Beatrice and Sydney's Stella. The emphasis in the poem is on the "fierce copper of flesh", in which Jikinya's legs become a metonym of human beauty. Unlike the reification found in Western courtly love, Jikinya stands for a beauty that is physical and erotic. The arena of Jikinya's performance of her song and dance is deliberately not made clear in "Jikinya (Dancer)", consistent with the mythic claims that the poet is making. The poem stages an initiation into art that combines aesthetics, revolution, and sexuality.

In "Jikinya (An African Passion)" the poet revisits the traditional musical archive in which the Jikinya figure is grounded. The poem is an ode invoking Jikinya to reconstitute dance and song in the larger project of countering the violence of colonialism:

> While metals roar and flame
> heads and feet smell of burning
> men enthuse about commanding Death
> and a sad wind ululates across the raped land
> Dance, Jikinya, dance

The poem uses the refrain of song to create emphasis and urgency in the song and dance, which are transformed by revolutionary imperatives. Departing from conventional nationalist iconography that gives mysterious power to a single female, Nehanda, Zimunya offers an alternative revolutionary figure that has not been explored. The muse of creativity and African female sexuality in earlier poems morphs into an androgynous figure that becomes everyman or everywoman dancing to "the rhythm of thunder", thus subtly displacing the Nehanda figure. Consistent with the deflation of the metaphysical in all the Jikinya poems, this poem returns revolutionary agency to the ordinary person. The restless energy of the Zambezi in the confines of one of its gorges becomes a metaphor of the power through solidarity of those oppressed by colonialism. More images of the power of the elements are used to reinforce the sense of creative suffering and destruction in anticipation of the birth of a postcolonial order.

Zimunya sexualizes and feminizes the country/city binary to give a particular eroticism to the colonial encounter as it is experienced in both the country and the city. Both country and city are used as metaphors of the women that stand for the indigenous and the

colonial respectively. In an extension of the woman metaphor, each site accommmodates different cultures of sex and sexuality, aesthetics, and politics. In sexualizing and feminizing the transition in the country-city dynamic, the poet negotiates a number of complications associated with the objectification of the black woman. There is no doubt that Zimunya is attentive to cultural changes occurring in both country and city as these are marked by changes in dress, food, dance, and music. He is alert to cultural mobilities from the village to the city, and from the high-density townships to suburbia.

Zimunya's city is a much-divided one, not so much in the sense of the racial asymmetry of Fanon's colonial city, but in the way black bodies in the city are divided from each other. There are men who are separated from the women whom they have left behind in the rural home. These men become the victims of city women divorced from rural traditions. There are no young men or married women in the city depicted in Zimunya's poetry. A deliberate occlusion of positive female identities in the city leads Zimunya to focus on the dominant masculinist figuration of women. Contrary to the feminist portrayal of men as perpetrators of violence against women, Zimunya portrays the black city man as victim of the erotic enticement of an enchantress:

> Loveness, the sunshine of the city,
> Once the honey-pie of the ghetto,
> The sugar-loaf of the township
> And now the ice-cream cone itself.

The poetic voice in the extract above invites the reader, as outsider, to share intimate knowledge of the city symbolized by Loveness. Using images of gross sensuality the poetic persona portrays Loveness as a body without mind. Gustatory and tactile imagery become a way of violating the bodily integrity of Loveness who is reduced to sweetness and smoothness, a mere object of consumption for predatory masculinity. The over-charged eroticism of Loveness as enchantress of the city is emphasised by her visual presence, described as disruptive of the sexual order in the city. Zimunya is engaged in replacing the Western myth from which the vocabulary of the colonial affective is derived. Loveness, who is aggressively aware of her sexuality, impales men's hearts with her breasts: "her breasts plunged ram-horns/into the hearts of men". Tito, a male character in Zimunya's ballad like poems in *Country Dawns and City Lights*, experiences the city as the hapless victim of an emasculating femme fatale who represents a new urban eroticism that makes migrants from the country neglect their rural moorings and responsibilities.

Zimunya portrays the unattached black urban woman as an enchantress, a prostitute, and a carrier of disease. This portrayal redeploys colonial discourses of black female respectability that circulated in the 1940s and 1950s. In their complicity with traditional patriarchy these discourses maintained divisions within women in the city. This redeployment re-inscribes women's precariousness in the city. This is challenged by the feminist writings of women writers like Vera, Gappah, Tagwira and Phiri. Phiri, whose writings are not considered in this study, explores the link between female prostitution and patriarchy. Other women writers portray polygamy, cohabitation, and one-night stands as constructions of male power that sets out to exploit women.

In the lines below Zimunya captures the economic deprivation to which the male black colonial urban subject is exposed:

> The city crawls for days of dreary waiting,
>
> then bounces to a month-end
>
> like a girl's first love.

This city rhythm, depression followed by reckless joy, defines the life of the black male proletariat. The city is infected with venereal disease, and the new woman is a femme fatale who impoverishes and turns the transitional man into a victim. In adopting a particular medicalizing, moralizing, and aestheticizing approach to female sexuality, Zimunya essentializes women in ways that other writers considered in this chapter deviate from in their portrayal of the city and colonial modernity.

3.3 Crises of subjectivity in Charles Mungoshi's *Coming of the Dry Season* and *Waiting for the Rain*

Charles Mungoshi's fiction deals with individuals who painfully separate themselves from their pasts, their families, and their communities. This separation, consistently presented as a failure to communicate, is framed within the context of colonial structures in his 1970s fiction. For Mungoshi, the rural, a product of the laws of impoverishment and dispossession, is not an idyllic landscape on which to place the burden of representation. Lucifer's poem in *Waiting for the Rain* is a response to the disruptions brought about by the Land Apportionment Act. To read Lucifer's anomie as the result of the dismissive treatment of his authentic culture in the autochthonic space of the rural, as some critics (Zimunya, Zhuwarara)

have done, is to miss the point that the idyllic rural space has vanished, and been replaced by a nightmare landscape filled with tension, demands, mourning, and incomplete journeys. The dream space in *Waiting for the Rain* becomes a model that affirms the new movement into the future, whether this future is understood as Western modernity or an unknown sociality or both. Lucifer's impending departure from home refers readers back to the story of Samambwa, the founder of the Mandengu clan and the flight of Makiwa to the white town of Gatooma. Emphasising the rejection of traditional food, medicine and ritual obscures the importance of the motif of migration in the family. Migration from Samabwa down the geneaological line is evoked as a radical break with the known world. The departures narrated in the novel provide narratives of migration that are offered as fundamental for the scripting of subjectivity as a state of exile from old homes and old selves. The migrant, in a space of transition that is unlike that which has been left behind, confronts problems that impede an uncomplicated flight into the future. The stories "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World", "The Lift", "Ten Shillings", and "The Accident" portray transition from the country to the city through a reading of bodies, sites, and languages imbricated in mutual exclusions and miscommunication typical of the Manicheanism of the colonial town.

Contextualizing the journey from the country to the city within the epic dimensions of founding and exile, Mungoshi in *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972) describes the heroism of small acts that have significant implications in terms of how subjects are (re)constituted through a series of departures and encounters. Never a writer for grand nationalist themes, rhetoric, or explicit metaphors, Mungoshi engages with what Schulze-Engler terms the "micro politics of modernity" (21). "The Mountain" and "Setting Sun and Rolling World" sketch migration to the city as propelled by a variety of colonial forces, such as Western education with its emphasis on scientific rationalism, the racial apportionment of land and the concentration of the colonized into marginal areas (quickly leading to environmental and economic degradation). These two stories mark the beginning of an epic journey into modernity. The narrator of "The Mountain" is one Nharo, a Junior Certificate graduate, whose name suggests the disbelief and doubt that comes with his education. He and his friend Chemai, who is less educated, are walking in the night to catch an early morning bus to the town of Mutare. Both young men in this story deploy the mountain as the site of an alternative worldview and as an arena for contesting knowledge systems and ways of being. To get to the modernity that is suggested by the colonial town they have to negotiate this

hurdle: "The mountain lay directly in our path and was shaped like a question mark. I like to think of our path as a question, marked by a question" (13).

Chemai reads the mountain as a repository of an indigenous knowledge system that defies Western cartographic, extractive, and colonising technologies, while Nharo dismisses it as a symbol of superstition that will submit to Western science. As the story unfolds the narrator conveys his epistemological dread": "my belly tightened'; "after I had laughed I felt sick" (18). Nharo's unqualified belief in scientific positivism wears off as a black goat follows the two travellers. The unsuccessful attempt to rid themselves of the goat in the old village church shows that Christianity will not succeed in saving modernising subjects from their pasts. In "The Setting Sun and the Rolling World" Mungoshi presents the country-city binary as a generational conflict: the father represents the "the way of the land, the way of the family" (25) and a fixed concept of home, while the son, restless and impatient to leave land that is "overworked and gives nothing now" (25), represents the desire for Western city modernity. The father sees his son's impending departure as an embrace of homelessness in a terrain conceived as a wilderness and as exile, where the "false honey bird" (25) of Shona mythology misleads hunters and travellers.

"Ten Shillings" and "The Accident" portray the racial mapping of the city. Departing from Fanon's focus on the architectures and spatial regimes of difference, Mungoshi opens a reading of bodies and a refracting of the gaze in the colonial library. In encounters in the racially divided city, the writer subtly insinuates the white body into situations where it becomes the object of the gaze of the colonised. An important aspect of the heroism of small acts is the ability to demythologize this body by turning it into a somatic text. In "Ten Shillings" and "The Accident" both Mr Thomson, an illiterate supervisor of black workers at a tobacco grading factory, and the unnamed white driver who runs over a black vendor, are presented as enigmatic somatic texts. This reading repeats the colonial representation of the racial other. Mr Thomson represents the failure of white working-class politics to shift into a progressive mode that would express solidarity with black workers. When he encounters blacks who are more educated than himself, Mr Thomson's fear of displacement and becoming economically irrelevant is fuelled and his crude racism strengthened. This racism in turn produces a crude othering, expressed in phrases such as "coarse open-air brick red face, the intimidating moss-concrete-wall chest, and the hard, dusty-blue eyes under the wide-brimmed farmer hat with the lion-skin band around it" (41); "podgy index drummed Paul's chest" (41). In the same story, another white man who is aware of the deleterious

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aspects of racism and their negative impact on the political economy fails to restrain Mr Thomson. This liberal settler thinks that he can buy himself out the moral trap of whiteness by giving Paul ten shillings. This philanthropic gesture indicates the failure of white liberalism to address the economic and political injustices of colonialism.

In "The Accident", Mungoshi describes an encounter that re-inscribes the inequalities and polarities of the colonial city. The accident occurs along a road that is very close to the "native location" of Harare. The white driver, far from the security of the white city, feels extreme insecurity when surrounded by black bodies. Encircled, before the arrival of the police, he finds himself on trial by the group of blacks who read him as embodiment of past and present racial injustices. Mungoshi is a master at using the semiotics of space to inscribe how separation produces emotions and thoughts of tension in the private sphere. In this short story prejudice produces feelings and thoughts that are in excess of existential facts. This story reveals how the racial categorisation of city space can lead to the misreading and misrepresentation of the body of the racial other as that of a threatening alien, and this can lead to violence. The black kangaroo court is gathering the energy to mete out justice to the white motorist, but collapses when the police appear.

Waiting for the Rain explores many of the themes that emerge in *Coming of the Dry Season*. The transitions that are taking place produce internal migrant subjectivities in both the city and the country, and these are revealed in the peregrinations of some members of the Mandengu family. Each generation of the Mandengu family is touched by a certain restlessness that originates in the biography of Samambwa, the ancestral founder of the family. Whether in the city or in the country, the wanderlust in the family gives continuity to the family saga and subjectivity through a narrative of migrancy. Similarities are noted in both country and city, spaces that cultural nativists insist on keeping separate. In the country, Garabha and his sister, Betty, express dissatisfaction with home. The former is hardly at home as he pursues his drum dream. In the city transitions of political subjects and new urban sexualities strain the traditional family. In the country Garabha and Betty find home to be unhomely. The bus brings the city to the country, and the country to the city. Citiness comes in the form of material objects that are culturally and ideologically loaded: the transistor radio, tobacco, sugar, peanut butter, books, and the animal-skin hat. Mungoshi uses food, drink, art, medicine, and other objects to set in motion a complex dialogue, from a variety of perspectives – nationalist/nativist, generational, and gendered –- between country

and city. The liberation war discourse is embedded in the opposition between country and city, and home and exile in the novel.

Critics who claim that Mungoshi ignores the liberation war raging in the country at the time when *Waiting for the Rain* was published miss the direct reference to the 1896 Uprising in which the Old Man took part. This veteran of the first anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe achieves an important iconic stature for a modern generation of anti-imperialist fighters. He insists that a military struggle against colonialism that is divorced from cultural nationalism is bound to fail. Home has shifting registers in the experience of the colonized, who in Mungoshi's novel have to deal with local displacements and replacements. Although Ahmed writes about transnational migration, her assertion – "the narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home, too many places in which memories attach themselves" (330) – is pertinent to the sense of disorientation produced by spatial and temporal displacement. Lucifer's farewell visit to the rural home of Manyene occurs in a gathering of the Mandengu clan at Tongoona's homestead, where the young members of the clan on the move no longer feel at home. The homestead, an uncanny site, that attracts as it repulses, brings the tension between the rural and the urban into sharp relief. The uncanny aspect of the rural, a feature of the complexity of Mungoshi's art, reveals itself in the destructive rivalry between male siblings across generations of the Mandengu family, as well as in Tongoona's dismissal of his son, Garabha, as unfit for Western modernity and a job in town that would bring credit to the family. There is the suspicion that actions of close members of the family and neighbours conceal sinister intentions to harm the nuclear family. In *Waiting for the Rain* the rural home is an ambivalent site, the carrier of a tradition that has become a burden. Travelling between homes, and the various departures and arrivals, make the space between (in the words of Ahmed) the site of identity. The mobility of both people and goods, in some cases across temporalities, that Mungoshi captures in his fiction, produces unstable identities. The instability is accentuated in the characters of Garabha and Lucifer – both caught up in physical and mental migrations: the former constantly making psychic forays into the past with his drum as he travels from one village to the other, and the latter using books and Western travel between city and country, preparing to emigrate.

Waiting for the Rain, despite the narrative of autochthony and rootedness, is about the consequences of mobility. Lucifer's impending departure from the homeland is not unique as it shares many similarities with the migration of Samambwa, the founder of the Mandengu clan. On less mythic scale are the local movements in the novel that link rural and urban

spaces and signal small but subtle transformations. Rural townships, with their stores and beer halls, are the sites of these transformations where city modernity in the form of commodities is brought by trucks from towns. The novel does not celebrate this modernity but signals its onset. Lucifer, a sharp observer cultural moments in the novel, describes one rural shopkeeper as being "alone in the middle of his assorted empire of hardware, cloth, food – fanning himself with a soiled handkerchief" (40). This tragi-comic picture presents readers with a degraded and un-coordinated modernity. Rural men also see this modernity as threatening, not only in terms of "bottle-stores and beer-gardens they have started building right in the middle of our lives" (124), but also in terms of their own women who have taken to self-fashioning. Women "are beginning to make their faces look as if they have been shit on by some bird, smearing themselves with white powders and making their hair stand on end like a porcupine's needles. 'We are going to the women's club,' they say." (125). This negative discourse of the city has its source in the autochthonic cultural nationalism of the Old Man who sees commodities of " urban modernity" – the transistor radio, sugar, "sweets and biscuits" (118) – as "new things whose seeds no one has ever seen" (114). In a discourse that medicalizes modernity he sees commodities as carriers of diseases whose 'cures always come too late ---after the disease has taken root, multiplied and become a jungle' (114). The Old Man sees colonial and capitalist modernity as a disease that manifests itself through its commodities, its discourse, its aesthetics, and its religion.

3.4 Farm and city iconographies in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* and *Ancestors*

In *Bones* (1988) Hove returns to the space of the farm, explored by Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*. The return links the two novels in their figuration of women from two opposed racial groups as the abject. According to Graham "Abjection is a literary mode of witnessing trauma by a self on the border between becoming and disintegration" (57). It is a resisting and reconfiguring of women's "negative" connection to land. Hove goes beyond conventional accounts of abjection in his complex portrayal of the rural woman as displaced peasant, exploited farm worker, mother, and wife, who is connected in her different roles to the past and future. In a significant departure from, and a writing back to, Lessing's novel that portrays black women as figures of fecundity and silence, Hove's novel gives them speech and agency. Approaches to Zimbabwean literatures and to Hove's novel have tended to emphasise the role of the black rural woman as a signifier who is perpetually attached to

the land that she signifies, thereby preventing her from accessing a complex subjectivity. However, to describe Hove as "the celebrator of peasant fortitude" as Backström (78) does and to view his novel as romanticization of Africa, as Veit-Wild (5-12) insists it is, is to miss the deepening complexity that Hove brings to his art as he engages with the country-city dynamic. *Bones* and *Ancestors* celebrate the power and ethical implications of story-telling in relation to gender, justice, and the subjective within the family saga and the national narrative. Story-telling, in the words of Miriro, the dumb ancestor who describes herself as a "latecomer to dreams and words" and haunts the narrator throughout all his migrations, is an ethical demand linking rural and urban space: "You have a story within you, and I am the story. It is this story which made you live. Not to tell it is death" (20).

In the novel, the narrator retraces a route that leads to the acknowledgement of the history of women in his family, and their muteness, silencing, and treatment as objects to be handed down between men in loveless marriages. The other route leads to the ancestral cemetery of the fathers that has been bulldozed to make way for a modern colonial road. Both routes, leading back into the past as they also look into the future, are important in shaping the modern colonial and postcolonial subject.

Bones, told from a variety of perspectives, has a double plot, a realist one onto which an allegorical one is grafted. The realistic plot is very thin but what happens has an allegorical resonance that is intensified by the poetic prose of the novel. When the story begins, Marita is already dead and is an absent present, a ghost haunting the narrative and eliciting varied responses. Dodgson (90) notes that "Marita never directly tells her story" and in *Bones* "autobiography is displaced, not by biography, but by testimony that emerges from both and individual and collective memory". On a realistic level, Marita is a woman persecuted by her husband's family in the village for her failure to have more than one child; she follows her husband Murume to Manyepo's farm, where she is overworked and abused by the white farmer. Manyepo abuses Marita because she has failed to breed more labourers for the farm. This is one of the examples of the complicity of colonialism and African patriarchy in constructions of the subalternity of the colonised woman. Her son, who writes a love letter to Janifa, an adolescent girl at the farm and the boy's schoolmate, leaves to join the Liberation Struggle. Marita after whom Chisaga (Manyepo's cook) lusts, is arrested and brutally tortured by the security forces because of her son's guerrilla connection. Later guerrillas visit the farm and want to know how Manyepo treats his workers. Contrary to the available evidence Martha saves Manyepo by lying in his defence. She leaves the farm to

look for her son, leaving her woman's belongings with Janifa, who is later raped by Chisaga. Janifa becomes mad and is sent to a lunatic asylum. In her travels Marita meets The Unknown Woman on the bus. The Unknown Woman, after Marita's death, does not want a pauper's burial for Marita. Defying colonial security forces, the Unknown Woman is killed and her body remains unclaimed in the mortuary. Marita is already dead when the story starts. Marita's story in its various interconnections, as narrated by Janifa, Murume, Chisaga, and the Unknown Woman, becomes the story of women and the colonized. On both the realistic and metaphorical levels Marita is connected to the land, which plays a significant role in the shaping of characters and the discourse of national liberation and recovery, but this does not preclude the depiction of other places from which to imagine the individual and the collective. The city in *Bones* is one such place: it allows Marita to re-think the ethos of place outside the essentialist nationalist frame. Martha's story is in part mediated through the voice of Janifa who becomes one of the important narrators in the novel. Janifa's closeness to Marita makes her the most reliable character to narrate Martha's story. In the complexity of their relationship Marita is a mother figure while Janifa is the acolyte and confidante. She narrates Marita's story, especially the flight to the city, and how it is intertwined with her own. Because of her adolescence and lack of experience Janifa invokes popular peasant fears about the city. To her "the city is like the throat of a crocodile", and "many children run away to the city and then change their names" (13). To Janifa the city is metaphorically a place of death and loss of identity. Janifa is afraid of Marita's departure and would rather have her remain as "part of Manyepo's soil" (13). Janifa's wish is to have Marita remain on the farm as a pillar of support and a model of resistance to women threatened by both colonial and traditional black patriarchy.

Marita, although closely associated with the soil and autochthony, is not, however, completely imprisoned in the discourse of the land. Veit-Wild, who objects to what she reads as an unsuccessfully translated indigenous discourse, does not attend to the way the novel alerts readers to the existence of other discourses beyond the space of rural autochthony. Through Marita, the richness of the oral archive is accessed – "stories of lizards courting the girl in the next village, and tortoises going hunting for elephant". The moment Marita decides to leave the entrapment of the farm she embarks on a journey that has immense cultural and political significance for women characters in Zimbabwean fiction. Marita's mobility heralds a severance from the land as a site of essentialist notions of gender and autochthony. She escapes carrying the woman's burden of being a trope of the land. By the end of the novel,

after inserting women as active participants in the nationalist struggle, the bones of all who have died fighting against colonial tyranny become collective signifiers of the land. Marita escapes from rule by both the colonial and the traditional African patriarchy. She also begins to question the adequacy of traditional archives in mediating contemporary experience, but without abandoning them.

Marita accepts the city for whatever it may stand for because it is a society, and like the land has both bad and good people. Children of peasants do not remain the same when they get to the city: "they may still be walking on the soil of the city, but with different names from the ones their mothers gave them" (23). The change that occurs is not merely linguistic but ontological and epistemological, touching on many aspects of subjectivity that Marita resists valorising. Marita goes to the city with prior insight into the city's capacity for both good and evil. It is however the positive potential of places that attracts Marita, who thinks that city archives and cultures can help her find her lost son. She believes there is the list of guerrillas who died in Mozambique and the community of urban polyglots who are able to link her with a world beyond her local one. Marita anticipates the sense of the translocal felt by characters in the novels analysed in later chapters of the thesis ("They say the city is full of people who can read even the languages from other places whose names I cannot say" [*Bones* 31]).

After her torture by colonial soldiers she finds that the city becomes not only a haven from the raging war and from intense state persecution but also offers a site for the growth of a new urban culture that is able to negotiate with other cultures and that has taken the battle against colonialism to another level. Marita also takes the narrative of the Liberation war to the city, thus uniting two stories that are posited as antithetical. Marita in fact becomes the convergence of diverse discourses that constantly expand to incorporate within themselves their antitheses – womanism, autochthony, nationalism, rurality and urbanity. The linking of Janifa, Marita, the Unknown Woman, and the spirits that speak in chapters 8 and 14, demonstrates the interconnectedness of Hove's fictional universe and the subversion of boundaries. This fictional universe links different temporalities without privileging any. It also links the world of the living and dead in a war novel that is about mourning, celebration and the remembrance of those who since 1897 have sacrificed their lives to the struggle.

Hove's second novel, *Ancestors*, revisits the themes raised in *Bones* and further complicates notions of antiquity and modernity in ways that the previous novel had not. As in

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Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, the country is not an unproblematic terrain, since haunting, associated with ancestral wrong, troubles the modern subject. The difference this time is that the genealogy of ancestral wrong is not located in patriarchal narratives but in the silenced narratives of women. The novel may mourn the destruction of a pristine land of plenty in which man is close to nature but it also grieves the absence of the sacral in the modern world and the suppression of women's history – a suppression that it has taken so long to acknowledge. The narrator shows how his father was quick to accept western modernity through acceptance of the Land Development Officer's discourse of transforming land use and agriculture in a new vision of "the belly of the purse" (22). The food metaphor used here echoes the metaphorical treatment of colonialism as food at the table of the master in *Bones* (from this table anti-nationalists like Chisaga get crumbs). Modernisation turns human beings into exploitable material but also transforms them into ogres. The narrator's father is "an ogre of a man walking in the night, chasing the fireflies of the night as his coins jingle and dance on his shirt" (23). He is "a man of the soil"' (66), an important semantic change from the familiar nationalist and autochthonic "son of the soil" of Zimbabwean politics. Modern capitalist agriculture is consistently portrayed negatively: the narrator dreams of his father being given a ride on a tractor that plunges into river as the deaf-and-dumb woman watches, refusing to assist. The narrator's mother sees herself as "a mere visitor to this new kingdom of death" (60), marking women's separation from the new technologies of farming and their association with death. In this dream the ancient and modern converge, as they do at several points in the novel, to show that modernity takes many complex forms – in both the rural and urban contexts. In fact the notion of transitional or halfway houses, although located in missions and boarding schools, needs to pushed further to include the various circuits and agents of modernity normally associated with the city: the tractor, the church, the school, the bus, music and trains all create halfway houses.

At the ceremony to hand over the Master Farmer's Certificate to the narrator's father, who leads the migration to Gotami, the village children sing of new commodities that are linked with colonial hygiene – such as Rexona and Lifebuoy, soap brands that Timothy Burke associates with the commodification of the subjectivity of the colonized. Although popular peasant music retains its subversive edge through its criticism of colonial officials and their collaborators, the modern has already infected it. It is, however, in trains that music explicitly expresses a modern experience. The text cites John White, Jacob Mhungu and Ngwarumapundu – train minstrels of the 1960s and 1970s – to suggest a transition closest to

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the city. This train music is not found in Lessing's music motif (see Chapter 2), but is vaguely suggested in Vera's music of the trains (see Chapter 5). It indicates the development of a new urban musical genre that shows little or no connection with the Sophiatown Renaissance.

3.5 Halfway houses of urbanism in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

In much of Lessing's fiction the movement of blacks to the city, that space that captures and concentrates all that is new and foreign, does not receive much attention, and where it does (as in the story "Hunger") the transition is too rapid and compressed and focuses on a single dramatic (but nonetheless valid) entry into the city. The routes of internal migration to and from the city are varied and difficult, given the bureaucratic restrictions of the colony. While inhibiting entry into the city, the colonial project produced cultures that would lead to disaffection with the tribal homeland reserved for blacks; these cultures would also (although this was not the intention) prepare tribal subjects for relocation in urban space. The mission and the boarding school became key sites for initiation into both rural and urban modernity. They were also sites of ambivalence as these spaces of transition were caught in the grip of conflicting affiliations and the sense of belonging and subjectivity was destabilized. Tsitsi Dangarembga, writing back to Charles Mungoshi, re-genders the theme of deracination through education that produced Lucifer in *Waiting for the Rain*. The experiences in which Dangarembga places her characters in both *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not* belong to missions and schools which function as explicit laboratories for the alienation of blacks, in ways that differ from the all-black boarding schools in Mungoshi's fiction. During colonial times, as shown in *The Book of Not*, the multi-racial school was a space for perpetuating minority interests and their attempt to re-invent the nation.

Nervous Conditions, through the author's use of the doubling technique (Kortenaar), opens with a broader perspective, linking peasant women and those in transitional spaces, both the uneducated and the educated, in the plot's development. However, this narrows as the narrative focuses on Tambu and her fictional foster nuclear family, and increasingly excludes the narrative of the uneducated woman who does not make it into Western modernity: the first-person narrator in Dangarembga's novels is engaged in monologic narration and her voice lacks the dynamic dialogism that Gunner notes in *Bones*. Wright (110) argues for a complexity and hybridity which both the trajectory of Tambu's life and the

plot disavow. Wright's reading, like those of many critics, takes the ideological declarations of the text at face value and ignores the autobiographical drama at work in the Dangarembga text. In the two novels considered here, Dangarembga explores possible and existential aspects of the autobiographical self and the autobiographical family. An article by Buchan and Gregory (327), "Anorexia in a black Zimbabwean", although it does not use Dangarembga's name, leaves the reader with little doubt as to the identity of the individual studied. The splitting that the author uses in *Nervous Conditions* shows writing as both psychotherapy and a way of exploring those identities foreclosed by class and education. The psychological pressures of an overbearing father are brought to bear on the girl child in the Buchan and Gregory case. The elitist convent high school education and translocation to England at an early age are important aspects of this autobiographical fiction. They leave an indelible mark on Tambu who finds Nyasha her cousin struggling to perform her African identity. Nyasha's performance, especially her struggles with a tyrannical father, is a reaction to the immersion in an alien culture. Nyasha's psychiatric history closely reflects the history of the psychiatric case noted above. Aegerter notes: "Nyasha's sense of schizophrenia belongs in large part to her Anglicization" (237).

This Anglicization is later described by Gillian Gorle as 'a victory in this struggle over the word' (192), but Dangarembga's victory over the word, through "Tambu's retrospective narration", is too quickly pressed into the service of a postcolonial narrative: it ignores the point that language, in terms of the semiotics of food, is part of the colonial culture that she regurgitates. Aegeter qualifies her statement, thus allowing for the articulation of other ways of reading Nyasha's condition that question Gorle's sense of victory over the word. One way is to deploy the father-daughter dynamic as it plays itself out contradictorily in narratives of gender and postcolonial struggles: it see-saws between Tambu's feelings of security 'at the mission under Babamukuru's shadow' (118-119) and Nyasha, who finds the father's shadow "threatening" (119). In *Nervous Conditions*, the struggle, in both Babamukuru and Jeremiah's family, is between fathers and daughters, and by extension between brothers and sisters. Tambu's struggle with Nhamo is a struggle for a place in the patriarchal order; Tambu triumphs and becomes very close to Babamukuru. That triumph does not bring dividends to the women she leaves behind – her mother and Aunt Lucia. The reader is left with Tambu who wants to excel and be accepted at the same time: she does not want to miss whatever becomes available to her peers, who want to take the place of the father. *The Book of Not* is an extension of the father-daughter conflict, an attempt

at autobiographical reconciliation and at severance from the rural, in the context of an extended experience of deracination.

The retrospective narration in *Nervous Conditions* explicitly invokes psychoanalysis as a possible discourse through which to understand "the traumas of colonial encounter" (Counihan, 175). Supriya Nair, writing on this novel that catapulted Dangarembga to fame, says although it is "set in the revolutionary period of militant struggle against a white supremacist government, there is little reference to the rising insurgency" (136). That statement, despite the positive postcolonial reading of Tambu's experience, indirectly accuses the writer of being inattentive to the epochal political movements by attending primarily to personal biography. This personal biography is as important as the history of armed conflict in its dwelling on other sites of struggle that produce (as Nair points out in her article on melancholy) a deracinating mission school.

In Dangarembga's novels the pursuit of western education is connected to migration to the city. I want to return to the mission and the boarding school in *Nervous Conditions*, which are, for the heroine, in-between sites on her way to the city. Apropos of the theme of urbanity, the decidedly aesthetic description of landscape at the mission on Tambu's arrival suggests that the mission is a gateway to the city:

> The smooth, stoneless drive ran between squat, robust conifers on one side and a blaze of canna lilia burning scarlet and amber on the other. Plants like that had belonged to the cities. They belonged to the pages of my language reader, to the yards of Ben and Betty's uncle in town (*Nervous Conditions* 64).

The narrator's poetic evocation of city flora recurs in the novel. Tambu vicariously appreciates this exotic beauty through the primary school English reader of her time. The mission turns into reality what Tambu has been imagining through her reading. Dangarembga's prose achieves poetic quality in a description like "up the road where the bauhinias on the verge glimmered like ghosts in the moonlight" (111). I read this as a romanticization of the city that in part is consistent with Tambu's age and inexperience. I also read this emerging poetics of the city as a writing back to a romanticization of country life in the poetry of Musaemura Zimunya. By bringing two different aesthetics into sharp contrast, the narrator draws attention to the significance of crossing. Tambu views her crossing of aesthetic and spatial boundaries as a translation of the self. She goes to describe her recreation of identity as her "transplanting" and "re-incarnation" (94). This

transformation of Tambu worries her mother. Having metaphorically and literally lost Nhamo to the mission the mother views Tambu's going to the mission school, "the place of death" (56), as repetition of Nhamo's fate. To confirm the mother's fears, Tambu's initiation into different ways of organising and using space, objects, and food begins swiftly and heralds her disconnection with the rural. At the end of the novel she is no longer comfortable with her rural home and her past and finds herself in Nhamo's position. Something in her dies and her in-depth immersion into colonial white culture reduces her capacity to communicate with members of her own family. The family – both nuclear and extended –collapses under the sustained onslaught of her multi-racial education. Both mission and boarding schools are products of missionary endeavours, the one run by native personnel (Babamukuru) and the other (the multi-racial boarding school) by European nuns. Missionaries affiliated to various denominations became the major providers of education for Africans within the constraints of colonial rule, which sets a glass ceiling to black educational aspirations. Indeed the modern subject, as constructed by the city, originates at the mission.

The mission is also becomes a welcoming site to the returning exile. The Zimbabwean "been-to", as represented by members of Babamukuru's family, is a figure that has not featured greatly in fiction, makes an important appearance in Dangarembgwa's fiction. Nyasha and Chido find themselves in double uprootment from rural sites and their country. Their relocation to England at an early age leads to their acute deracination characterised by aphasia and cultural amnesia. At Sacred Heart College Tambu's life is a re-play, with variation, of Nyasha's alienation from rural space relieves, with variations.

I want to shift the focus slightly away from the melancholia, hysteria, and bulimia which have received a good deal of attention – without downplaying their importance. This area has been covered by critics like Hill, Nair, Saliba, Patchay, Kennedy and Thompson, and a detour will bring me back to them. The dominant strategy in the reading of the Dangarembga text has been that of reading colonialism through the lens of the food metaphor, in which surfeit/excess, bulimia and hysteria (for victims of cultural immersion) are deployed as strategies of anti-colonial struggle. Considering that the novels describe childhoods recollected in moments of ideological reconstruction by the narrating self, and that anorexia nervosa is difficult to deploy in the colonial and postcolonial condition of food scarcity, this minority discourse needs to be re-examined. Commodities, architectures of home, and the physical environment are key registers in the language of home and becoming. In the two novels, to use Sutton theorisation on cultural and social history, food is a "marker

of epochal transformations" (58). Sutton stresses the importance of a "criss-crossing between the 'public' and the 'intimate', the individual and collective institutions" in the production, exchange and consumption of food (60). Food cultures mark existential spaces in indelible, sensuous ways. They also sculpt bodies, regulate gender identities and relations and mediate class and personal relations. I extend this indexical function to houses, dress, landscape and gardens in *Nervous Conditions* to analyse how material cultures are associated with the ongoing exchanges between the city and the country.

The narrator foregrounds material cultures in the contrasted places in the two novels without losing sight of the politics of the female body (Harlow). In writing food as a marker of epochal transitions and the re-inscribing of identities, Dangarembga returns to a motif in Zimunya's poetry that has been noted in section 3.2 (above). The focalized female narrator in *Nervous Conditions* is Tambu, whose journey is, in many respects, an epic representation of the odyssey from rurality to urbanity via the halfway houses; it is also a feminist reclaiming of cartography. In the rural home Tambu is educated in both the growing of food crops and in the telling of stories by her grandmother, "an inexorable cultivator of land, sower of seeds and reaper of rich harvest until, literally until, her very last moment" (17). Grandmother narrates the stories of family romance, white invasion, and migration to Johannesburg mines, and forced removals and relocations during colonial times. Tambu's story lacks romance and focuses on the movement from the land to the city through the halfway houses of the mission and boarding school; these are marked by a different kind of gardening and food culture, and a different kind of story-telling. Although grandmother is presented as an inspiration to a feminist work ethic and creativity, Tambu's trajectory in *Nervous Conditions* finds her distancing herself from her grandmother's world. In *Waiting for the Rain*, Garabha, the grandchild who follows the wisdom of the grandparent, does not radically disconnect with the past in the way Tambu does. Babamukuru's mission house and Amaiguru's garden are very different from the rural homestead and grandmother's garden. Tambu's journey begins when she displaces her brother Nhamo (after his death) in the patriarchal economy of the extended family. Her new role is a complicated one and it implicates her in both patriarchy and the world of women. It becomes a moment of disconnection with the land narratives and marks her uneasy but unstoppable movement towards the city.

Tambu describes herself as a peasant in "tight faded frock" (58). Her body has the marks of rurality: "broad-toed feet that had grown thick-skinned through daily contact with the ground in all weathers"; "black callouses on...knees", and "short tufts of malnourished

hair" (58). She describes her translocation as "my transplantation" (59), but what occurs as the plot of the novel unfolds confirms the worst fears of Tambu's mother, who associates the mission with the death of her son Nhamo. Tambu is reluctant to return to the rural home, its gendered chores, its lack of Western hygiene, and its confined spaces of domesticity. Tambu's "possessions had been disciplined into retaining their newness" (60) and her books would live in a bookcase without "becoming embellished with grime and grease-spots in their corner of the chikuhwa, clinical, antiseptic white" (63). Tambu joins Timothy Burke's new class of "lux women" conditioned into adopting Western concepts of cleanliness and beauty. Hygiene, body semiotics, food, and sumptuary codes become important in Tambu's (dis)location of herself in *Nervous Conditions*. They are also boundaries markers between the rural home and the mission halfway house.

3.6 Conclusion

In the transitions imagined in the various texts, commodities and characters travel and undergo mutations. In all the novels and short stories examined in this chapter, protagonists are about to leave or have left a rural home. A conceptualisation of home as rural views rural departures negatively, as involving loss, betrayal, rupture and death. The psychological pressures on travellers to either delay or cancel their travel plans are intense. But a discourse of city modernity disrupts narratives of fixity that figure the rural as the mythic site of autochthony and pristine indigenous knowledge systems. In *Waiting for the Rain*, both the founder of the Mandengu clan, Sambabwa, and Lucifer, are hunters and travellers. Linking the two is Makiwa, son of Mandengu, who runs away from home to work in the town of Gatooma. Urban space is figured as non-autochthonic and migration as producing disorientation. Men are the privileged participants in a travel narrative that either excludes women or casts them in subordinate roles. In Samambwa's case woman represents the erotic that douses his wanderlust, and a mother figure in the birth of the clan. Women are presented as symbols of colonial modernity in their rapid adoption of western material culture.

However, Hove and Dangarembga's fiction contests this association of women with markers of colonial urban modernity. They refuse the ploy of cultural nationalists like Zimunya who, in his view of the contamination of city woman (as siren and whore), finds solace in turning rural woman into figures of redemptive myth. Jikinya in "Jikinya" and "Jikinya, the Dancer" becomes a black muse, representing positive black sexuality, and the

custodian of African culture. Zimunya in the end offers a limited range of black female identities that does not do justice to the full range of female subjectivities in both country and city. He also comes close to trivialising feminine struggles in the city. Hove and Dangarembga question the silence regarding women's experience. Hove uses the trope of haunting, associated with retributive justice and mourning cultures, to allow for female narratives and to acknowledge the wrongs done to women. While questioning the exclusion of women from national narratives, Dangarembga also offers an ambiguous feminism in her texts. This ambiguity is reflected in the way that Tambu distances herself from other women in the gallery of women characters offered in *Nervous Conditions* and associates herself with Babamukuru. When she enters the cultural spaces of transition her aspirations are to be viewed in the context of a white world. The woman Tambu becomes, in the cultural semiotics of the body, in her manners, and in her pursuit of city identity, differs from constructions of colonial womanhood found in other postcolonial women writers. According to Boehmer (173), these writers define postcolonial womanhood without reference to the West. It is left to a later generation of women writers to imagine modern female subjectivities without using the vocabulary of the West and to discover the limitations of class and geography in imagining the city.

In some of the texts considered in this chapter, we see the beginning of a complication of the country-city binary, and a sensitivity to gender in exploring lines of flight from spaces that entrap. Transition from one spatial order to the other is presented as complicated and traumatic, but never amnesic, as will be shown in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 4:

RELENTLESS (UN)HOUSING IN THE CITY IN SELECTED PROSE TEXTS BY DAMBUDZO MARECHERA

In this chapter I contest, in part, the claim that "Marechera remains doubly marginalized: invisible in the West and misunderstood at home" (Buuck 118). I argue that, apart from his performance of cultural dissidence and the drama of his interaction with the government of the day, the question of Marechera being misunderstood at home requires further scrutiny. The misunderstanding involves many interwoven strands: a misreading of his work, a failure to acknowledge the literary impact of his writing and the difficulties posed when trying to understand the personality. Much of the work on Marechera has tended to focus on his staging of his identity as writer, a line of inquiry that tends to obscure the merit of the writer's work. I want to focus on the (mis)reading of Marechera's work and the significance of its place in the Zimbabwean literary canon. Bloom's theory of misreading literary predecessors – *The Anxiety of Influence* – with regard to Marechera's literary output surfaces in the novels and short stories of a later generation of writers as they clear creative space for themselves. For example, Yvonne Vera and Brian Chikwava in their different ways, reveal their indebtedness to Marechera in the formal, stylistic and thematic features of their work. Of particular interest for this chapter's focus is the literary productiveness of the master trope of the house which Marechera develops to give unity to his literary oeuvre. This trope, adopted and refined in various kinds of 'misreadings' continues to dominate post-1987 Zimbabwean writing. The key text that triggered this rich replication of metaphor is *The House of Hunger*, whose publication transformed the poetics of genre, and the tone and urgency of African literature; it was welcomed and celebrated by many critics and castigated by others. The house became a strategic metaphoric architecture for dis-locating the key issues found in African literature such as nation, identity, language and the canon. Marechera generates powerful images from this trope to evoke and unsettle a sense of belonging and constantly make and unmake the architectures of real and fictional houses. This allows me to complicate what some critics' claim to be a rejection of the artist by the nation.

Rejection is arguably mutual as throughout his texts the artist is always grappling with the question of leaving many of the metaphorical houses that stand for the nation and Africa. Marechera's construction of this mutual rejection and sense of entrapment is first articulated

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in *The House of Hunger*. This rejection is linked to the question of exile in a very broad sense as mutually produced by both the house and its subversive inhabitant (in the form of the artist as permanent rebel). In the transitive meanings of (un)house the narrator/artist as victim and agent, (de)constructs a complex of entangled houses in which the most marginalised groups emerge as hapless victims. The narrator as guerrilla artist, dissident and bohemian flâneur in *The House of Hunger* (1978), *Mindblast or the Definitive Buddy* (1984), *The Black Insider* (1990) and *Scrapiron Blues* (1994) is located in and dislocates himself from literal and metaphoric houses in which unsettling and (un)housing occurs. Part of this un-housing entails what Theodor Adorno describes as the condition of the unsettled subject in the home, "not to be at home in one's home" (Adorno 39). In Marechera's texts this is critical for the construction of a cosmopolitan imagination. In Marechera's celebration of the imagination as transcending national and continental borders, un-housing entails insecurity, abandonment and freedom.

I argue in this chapter that the metaphor of the house and its several ramifications is firmly located in the city. All the selected texts portray the city using the metaphor of the house. Janet Larson, Francesca Saggini and Anna-Enrichetta, writing on the house trope in European fiction, read metaphoric houses as "permeable fluid spaces" where "inside leaks outside, outside invades –perpetually under construction, disintegrating from within, unsettled and unsettling places of settlement" (3). The fluidity of spaces where borders collapse as they are incessantly erected and maintained is a recurring image in Marechera's writing in which outside and inside become blurred. The city, the nation, race, family, language and canon are some of the constructs whose boundaries this writing deconstructs. In *The Black Insider* the African Schweik seeks to confound boundary maintenance and (dis)-locate himself in relation with Africa: "I ponder every day where I should stay: solidly in my own mind or in the real Africa of give and take" in which "definitions and counter-definitions of Africanness" (4) are made. For the Schweik "Inside-out is outside-in, but there is always bleeding" (4), a stance that is consistent with the entanglement of houses in Marechera's writing, which is characterised by abrupt narrative transitions and a metaphoric density and inter-connectedness. This attests to the fluidity of space and what Tim Ingold describes as "the entanglement of life in an open world" ("Bindings" 1)

Unlike VS Naipaul who uses the physical architecture of a particular building to stand for the exilic condition of the colonised and the transplanted condition of the marginalised in *A House for Mr Biswas*, Marechera focuses on architectures of drabness, sameness and

monotony to emphasise how individuality is denied expression. In the short story "Are There People Living There" (*House of Hunger* 149-151), which echoes the title of Athol Fugard's play, Marechera portrays the various architectures that structure the house trope in his writing: the traditional "thatched mud-and-pole affair", the "whitewashed barracks", the "seedy tenement and the modern house of colonial consumerism" (150). These houses are constantly morphing to produce a single metaphoric structure whose malevolence is emphasised throughout *The House of Hunger*. This can be seen in expressions like "that House of Hunger where every morsel of sanity was snatched from you the way some birds snatch food from the mouths of babes" (11) and "the eyes of that House of Hunger lingered upon you as though some indefinable beast was about to pounce on you" (11). A visceral relationship with the various existential and metaphoric houses as the origin of madness, disease, unsettling surveillance, insecurity and imprisonment is emphasised.

Marechera does not place these houses and cities in a hierarchy but entangles them in a variety of ways. His sense of a cosmopolitan intertext disrupts city hierarchies to suggest elements common to these divided houses. I want to characterise the Marechera text in terms suggested by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's conceptualising of a book as an "assemblage" of "lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification" (4). Marechera's text is constantly deterritorializing literature, the city and the urban subject. The cities that feature prominently in his writing, Harare and London, are houses of power, language, the canon, race and a proliferation of identities. In Marechera's analogical thinking, the boundaries of these two cities are blurred and in the entanglement of places all cities share the same dystopic characteristics. The cosmic dread that comes from the dropping of the atomic bomb on the two Japanese towns of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the development of various weapons of mass destruction in numerous post-1945 wars allows Marechera not to focus on the particularity of the city but to re-vision all cities across political and civilisation divides as threatened by imminent annihilation.. He also uses the bomb as metaphor for the demolition of metaphoric houses. Marechera's prose is replete with images of a boundless world in which the writer represents space as "fluid". Ingold identifies some features in space so defined: " In fluid space there are no well defined objects or entities" but substances which flow, mix and mutate, sometimes congealing into more or less ephemeral forms'' ("Bindings"). Places and entities according to version of entanglement finds them flowing or exploding into each other. There is an extract from "The Writers Grain" (*House of Hunger*

100-133) that I place at the centre of Marechera's version of this collapsing of boundaries, as metaphoric and literal houses flow into each other:

> I was mechanically drawing all sorts of circles and squares on my blotting-pad you should have seen the map of it! Little circles eaten or eating the big circles and everything in everything else, so much so I still wonder how on earth I found my way out of that labyrinth. (101)

Although in the context from which this extract is taken "everything in everything else" attests to the inseparability of psychic worlds and the presence of doppelgangers, the writer extends this to the whole gamut of his existential world in a process of mutual implication and destruction that reinforces the earlier point about the house trope in the context of concentric worlds. This narrative of a borderless world or city is sustained by a variety of metaphors, one key one being that of the circle. In *The Black Insider*, the circle represents a specific metaphoric house and its relation to other circles in a galaxy in which the artist is a galactic hitch-hiker. The city is one such circle in its literary and existential manifestations in which temporal and geographical boundaries are constantly disrupted through the metaphors of escape and explosion. Through their porous nature and their merging, circles create space for the writer/narrator to perform the identity of a pariah at the edge of conventional houses and a of bohemian nomad transgressing essentialist boundaries of the family, community, nation, state and race. Transgression involves the wounding of the artist/transgressor and the metaphor of wounds and stitching that features in Marechera's writing gives a special inflection to his myth of the bohemian artist (I will enlarge on this later). In the various transgressions that occur in the selected texts the city becomes a text, that, like his life, Marechera reinvents as he uses it to reveal both the singularity and metonymy of the various houses that he contends with in his writing. To return to the (un)-housing trope and the circles of identity indicated earlier on, dis-location and un-belonging occur when crossings and ejections take place. It is the implications of these crossings and ejections that are important in Marechera's writing. Literal and metaphoric homelessness, an insider/outsider view of the world, the ability to see connections beyond the limits of a particular circle of belonging, the thrill and risk of taboo breaking, and the creation and acceptance of novel identities are the key implications that flow from this (un)housing. The emphasis on un-housing is closely associated with the Jonah complex in Black Sunlight that Flora Veit-Wild discusses in her work on writing and madness in Marechera's work ("Mad Writing" 53-76). I extend this complex, the fear of the great cunt, to all spatial imaginaries, including the city, that threaten

to swallow and destroy the writer/narrator. The Jonah complex is also associated with the unsettling view from the inside.

For Marechera, whose life was premised on the absolute non-negotiable autonomy of the artist, this (un)-housing is tied to an insistence on and celebration of the unique place of the artist the city. In some of his most hybrid texts, *The Black Insider* and "The Writer's Grain" (*House of Hunger* 100-133), Marechera cites writers who validate the importance of the writer in society. The myth of the bohemian artist and the bohemian space in the city that Marechera adopts from Western literature, in its fraught transplantation to the postcolonial city of Harare, allows Marechera to perform his identity as city insider/outsider. In both Harare and the English city Marechera represents the artist as a bohemian tramp whose homelessness becomes an indictment against society.

The themes of homelessness, exclusion, transgression of boundaries, and the place of the artist run through Marechera's evocation in his oeuvre of the colonial city, the city without borders, and the postcolonial city. Much of the violence that pervades Marechera's description of the colonial urban ghetto echoes syntactic, verbal and metaphorical patterns from Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Characters in *The House of Hunger* are conceived in the broad context of the Manicheanism of the colony and its psychopathology, but Marechera swiftly complicates this by offering counter-versions of Fanon's "the woman of color and the white man" and "the man of color and the white woman"; he moves beyond the limitations of race. Nationalist and anti-imperial narratives do not give a full account of violence in the city. Peter, the narrator's brother, is in the Fanonian trap of the colonised: he walks about "raging and spoiling for a fight which was just not there" and obsesses about "capitalists and imperialists and bloody whites" (20), a trinity that for him held "the House of Hunger in a stinking grip" (20). The "white chicked" brother of Immaculate is another male character who is trapped in Fanon's description of the black man who desires "to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settle's bed, with his wife if possible" (Fanon, *Wretched* 30). The latter's pursuit of white culture, especially colonial consumer capitalism, leads him to betray his own people.

In Section 4.2 I analyse *The House of Hunger's* imagining of the colonial city as a prison house from which to escape from the prison-like city. Although Frantz Fanon's depiction of the colonial town provides the basis for Marechera's evocation of the town of his birth, Rusape, and the colonial city of Salisbury (now Harare), as well as explaining the tone

of his engagement with colonialism, without glamorising the township, Marechera shows the power of the imagination to offer a new urban aesthetics for the colonised that repairs the trauma of colonialism. Township space denies bare life to the colonised. Doris Lessing evokes this abject space of the native location in her fiction from the perspective of an outsider. Marechera as insider graphically evokes the images of abject life in the township in his critique of colonial aesthetics and politics in order to free the colonial urban subject from their grip.

Section 4.3 analyses the method used by Marechera to achieve his particular brand of cosmopolitanism. Caroline Rooney's inter-related concepts of "utopian cosmopolitanism" and the "conscious pariah" ("Utopian Cosmopolitanism" 139) are productive in the analysis of Marechera's literary performance of the outsider within the city and of his celebration of cosmopolitanism. This chapter's focal texts are the novella *The House of Hunger* and the stories "Fear and Loathing Out of Harare", "Things That Go Bump in the Night", "Dread in Harare" (in *The House of Hunger*); *The Black Insider*; *Mindblast* – with a special focus on "Prologue – Grimknife Jr and Rix and the Giant Cat", "Grimknife Jr's Story" and "Appendix – From the Journal"; and *Scrapiron Blues*. I will only be referring to the poetry and drama to reinforce points raised in my analysis of the selected texts. I have moved "Fear and Loathing Out of Harare", "Things That Go Bump in the Night", "Dread in Harare" from the section on the colonial city and placed them in the section on the postcolonial city since these do not appear in the 1978 edition and are post-1980 pieces, added to the 2009 edition of *The House of Hunger*.

In Section 4.3 I analyse the collapsing of city boundaries in *The Black Insider* as a way of establishing a cosmopolitan bohemianism and a regard for the non-national other. In a world that hierarchizes cities and emphasises asymmetries between cities of the north and those of the south, Marechera deconstructs urban hierarchies and imagines fluid cities that flow into each other. Marechera's oeuvre, in the tradition of Western constructions of Bohemia, celebrates "bohemian values of expressiveness, sexual experimentation, radicalism and an aesthetic approach to life" (Wilson, "Bohemianization" 11). Marechera's texts, I argue, turn the city into an arena for the performance of this role and represent multiple transgressions on several fronts. Though fraught with ideological, class, and cultural assumptions and contradictions, the Bohemian myth allows Marechera to re-figure aesthetic relations in the city as he portrays the artist as a bohemian who crosses boundaries to achieve a cosmopolitanism that responds to difference and the other.

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In Section 4.4 the cosmopolitan imperative in the previous section is qualified by a return to the particular existential demands of the postcolonial city of Harare. I analyse this return to the singularity of the city in Marechera's re-framing of city aesthetics. He adopts the irreverent earthy realism and formal construction of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and his own kind of magical realism to re-visioning the city. Marechera traces this earthy realism to Boccaccio's *Decameron* and describes it as "a natural way of combining grim reality with the art of story-telling" in the pursuit of what he describes as an "irreverent zestful treatment of values" (*Black Insider* 89). The text that combines both ways of re-imagining the city is *Scrapiron Blues* (see "First Street Tumult – More City Stories"). The writer's magical realism emerges in the various levels of fictionality in the stories in this text. It strives to transcend the crude photography, mural art of the city and the music of the nightclub in order to magically transform the city and its inhabitants.

4.2 *The House of Hunger* and the colonial city as malignant house

The House of Hunger is a seminal text in Marechera's oeuvre for its charting of new directions in African literature. Much of the criticism of Marechera identifies these as changes in form, style, tone and theme without acknowledging Marechera's abandonment of the village for the city. This embracing of the city as a site for existential struggles, identity formation and re-framing of the African canon is generally not emphasised. Through the portrayal of the existential conditions of living in the colonial city and the use of metaphor, Marechera paints a very grim picture of the native part of a divided colonial city – what Fanon describes as "a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness, men live on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other" (Fanon *Wretched* 30). Marechera portrays the native location of Rusape and the Harare of the 1970s in terms that echo Fanon's description of the lack of individuality and the randomness of misfortune that afflicts lives amidst squalid, overcrowded conditions: "Life stretched out like a series of hunger-scoured hovels stretching endlessly towards the horizon" (13-14); "the panorama of barbed wire, whitewashed houses, drunks, prostitutes, and the angelic choirs of God-created flies" (22). Although he takes the theme of hunger from Fanon, Marechera gives it a specific articulation in his figuring of the Rhodesian colonial township ghetto as a colonial house that produces "the acids of gut-rot" that "had eaten into

the base metal" of his brains. In the constant mutation and merging of public and private spaces the narrator's mind whose "roof is rattling" (24) becomes a house.

Marechera's use of the house of hunger trope suggests several states of deprivation that are critical in understanding the writer's evocation of the colonial township as abject site to the colonised. The abject aspect of the township, emphasising the biopolitics of bare life, is evident in the following quotation: "The room had taken over my mind. My hunger had become the room, there was a thick darkness where I was going. It was prison. It was the womb" (37). The Jonah complex that is articulated here differs from its versions in Christianity and psychology. This produces in the narrator the desire to escape from the various rooms that make up the house of hunger, whose topography is mapped in various ways in the text: through gender, sex, violence and consumer capitalism in the city, and through photography and film. The production and circulation of images in the city unites the various ways of mapping the city as house of hunger. Marechera's writing sees the production of images and their circulation as part of a broader and insidious strategy of colonial domination.

Images that fix conceptions of race, gender, and sex proliferate in the city. Colonial consumer capitalism in its construction of normative gender roles and its production of Western body aesthetics aggressively encourages self-debasement, especially among black women. Describing the plight of young black women in the city the narrator says, "But the young woman's life is not at all an easy one, the black young woman's" (65). Her life is made difficult by the media as she is "bombarded daily by a TV network that assumes that black women are not only ugly but also do not exist unless they take in laundry, scrub lavatories, polish staircases, and drudge around in a nanny's uniform". This life of gendered racial servitude is closely linked to the aesthetics of self-abasement manufactured by colonial capitalism. The young black woman in the city "is mugged every day by magazines that pressure her into buying European beauty" (65). A nightclub in downtown Harare for black patrons, "all garish colours and lights", has walls that are "plastered with advertisements for skin-lightening creams, Afro wigs, Vaseline, Benson and Hedges" (36). Both Julia, with "painted fingernails" that "gleamed like claws" (55, and Nestar, now a classy whore, respond in their different ways to the demands of a Western aesthetic of feminine beauty. These colonial urban images are symptomatic of a pathology Marechera describes as a "preternatural urge to consume to the hilt the beads and art trophies in the whiteman's bin" (*Black Insider* 107). The narrator expresses his sympathy for the economically exploited

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black woman who is made to re-script her body by the media. The colonial township's "large floating population of prostitutes" (*House of Hunger* 64) attests to the capacity of men and colonialism to turn women into figures of abuse and denigration. Many young women fail to attain their full human potential as patriarchy turns them into objects of sexual exploitation. At the age of twelve, Nestar, the narrator's childhood classmate, is impregnated by a married man who beat her up when she went to him for help. Cast out into the streets where she "slept in waiting rooms and lavatories at the bus station and at the railway station" (66), she gave birth to a son in the bush. The narrator says, "The pain, blood and emptiness of that birth made her decide to 'fight into the thick of money'" (66). Nestar, like some of the older women of the township, does not succumb to abject victimhood, though she exposes herself to "the absurd, the grotesque" (42) in her sexual encounters with her white clients (66, 67, 68). The narrator's mother, whom he describes "as a hard worker in screwing, running a home, and maintaining a seemingly tight rein over her husband…good in fights, and verbal sallies" (96), rejects victimhood and challenges facile moralising that condemns women who find themselves in her predicament.

This is not to say most women rise above the violence of men who perceive them as receptacles of stains. Colonised man "screwing pussy as though out to prove white men do not in reality exist" (93) dominate women through sex in order to repress colonial violation. Peter, the narrator's brother who wants to express himself through sexuality and violence, impregnates Immaculate and, because he does not want commitment, "beat[s] her until she was just a red stain" (14). Peter's behaviour does not significantly differ from the norm of township masculinity that says "if one did not beat one's wife it meant that one did not love her at all" (64). This flaunting of violent masculinity is grotesquely illustrated by an incident in which spousal rape occurs "in the thick of an excited crowd". The spectators can only wonder how the woman "could have survived such a determined assault" (65) but do not rescue her from the assault. A similar assault on Anne, Philip's sister, is carried out by Leslie, Nestar's son.

The narrator/writer, in his characteristic mode of transgressing genre adopts photography and film to map the metaphoric house of hunger and to explore ways of lessening its grip over him. The crude escapist art of the township photographer is rejected and replaced by an alternative photographic and cinematic aesthetic that offers new ways of capturing the house of hunger experience and subverting it. The seven postmodern films screened at Citre's house (85) are evidence of an alternative aesthetic and provide a powerful

synopsis of urban life for blacks during colonial times: "an old black man, rags tucked in, cycling into town"; "thin stringy hands gripping ice-cold handlebars"; "Bare feet pedalling mechanically on and on and on"; "a black woman nestling and hushing a white baby to sleep"; "five people, three men and two women in a lift forever going upwards- or had the lift stopped, or was it going downwards"; newspaper cuttings and the question marks. Each of the film shots is defined by tragedy, monotony and futility in the lives of urban blacks; these derive from the racial inequalities of the colonial city. The grim physical details provide images of a stained and panoptic colonial city that goes against the grain of colonial narratives of the picturesque sun-city. Stains dominate the imagery of the colonial city and paint its moral, psychological and political universe. Blood stains evoke a picture of endemic violence in the city and how this is symptomatic of the violence of imperialisms: "the twentieth-century train crushed the old man into a stain" (20), "nothing left but stains, the bloodstains and fragments of flesh", "where once our heroes danced there is nothing but a hideous stain" (60). The pervasiveness of stains is commented upon by the narrator: "Love or even hate or the desire for revenge is just so many stains on a sheet, or wall, on a page even" (70). Philip pulverises Nestar's on into a stain and many characters in *The House of Hunger* are trapped in the web of violence that colonialism produces. This partially explains the narrator's desire to escape from the colonial city. I place the escape motif in Marechera's novel in the context of the writer's imagining of a borderless world. In his evocation of cities that are entangled Marechera's texts create a sense of the cosmopolitan that I analyse below.

4.3 Cosmopolitan bohemianism and collapsing city boundaries in *The Black Insider*

In this subsection Elizabeth Wilson and Jerrold Seigel's work on the cultural history of bohemianism in the west and its location in the city is important for my analysis of Marechera's transplanted bohemianism. The focal text for this section is a literary instantiation of the principle espoused by Mr Warthog in "The Writer's Grain" (*House of Hunger* 100-133) in his advice to the narrator "to insist upon your right to go off at a tangent. Your absolute right to put the spanner into the works. Your right to refuse to be labelled and to insist on your right to behave like anything other than anyone expects. Your right to say no for the pleasure of it" (109). Marechera puts a spanner into the works in his deconstruction of various metaphorical houses – literary canons, gender, the nation, ethnicity and race. *The Black Insider* is a hybrid text and a key literary manifesto that captures the rhetoric of the

Russian Futurists at the beginning of the twentieth century. The hybridity of the text lies in its mixing of autobiography, fiction, history, drama (38-43), literary criticism, and a reaching out to other semiotic systems like photography, painting, film and music. Together with the house trope Marechera uses this textual feature to justify generic, stylistic and logical disruptions that conceptually attest to the inseparability of worlds and the possibility of a cosmopolitan bohemianism.

Marechera positions himself as a de-nationalised artist as he foregrounds the positive, uncontested and exuberant aspects of cosmopolitanism and bohemianism. Three theoretical positions, according to Seyla Benhabib, provide the following definitions of cosmopolitanism: (i) "an attitude of enlightened morality that does not place 'love of country' ahead of love of mankind"; (ii) "hybridity, fluidity, and recognizing the internally differentiated and conflictual character of human selves and citizens, whose complex aspirations cannot be circumscribed by national fantasies and primordial communities"; and (iii) the "normative philosophy of carrying the universalistic norms of discourse ethics beyond the confines of the nation state" (17-18). Marechera celebrates the three meanings signified by cosmopolitanism, particularly in his transcendence of national boundaries in the politics of identity and aesthetics. I define cosmopolitan bohemianism in Marechera's writing as a sharing of a dissident identity and an adversarial relationship with the city with artists from other epochs and places. The city, like any one of Marechera's houses, is a fluid space whose boundaries are transgressed by the imagination. The writer un-houses himself from metaphorical architectures that preclude the growth of the cosmopolitan. Marechera locates this in literature's capacity to escape the confines of national canons and to represent encounters with strangers. Such encounters, like the one he has with Dagmar in Berlin, release the capacity "to be human and humane" ("Appendix – From the Journal" from *Mindblast* 125). Family, nation and race are some of the restrictive houses and, as they are constructed in the city, they deter the individual from embracing the ethics of responding to strangers (see Appiah, *Ethics in a World of Strangers*). For Marechera, literary cosmopolitanism in which national canons are deconstructed leads to the sharing of a common humanity with strangers. The writer's literary citations indicate a gifted ability to read and write that "exposes the mind to the haustoria of everything that is written" (*Black Insider* 33). This drawing of inspiration from diverse sources turns the narrator/writer into a nomad. This literary nomadism enables him to imaginatively engage with cities outside Harare, a city with which he has a love-hate relationship. The allusive and referential breath

and force of *The Black Insider* breaches national canons housed in the city to include the non-African other of the literary text. Through these canonical transgressions the black writer in exile becomes an insider in both the western canon and in the United Kingdom, the country that gave Marechera asylum when he fled the colonial prison-house of Rhodesia.

Marechera's literary nomadism is an expression of rebellion; it is also connected to the bohemian identity of himself that he cultivated. Bohemianism is by its very nature an artistic lifestyle of rebellion that seeks to transcend its spatial and temporal location in its pursuit of higher art. Dissident artists live outside their times and their cities and share intellectual and artistic qualities that create and foster freedom and compassion. Marechera turns aesthetic transgressions into spatial and temporal ones in a manoeuvre that reinforces his rejection of the essentialist notions that accrue from inhabiting bounded spaces. Some of these notions are associated with the national, ethnic, racial, and gendered identities associated with the city. An obsession with boundary making and maintenance is a feature of these houses and this extends to questions of the canon and the regulation of sexuality and intimacy. Marechera throughout his career encountered recommendations from publishers, critics, readers and the state that he interpreted as proscriptions. The city as a bounded house of nationalism became a target for the writer's attack since it disallowed a less fixated notion of identity, a more catholic and inclusive sense of the literary canon and a spontaneous reaching out to the cosmopolitan other. David Caute's observation on Marechera in part reinforces the point with regard to a particular aspect of his cosmopolitanism: "He wanted to be neither black nor white. He detested the tribe". His hatred of racism in its various forms, including black power politics and essentialist nationalism, produced in him an acute sense of not belonging to the metaphoric houses that are shaped by violence that the mural in the opening paragraph of *The Black Insider* depicts:

> The naked light bulb still shone down upon the jungle mural which covered the far wall: a naked black woman was being pursued by a blood-red giant cat which was looking back over its shoulder at a brawny black archer who was aiming at it with an invisible bow and arrow. In the top centre of the mural a myopic falcon held in its talons a Stone Age handaxe; its eye pierced toward the archer. Directly beneath it and slightly behind the cat a frightened zebra was simultaneously rubbing its buttocks on a baobab and pawing the ground with its nose and hooves (23)

The extract establishes its own world using surrealist images to establish an ecology of violence in which every living organism is caught up in a frozen movement of violence, using technique John Keats made memorable in his poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn". In the mural every organism is both potential perpetrator and victim. The landscape depicted here is an image of a world living in the shadow of violence; it shares some similarity with the metaphoric potency with the bomb on the roof of the Faculty of Arts building. In this pervasiveness of violence the world is like "a kaleidoscope in which every little chink of colour in the shaken picture was fighting every other little chink" (24), a viral cannibalism that Marechera borrows from William S. Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*. Marechera offers this surreal logic of the mural at the beginning to foreground the importance of representational strategies from other arts, like painting and film that do not yield to the regime of rational analysis. The recognition of the pervasiveness of violence throughout the houses that the writer imagines is consistent with the cosmopolitan imperative that is premised on the disruption of narratives of separateness and the boundedness of the city.

By using the logic of "inside-out is outside-in" Marechera draws cities separated by vast temporal and spatial divides into a fluid space in which cosmopolitan identity is possible. This fluidity is achieved by means of a surreal logic of images in the urban texts which connect cities. For instance, the location of the Faculty of Arts building, representing the academic ivory tower and the kind of literary canon it defends and circulates, is undecided as it constantly shifts between Harare and Oxford. In the course of the spatial and temporal transgressions in *The Black Insider* the Faculty takes on a clear reference to colonial Salisbury in the 1970s as it simultaneously refers to the onset of war in other cities elsewhere:

> When the war came out of the blue sky like something out Ixtlan, only more deadly than the lessons Castaneda learnt, it destroyed most of the buildings and what was left of the intellectual atmosphere was this plague-ridden building with its diseased ghosts of arts undergraduates still wandering about in the corridors waiting for tutorials and seminars that were never to come. (47)

The intellectual malaise that pervades the building evokes the ferment of student politics that led to Marechera's expulsion from the University of Rhodesia and the deportation of progressive academics. The plague that dominates the building is both intellectual, in the complicity of the academy in the perpetuation of power, and political, in the face of the increasing menace of Zimbabwe's war of liberation in the 1970s. The placing the bomb on

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the roof the Faculty of Arts building becomes an intersection, like many others in the text, of the local and the global in its evocation of a global sense of living under the shadow of the bomb. This sense informed American and European anti-war protest and writing during the 1960s. Connected to the dread of nuclear annihilation is Robert Lowell's evocation of the twentieth century: "Pity the planet, all joy gone / from this sweet volcanic cone / peace to our children when they fall / in small war on the heels of small / war – until the end of time / to police the earth, …"("Waking Early Sunday Morning"). Marechera captures something similar in his images of the internecine wars that wracked the post-1945 world.

By connecting with anti-war writing in other times and different cities Marechera subverts the image of the bounded city as a seat of power. *The Black Insider* achieves cosmopolitanism through a literary ventriloquism in which the voices of the ancient Greek and Roman, European, African-American and Africa writers he cites speak through textual echoes. I will briefly focus on some of these citations to show how Marechera links ancient Athens, Rome, and modern cities in the North with those in the South – and what these links reveal about the city as centre of power (colonial, post-imperial, post-colonial and capitalist). One of the telling images of a cosmopolitanism that cuts across temporal and spatial borders of the city is the figure of Cicero, the narrator's anti-war neighbour who "wears a toga and bowler hat" (45). His sartorial hybridity suggests a transgression of space and time to universalise the anti-war stance. Most of the cities in Marechera's allusions and references are threatened by war and decline, for example the Greek city states of Athens and Sparta in *Lysistrata* (Aristophannes) and Rome in *Decline and Fall* (Gibbon). City decline caused by the state's intolerance of deviance, suppression of individuals and egregious misrule from ancient Athens and Rome to modern cities emerges. References to the ancient Greek polis are numerous, but I will focus on the play *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes to bring out the importance of gender and public space in the city. Lysistrata, the eponymous protagonist of the play, mobilises the women of various Greek states who are confined to spaces of domesticity to rise up against men who occupy public space and squander the national treasury in the pursuit of war, a theme that resonates with reference to twentieth century wars, including Zimbabwe's Liberation War of the 1970s. The following quotation depicts the century as one of trauma: "I had mild palpitations and I could not erase out of my mind the bitterness of the bitter pictures of war which I suddenly remembered. Vietnam. Korea. Kolwezi. Soweto. Dresden. Hiroshima" (44). Marechera's references to the Vietnam and Korean Wars, the Kolwezi Massacre in the Shaba Province of Zaire in 1978, the Soweto

Uprising of 1976, the indiscriminate large-scale bombing of the Germany town of Dresden and the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japanese town of Hiroshima during the Second World War, foreground a regard for the other in war-ravaged cities across the globe. In reaching out to cities beyond the African continent, Marechera returns to African cities that have been turned into grisly fantastic spectacles by dictators.

In the statement, "the road to Kampala leads to Buchenwald" (74), Marechera links the African city, represented by Idi Amin's citadel, to the German concentration camps of World War II to evoke a sense of the grotesque and grisly. Marechera describes a scene that resonates with the road and with the accident motifs that define Wole Soyinka's absurdist drama, *The Road*. In this scene "lucid minds shatter through thick windscreens" and "original thoughts crash into ancient lamp-posts". Hieronymus Bosch is adduced here, as in many of the literary citations, as evidence of a specific way of mediating the city in *The Black Insider*. It is the fantastic style in conveying moral narratives, associated with the art of this sixteenth century Dutch painter, that Marechera suggests here in a subversive undertaking of scrawling "massacre nightmares on the Coca-Cola billboards" (74). Marechera, ever attentive to the media which dominate and control the dissemination of information in the city (see *The House of Hunger*), is aware of the complicity of consumer capitalism in hiding evidence of massacres that have turned Africa into "a continent of refugees" and "of wounds which no longer knows what is to be whole and healthy". Marechera's subversion is driven by his concern with the African image, of which the city is a metonymy, and his refusal to romanticise Africa. He describes African cities as follows: "These new towns crowded with thousands of homeless unemployed whose dreams are rotting in the gutters, are only the new dunghills from which will emerge iron flies in a cloud to scatter all over the hills" (80). In this poetic evocation of failing cities in Africa after independence Marechera shares the same vision of the city with Armah in his unflattering portrayal of the Ghanaian city of Accra in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Marechera develops the trope of a dystopian city to de-mystify idyllic and essentialist images of Africa that obscure the experience of ordinary people. Yet despite the negative images of the African city evoked in Marechera's texts the city is figured as connected to other cities. This linking of cities in a borderless world provides a context for expressing a compassion for those beyond the borders of a particular city. The wars of liberation in Southern African that directly affected him do not stop him from acknowledging the plight of those affected by various small wars of the twentieth

century (see Lowell's "Waking Early Sunday Morning"). References and allusions to American writers who helped to define the anti-war protest movement express this aspect.

Marechera, like Mailer, learned to "live in the sarcophagus of his image" and like the American writer was worried that "newspapermen and other assorted bravos of the media and the literary world would carve ugly pictures on the living tomb of his legend" (*Armies of the Night* 15). Marechera's reading of Mailer is attested by his collapsing of the distinction between the writing self and the narrating persona, by the blurring of history and fiction, and by the scatological aspect found in Marechera's portrayal of the postcolonial city of Harare in his plays "The Coup", "The Gap" and "Blitzkrieg".

4.4 Beyond bohemia: the postcolonial city and the artist in *Mindblast*, selected short pieces and *Scrapiron Blues*

Mindblast and *Scrapiron Blues* mark a transition and tension in Marechera's writing about the city and the role of the artist. The former points back to an exuberant celebration of the artist's power as a gifted pariah, while the latter suggests a questioning of the bohemian stance in the postcolonial city of Harare. This tension arises from the writer's imagining the city as a "daemon lover" that offers nightly embraces but "in the cold light of day would retreat in the netherworld of stark clarity" (120). The two texts in this section capture the two rhythms of the city.

Mindblast, in its title and use of metaphor, emphasises the power of the word as a nuclear explosion that transforms philistine minds and points back to the exuberant expression of the power of the bohemian artist in *The Black Insider*. In the blast there is also an unforgiving satirical attack on the city as seat of power, on social inequality, on the excesses of the new elite and on the stage on which "African mutants in transition" (97) perform their postcolonial identities. The excoriation of the city's parochialism, its smallness and its exclusion of marginalised groups is unrelenting, although there remains an abiding search for an ideal postcolonial city. *Scrapiron Blues*, on the other hand, attends to the particularities of the city and to the new literature that is emerging in the city. In an admission that reinforces the bohemian exclusivity in his writing, Marechera says, "So I couldn't see the Harare I had come back to, physically. And even people I met were merely a blurred image" (34). Returning after years of exile in Britain, the un-homeliness of postcolonial Harare is

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evident in what Marechera perceives to be the lack of any tradition of "the Bohemian fulltime writer" (*Mindblast*, 125) and this complicates his relationship with the city. That demand for a Bohemian space in Harare arises out a transposition of London to Harare, in an affirmation of one of Marechera's key mantras: "Such a long way to have to go to merely find out that the exile takes himself him in his travels" (129). Marechera's statements are part of his staging of the pariah identity of the writer who occupies what Gérard Genette describes as the "shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the one in which one tells, and the world of which one tells". Dis-location sees the writer/narrator as insider/outsider of his fictional creation, and creates a problematic identity that can be extended to the artist's relationship with the city and state. Seeing the city and people from a blurred optic signals a deracinated native son who has come to accept an aesthetics of opposition, difference and apartness. The opposition between inside and outside had far-reaching consequences for Marechera's writing and the writer's relationship with the city and the state. The emphasis on the writer as an outsider creates a distance between him and the city, yet in writing about the city an insider's position is implied. The blur in the image is removed and there is a sharp precision to the images of the city that Marechera depicts, though this may suggest isolated brilliance in the general gloom that comes with the questioning of the artist's role.

"Appendix –From the Journal", "Fear and Loathing Out of Harare", "Things that Go Bump in the Night", "Dread in Harare" comprise a formal and stylistic unity in their mixing of autobiography, memoir, journal/diary, history and fiction. This generic undecidability is a deliberate ploy in a figuring of transgression to clear the ground for the writer's re-imagining of the city of Harare. Marechera, in his collapsing of the fiction-fact dyad, blurs the boundary between the fictional and historical versions of the city of Harare. This is precipitated by his sense of homelessness and un-belonging in the city: "There was just this terrifying sense of having missed the bus of human motion, having missed out on whatever these others had which made them look "at home in the world" (120). Though not singling out Harare in this regard he subjects it to the most unflattering portrayal and in exasperation compares it unfavourably with London (I will revert to this later). This is not unconnected to Marechera's blurring of fantasy and reality in his imagining of the city: "This Harare I was living in was someone else's creation. I could not encompass it. I was encompassed by my own description of it"(124). In "Prologue: Grimknife Jr and Rix the Giant Cat" he describes the historical city as one of a double exclusion: "The whites had created it as frontier town for gold and lust, lurid adventures and ruthless rule. The black inheritors had not changed that - just the name"

("Grimknife" 51). Showing no significant disjuncture between the colonial and postcolonial versions of the city, Marechera suggests continuities of power, greed and vulgarity that are occluded in the nationalist narratives of postcolonial modernity. Instead two visions of the city exist, the imagined one and the historical/official one, and these cannot exist completely independently of the other. Marechera, who is one of the most self-reflexive Zimbabwean writers to date, is fully aware of the aesthetic and political choices he makes in the context of what ultimately becomes the impossibility of a complete escape from the city that has become the source of his art. Most people living in the real city, those "on the park benches and on the concrete perimeter of the fountain in Cecil Square" accept "another's description" (123) of it. This is a quality that the writer deplores and that makes him want to give up on people, though he concedes that they are important in his art: "They are the story also because it is always from them that I meet those rare and uncommon women who are the matter of this story" (123).

Marechera's concession does not mask his fight with Harare as "a very, very personal conflict between Harare and I" (132). In the poem "Throne of Bayonets" the poetic persona evokes the sense of dread that defines this relationship: "I look at Harare, my hair stands on end" (75). This fear is reinforced by the city's capacity to turn citizens into "gaunt skeletons" and "caricatures of people who insisted on being taken seriously as people" (*Black Sunlight*). The poetic persona establishes a relationship with the city in sensuous terms to accentuate the sense of dread from which there is no respite: "No escape from the needle pinning my/Throat to Hararean velvet cascades" (81) and "I taste Harare and go down with diarrhoea". It is this personal element that can lead to a loss of perspective and that may reinforce a perception of Marechera reconstructing the dominance of the post-imperial metropolis that he claims to subvert through a metaphorical trashing of its canonical texts. Harare is compared unfavourably with London: he describes it as "this one-street City called Harare", "this one Mercedes-Benz town" ("Grimknife" 51). Both Harare and London are figured by means of the trope of Babylon in Marechera's citation of Linton Kwesi Johnson's poetry. Although sharing the same aim of searching for a new aesthetic and fighting canonical battles within the post-imperial metropolis and its exploitative and entrapping nature, Johnson draws language and style from recognisable repertoires of black traditions, while Marechera's literary persona sees Harare as site of linguistic and artistic entrapment. O' Brien notes that Marechera rejects "the path of insurgent linguistic nationalism…in the name of wider diasporic demos" (7), a rejection reflected in Marechera's abandonment of Shona as a

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language that has been contaminated by colonial ideology and as a carrier of nationalism: "Shona was part of the ghetto daemon I was trying to escape. Shona had been placed within the context of a degraded, mind-wrenching experience from which apparently the only escape was in English language and education" (4). Escape from the linguistically coded ghetto and the city as post-colonial nationalist construction raises aesthetic and political questions whose resolution is open-ended. Although Marechera is alert to what Walter Mignolo terms the "world-wide epistemic import" and "epistemic violence" of European imperial languages (207), he goes on to privilege English as the language of city. He claims that his use of English is experimental, "standing it on its head, brutalising it into a more malleable shape", and in the hyperbole of metaphor asserts he has "harrowing fights and hair-raising panga duels" with the language (" An Interview with himself" 2). In most of his texts the implied "intolerable wrestle with words" is not an attempt to make his work accessible to ordinary city residents. Marechera, as avant-garde writer, wants "to protest with Mayakovsky that the workers and peasants had to lift themselves up to the level of his poems" (52). In a gesture which makes linguistic and aesthetic concessions in response to demographic and ideological changes in the postcolonial city, in *Scrapiron Blues* Marechera experiments with new forms of writing. Without abandoning the major premises of his writing, he plays down the use of digressions, allusions, references and other echoes that I have described as literary ventriloquism.

Scrapiron Blues is an instance of Marechera's re-invention of his autobiographical self and his identity: he returns to the particularity of the postcolonial city of Harare without abandoning its cosmopolitan potential and the abiding insistence on the artist's right to the city. The city's promise of a cosmopolitan identity is reflected in its demographics in the first decade of independence. "Smith in Dead Skin" notes the varied origins of the Harare population ("They come from every conceivable hole on the ragged earth" 5) and in "Dream Wash Walls" Jane teaches at a school where "There are all kinds of colours among pupils" (6). Marechera insists on a cosmopolitan register of the city where racial boundaries are blurred. Fred, the teller of the pub stories, in the story sequence "Tony Fights Tonight - Pub Stories" remains an ambiguous figure as he looks like an eskimo (2). This ambivalence extends to sexual identities in the city that Marechera dramatizes in "Killwatch", a play about male homoeroticism that has been made taboo in Zimbabwean public discourse. In returning to the postcolonial city Marechera re-formulates his poetics of the city against a background of increasing fascism, philistinism, the poignancy of personal grief and a foreboding

prescience of his own death. The extract below, working with two different visions of the city, evokes the rapid transitions that occur between these two visions and that of the narrator's disintegrating body and mind:

> I am trying to grasp the kind of story that will take in the swimming-pool skin of the Harare skies, the slightly mocking darkness that underlies sunset's briefly glowing coals, before the black hand of anxiety clenches its darkness around the city. In the mind the roof rattles. The plaster comes down. And millions of tiny red ants slowly but inexorably creep through the egg-cracks into the sleeper's dreams.

This extract is a good example of Marechera's crossing of semiotic boundaries in an effort to find alternative ways of narrating a story, evoking mood, and combining thought and feeling. The meteorology of the city is captured through contrasts which reveal the writer's ambivalence regarding the city: the "swimming-pool skins of the Harare skies" and "the sunset's briefly glowing coals" come close to a celebration of the beauty of sun-city Harare. Painterly chiaroscuro, a play between light and dark colours, becomes a key technique in the stories that evoke the city as a space of "incarnation of a myriad transformations" (118) in sharply crafted images, like "A colourful tumult parading itself before the sun went down" (108), "a concertina of human movement in the glass-shot sunbeams of fantasy" (109), and "winter sunlight glinting off the automatic G3s of the guards far down the street" (112). Some of these vignettes of urban beauty appear in *Blackrain Timewhite & other poems*: "Pure sunlight / Turns into silver delight / The lakeslime surface of my day. / Moonlight / With luminous honeymilk dapples / This after-twilight serenity".

This poetic evocation comes from the city insider, despite the persistence of dystopian aspects that obtrude into the picture. Towards the end of his short writing career Marechera signals a shift from the iconoclasm that depicts the dystopian city. One aspect of Harare's dystopia is the haunting power of Chimurenga, Zimbabwe's Liberation War, subtly suggested by the image of winter sunlight glinting off the rifles of the guards. Marechera, who tries to come to terms with the violent origin of the Zimbabwean postcolonial state, describes the Chimurenga dream, in his characteristic vocabulary of dissidence, as a violent one. The stories, especially the five in "First Street Tumult–More City Stories" are in part about coming to terms with this war, an unreserved giving of the writer to the city and his faith in politics of the possible in the city.

Democratising the creative process that gestures towards a democratisation of city space. The eleven stories (all in *Scrapiron Blues*) "Tony Fights Tonight-Pub Stories", "Smith in Dead Skin", "Dreams Wash Walls", "The Power", "The Shining", "Babel", "What Available Reality", "Snakes in Tracksuits", "Riddled With Opium", "Description of the Universe", "The Pinpocketing Preacher" and "Decline and Fall" re-invent the persona of the writer as a more friendly and accessible "buddy" of the marginalised in the city. The average length of each story is not more than two pages and they are written in a very compressed style: the shortest, "The Pinpocketing Preacher", is just one page. This brevity is achieved through choosing titles that summarise each story and through the uncompromising pruning of many features of narrative. In the two strands of narration in the story sequence the writer makes no concessions to traditional African folktales or Western stories in the realist tradition: Marechera uses a minimalist, fragmentary, epigrammatic style reminiscent of the stories told by the narrator's father in *The House of Hunger* (97-101), giving a sense of continuity to the urban poetics that the writer had gestured to in that seminal text. The stories do minimise digression and the overload of metaphoric density characteristic of Marechera's writing: they tell a story swiftly and directly without losing the sense of mystery in the interplay of fact with various levels of the fictional.

The frame structure of the stories alternates the ribald tales of marital infidelity told by Fred, the irrepressible urban raconteur, with those of the writer/narrator, using complex intermeshed levels of fantasy and realism. This often happens in the Tony and Jane stories in which the actions of fictional characters impact on the lives of people living in the city: the writer/narrator enters the fictional world of his creation and the fictional creations become ordinary citizens in the city. In the concluding story in this sequence, "Decline and Fall", the writer says, "More than ever I sought out Fred and Jill night and day and with them, I roamed the town in search of stories and drunken oblivion" (28). This foregrounds the writer's aesthetic relationship with the city, in which Fred and Jill are not just characters but tropes used to imagine and perambulate the city. Fred and his girlfriend are pub-crawlers who accompany the writer in his tour of city pubs. Marriage, like politics in the postcolonial city, is characterised by infidelity: all men are cuckolds and all women are whores, a theme that runs through "The Skin of Time: Plays by Buddy". The ribaldry is obvious in "Snakes in Tracksuits", in which a mother refuses to acknowledge the obscene language that a child has picked up from the streets and uses it to disrupt the polite serenity of the dinner table. The thin plots of each of the three stories are brought to a swift but unexpected denouement while

retaining a sense of mystery that transforms the urban experience. Storytelling, like a flash of light, transforms the bar in "The Shining" ("the bar had come alive during the telling of the story", the panelled walls acquire "a sheen to them which had not been there before" 12) and in "Snakes in Tracksuits" the thick opaque beer miraculously turns into smooth nectar.

In all the three stories dealing with the lives of ordinary folk in the city the transformation provides a link to the world of Tony and Jane that for Marechera is at a higher level of fiction. "Dreams Wash Walls", "The Power", "Babel", "What Available Reality", "Riddled with Opium", "Description of the Universe" "The Pinpocketing Preacher" and "Decline and Fall" are stories about the entanglement of fictional worlds in the city. Marechera's image of concentric circles are eating each other or are being eaten brings out a different kind of connection that brings out a sense of insecurity. In "Dreams Wash Walls" and "The Power" Marechera portrays the deep entanglement of fictional and existential worlds. The writer stages the entanglement and inserts himself into it. Tony, a fictional creation of the writer and at the same time a persona of the writer, lives in a quiet flat in Montague with Jane, his girlfriend. Marechera gives a specific historical city location: Jane is a school teacher at a multi-racial school ("there are all kinds of colours among the pupils") and is marking her pupils' work as Tony washes walls. What appears to be a banal everyday experience is transformed by Jane's dreaming and Tony's washing of the walls "with a stiff brush, soap and bucket of water" (5). Jane's dreams erupt into her world of work-a-day reality in ways that make ordinary people doubt her sanity (6, 7). Jane's dreaming is the obverse of Tony's work of "trying to wash invisible blood from perfectly clean walls" (6). This is consistent with the imagery of gore and staining in *The House of Hunger* and elsewhere. Tony "scrubbing and washing the blood from the dead skin of time" resonates with Marechera's writing on trauma, the violence of writing, and the capacity of the imagination to link the present with pasts beyond the spatial limits of the writer's world, and with " the politics of aesthetics" as conceptualised by Jacques Rancière.

Rancière identifies a tension between what he describes as two opposed types of politics: "between the logic of art becoming life at the price of its self-elimination and the logic of getting involved in politics on the express condition of not having anything to do with it"(46). Marechera's writing on the city, particularly in *Scrapion Blues*, is characterised by this tension. In the other texts the emphasis is on (un)housing as escape from the city as it constrains identities. The Jonah complex, conveys the writer's fear of being swallowed up and losing individual autonomy. This fear does not disappear. In the short stories Marechera

tries to democratise the writing process and his vision of the city in several ways: by allowing more freedom in the conception and development of fictional characters, and collapsing the hierarchy of his aesthetic system which places the artist at the top, and by collapsing the boundaries that separate fictional city from the existential one

4. 5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the implications of the un-housing trope in Marechera's writing. Marechera adopts multiple transgressions as a strategy of "taking refuge from the literal strait-jackets" of his time (53). His work, like that of the numerous writers he cites, is an escape from the singularity and narrowness of any given city that carries scripts of gendered, ethnic and racial identities. This escape motif, which runs through all the texts examined in this chapter, opens the closed boundaries of the city. The un-housing in the city and of the city, I have argued, is not just an aberration of a quixotic imagination, but an important aesthetic project that has implications for the construction of a cosmopolitan sensibility. Marechera's writing swings between the two poles of the cosmopolitan and the local, as located in the city, and anticipates the attention given to these aspects of the city in the final chapter of this thesis. His attempts at democratising aesthetics and his concern for the marginalised finds a new articulation in writing by a new generation of writers.

CHAPTER 5:

WRITING WOMAN, THE LAND AND CITY IN YVONNE VERA'S FICTION

5. 1 Introduction

This chapter analyses Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* (1994), *Butterfly Burning* (1998) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002), foregrounding their writing of women in the city. Vera portrays women reconstructing the city, traversing various spaces that lead them to contest how they are restricted and figured in particular spaces and in the process remaking themselves. Vera's writing responds to what Elleke Boemher ("Transfiguring" 268) holds to be the widely discussed figure of a woman's body as silenced and wounded in postcolonial discourse. Boehmer asserts that postcolonial women's writing, a category in which I place Vera's novels, responds to this figuration of women as she radically rewrites the figuration of women in the male canon by signalling shifts from extreme female marginality to subjectivity, from voicelessness to voicing and from woundedness to recovery. I focus on the transfiguration that occurs when women travel to and find themselves in the city. The city, despite its colonial and postcolonial constraints, emerges in these three texts as a place that accommodates new ways of becoming. Sarah Nuttall signals an important shift in the reading of Vera's work from a critical attention on "its post-realist style, its articulation of women's voices and its engagement with questions of memory, space and trauma" to "the ways in which urban subjects and objects mutually constitute each other" ("Inside" 177). Although not discarding the earlier concerns with Vera's writing (which Nuttall considers to be over-emphasized), wherever possible I relocate these in the making of urban space and the urban subject.

I situate the three texts in their chronological order of publication in order to suggest a point of departure in rewriting city and woman in *Without a Name*, followed by a reading of *Butterfly Burning* as reaching the apex of women's self-inscription in the city, despite the severity of urban constraints in colonial Bulawayo. Finally I place *The Stone Virgins*, Vera's last novel, and one that is dominated by multi-directional connections, in the context of national atrocities, trauma, and the return of archaic. The novel evokes the city as spatially and temporally multi-layered, thus leading me to propose the trope of the palimpsest in the reading of Vera's fictional oeuvre and the city. Andreas Huyssen's theorises "cities and

buildings as palimpsests of space, monuments as transformable and transitory… as subject of the vicissitudes of time" (7). Both the city, as portrayed by Vera, and the literary text reveal the meshing of temporal and spatial layers.

The title of an historical text by Terence Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning*, captures the theme of "actual and metaphorical fires in colonial Bulawayo" (14) and reconstructs the historical struggles of laying claim to the city by the colonised. He uses the metaphor of fire to describe the various conflagrations that are part of the ruination and re-construction of the city. The title of the Ranger text echoes Vera's portrayal of the city in *Butterfly Burning*. Early in the novel there is a description of a "cloud of violent and impeccable flame" (21) that engulfs workers working on an oil tank. This fire brings the township children in close contact with the violence of the colonial city. This scene prefigures Phephelaphi's self-immolation by fire in "a spectacle of severe horror" (148) in the final chapter of the novel. In *The Stone Virgins*, a novel that continues Vera's portrayal of Bulawayo, although it does not deal directly with the city, fires are evoked to write the horrific killing of Mahlathini (123). Sibaso, whose name means "fire" or "flame", and his crater hideout, bring out the metaphorical conflagrations that affect people in all spaces. I read these fires as indexes of what Huyssens terms "the vicissitudes of time" and the effects of violence in the endless process of ruination and re-creation, where the persistence of traces of the former city and of the emergent or future city are already fairly discernible.

Vera's writing is attentive to the persistence of traces in imagining the city. These traces are of two types, colonial and pre-colonial, and shape emerging gendered identities in the city. Ann Stoler, writing on imperial ruins, conceives traces as "more protracted imperial processes that saturate the subsoil of people's lives and persist, sometimes subjacently, over a longer durée" (192). I read the city and the urban subject as layered and saturated in their contemporary formations by ruins or remnants of the past. The importance of this element is given prominence by Beasley-Murray's conceptualisation of ruins as "the site of what we have left behind" that remains "front and centre" (213). In Vera's novels, especially *Without a Name* and *The Stone Virgins*, traces of gender and power regimes associated with the past are constantly resurfacing to shape characters. I link this thinking about ruins with Achille Mbembe's expansion of his theorisation in which he conceives of the colony as "guilty secret and accursed share" (29). The city, through time travel and movements across its grids that mark racial enclaves, thus becomes a place of entanglement: the becoming of the colonized woman and subject does not always follow an unproblematic linear trajectory as it exhibits

the ruins of its pasts through the palimpsest. Female fictional characters, despite their temporal placement in postcolonial modernity, may find themselves, as in *The Stone Virgins*, metaphorically and literally regressing to sites that they have left behind.

In addition Vera deploys other tropes of travel, music and writing to offer fresh theoretical insights into the feminist and postcolonial project of writing woman as subject and as citizen. A common element to all these tropes are various forms of (im)mobility that find Vera's characters travelling across temporal and spatial boundaries or getting trapped in historically situated spaces. Travel and its related tropes subvert normative concepts of space and gender that form part of "the political economy of the colony … obsessed with the mobility of indigenous people" (Barnes 586). This obsession, Barnes observes, was riddled with contradictions, especially in the case of the movement of black women, as the colonial government vacillated between working with and against the traditional black patriarchy in the control of black women. For women characters in the three texts by Vera, movement from rural enclaves like Mhondoro and Kezi signals both escape from the grasp of a conservative patriarchy and the freedom to be found in the emerging social classes and cultures in the city. Although mobility suggests an ongoing process of becoming, it does not always herald a life without complications for Vera's female protagonists. These protagonists are women in flight with no definable destinations, women in the grip of a desire for escape from the land and from all entrapping spaces. Each heroine's life is an instantiation of a Deulezian nomadism that disavows fixity. Mazvita (in *Without a Name*) and Nonceba (in *The Stone Virgins*) escape from the country, a privileged site for the nationalist figuration of woman and the nation in both the colony and postcolony. Travel, though not necessarily limited to diasporic contexts, allows me to adopt Homi Bhabha's rejection of a theory and aesthetics of oppositionality that characterises traditional postcolonial theory, and to pay particular attention to his positing of the concept of hybridity as occurring in "third space" that "displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (in Rutherford 211).

In these interconnections of figuration, space, and gender I want to insert the writing-gender connection as an important dynamic of the palimpsest. I argue here that the land and the city, as portrayed in African literature, particularly in its Zimbabwean version, produce writing and gender differently. I associate texts that celebrate the land as the locus of nationalism and autochthony mainly with first- and second-generation male writers, though

current developments in Zimbabwean literature show the persistence of an unreconstructed classical nationalist figuration of women (see Stanlake Samkange and Solomon Mutswairo) . These texts are implicated in strategies in which "women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit" (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 90).) In addition to the above function, one finds a nationalist figuring of women as reproducers of the national subject, transmitters of the national culture, signifiers of national difference and participants in gender-prescribed nationalist struggles. Florence Stratton's (1994) provocative feminist re-reading of canonical male-authored texts in the African literary tradition exposes a startling similarity between the anti-colonial African writers and the imperial writers in their figuration of the African woman. This leads African women writers to write back simultaneously to both colonial authors and male African writers in subversions of both racial and gender hegemony. Elsewhere I argue that Vera writes over male nationalist and white feminist layers to revision archives (Muchemwa 280). I suggest this re-visioning in the context of migration from the village to the city in which Vera's texts reconfigure both women and space. No longer viewing the city as a threat to woman, the writer displaces her female fictional characters from the land and its tyrannical hold on them, and physically and symbolically locates them in the city with its transitional spaces where they invert every aspect of the nationalist figuration of women. This inversion is found in the refusal by Vera's female fictional characters to participate in the biological replication of the national collectivity by either rejecting motherhood or by problematizing it by choosing prostitute identities or motherhood that escapes the trap of patriarchal constructions. Desire in Vera's fiction includes and exceeds the Freudian limitation of Eros. Vera's novels, especially *Without a Name*, *Butterfly Burning* and *The Stone Virgins*, are the first narratives of female desire in Zimbabwean literature and of the way masculinity seeks to define this. In all the novels the women are initially present as passive objects of male desire. The nomadic imperative in these texts rejects limits set on sexual desire and goes on to reject the sexual as the limit of female subjectivity

I read this city writing through Rosi Braidotti's lens of "an intensive genre of becoming" (45), which she applies in her analysis of Virginia Woolf's fiction. Like Virginia Woolf, Vera (re)imagines the city in order to demythologize the colonial and postcolonial subject in nationalist narrations of the nation as male and monolithic. Anne M. Cronin and Liz Oakley-Brown, writing on feminist (re)imaginings of the city, view this as a way "different genres, or modes of mediation, produce particular ways of conceptualising the city

and enable certain possibilities for thinking about gender and sexuality" (1). Vera feminises the Zimbabwean literary canon as she makes it urban. The female characters in Vera's novels are nomadic women whose mobility is an index of their becoming. Nomadism radicalises Vera's re-writing of the Zimbabwean woman in the city as she subverts "language secured and structured by categories, binaries and hierarchies" (Braidotti 280). Braidotti's concept of the nomadic subject surfaces in Vera's writing and dismantles essentialist notions of the gendered subject and subverts structures that sustain gender hierarchies and exclusions. Although the colonial city is depicted in Vera's fiction as a site of exclusion, it is also a place of contradiction in that in as much as it represses it also frees new formations. Vera's fictional characters' struggle for freedom is played out in their negotiation of their individuality in the context of the family. The marginality of these characters is emphasized by their determined subversions of the family as a site for the figuration of women. Prostitutes, murderesses, abortionists, shebeen queens, single mothers, nomads, dissidents, and social outcasts in general – all coming from the margins (a feature of black Southern African urban belonging) – are associated with Vera's re-imagining of the city. Both Mazvita in *Without a Name* and Nonceba in *The Stone Virgins* experience the city from a position of triple marginality – as women, outsiders and blacks coming into the city. These marginal characters allow the writer to propose the unthinkable other as a subject in fiction, as constantly subverting prescriptive notions of gender and as sustaining the burden of exorbitant desire. In the city's motion and in their ceaseless journeys, nomadic ex-centric characters celebrate the "provisional and the contingent" (Pierre 280). In aesthetic terms the city becomes the ideal arena for becoming and for Vera's radical agenda of reconfiguring the Zimbabwean literary canon, as well as refiguring woman and re-thinking gender, race and ethnicity.

We have seen how Doris Lessing in the *Children of Violence* series writes about the white colonial flâneuse, Martha Quest, and the gendered and racial spaces of the settler city of Salisbury (now Harare) in which black women are invisible because of colonial controls and the restrictions of black patriarchy; where they appear they are portrayed as iconic figures of an unknown and unknowable indigenous womanhood. In *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue*, *Butterfly Burning* and *The Stone Virgins*, Vera gives the colonised woman visibility, mobility, voice and agency. In novels by the first generation of Zimbabwean writers, focusing on the liberation struggle narrative, authority, heroism and power are accorded to men while women are represented as mere tropes, lacking agency. These novels are preoccupied with an

aesthetics of the land as a site of autochthonic belonging, and with narrating the nation as an arena of heroic exploits. The city frees women from their figuration as "signifiers of moral purity and sexual innocence" (Nash 45) and from their exclusion from national narratives This freeing reveals the unnarrated aspects of the nationalist figuration of woman by presenting the land as a site of loss, dominated by rape, murder, mutilation, arson and the silencing of the marginalised, especially in *Without a Name* and *The Stone Virgins*. The texts also portray the land as site of severe limitations that constrain the expression of female desire. In exploring the subtle ways in which the female subjectivity is shaped by geography and history, Vera novels radically transform the topography of motivation and causality in Zimbabwean fiction by introducing nomadic women characters with exorbitant desire. This desire, an excess that cannot be contained, defines these women characters who push against and transgress the boundaries of tradition, race, ethnicity and the nation – for example the Gumede sisters in *The Stone Virgins* and Zandile and Gertrude in *Butterfly Burning*. Although it includes the erotic, this exorbitance is an articulation of a quest for strategies for transcending the self in the context of the boundaries set by patriarchy. The women characters who are impelled by this excessive desire are those who are low down in the hierarchy of the Zimbabwean nationalist moral economy – single mothers, prostitutes, and women who generally avoid matrimony. I argue that, despite the various impediments to women's freedom, female desire is only made possible in the city. City space, despite the opacity, exclusion, and violence so graphically captured in the texts, is the home of a nomadism that authorises an aesthetics and politics of re-inscription and resistance. Some of the motifs that recur in Vera's fiction like those of voice, deportment, dress, body beauty, music and dance appear in *Butterfly Burning*. The city becomes an arena of transgression and theatricality gesturing towards the emergent, an inchoate entity whose future shape cannot yet be fully envisaged.

I want to reiterate the connection between genre and gender to emphasise how the re-location of the archive to the city rescues both writing and gender from the essentialising strategies embedded in the male Zimbabwean literary canon. I restrict the meaning of genre to particular ways of literary mediation that develop from an understanding of the fact that "genres are storehouses of cultural knowledge and possibility" (Seitel 279) in the inauguration of writing by women and the constitution of subjectivity. I read Vera's relocation of the Zimbabwean postcolonial text to the city as a way of opening up new forms of knowledge and new aesthetic values. Entry into the city acquires significance in Vera's

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writing as women characters lay special claim to the city and subvert the epistemologies and aesthetics that subtend both nationalist and colonial patriarchy. The city, despite its constraints, offers opportunities for creating new knowledge and new ways of self-realisation. Terence Ranger, who writes on the social history of Bulawayo and is inspired by Vera's novel, views the presence of women in the city as "the gendering of the urban landscape" (69) and "the feminization of township culture" (173), processes that are reflected in both *Butterfly Burning* and *The Stone Virgins*.

I analyse the importance of place in Vera's fiction in the context of Edward Said's comments on the "interplay between geography, memory, and invention" (182) in constructions of nation and identity. I link this geography of becoming to what happens when characters move from or get trapped in specific geographies in the context of the rural-urban dynamic. Although Vera portrays the city as an arena of black urban modernity, her writing also evokes the precariousness of black urban life. The difference that she brings to imagining the city in Zimbabwean literature lies in her rewriting of migration narratives in which women, children and the old are left behind. In her handling of the migration-to-the-city narrative, the male migrant labourer is no longer the focus of attention. In *Without a Name* it is Nyenyedzi, Mazvita's lover at the farm, who is left behind as Vera's fiction, with key aesthetic, ontological and political implications, inserts women into this rural-urban migration narrative and re-genders the city, Deborah Parsons (215), writing on Doris Lessing's *The Four Gated City*, places her within a "fictional code of women writers who counter women's historical exclusion from the city"; she argues that in Lessing's fiction "women have greater connective relationships with the city than men". Consciously writing back to Lessing through tropes of music, the train and water, Vera retraces this code as she portrays black women characters who are more at home in the city than their men are.

In the interests of unlocking doors to a multiplicity of unheard narratives in *Butterfly Burning*, Vera chooses to relocate her city focus from Harare to Bulawayo, the city in the South-west of Zimbabwe. She establishes parallels between the two cities in terms of literary and historical symbols and motifs to challenge ethnic narratives of gender and the nation emanating from the single location of Harare, which are often presented as univocal and homogenous. To deepen and complicate this relocation Vera presents Bulawayo and the adjacent rural enclave of Kezi in *The Stone Virgins* in an intricate inter-relationship in which both are temporal and spatial palimpsests offering complex explorations of the gendered, racial and ethnic subject. The intertextual references point to her own text, *Without a Name*,

and to Doris Lessing's novels and short stories dealing with Salisbury as the colonial city on the veld. Vera sets her narrative in the 1940s – the same period used as historical context for Lessing's fiction – and inserts black women into narratives of the city and nation alongside those of men, replicating but re-gendering the same historical events that mark the violence of settler colonialism. Vera returns to aspects of the colonial city that Lessing dealt with in her fiction – racial apartheid and constrained black mobility in the city, the invisibility and silence of the black woman in the city, the power of music and travel tropes, motherhood in iconographies of the city and land – to capture, through her focalized narration, the perspective of the marginalized black woman.

5.2 Endless journeys in *Without a Name*

In *Without a Name Vera* returns to the colonial city of Salisbury that Doris Lessing had written about in her *Children of Violence* novels, adding in the process the adjacent communal area of Mhondoro in a manoeuvre that replies to a white feminist aesthetic of another era and sets a radical agenda for writing in Zimbabwe. *Without a Name* is framed in its opening chapter by a raped young woman who is fleeing from a burning Mhondoro village and from the scene of her violation, and in the concluding chapter by her return to the ruins of the village and the scene of her rape. That journey is marked by three encounters with three men: the unnamed rapist; Nyenyedzi, a worker at tobacco farm who has a brief affair with Mazvita; and Joel, Mazvita's city lover. Each of the three men represents a type of masculinity that Mazvita finds either abhorrent or unsuited to the construction of new gender relations. The text withholds the identity of the armed man who rapes Mazvita during Zimbabwe's war of liberation, although Boehmer ("Beside" 176) and Felicity Palmer (31) read the rapist as a freedom fighter, taking their cue from the writer's words in an interview with Eva Hunter (79). The text reserves its ambiguity on this matter despite the author's post-writing claim. This ambiguity, also expressed in the withholding of the identity of the perpetrators who burn the village, reflects Vera's refusal to attribute violence to a specific group or historical period. I read the burnt village in the context of the ruination of traditional African archives and imaginaries by both settler and liberation armies, as this sets the stage for the motifs of flight, renaming and rewriting.

Without a Name tells, through the story of Mazvita, the predicament of women and girls who "found themselves squeezed between a repressive colonial government and

coercive nationalist guerrilla armies" and their (i.e. the women's) flight to the city (Chadya 25). Mazvita escapes the village in ruins, by making a detour through a commercial farm, and seeks refuge in the city. At the tobacco farm she meets and falls in love with Nyenyedzi who presumes to educate her desire. He reveals that his passion for the land complicates heterosexual desire. Mazvita in turn resists the invitation to share this love for the land and leaves for Harare. When she arrives in Harare she is already pregnant, but it is not clear whether it is Nyenyedzi or the rapist gunman who has impregnated her. The pregnancy, apart from representing the violence of rape, also represents Vera's ambivalence regarding motherhood, noted by Carolyn Martin Shaw (35). After giving birth Mazvita commits infanticide and goes back to the village carrying the dead weight of her baby on her back. (I explain this return migration in a novel that inaugurates Vera's city writing later in this chapter.) Like her fictional counterparts in *Butterfly Burning*, Mazvita finds motherhood a constraint on her desire for freedom. Helen Cousins (21) discusses how the "barrenness, abortion and infanticide" matrix in Vera's novels works to inscribe womanhood in ways that are not sanctioned by patriarchy. This section, while adopting this matrix in a new register for scripting of new forms of womanhood during a problematic political transition, will depart from the anthropological limitations found in Van Gennep and Turner's "rites of passage", which are based on the assumption that society is in control of all the three stages of the rites of passage – 'separation', 'transition', 'incorporation' – and that the outcome ensures the integration of the initiate and society's continuity and stability. In Vera's novels characters, on the margins and often against society, are constantly negotiating these stages, which are represented as unknown and unpredictable. Although rites of passage "build[s] upon fundamental biological events such as birth, adolescence, parenthood, death" (Berndt, "State of Transition" 19), the novel negates any normative structuring of these events. *Without a Name* is attentive to interlinked personal and public transitions that are signposted in the novel: the transition from girlhood into womanhood; the movement from the village to the city and back again; and the ambiguous transition that war provokes. These transitions suggest different interpellations of the subjectivity of women at the height of Zimbabwe's second war of Liberation. Vera departs from the official narrative of heroism associated with the war by writing about the personal experience of the war from the perspective of the un-narrated and excluded. This explains her abandonment of the figuration of the land as a site of autochthony, nationalism and iconic womanhood, represented by Nehanda, the heroine of the 1896 struggle against colonialism. In her novel *Nehanda* Vera extricates this figure from the limitations of a patriarchal nationalist imagination. On the import of this departure from

the official narrative of the Liberation War, Vera says (in an interview) that *Without a Name* tries to "understand what this conflict is and to pursue some redefining of our consciousness towards land in this postcolonial stage and to find out new directions which might offer us better possibilities for freeing ourselves" (Bryce 80).

For Mazvita the land is a place of ambiguity. As she walks down to the river she is enveloped up to her shoulders by a thick mist that hides the armed man who pulls her down and rapes her. In subversions of idyllic land cartographies, the mist image symbolises the land's opacity that is a product of both colonialism and the war of liberation. Viewing the land as ambiguous and connecting the rapist to it ("He had grown from the land" 31), Mazvita views the land as threatening and unhomely: it becomes a source of a deeply disturbing authorisation of gender violence. The land, here and in *The Stone Virgins*, is deployed as a setting that works against the interests of women and against alternative ways of becoming and introduces a troubling twist to the nationalist "son of the soil" mantra. Mazvita associates the sons of the soil in the novel with violence. Though Nyenyedzi tries to redeem the land and restore it, through endorsing the discourse of nationalism and autochthonic patrimony, the village has been burnt to the ground and the inequities of settler commercialised farming have compromised and complicated what the land stands for. The choices that are offered in the novel are to escape the land or join the guerrilla army. Nyenyedzi, who fears "untried absences" (39) from the land, prefers neither. This fear of dislocation shows how patriarchy, in whatever form, finds it difficult to reconstruct itself. The novel figuring Mazvita as mushroom, a powerful symbol of fragile feminine beauty, whose vulnerability suggests the possibility of violence, domination and possession, Nyenyedzi cannot offer Mazvita a new vision of womanhood as he continues to possess the power to name. He associates departure from the iconic space of the land, where the mushroom image flourishes, with betrayal (32). Declining Nyenyedzi's invitation stay on the land, Mazvita introduces the discourse of the city in the context of the war ravaging the country during the 1970s: "We must go to the city and live there. I don't know if we are safe even in this place. The war is everywhere. It is said there is no war there. Freedom has already arrived" (24).

Wartime migration by women to the city radically changed the gender composition of the city (Chadya) and the dynamics of its gender politics. However, the colonial city of the late 1970s is not an unproblematic haven for rural women in distress. It is a place of ambivalence offering ambiguous transitions, pyrrhic victories and reversals in ways that will

be examined below in the context of reformulations and continuities in patriarchy, urban capitalist aesthetics, and the uncertainties associated with war.

While still on the tobacco farm, Mazvita expresses an outsider's idealised view of Harare as a "perfect place to begin" where one can "forget anything" (24) Mazvita, more than any other of Vera's fictional characters, is obsessed with beginnings and with forgetting. She wants to forget the rapist's "whispering carried in her ears" (25) and "how the sky exploded as the village beyond the river burnt" (25), aspects that subvert the narrative of ordeal associated with the land that Vera had embraced in her first novel, *Nehanda*.

When Mazvita arrives in the Harare of the late 1970s, "unprotected, ready to be injured" (45), yet feeling "she was protected from the hills and the land" (55), she believes "in the transformation new geographies promised and allowed" (55). She is disabused of this optimism as the city is not readily accessible to her. She fails to secure a job in the "smoke-filled industrial areas" (58) because of gender discrimination. This leads her to contest the gendering of employment in a city that sees black women as maids ("she had not come to the city simply to nurse the children of strangers" [58]). This contestation elevates her story from that of refuge in the city to one that makes larger claims for women's place in both the city and the nation. In seeking a woman's place in the city, Mazvita embarks on the urban politics of identity and a woman's right to the city ("She had to find a voice with which to speak, without trying to hide from herself" [58]). She believes that both self-identity and right to the city are possible when she finds her version of the city ("Mazvita had to find her Salisbury 58), but her quest yields little success. Although her immediate apprehension of Harare as she co-habits with Joel is that it frees them from tradition ("Rituals were not liveable in Harare, so they forgot about them and created empty spaces in which they wandered aimlessly" [50]), the cultural and subjective terrain the two lovers navigate does not offer secure beginnings.

The terrain as portrayed through Joel's version of the city is a derivative one, retrieved from the dump of the white city. A copy of the magazine *Scope* and a torn copy of a James Hadley Chase novel make up the library of township residents like Joel. This version of the city as represented by Joel's library can neither contain nor express her desire. This partially explains Mazvita's return to the burnt village. In using the word "desire" here I do not limit it to the erotic but locate it in the larger yearning for new and as yet unexpressed ways of becoming that I describe as exorbitant desire. Mazvita becomes a woman in abeyance whose journey of becoming has just begun. This becoming comes from some of the

city's visual and sonic aspects that manufacture new desires and complicate her quest. Its billboards and radio jingles, represented by the catch phrase Nyore Nyore, extol the pleasures of consumerism and embedded commoditized identities, and offer an exaggerated and illusory version of the city. The Harare of 1977, like T.S. Eliot's unreal city of *The Wasteland*, is a city of the living dead, ghosts without substance, who are in contradictory ways free. The false freedom offered by capitalism enslaves black city residents of Salisbury to body aesthetics of self-hatred as they "danced an enviable kind of self-mutilation" (26), "their faces perpetually perplexed" (27). The writer uses language that evokes a disgust for characters that is rarely found in Vera's prose. Her language, ever so empathetic (see Musila) that sometimes it comes close to expressing compassion for even the most heinous perpetrator, recovers beauty in the most uncongenial of settings. The Ambi Generation lacks this empathetic quality. Instead in the emphasis of Fanon's "corporeal malediction" that this generation shows and the smell of burning skin in Salisbury streets in 1977 Vera writing comes close to validating the nativist view on autochthonic identity as threatened by the city. She links this false aesthetics to a collective forgetting of the past and an erasure of nationalist consciousness, expressed as "an ill and silenced song" (27).

The "silenced song" is mocked by the city's obsession with facile fashion statements of revolutionary solidarity ("people walked into shops and bought revolution "; "Everyone was an over-clad and spearless revolutionary" [47]). However ludicrous and destructive women's adoption of western beauty aesthetics is (as "women picked their colours from a burning sun, from the lips of white women" and "its location in "mimicry and death" [62]), Vera associates this with carnivalesque. City women conjure "freedom from chaos" as they "offered their bodies as a ransom for their land, their departed men, their corrupted rituals of birth" (63). This sacrificial dimension foreshadows the sacrifice in *The Stone Virgins*.

Mazvita returns to the burnt village, the scene of her trauma, not just because she has realised the inadequacies of the colonial city in transforming gendered lives, but because she needs to return the dead weight on her back to where it belongs. The infanticide that she commits, prompted in part by Joel's rejection of the baby, is a symbolic slaying of rituals, motherhood and traditional notions of sexuality that limit female desire. The ground-zero landscape at the end of the novel becomes a site of mourning, memory and re-scripting. Mazvita returns home to mourn the war dead and bury her baby and the archive that has allowed female sexuality and desire to be controlled by men. Her return signals another beginning for her.

5.3 New Woman in the City: Gender in *Butterfly Burning*

In *Butterfly Burning*, the most urban of all her published novels, Vera represents Bulawayo as a city of women, a feminization given ex post facto validation in Terence Ranger's *Bulawayo Burning*. It does not, like *Without a Name* and *The Stone Virgins*, dwell on the significance of a woman's journey to the city but celebrates her urban presence. Women are no longer outsiders coming in, but insiders who contribute significantly to the making of the city. The novel thus subverts the discourse of colonial urban space as male and white by portraying women's presence at the very emergence of the colonial city of Bulawayo. The novel focuses on the intersecting biographies of four women, Phephelaphi, Zandile, Deliwe and Gertrude, and one man, Fumbatha, who live in the slum of Makokoba in colonial Bulawayo of the late 1940s. The four women are each engaged in the struggle of (re)creating themselves and the city. They are driven by the desire to be a new woman, one who differs from the stereotypes of women found in male fiction and in the Zimbabwean nationalist narrative (this figures women as symbols of the nation while egregiously abusing them in both the domestic and public spheres). This nationalist narrative deploys Nehanda as a symbol of the nation and its patriotic struggles and produces men like Mazvita's anonymous rapist in *Without a Name*, or like Sibaso, who kills Thenjiwe and rapes Nonceba in *The Stone Virgins*, or like the father who rapes his own daughter in *Under the Tongue*. In my examination of the figuration of the new woman in *Butterfly Burning* I focus on how the novel complicates notions of motherhood, the struggle for the right to the city, metaphors of travel, music and the use of the play element.

Motherhood, in the context of both monogamy and polygamy, as one of the notions that underpin traditional patriarchy, is problematised. All the women characters in the novel subvert traditional conceptions of motherhood, attesting to the city's capacity to rework tradition. Zandile, the biological mother of Phephalaphi, sees child-rearing as an impediment to her freedom. She dumps her child on her friend, Gertrude. Zandile "wants to be remembered, if for nothing else at least for her poise, her voice and liberty" (38) and is "willing to try rising, and [is] forever falling down"; she exemplifies a search for gender freedom from the constraints of tradition. For Zandile this freedom entails control over her sexuality as she "makes no distinction between white men and black men" (40). Later on she abandons "the night parades" and foregoes "the glory of waking up in the early hours to

examine the face beside her own" (41) opting to be with one man, Boyidi. Her friend is no model mother-figure either as she "brought a baby strapped to her back to every possible appointment with every possible male stranger" (42). Deliwe, the shebeen queen, portrayed as a figure of resistance for her hatred of black policemen because "they push women into police vans and lead dogs salivating for black blood" (59), takes Fumbatha from Phephelaphi, thus tainting her image as a mother figure.

The fictive refiguration of woman, noted in *Without a Name*, initiates Vera's writing on woman in the city. *Butterfly Burning* abandons the ideologically risky self-stylization of the Ambi Generation to explore alternative modes of self-making that are offered by the city. The text does not, however, describe city space as utopian since blacks, using various tactics of survival, learn to "live within the cracks" (6). Some of these tactics are to walk in the city "unnoticed and unnoticeable" and "without making the shadow more pronounced than the body or the body clearer than the shadow" (6). In response to the crude pavement law of the colonial city, blacks "vanish", "slide" and "crawl" (6). Colonial Bulawayo is imagined as a city of racial exclusion and exploitation whose cartography contorts the bodies of the excluded and determines the horizons of their lives: "They understand something about limits and the desire that this builds in the body" (6-7).

The dystopian nature of the city becomes more pronounced in the architecture of the colonial slum of Makokoba, one of whose streets, Sidojiwe E2, "is fresh with all kinds of desperate wounds" (6). This allows Vera to depict Bulawayo as a wounded city. The scar motif extends to the landscape, links communities, and connects specific characters in the story – Zandile, Boyidi, Gertrude, Phephelaphi and Fumbatha. Writing becomes a way of re-imagining Bulawayo (no longer a slum) in a representation that recuperates voice and history. The recuperation takes place through attending to Andrew Scheiber's concept of the city as a place of theatricality and urban lives as "subject to self-stylization" (477).

Vera's *Butterfly Burning* celebrates Bulawayo of the 1940s, notwithstanding "the processes of labour, self-mutilation and alienation", as an arena of theatricality for both men and women. The first chapter of the novel foregrounds the theatrical: "They play a refrain on handmade guitars" (2). This becomes an important motif, associated with self-styling and music's "curing harmony" (5). The various kinds of self-styling depicted provide ways of "masking reality" (6) that hide and reveal at the same time. I want to read the performance of this theatricality in the form of music and dress as a key element of Quentin Stevens' concept

of the ludic city where the play element is critical in the configuration of public space. He argues that play "is subversive of social order and the mythologies which sustain it" and provides "opportunities… to unravel the mythic from within" (24). Kaiser, writing on the play element in the Victorian world, conceives the ludic in poetic terms ("play as the surfer and the wave: a dance atop the collapsing roof of the knowable" [118]); this captures the exhilarating and unpredictable aspect of self-fashioning that I find in Vera's novel as she choreographs her characters' intricate dance through life. In the cracks and the interstices of the colonial city Vera's women characters are players who push the boundaries of gender and the subjectivity.

Fashion, music, and body aesthetics feature prominently in Vera's evocation of the ludic city. Women, children, and migrant workers embrace the ludic as a way of escaping the harsh ugliness of the colonial slum and contesting exclusion from the city, constructed as white, making life both an aesthetic and a political project. Each of the twenty-one chapters of the novel is dedicated to a particular aspect of the city or a particular character in a way that brings out a facet of the city. Chapters 1 (1-8) and 8 (51-58) contextualize the biographies of the fictional characters while at the same time portraying the city as a dynamic entity and an assemblage of life stories that counter "improper histories" (8) that are materialised in exotic eucalyptus trees. The text exposes here the theme of literary and political ecologies that are central to Vera's writing; their hierarchies of exclusion silently omit blacks and women from the city proper. This section reads the emergent in the context of characters' articulation of desire along the circuits of bodies, sex, dress, music, and travel. The text's focus is on "the city and the pulse of possessing desire" (8) against a backdrop of the sanitary lane that "carries the secrecy and stench which envelopes the waste of every character" (9).

Aspects of Vera's writing that attract critical attention are trauma, rape, genocide, voice and narrative authority. Attention to these often clouds the significance of the play element, an aspect children share with the very conscious self-stylization of adults. While not shifting away the feminist concerns in the texts, the ludic perspective broadens an understanding of the politics of resistance and subjectivity in the city. The children of Sidojiwe E2 who watch cars pass along Jukwa Road exemplify a ludic aspect as they "find rainbows" (16) in spaces of extreme deprivation, death and violence that make up the "capricious reality" of subaltern colonial urbanity. Play, apart from providing a shield against harsh reality, allows the inhabitants of the city to forge an aesthetic from the dump of colonial

modernity – "handmade guitars" (3), the melody from empty bottles and "guitars made out of empty, battered cases of Olivine Cooking Oil" (17). This is part of Kwela music, which has now come to define the city from a subaltern perspective and is associated with resistance. Along the road where they witness a horrific conflagration that incinerates workers, children mimic a life of privilege from which they are excluded: "[they] dangle their arms from imaginary car windows, stagger and stare, whistle and beckon" (18). Making do with very little and often with the discarded objects of colonial modernity, the children use play as both a way of "masking reality" and mocking it. Mimicry, suggesting the provisional and the contingent, simultaneously tames and mocks the settler as it signals the desire to be part of settler modernity. Migrant miners import a transnational theatricality to stage new language, fashion, music and identities in the city.

Deliwe, Gertrude and Zandile are not chained by marriage or custom and the city provides them space to express female desire, despite colonial restrictions in the city. Zandile rejects the motherhood-sexuality connection offered in normative heterosexuality, as defined by patriarchy, by offloading the burden of bringing up her child on her friend Gertrude: "She needed lightness. That is what the city offered, not the burden of becoming a mother" (143-144). Although suggesting a new kind of sexuality in the city, Zandile's desire is more than this and she has no language to articulate it: "opportunity has taken too long and is buried too far in the future. She has no shape of it she can retrieve and so she feels it more useful to search through the void" (39). Female desire seems to crystallize in the figure of Phephelaphi, an embodiment of exquisite female beauty in search of self-creation in the city – a search, however, that has tragic consequences. She is described as "a woman who chose her destinations and liked to watch the horizon change from pale morning to blue light" (63). Her desire is "a wailing hurt, gathering there like a spring, because there was a longing there, burning" (75). This embodied desire includes and goes beyond Fumbatha: like her biological mother, "She wanted to do something but had no idea what it could be, what shape it offered in the future" (75).

In its inchoate shape, desire is linked to the body, but transcends it, and finds articulation in various forms. Chapter 11 of the novel contains a serenade to Phephelaphi by migrant miners from Johannesburg who celebrate her beauty in Deliwe's shebeen. Phephelaphi's exquisite beauty is layered as it includes clothes and skin. In a transgressive exfoliation of these layers she sets herself on fire to get to this buried hurt, going beyond the limits travelled by her mother figures (Zandile, Gertrude and Deliwe) in the novel. In un-

doing the layers of her body, Phephelaphi enacts the creation-destruction dynamic of the city in which the everyday lives of its inhabitants are celebrated but never recovered once they are lost. In this regard *Butterfly Burning* in the paradox of its title captures a celebration of the fragile intense beauty of a particular city life and the mourning of its destruction. *The Stone Virgins* continues to present this paradox in the lives of two young village women as it offers some fragile hope in redeeming connections. City connections rescue Nonceba from the horror of war and the city becomes a haven for convalescence and re-construction in the shrinking possibilities of the postcolonial nation.

5.4   The city and its connections in the *The Stone Virgins*

The Stone Virgins is about two nubile sisters, Thenjiwe and Nonceba, in rural Kezi who instead of being offered in marriage become, like the stone virgins in the Khoisan painting in Mbele Cave, sacrificial victims – sacrificed and petrified by patriarchal power. The sisters encounter strangers who bring unforeseen and dramatic changes in their lives: Cephas Dube, an archivist with the National Museum, and Sibaso, an ex-guerrilla fighter and dissident soldier. Thenjiwe, the elder sister meets Cephas Dube, a city man who originates from the eastern part of the country. After a brief but intense love affair the man returns to Bulawayo. After Cephas Dube's return to the city, Sibaso, a man who has been made homeless by the city, comes to Kezi where he meets the two sisters. Sibaso's decapitation of Thenjiwe lacks a clear motive, perhaps pointing to the irrationalities of war and the gratuitousness of its violence. Sibaso proceeds to rape and mutilate Nonceba who later on is taken to Bulawayo where Cephas Dube sets out to restore her body and voice while simultaneously working on the project of the restoration of Lobengula's city (burnt to ashes in 1893).

The title of this sub-section arises out of my reading of *The Stone Virgins* as a novel of flows, the (dis)connections within and between the country and the city on one hand , and the past and the present on the other (not that other novels by the author do not attend to this aspect). These features are present in other novels, as seen in the music, train, and water motifs of *Butterfly Burning* and the journeying in *Without a Name*, but not in the particular way in which *The Stone Virgins* foregrounds the roads as arteries giving life to the city. Ashleigh Harris reads the opening of *The Stone Virgins* as "narrative mapping of the city". Sarah Nuttall also observes the novel's "intense engagement with roads and street spaces", asserting that spaces "in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe have always been highly symbolic and

contested" (187). Streets are named after men involved in Cecil John Rhodes's project of expanding his commercial empire through his British South Africa Company (BSAC); streets are also named after English poets as part of the symbolic inscription of conquest and expropriation by settlers. Selborne Avenue is portrayed as part of Rhodes's imperial Great North Road and the vista it offers is imperial. The mapping of the city reflects this imperial dominance. Lobengula Street marks the boundary between the black township of Makokoba and the city of Bulawayo, and like the road from Kezi, has not been given sufficient attention. Described as "the last road before you touch Fort Street and penetrate the city" (6), it marks the zone of engagement between the township and the city. Township residents cross this boundary to experience city life that is largely confined to the pavement, the *ekoneni* ('street corner') underground architectures of the city and the photographic studio. Although Nuttall and Paci (2012) argue convincingly for a consideration of the importance of things and the materiality of the city in Vera's texts, I want to focus on the experiences of the city that I have indicated here, in particular as they affect black subjects and the way they respond.

The first part uses a wide-angle shot that gives a panoramic view from Selborne Avenue and imaginatively wills Johannesburg into being. This Avenue is the grid from which the text maps the city. Street names also inscribe the history of the city's founding in the violent colonial conflicts of 1893 and 1896 and point to the foreign culture of white settlers. Some of the streets lead to roads that connect the city with its hinterland and play a critical role as routes along which the country and the city are involved in exchanges and flows. The colonial city has a conflicted history, with division along racial lines, deep contradictions and a myriad of hidden connections that determine it and the identities that are possible in it.

I argue that walking the street and the pavement, the *ekoneni*, the basement of a city hotel and the photographic studio mark Vera's writing back to Doris Lessing and establish a connection with Ellison's novel, *The Invisible Man*. Although their novels are set in different spaces and times, these two writers, Lessing and Ellison, focus on the experience of invisibility on the part of those who are excluded, "trying to navigate a difficult and often oppressive world with stealth, inversion and guile (Simone 3) I draw on Simone's concept of "spectral instrumentality potentially capable of revitalizing an affective glue, a desire for social interchange and cooperation that might contain the seeds of social economies that extend themselves through scale, time and reach". This allows me to read what emerges from the racial cleavages of the colonial city. The spectral aspect of the black presence in Lessing's novels, especially *A Ripple from the Storm*, is taken up and re-articulated in *The Stone*

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Virgins. In the *Children of Violence* novels little is mentioned about the flows between the township and the city. The visit at night by an RAF airman to the township, where he goes into a place where jazz musicians are playing, becomes significant in the writing of less visible township-city interactions. In Vera's re-writing, the jazz scene is set in the basement of Selborne hotel where, despite the constraints that keep their aesthetic endeavours from fully flourishing, black musicians engage in a cosmopolitan exchange with the legendary jazz musician, Louis Armstrong: "He plays a trumpet. Plays his Skokiaan with Louis before his eyes, as far as he can imagine to the left, under that dimming lamp and the smell of kerosene light" (8). The quotation refers to Musarurwa, band leader and composer, whose name has been omitted from the text in order to emphasise the strategies of anonymity that operate for those confined to the real and metaphorical basement of the city. This scene partly validates Nuttall and Mbembe's (357) argument that city and township are mutually imbricated, "in spite of unequal social relations", as they posit a reading of the African city that is cognisant of its complexity. I qualify this township-city mutuality, since this exchange in Vera's novel has less to do with the contiguous but divided spaces of the colonial city, but rather points to connections outside the country. The political implications of the hotel basement in the colonial city emerge in the statement, "They want him to be heard above ground – somewhere" (9). The band-leader and his trumpet are described as vehicles for the desires of the colonised. In a synecdoche of the trumpet as desire and the hat as a symbol of repression, the text figures aesthetic freedom as political freedom. In a disavowal of the centrality of things in conveying the desire of characters, the upstairs space in the hotel, from which they are barred, is not important because of its objects: "To be honest there is nothing they actually wish to enjoy, up there, not all that velvet on the chairs, all that ribbon on the curtain, and all that frill on the curtain…they have no wish to acquire that" (9). In fiction that emphasises nomadic movement, objects, though important in evoking the materiality of specific spaces, are seen as entrapping by characters who "want to go as they please". This kind of freedom is denied in the hotel room and the streets and pavements of the city where the same colonial regime of discouraging black visibility operates.

The *ekoneni*, the street corner, is the place of performing black marginality, contesting exclusion and inscribing the black presence in the city. It is a place of surprise ("Anything could be round the corner" [10]), an angle from which to view the endless vistas provided by the city's streets and "a rendezvous" for township dwellers who cannot meet "inside any of the buildings because this city is divided, entry is forbidden to black men and women". In

describing the ekoneni as "a camouflage, a place of instancy and style" and "a place of protest", what the narrator accentuates is invisibility, transience and the tactics of survival in the performance of black city identities. Meg Samuelson, in her discussion of "the ambivalences infusing urban modernity in both colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe" ("Yvonne Vera's" 23), views the photograph and the street corner as markers of this ambivalence. This ambivalence is evident in how the ekoneni brings together contradictory aspects of the black urban self such as violence.

The ambivalence of photography lies, like anthropology, in its being implicated in the imperial/colonial project and its deployment in the theatricality of self-fashioning. Dambudzo Marechera, in his scathing dismissal of township photography in *The House of Hunger*, writes it off as escapist art. Vera, however, adopts a more generous yet ambivalent approach to photography. Vera claims the "camera has often been a dire instrument... In Africa, as in most sections of the dispossessed world, the camera arrived as part of colonial paraphernalia together with the gun and the bible" ("Thatha Camera" 2). The camera in her view indicates one of the "most unequal, brutal, and undemocratic moment of human encounter" (2). She, however, acknowledges its role in recording the history of the township's residents and their encounter with colonial modernity. Beyond its hegemonic instrumentality, Vera finds it offering novel ways of negotiating urban identities as it became important in imagining the city. She reiterates this point in an interview with Jane Bryce in which she explains how the story of *Without a Name* revolves round an image or a series of images: "I had this 'photograph', or a series of photographs, of a woman throwing a child on her back" (219). The plot of *The Stone Virgins*, likewise, grows out of a series of images, some of them horrific and others not. In her writing Vera rescues photography from its colonial and anthropological past, in which the colonial encounter emphasises the gaze of the coloniser and represents the non-Western subject as the exotic and tribal "other". The images that she invokes in her novels are captured photographic moments that are portrayed as historical moments that reveal "the autobiographies of unknown women" (223) and the history of the nation. In attending to the specificities of "a particular time" (223) and place, characters themselves use photography to harness and transgress temporal and geographical constraints on fashion identities. There are three photographic studios that are mentioned in *The Stone Virgins*: "an African Photo Studio on Lobengula Street and 11th Avenue" ; "Kay's Photo Studio on Jameson Street"; and "Star Photo Studio, right across from Kay's Studio" (12, 13). Little is said about the first, but from the woman lover's refusal to patronise it one

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can infer that the African Studio, by virtue of its location and its name, is implicated in the anthropological and colonial representation of blacks. The second-person narrator considers the two studios in Jameson Street to be better than the first: one makes "the city part of you" while the other (in a reference to Doris Lessing's novel, *Landlocked*, and its heroine's longing for the sea), provides "a backdrop of sailing ships [that] shows that you are not as landlocked in this city as elsewhere in the country" (13). The technology of photography thus brings with it the fluidity of the sea and its capacity to transport selves elsewhere, beyond the landlocked country.

Selborne Street, on the other hand, differs from Kezi Road in that it is figured as a conduit of power and possibility. Nevertheless, the narrator makes this street carry the ambivalence of colonial modernity, reflected in Cecil Rhodes's vision of commercial and colonial imperialism and of the colonised transformed into migrant miners. Rhodes's British South African Company's (BSAC) was granted a charter to expropriate land. In both its denotative and connotative meanings, the word "charter" authorised the company to parcel out land, displace local inhabitants and commit cartographic violence. The granting of the Charter gave rise to the 1890 Pioneer Column and the wars of conquest and resistance that followed. Fumbatha in *Butterfly Burning* carries the history of these wars. The contested street names in *The Stone Virgins* reflect this violent history. Terence Ranger is alert to Vera's concern with history in her writing. Vera articulates this historical focus in an interview with Jane Bryce: "I hope that I am telling stories which are more than stories. I also want to capture a history, but history in a moment" (223). She claims to write "the biographies of unknown women…against the backdrop of a particular time" (223). Bulawayo's colonial moment is captured in its street names and the mapping of exclusion where certain identities are kept out of the city. However (like many such contradictions in the colony), the township is already in the city in the form of the black labourers who keep it going and patrons and musician quarantined in the basement of Selborne Hotel. While the panoramic vista offered by Selborne Avenue is associated with the hegemony of colonial capital, it also establishes connections that suggest new black urban cultures and identities associated with migrant labourers in the music, the sumptuary codes and the city lingo that flow into Bulawayo from Johannesburg. Vera's writing shows her fascination with inter-connected places (Bulawayo-Johannesburg, Kezi-Bulawayo and Matabeleland-Manicaland), characters (Thenjiwe-Nonceba and Cephas Dube-Sibaso) and temporal spaces (the colonial and postcolonial, the precolonial and the postcolonial) in which each becomes a mirror and

foil of the other. Together with the language, behaviour, new sumptuary codes and music of returning migrants from the Johannesburg mines, Selborne Avenue plays an important role in the semiotics of the city. In Vassilena Parashkevova's analysis of one the novels by one of the foremost postcolonial writers to engage with the city, Salman Rushdie, she describes "ways in which cities reconfigure each other through an inter-urban exchange of auditory and visual echoes" (414). She elaborates this process as "refractory, doubling, inverted reflection, substitution and permutation and intertextual echoing" (415). This reciprocity of cities is noted by Meg Samuelson ("City beyond the border"; "Yvonne Vera's Bulawayo") in her analysis of Vera's depiction of the Johannesburg-Bulawayo nexus and its production of a vibrant transnational hybridity, despite the racial regulation of space and the abject exploitation of the colonised in the two colonial cities. Vera establishes a twinning of places, not to set up of binaries, but to show how they flow into each other as they subvert boundaries:

> Selborne carries you straight out of the city limits and heads all the way to Johannesburg like an umbilical cord, therefore, part of that city is here, its joy and notorious radiance is measured in the sleek gestures of city labourers, black, who voyage back and forth between Bulawayo and Johannesburg and hold that city up like a beacon… (*Stone Virgins* 5)

If the Selborne Avenue vista and photography express the desire for an elsewhere beyond the geographical borders of the colonial and postcolonial city and state, it comes as no surprise that an imagination that seeks to transcend the boundaries of the landlocked country pays less attention to the rural-urban linkages that are evoked in the novel. I argue here that Kezi and Bulawayo are linked in their mutual production, the country producing the city as the city produces the country in what Samuelson ("City" 250) describes as "the shuttlings back and forth between urban and rural worlds that confound colonialism's spatial controls". The mutual re-configuration that occurs between Johannesburg and Bulawayo overshadows the less studied road between Kezi and Bulawayo. I argue that the Bulawayo-Kezi nexus offers a complex exploration of the subject as gendered and ethnic, and that the township of Makokoba and city of Bulawayo cannot be separated from the rural enclave of Kezi, represented by the store, the road, the river, and the Gulati Hills.   The store occupies a

boundary between places and temporalities, holding two worlds in abeyance: a few metres away from the store "are hoof prints, the smell of dung, the sun, vermillion" (22) and close to it "the bus, bustle" under a giant marula tree where locals go "to meet relatives and friends who have returned from the city of Bulawayo" (23). The tarred road that ends abruptly and the incomplete telephone booth, both symbols of disconnection and incomplete urbanity, are associated with Zimbabwe's not-so-successful postcolonial project of creating urban enclaves in rural areas. The incomplete telephone booth accentuates the sense of a failing urbanity and the disconnection of Kezi from Bulawayo and the rest of the country. The promise of the road link, like that of the panorama of transnational dreams and the flow of Johannesburg citiness in the first half of the novel, disappears in the second half to create the sense of postcolonial limitation.

Most of the characters caught up in the horrific genocide that took place, mostly in the western part of Zimbabwe during the 1980s, never reached the city that is evoked as a haven in *The Stone Virgins*. Nevertheless, ambivalence emerges when the city and its transitional spaces are figured as simultaneously connecting and disconnecting people. Like the city itself, described as constantly in motion, Vera's novels do not present a single vision of the fictional city and the characters inhabiting it; each expands the limits of city belonging for those at the margins. *The Stone Virgins* presents marginality as being colonised, woman and Ndebele. Using this triple marginality, the novel develops, qualifies and complicates the picture of the city that emerges in earlier texts. In its foregrounding of connections, the novel links Bulawayo with other cities, especially Johannesburg. An equally important connection that has not received much critical attention is that of Bulawayo and Kezi, which plays a central role in the plot of the novel. I argue that, along this less fabulous route of journeying, the novel reworks Vera's themes of urbanity and translocal connections; the latter are more critical in the formation of the postcolonial city than the transnational connection concretised in Selborne Avenue. The rural-urban exchanges in which the city and country mutually constitute each other occur along the Bulawayo-Kezi bus route.

This does not detract from the text's deployment of Thantabantu Store as a place of encounter in both the existential and symbolic senses and the city as haven for those in flight from the rural spatial and gender power politics. The Thenjiwe-Cephas encounter that occurs in this space of transition determines subsequent plot developments. It is here that fictional characters meet each other to start a journey of discovery in the contrasted symbols of the marula and muzhanje trees and the metaphors of roots and ethnic identities. It is this

encounter that determines Cephas's reaction to the atrocities that affect the Gumede sisters and Nonceba's re-location to the city. In a repetition of the destruction of Mazvita's village in *Without a Name*, Thantabantu Store is turned into a place of horrific killings and burnt to the ground, precluding any possibility of future encounters.

The novel links the violence that is perpetrated against the Gumedes with the stone virgins sacrificed in the burial rites in an ancient kingdom. This burial represents the silencing and murderous strategies of patriarchy, which, in Vera's layering of temporalities, has similarities with the death of Thenjiwe and the rape and mutilation of Nonceba. The stone symbolism and the petrification of women and subjectivities in general link the rural landscape and Bulawayo, an ancient temporality and a modern one, to suggest complex (dis)connections. When the wounded Nonceba says, "I lie on the bed listening to my body turn slowly into stone" (113) she is made to identify unconsciously with the virgins sacrificed at a king's burial in the San painting.

The Bulawayo of the first half of the novel is marked by this paradox of an empowering transnational identity and a limiting local one. The migrant workers from Johannesburg return with a new confidence as they "can challenge the speculative, the hostile and suspicious enquiries about their presence in the city" (5). An assertive subjectivity, a new aesthetics has been retrieved from their abject exploitation; I examine this elsewhere (Muchemwa, "Fictional Palimpsests"), but, in a reflection of their underground existence in the mines and their invisibility in the city, the inhabitants of Bulawayo lead a ghostly existence. The colonial city with its racial cartography demands techniques of both survival and subversion: the precarious *ekoneni* rendezvous, and the escape through the cracks.

The second part of the novel inverts the first, replacing the panoramic shot of the first part with a close up in the second part that briefly attends to the crowded, vibrant aspect of life in newly independent Zimbabwe, the return of the guerrilla fighters and the many promises regarding the transformation of the lives of the women that crowd Thandabantu Store. This picture does not last as the country quickly descends into fratricidal conflict and roads are turned into routes of war and disconnection. In contrast to the long sentences of the novel's opening, the clipped structure indicated below suggests a reduction in the connective potential of roads, a clipping of visions, the loss of memory in the exigencies of the present and the staccato of guns in the city:

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The war begins. A curfew is declared. A state of emergency. No movement is allowed. The ceasefire ceases. It begins in the streets, the burying of memory. The bones rising. Rising. Every road out of Bulawayo is covered with soldiers and police, teeming like ants. Road blocks. Bombs. Landmines. Hand-grenades. Memory is lost. Independence ends. Guns rise. Rising anew. (59)

5. 5 Conclusion: writing the city

Boehmer's trope of the transfigured "silenced, wounded body of the colonized" ("Transfiguring" 268) helps to summarise this chapter and Vera's placing of women in narratives of migration to the city. Land is associated with the wounding and silencing of women and so it becomes a place of trauma. The city also silences but the most egregious forms of violent silencing occur in the country. The decapitation of Thenjiwe and the cutting of Nonceba's lips in *The Stone Virgins* emphasise the tragedy of wounding at both the physical and the metaphorical levels, and occurs (as I have argued in this chapter) in a specific geography. The land's complicity in the patriarchal perpetration of violence and the silencing that *Without a Name* foregrounds, graphically haunt *The Stone Virgins*; in *Butterfly Burning*, Phephelapi's wounding occurs outside the city, which suggests that the self-wounding is impelled by patriarchal designs. Yvonne Vera portrays both the colonial and postcolonial city with a great deal of ambivalence, but in that ambiguity the city provides the space for women to escape the shackles of tradition as they search for new selves and seek to recover from the injustices of their past. The three novels celebrate the lives of ordinary women without occluding the suffering associated with the various journeys these women travel. Vera's novels are about the extreme violence that forces women characters to flee. Their flight, though, does not imply a sense of an untroubled city location.

CHAPTER 6:

NOMADS, PARVENUS AND PARIAHS IN THE CITY IN NOVELS BY SHIMMER CHINODYA AND VALERIE TAGWIRA

Round the corner, there is, there should be, there must be, a hospitable land in which to settle; but behind every corner new corners appear, with new frustrations and new, yet undashed hopes --- Zygmunt Bauman

6. 1 Introduction

The epigraph from Zygmunt Bauman on the ever-receding horizon of Western modernity and its capacity to manufacture expectations and frustrations, conceived as a journey, frames this chapter's analysis of fictional characters' experience of city modernity in the following novels: *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), *Chairman of Fools* (2005) and *Strife* (2006) by Shimmer Chinodya, and *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2009) by Valerie Tagwira. In this thesis, the city is the arena where aspects of western modernity are concentrated. Both writers portray unsettled identities in unsettling urban spaces. Chinodya's novels reveal the gains, losses and complications that follow the various local and transnational migrations they depict. Migrants from the country are depicted as new arrivals, nomadic victims of modernity whose arrival, inclusion and security in the city as place of modernity cannot be guaranteed. Their pariah-like status as people beyond the pale of the city is defined by the city space marked out for them. Bauman uses a desert landscape metaphor to describe the nomadic and unsettled identity of travellers infected by "the bacillus of restlessness" (23) along the route of modernity: "Wherever they come and clearly wish to stay, the nomads find themselves to be parvenus. Parvenu; arriviste; someone already in, but not quite of the place, an aspiring resident without a residence permit" (24).

Bauman uses the vocabulary of class profiling that leaves new arrivals in the city as social upstarts. In the study of the focal texts for this chapter, the class element emerges in narratives of migration into and across the city as a project of social amelioration, but the feeling of being "not quite of place" (24) is cultural as it is a feeling that is produced in those migrating from the country, which figures as a place of tradition. These nomads, in my

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reading of the migration of the colonised, find themselves in an unsettling condition of peripheral city belonging. The colonised is figured in the focal texts as "an aspiring resident without a residence permit" (Bauman), a phrase evoking the sense of a juridical order that sets laws governing the admission of outsiders into the city and their subsequent expulsion from it, as depicted in *Harvest of Thorns* and *The Uncertainty of Hope*. Restlessness is the very nature of modernity as embodied in the city. City modernity's ever-receding horizon in the fiction of these two writers is captured through metaphors of dis-ease, madness and travel. Bauman's concept of the belated arrival of the parvenus as it applies to the recently arrived (whose arrival is not quite secure and whose footprints, like those of their predecessors, are erased) is formulated in the context of his concept of liquid modernity that is neither graspable nor fixed as it continues to produce new desires. The metaphors of desert nomadism, erasures and mirages Bauman uses in his conceptualisation of modernity are adopted here to analyse fictional texts that portray migration from the country to the city, in different inflections of gender, age and ethnicity. The migrations are prompted by a people's search for a place in which to set up home in what is described by Tucker as "the gap between natural home" and "the particular ideal home where they would be fully fulfilled" (184). In Roberta Rubenstein's study of longing and belonging in women's fiction the ideal home is "the place that represents emotional succour, intimacy, and plenitude" (59). Although directly related to the analysis of women's experiences of home in Tagwira's novel longing and belonging undergird the lives of most fictional characters in all the focal texts of the text regardless of their gender.

In the multiplicity of meanings of home that circulate in the texts analysed in this chapter location in specific places is important. The house is the first of the struggles of belonging. In chapter Four I analysed the metaphor of (un)housing in connecting with belonging and escape. While in Chapter Five I focus on characters claim owning houses and their place in the city. Most of the houses in the texts, the abject urban dwellings from the *jaradha* [a long rectangular room shared by more than one family] and the four-roomed house in Chinodya's fiction to the fragile structures characteristic of Mbare township in Tagwira's novel, are not ideal homes. Their architectures provoke anxiety and the desire to escape to better urban homes, even though they are inaugural spaces for the modern black urban subject, representing the first toehold in the city. The township in the colonial city is the space of exclusion and its camp architecture produces nomads, parvenus and pariahs in the city. The city was imagined, mapped and administered by the settlers as the pale from

which the township-dwellers were excluded, as evoked in Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning*: "The people walk in the city without encroaching on the pavements from which they are banned" (6). The colonized were figured as outsiders waiting at the gates of colonial city modernity. In city cartographies of internal borders and exclusion the township plays an important role as space of transition and place of abjection. Imagined as a slum, the township (or native location) became the site of problematic urban modernity, where those coming into the city from outside are camped and quarantined to control perceived moral, medical and juridical disorders; it was the place for those whose city belonging was considered to be still pending. Moral panics that appear as episodic in the fiction of Doris Lessing in reality develop from discourses that question the belonging of the colonized in the city, and such discourses were instrumental in the construction of the township as holding camp and dormitory for labourers. Chinodya evokes characteristics of the township as concentration camp in *Harvest of Thorns* during colonial times and Valerie Tagwira, writing three decades after independence, portrays how colonialism persists in the city more blatantly than elsewhere, despite decolonisation. This persistence is linked to the recurring idea of modernity as un-African in both colonial and nationalist discourses. I read this problematic urban space as it travels and mutates in the postcolonial city through two lenses that I combine here: Agamben's "the camp as nomos of the modern" and Foucault's "other spaces" differ from the heterotopia of crisis that Foucault associates with rites of passage in primitive societies and the heterotopias of deviation he associates with psychiatric institutions and old-age homes. Foucault describes heterotopia as "a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (24). I extend the concept of heterotopic spaces of the city to the bush, the site of war that will determine new cartographies of the city and the nation in *Harvest of Thorns*, to the village in *Strife* and to the hospital annexe in *Chairman of Fools* in order to analyse how counter-identities and imaginaries are produced in these spaces. I also explore whether in the numerous journeys undertaken in *Strife* it is possible for urban nomads to return to some point of departure in their pasts to recover redeeming or usable pasts. The township retains its characteristic as an unaccommodating place where people camp. I use these terms to bring out the sense of uncertainty and unsettledness that prevails in an unwelcoming place, the sense of not being at home, and of ambiguous arrival in the city as place of both lingering colonial and postcolonial modernity.

The entry into township space marks a coming to terms with colonial city modernity. The township is evoked as ambivalent space in that, while it causes colonial trauma, it

initiates the production of the black subject. Achille Mbembe conceives of the colonial remains as "guilty secret or accursed share" as "the colony inscribes itself into the contemporary African imagination" (27, 29). This idea of colonial remains as manifested in the township has consequences for the formation of postcolonial black subjectivity and his/her right to the city. In writing the township as site of colonial trauma, Chinodya and Tagwira's novels suggest possibilities of reconstruction, erasure and flight that entail the making of new men and women. Ranka Primorac reads Chinodya's novels as "a continuous exploration of Zimbabwean post-independence masculinities emerging into consecutive stages of post/colonial adulthood, mapped onto various moments in the history of the Zimbabwean nation" (249). This concern with new masculinities, also evident in Tagwira's novel, need not obscure the two writers' portrayal of new women in the city. Chinodya's novels, in particular *Harvest of Thorns* and *Strife*, portray fictional characters migrating into the city. Their emplacement in urban spaces traditionally depicted in Zimbabwean literature as sites of aspiration is subjected to displacement that interrogates the sense of having arrived. Although the township inaugurates the modern Zimbabwean urban subject, Chinodya's novels and Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* do not turn the township into a site of nostalgia as the emphasis is on instability and un-homeliness. As migration continues across the city, with a back and forth country-city movement and cultural obligation expressed in visits to the rural home, a sense of uncertain mooring in the city emerges. The township is a space of lack and is not constitutive of all modern urban identities. For the main characters in the novels examined in this chapter the suburbs of affluence and privilege promise to unlock the plenitude of the city, but the irony is that as soon as they arrive in the space of aspiration a sense of incomplete anchoring emerges. This is particularly so in Chinodya's novels, but in its ending Tagwira's novel does not question this celebration of arrival after the escape from the township. But if there are differences in how the escape narrative is written, what is common in the fiction of the two writers is the need to attend to other forms of urban belonging beyond the township. I link two writers in this chapter; they write from different generational and gender perspectives but their texts are linked by their representation of the township as iconic space of colonial urban deprivation and struggle. I place Tagwira's text here to measure the distance travelled by both urban subjects and the postcolonial government that initiates and enables a politics of possibility in this space of urban dystopia.

Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* and Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* are described by Liz Gunner as "interrogatory texts with a certain subversive quality" (77). The subversive quality alluded to here is a questioning and complicating in both *Harvest of Thorns* and *Bones* of the grand nationalist narrative that elides the narrative of ordinary fighters and women in the Liberation War. *Harvest of Thorns*, in part questions, the nativism involved in making the country and not the city as the main arena of the liberation struggle. I will argue that Chinodya portrays the city as one of the various sites of struggle: the hero of *Harvest of Thorns*, Benjamin Tichafa, is a boy who grows up in a township that is immersed in the politics of the township and its camp conditions; as a result he joins the guerrillas. When he returns the ironic harvest that he gets out of his investment in the war is the newly established state of Zimbabwe's failure to re-inscribe the cartography of his home city of Gweru. In *Strife* the township is the point of entry into urban modernity for the Gwanangara family, who share many characteristics with the Tichafa family in the earlier text, especially the father's fanatical Christianity that separates him from his traditional culture and the nationalist politics of the time. The focus of Tagwira's novel is the continued existence of colonial spatial regimes after independence, particularly that of the township, together with new strategies of making urban populations superfluous and expendable through forced removals.

6. 2 The township as the other space in the city in *Harvest of Thorns*

In this subsection I combine Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia and Agamben's of the camp as "nomos of the modern" to analyse the place of the township, the native location as evoked in texts by Doris Lessing, Dambudzo Marechera and Yvonne Vera (considered in the previous chapters). Here the aim is to attend to images of "other space" and the camp that emerge in *Harvest of Thorns* and *Strife* as they shape the politics of spatial struggle in the city. The two texts figure constructions of urban identities of the colonized in terms of travel and show migrants metaphorically waiting at the city gates where the right of admission to the sanctuary of the privileged settler city is bestowed or withheld. The waiting room and the township are conflated in *Harvest of Thorns* as they are subjected to the same spatial regime of surveillance, harassment and belittlement. They both become spaces of exclusion, of deferred or partial entry into city modernity, where the colonized stage a politics of resistance.

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Harvest of Thorns has two heterotopias, the township and the bush, that are connected in shaping the plot of the novel and in the life of the fictional protagonist, Benjamin Tichafa. Benjamin's adolescent political consciousness develops in relation to the ostracism that he experiences at school and on the playground. Mocked because of his father's apolitical stance and religious fanaticism, he seeks peer acceptance through acts of resistance against the colonial township and the laws that have reduced the black experience of the city to that of bare survival. Never looking back after forging an identity for himself in the narratives of black resistance, he later on abandons secondary school to join the guerrillas fighting against the settler army. Much of the plot concerns the guerrilla experience in the heterotopic space of the bush where Benjamin "comes of age with AK-47" in a displacement of traditional initiation rites. The liberation war rites of passage find him emerging as a man, militarily, politically and culturally, a change that is observed by members of his family on his return. He flouts cultural marital codes by taking Nkazana as his wife, without consulting his parents, ignoring outmoded social etiquette. Benjamin returns home, confident that independence will herald change in both his home city and the nation. The first decade of independence, as depicted in *Harvest of Thorns*, provides an opportunity for the new rulers to re-configure the urban ghetto of Gweru and remove the inequalities in that city. In bitter irony Benjamin finds himself alone in his endeavour to redress the injustices of the city. To make matters worse, his participation in the war is not rewarded. This is of lesser importance to Benjamin, who represents here the main aspiration of urbanizing fictional characters, which is to be integrated into the city. Chinodya charts a detour from the main nationalist narrative by focusing on urban fictional characters and their struggles. The novel is very much of its time as it addresses the contemporary issue of the apparent abandonment of the fighters of the liberation war, but Chinodya locates this narrative of national ingratitude in the context of the city and devotes more than a third of the book to this. While it resonates with emerging voices of ex-guerrilla discontent , the metaphor of an ironic harvest is deployed by Chinodya to simultaneously evoke a sense of incomplete independence and of unsettled urban spaces and subjects. Chinodya's version of the independence struggle encompasses the struggles of blacks in the city, and Benjamin Tichafa enlists in the guerrilla army because he is impelled by a sense of injustice in the city. His return to his home city entails a strongly-felt need to re-draw its map.

Chapters 5 and 6 in Part 1 of the novel depict the township as point of entry into the city and also evoke a picture of the highly disturbed everyday life in the colonial ghetto. This

unsettled life is emphasized by the Gweru railway station with its "smell of toilets and trapped people and the coal smoke from the train engines" (*Harvest*,31). Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, in a chapter on the city-train connection, represents the railway station as a place of endless waiting: "The most congested place is the railway station, with its waiting rooms, where people linger for months with nowhere to lodge. With no direction" (54). The sense of toxicity, futility, harassment, and unrelieved surveillance at the railway station extends to the township. Colonial officialdom continues to regulate private lives in the most humiliating of ways. In the "rows of blocks separated by narrow, dusty roads and small gardens" where people with no official marital status lived and suffered "the humiliation of being invaded in that naked, marital hour", township men "mumbled curses against the tyranny of unpainted walls, high rents, crowded toilets, supervised relationships and the problems of acquiring marriage certificates" (Vera, *Butterfly Burning*, 55). Township inhabitants, more than any other city dwellers, experience the city strategies of classifying people and urban space.

Supervision entails the coloniser's infantilization of black city inhabitants who are prevented from exercising the right to determine the quality of their own lives. Colonial power treats the township as a dormitory where "municipal lights went out at eleven, plunging the township into a mass of black" (Chinodya, *Harvest of Thorns* 70), and as a concentration camp with loudspeakers that only allowed state propaganda to be heard. Chinodya depicts the township in the 1960s in *Harvest of Thorns* as a site of trauma in colonial Rhodesia: "for those of us who saw the traumas of our country from the doors of township houses, peeking through the restraining skirts of our mothers" (69). This particular extract locates the trauma as something outside the township dwelling, out there in the street, with children as spectators. This is attested in the text by the prevalence of various forms of unsettling and unsettled urbanisms. The cultural and political ferment of the sixties produced a politics of resistance and nationalist consciousness evident in the emergence of the "son of the soil" discourse and the urban riots that were to make the townships briefly ungovernable. Benjamin Tichafa's nationalist consciousness, which develops in the 1960s, is tied to a politics of the right to a better city, and when he joins the guerrilla army his enlisting is related to the implied project of making his home city a just city. On his return in 1980 to the home city from the war, he finds the township in a general state of degradation and poverty, although in the inflated hopes of the decade there is a hint of transformation. There are a lot of "small four-roomed houses that are being extended", but that moment of change is mocked by the narrator's comment that these houses "had a sprawling squashed look" (*Harvest* 6).

The task of re-scripting the city is made difficult by the indifference to change, as "suburbs on the hill, chose to remain untouched". The narrator's evocation of the white suburb – "faces of sparkling glass, pinewood, stone, at the marble driveways and the swimming pools and gleaming cars in closed garages, and flawless lawns tended by black garden boys in khaki and black maids still pushing babies in prams" (7) – reveals the unchanging cartography of the colonial city. The persistence of racial prejudice in the city raises Benjamin's ire when he goes shopping with Nkazana at city supermarket. His outburst against the crude racism of the white girl at the till becomes a grand gesture that is not matched by the will of the new political order to re-configure the city. In the end Benjamin fails either to escape or to transform the township as a place of trauma. If the entry of the marginalized into the city has been traumatic, their stay in the city continues to be unsettled by postcolonial disorders.

The experience of living in the city continues to unsettle even those migrants of 20th century modernity who have made it into the heart of the city. They are unsettled in the sense of experiencing psychic displacement and endless migration, and this is the focus of the section on unsettled subjects and unsettling cities. Although *Strife* was published after *Chairman of Fools*, its historical sweep revisits the township as both heterotopic space and foundational site for constructions of modern black urban subjects. This return measures the distance between the original and the contemporary urban subjectivity. Although *Harvest of Thorns* reflects the failure of a new politics to re-imagine the city, the novel's ending is not pessimistic. Its optimism can be seen in the birth of Benjamin and Nkazana's baby, a birth that re-unites the divided Tichafa family. Benjamin describes his family to his prospective brother-in-law with characteristic candour: "We [Benjamin, Esther and the father] all ran away from home and mother – each for different reasons" (241). The last two chapters of the novel (chapters 34 and 35) express hope for a dissident narration that offers complex motivations for individuals who leave home and that provides a more generous and forgiving approach in its portrayal of those who participated, on different sides, in the Liberation War. The return home as township space and mother is part of Chinodya's portrayal of a politics of the possible within the limitations of township space. The naming of the child Zvenyika ["Political"] affirms Benjamin's unflagging commitment to the politics of liberation, and recalls Ngugi's assertion on language as necessitating a "decolonization of the mind" (*Decolonising*). The persistence of the township and the failure to re-make the city continue to be major concerns in Chinodya's latest novels. Despite its persistence, the township is represented as a place of ambiguity. Since in this discussion I equate township and waiting

room, this place of the abject is also a place of encounter that allows strangers to meet. One such encounter leads to the courtship between Clopas and Shamiso, which Chinodya describes with tenderness. Despite the humiliations, their courtship and subsequent marriage give rise to a new generation that can claim and fight for urban space as their own.

6.3 Nomads, unsettling cities and unsettled subjects in *Strife* and *Chairman of Fools*

This section examines the emergence of the modern urban subject in the context of unsettling dislocation from a land of origin; this entails travelling through landscapes fraught with danger and re-location in a new place. A return to Bauman's linking of a discomforting nomadism to an unstable modernity (see the introduction to this chapter) clarifies the question of migrating black subjects locating themselves in the city, and the role of unsettling cities and unsettled subjects in Chinodya's novels. The city is often seen as a discomforting environment that unsettles those who have already arrived, whose arrival is made insecure by the baggage they carry with them to the place of arrival and by the techniques for displacing "strangers" embedded in its structure. In Chinodya's re-visionary writing this is re-configured to focus on the emergence of the modern black urban subject The subjects coming to the metaphoric city gates from the outside (as indicated in the previous section) are unaccommodated men and women who contend with the questions of urban housing. These outsiders are on arrival consigned to the confines of a place of waiting, the township that becomes an important beacon in the mapping of city cultures in Chinodya's *Strife*.

Strife establishes the inter-text of Chinodya's pre-2006 novels. The references to *Dew in the Morning*, *Farai's Girls* and *Harvest of Thorns* alert the reader to a historical sense that pervades the texts and that is closely linked to an assumed sense of a teleological trajectory that comes under pressure in the lives of fictional characters. *Strife* returns to the township space rendered at the end of *Harvest of Thorns* by the inauguration of a new generation of urban strugglers represented by the baby boy Zvenyika, in a conclusion that departs from the novel's dominant mood of despair. This return to the township in *Strife* is not an expression of nostalgia, since the township and its particular temporality has already been associated with trauma in *Harvest of Thorns*. Rather, it is part of Chinodya's iterative writing that seeks to reinforce, yet express differently, the abject experience of fictional characters. In his paraphrase of Mark Petrakis, Chinodya conceives of writing as "revisiting old pains, old memories, old troubles, old problems and doing something with them and coming up with

something which is palatable, more digestible" (Interview n.p.). In repeatedly returning to the township to write it differently, however, Chinodya does not so much make the dystopia of the past more palatable as offer a prose epic that portrays the township as the original urban space for blacks from which subsequent urbanisms emerged. This is why, although published after *Chairman of Fools*, *Strife* is presented as a bridging text connecting the various geographical spaces travelled by the Gwanangara family and their fictional counterparts in Chinodya's other novels. In disturbing the chronology of publication so as to argue for a line of development in the construction of urban identities in Chinodya's oeuvre, I argue that *Strife* establishes a retrospective link with *Harvest of Thorns* and all the pre-2006 novels. It anticipates to the fictional city that connects with other cities beyond the national borders in *Chairman of Fools*.

Strife is a tribute, in its autobiographical and allegorical implications, to the parents of Godfrey Gwanangara, the main narrator, and a representative of the first generation of black city dwellers. This comes out as one of the most poignant expressions of filial gratitude, love and respect in the depiction of father figures in Zimbabwean literature: "We must all fail our fathers as times change , values change, and we are greedy for success in a new age" (171). The failure of sons articulated here touches on the abandonment of the father to loneliness; the novel explores how sons shift away from the core values that produced the contemporary urbanism they are now enjoying (a problematic word to use in the context of the unsettling character of the city) and their failure to continue with the construction of the hybrid house started by the father. In its dislocations and re-telling of the story of anti-colonial struggles initiated in *Harvest of Thorns*, *Strife* posits the city as an equally important arena for struggle.

The novel's title points to various tensions that permeate it. These tensions define this struggle as one between the country-as-tradition and the city-as-modernity, especially in the allegorical treatment accorded to the country and the city in the last chapter (216-223). As it plays out in the lives of individual characters, this contest is conveyed by metaphors of disease and madness that affect all generations of the Gwanangara family. This gives the struggle the character of a relay race in which the baton of a tradition-in-the-making is passed from hand to hand. By narrating the un-narrated lives of ordinary men and women of each generation in the city, the writer gives visibility and voice to what is often obscured or omitted in the nationalist narrative of the liberation struggle that celebrates the heroism of the gun. Setting up a connection with this national narrative is not arbitrary, since almost all parts of this complex family saga come with clear temporal tags that are linked to the national

narrative and demonstrate their embeddedness in it (7, 36, 117 and 158). There are three generations in the novel that contend with colonial modernity. Firstly, there is the generation of Njiki, the rural matriarch who dictates her terms of engagement with western modernity. She is the one who takes her children, Tachiona and Dunge, to school. It is western education that leads Tachiona and Shabani to the asbestos mines and, later, leads Dunge to Gweru. Tachiona, memorable for his urine bags, and the first to urbanise, represents failed city modernity because he returns to the desiccated ancestral rural home of Chivi. Tachiona's return to Chivi makes comprehensible the determination of Dunge and the children (described as "townies") to escape it. In one of the most unromantic evocations of country life after Lucifer's description of his village in *Waiting for the Rain*, Chivi is characterised by "the smell in the air [which] is of dust, cow dung, goats and the sun-muted stink of human refuse" (30); it is described as "a dry, cruel district [in which] good rains are the exception rather than the norm" (71) and as a "harsh, barren land (123). Though the novel suggests that the journey to the city has made travellers disconnect with the tradition of their ancestors, most of the sites of this tradition, such as Chivi, offer little in terms of a secure ancestral home. In any case the bonfire that destroys tradition (94) takes place in the village and not in the city. If the abandonment of the city by Tachiona has not been fully explored, this is because the focus is on Dunge Gwanangara's determined identification with the city: the novel portrays this and rigorously asks questions without providing any facile answers.

Dunge Gwanangara's decision to dislocate himself from his ancestral home must be understood in the context of the abject life in Chivi and the disruptions and displacements of colonialism modernity that fracture the family. This novel draws the concepts of family and home together, but complicates both concepts and the relationship they continue to have in changing geographies. The movement to Gokwe, a fertile but hot and originally tsetse-infested district in the Midlands province of Zimbabwe, is one way of disengaging from a land of extreme rural hardship, but this exacerbates the strains in a family that all along has been fracturing. This new rural home is a detour on the road to the city where education, religion and capitalism fracture the traditional African extended family. Establishing a city home becomes Dunge Gwanangara's consuming passion, despite poverty. Uncharitably described by Kevin, his schizophrenic son, as "Dutch-reformed, English-washed, Indian-starched" (40), in a summary of his dislocation from a cultural home, Dunge reveals a doggedness in the pursuit of the dream of modern life in the city. He has dedicated a greater part of his life to the pursuit of a " glorious house" in the city: "The man who has sold clothes

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in an Indian shop for three decades" (12); " The man who has spent the last thirty years living in the little four-roomed house" (13). The jaradha and the little four-roomed house are revisited to accentuate the contrast between them and the new city homes occupied by the children. In the characters' temporal and spatial movements, the return to the country also applauds the first generation of city dwellers for their dedication and their self-abnegation in inaugurating urban homes. Dunge, repeatedly referred to as the man of the house, aspires to become bourgeois, to escape from the grime of the township house, and to provide education for his children. He wanted his children "to rise up in life, to move out of the cramped, stained walls of 33 Hoffman Street, suckle the morning dews of Gokwe and masticate the books which would make [them] as solid and substantial as baobab trees" (149).

Dunge and his wife Hilda Dolly Tsvangira, who runs the Gokwe rural home to supplement the fragile urban existence of the family (159), partially realise their dream and the following passage expresses their sense of arrival – yet it is one that get ruffled as the plot develops:

> enjoying our new plot, enjoying our three-bedroomed house, the cottage, the orchard, the garden, the generous electric water-pump, the sprinklers, the more than ample water-tanks and fields; enjoying the space, the fresh air, the vegetation, the shift from the stifling little township house and its jealous, gossiping neighbours; the shift from the smell of death in our once fresh but now putrefying dew-in-the-morning village (*Strife* 37).

This extract serves to illustrate the urban aspirations of the Gwanangara family and also the way that the city (in Bauman's formulation) continues to push them out of their complacency. The partial realisation of the father's dream is expressed in their arrival in their new urban home and in the university education attained by Rindai, the plant breeder, and Godfrey, teacher and writer (the metaphor of "eating books" is used). The father articulates an obsession with education as the panacea to colonial problems: "in these colonial seventies when education for blacks is regarded as the be-all and end-all, hers is considered a glorious house" (7). The dream urban space described in the extract is quite different from the cramped township home at 33 Hoffman Street. The change of address that is part of the identity of a glorious house does not bring with it the much-anticipated peace. The narrator, with the benefit of hindsight, comments on the father's dream of urban modernity: "Such were the dreams of our household, out of which father was, sooner or later, to be rudely

shaken" (149). The father's "motley library" (147, 148), his new religion and work ethic will only take him to this dream space, but whether he will be fully settled there remains doubtful. Rindai's epileptic attacks, Kevin's bipolar disorder, the deaths of the grandmother and the mother, Bramson's hanging, the burning of the house, death of the father and other portents unsettle the family. The "smell of death in our once fresh but now putrefying dew-in-the-morning village" does not disappear but comes to haunt the narrator's house in Harare and the family house in Gweru. The mother, formerly described as a tractor, in her terminal days transforms the narrator's home, which "becomes steeped in the smell of the odour of her rotting flesh" (151). Even after being sent back to Gweru, she leaves "the reek of illness which hangs in the air and cannot be sprayed away" (153).

Although the novel attributes the unsettling experience of being in the city to "the tragedy for all aspirant middle-class blacks, that none of them can find their way back" (11); in depicting various attempts to go back, the novel also shows the past as being as unsettling as the present. The question asked by Tavengwa concerning the Gokwe home left to him by Dunge – "Am I safe in the home that my father left me?" – that Muponde addresses ("*Strife*" 126-129) can be extended to all the abandoned sites left by the Gwangara family in their migrations. It cannot be answered in the affirmative, as "gusts from the Gwanangara's buried pasts" (52) continue to trouble the present. The question invokes what Sibley describes as "simplified and idealised notions of domestic space" (93) to expose the "tension between the binary opposites of safety and risk, security and fear, [and] privacy and invasion" that "may exist in the home for many" (93).

In *Chairman of Fools* there is a temporal and spatial shift that looks at the city and its connections with other cities in the world. This explains its placing here. In any case the dates of publication do not reveal what Chinodya concedes in an interview with Manfred Loimeier that *Strife* was initiated before *Chairman of Fools*, but that after completing a hundred pages the writer shifted to *Chairman of Fools*: "So I left it [*Strife*], did *Chairman of Fools* and after a year I got back to *Strife*, I finished it in Zimbabwe. *Chairman* was a book between books, a mad interlude" (Interview n.p.) The broadening of the spatial experience of the city comes with the movement from the trauma of township space. *Harvest of Thorns* and *Strife* are meant to provide the necessary catharsis for escape to other sites of the modern city. However, as evidenced by backward references in *Chairman of Fools* to family afflictions and deaths, using fictional different names, the cathartic effect was not really effective. The deceased Dzimai who "dropped out university to walk the streets" (84) and his elder brother

Garai, "who is in the study recovering from a huge epileptic fit" (85) come directly from Strife, just as the ghosts of Kevin and Rindai come to haunt the pages of *Chairman of Fools*.

In *Chairman of Fools*, Foucault's space of heterotopia is not confined to the township as it includes the domestic space of middle-class suburbs, the hospital annexe, the cemetery and other towns outside the national boundary that unsettle received notions of the city. In the eruption of gender struggles (these have not been previously raised in the other two novels), with men and women not conforming to traditional gender stereotypes, the suburban home becomes un-homely. These places are "something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", 24). Chinodya's fictional character in this novel connects these different counter-sites to re-vision the city. Farai, the fictional writer, and Veronica, his wife, are each growing in different directions. Because of the pressures of their professional lives they do not have time to bridge the gap that is separating them. The dominant motif that brings out the un-homeliness of the home is that of confinement: Farai "approaches what feels like his grim prison for the four-thousandth time" (15); "Mati drives him back home…and drops him at the gate of his prison" (22); "You know this house is a nunnery" (64). In describing his house in Harare's suburbs of privilege as both prison and nunnery, Farai reveals how this location has shut him out from the experiences of the less privileged city dwellers and produced a puritanical attitude to sexuality.

The car chase and the hallucinatory journey in the story, enacts Farai's multi-faceted quest that includes some of the unresolved questions posed in the last chapter of *Strife*. Driving around the city is a way of re-mapping the city, reintegrating those parts excluded from the narrow vision of the gated and walled suburban home. In *Chairman of Fools*, Farai sets out to see the city whole. Never staying in one place for long reflects Farai's discomfort at being imprisoned in single city site and perspective. It is also an aspect of the generosity of Chinodya's imagination as a writer that expresses itself as an ability to expose oneself to the experience of the other in the city. Farai visits most of the places that convey the diversity of experience in the city, evoked through sounds, sights, smells, food, music and religion. Dan Wylie, in his review of *Chairman of Fools*, castigates the book for not delivering what it promises: "The title promises a satire on leadership, but this is scarcely developed as such; the muddled plot and the chaos of its protagonist's addled head is possibly symbolic of a national sense of paranoid disorientation" (163). This caustic comment arises out of a reading

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that reduces the annexe as heterotopic urban to the experience of one character. The narrator is careful in his choice of this site as revealing what society rejects. Placing Farai in the annexe is a deliberate displacement from sites associated with what is conventional and stultifying. Farai says after emerging from the learning experience of the annexe: "Those people outside annexes are just as 'mad' as those within, perhaps even 'madder'! Society is one big chauvinist towards the 'unwell'" (162). Farai is expressing Foucault's idea of spatial partition and control "according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment of differential distribution" ("Panopticism" 4). *Chairman of Fools* rejects this binary division with its medical regime that separates diseased/mad individuals from society. The hospital annexe marks this separation as it also becomes society's microcosm, mirroring the outside world. This other space of the city offers an indirect critique of Zimbabwe's politics of violence and disorder since the inmates, unlike their counterparts outside the annexe, successfully conduct fair elections and efficiently maintain the cleanliness of their environment. The world outside is chaotic (80, 81). Though separated from the outside world, the annexe is shaped by it as most of the inmates are victims of societal forces (107, 108). The annexe, given the metaphor of the nation as house, brings to the surface the unresolved debate in the last chapter of Strife. If one recollects Godfrey's statement in Strife, "I actually feel abandoned at the helm of this ailing ship our affairs" (147), the ship metaphor can be extended to the annexe, where again, to recall Godfrey's words, "It is as if a roaming affliction has camped within our household" (135).

The Zimbabwean city that is evoked in Chinodya's novels is dystopic, but this portrayal is balanced by the evocation of the violence of another African city and of a European city.   Encounters in the foreign city are of a violent kind: in Germany "a group of Nazis cornered him in the street, beat him up with batons and sprayed something in his face", and in Swaziland "he watched a colleague's face burst into bloody pulp as apartheid police beat him up" (135). It is the Hillbrow mugging, abduction and savage beating that stand out as one of the most horrific expressions of xenophobia (136, 137, and 139). This narrative of the failure of the cosmopolitan imagination and in the foreign city does not imply that the local city is violence free. In Tagwira's novel the portrayal of violence in the city comes with its amelioration by the emergence of new men and women in the city.

6.4 The persistence of the township in *The Uncertainty of Hope*

The main characters in Tagwira's novel *The Uncertainty of Hope* are two friends, Onai Moyo and Katy Nguni, who dream of escaping from the architecture, the gossip, and ugliness of the township. Throughout the novel the two women complement one another, and this evokes a powerful image of female bonding, reminiscent of Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning* (in the Getrude-Zandile relationship.) Their lives intertwine as each becomes a foil for the other. The writer uses contrast and comparison to show how these two women in particular respond differently to living in the township, and deal with the pressures of traditional patriarchy, spousal infidelity and abuse, raising children in the most uncongenial of urban environments, and dealing with the brutality of the police who destroy market stalls and shacks that house those who cannot afford decent accommodation. It is through these two women that the township experience is most profoundly felt, although other character pairings in the novel also extend the range of township experience.

Tagwira's novel is often read in one of two ways: either as an HIV/AIDS novel focusing on the infection risks faced by women in a patriarchal culture that encourages men to have unsafe sex with multiple partners (Chitando) or as a Murambatsvina novel that opens a unique fictional window onto the massive displacement of people by a black postcolonial government (Nyambi). Neither reading is attentive to the breath of fictional experience that this novel presents. It strains at the seams with references to the Zimbabwe of 2005: the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Operation Murambatsvina, the decline in the formal economy, cross-border trade, human trafficking, inflation, shortages of consumer goods, the collapse of government funding for university students, the flight of skilled personnel from most public institutions and a host of other urban problems that the two friends in the novel, Onai and Katy, and their families experience. The novel cannot therefore be reduced to either an HIV/AIDS or an Operation Murambatsvina narrative: it imagines a city that exhibits various symptoms of urban dis-ease. Much of this dis-ease, which Muponde asserts characterises Chinodya's fiction, comes from the persistence of the township as one of the manifestations of colonial memory. Placing Tagwira's novel in the context of writing the city in the Zimbabwean literary canon frees the text for a reading that focuses on the exigencies of living in the city without trivialising the suffering caused by HIV/AIDS and forced urban removals. This analysis seeks to explore what the writer brings to the imagining of the city. Tagwira evokes the abject space of the township; he highlights asymmetries that prevail, as exemplified in the contrasts between the families of the two women friends in the novel; and

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he portrays the strategies used by the postcolonial state to intensify the abject condition of the township residents – and he suggests ways of escape.

The township does not disappear with the coming of independence but continues to proliferate in both old and new ways. In a city whose economy has morphed from formality to informality, from the legal to the illegal and from the certain to the uncertain, the insecure township residents pursue novel but unorthodox ways of survival. Although their husbands are in formal employment, Onai and Katy have to work as market traders to ensure that their families survive. All are driven towards illegality. For instance, Katy's husband, John Nguni, is a cross-border truck driver who ends up trafficking women and dealing in foreign currency. Mbare Musika, Harare's largest market, the hub, is a place of abjection, and acquires a "distinctive flavour" of "legal and illegal deals" (49). The post-2000 forms of informal survival are defined by a moral and legal ambiguity that creates a sense of uncertainty in the lives of fictional characters in the novel; these strategies are described in local parlance as kukiya-kiya [make do/improvise] (Jones, 285). Like the native location in Lessing's *A Ripple from the Storm*, or Vengere in Marechera's *The House of Hunger*, or Makokoba in Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, or Munhumutapa in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*, Mbare (as the underside of the colonial city) is portrayed as a site of original but troubled black city belonging. In both Marechera's novella and Chinodya's novel it emerges as a site of deep trauma and unsettled location. Literary texts analysed in previous chapters of the thesis and in the earlier sections of this chapter construct the township as an iconic space for a politics of struggle and urbanisation for migrants coming into the city, described here as "residents without residence permits" (Bauman,"Parvenu" 24). Tagwira's novel enters this tradition as it portrays how the space that inaugurates black urban subjectivity also marks the incompleteness and failure of becoming urban.

Three decades after independence, the trauma of living in the township assumes unsettling postcolonial manifestations that re-inscribe the township as a place of abandonment, gender inequality, homelessness and economic insecurity. *The Uncertainty of Hope* has elements of what Njabulo Ndebele in his analysis of black South African literature describes as the "the spectacular" (49). Some of the characteristics of this literature of spectacle are the descriptions of "visible symbols of the overwhelming oppressive" system and "the sprawling monotony in architecture in African locations" (41). In the persistence of the colonial township that is the focus of the novel, the writer does not stop at mere documentation but proceeds to paint a gallery of township characters in the creation of a

vibrant sense of a community engaged in the everyday activities of surviving in the city. Tagwira writes about absent township men with little or no compassion or political resolve. This applies especially to Gari, Onai's drunken, promiscuous and abusive husband. John, Kathy's husband, is a cross-border driver, although he does pursue family interests most of the time, and he shows some compassion for the abused Onai. I emphasise these aspects because, when bad things happen to their families or to their community, these two men are not there. When the burglary at his house and the demolition of the shack occurs, Gari is away from home. Likewise, John Nguni does not experience the unsettling experience of urban demolitions. Although the two men are different, they differ in degree and not in kind as regards their treatment of women and their abandonment of them: Gari routinely abuses Onai while John is involved in the trafficking of girls, although he does not have sex with them. The novel's primary target of compassion is Onai, but as the plot unfolds and the criminal dimension of the "kukiya-kiya" economy unravels, Kathy also elicits compassion. Onai is vacillating, too forgiving and too accommodating, with a saint's capacity for misplaced sympathy that extends even to her abusive husband and to the husband's girlfriends who have contributed to her unhappiness. Onai overwhelming sorrow, is expressed in terms that reveal the generosity of this character who despite the nadir of her own life, extends her compassion to all those rendered homeless by Operation Murambatsvina:

> She cried about her miserable life with Gari. She cried about the food shortages. She cried about the market that had been closed, leaving her without livelihood. Out of the corner of an eye, she glimpsed Sheila's hunched figure and wept for all the people who had suddenly become homeless. She cried about the poverty that had left her crushed and hopeless, about everything that rendered her powerless, everything that held her bound in chains… (143)

Oliver Nyambi (n.p.) argues for a reading of the novel in the context of compassion for the victims of Murambatsvina. From the theoretical perspectives of Martha Nussbaum and Lauren Berlant, compassion is closely associated with both an aesthetic and a political imagination that seeks to establish a shared humanity. Nussbaum (14) defines compassion as "an emotion directed at another person's suffering or lack of well-being" and suggests it is characterised by four types of judgment that lead to an ethical decision to ameliorate suffering: "judgment of seriousness" (14); " judgment of non-desert"; "judgment of similar possibilities" and "eudaimonistic judgment"(15) – the latter is related to the aspect of human

flourishing. The four types of judgment relate to how the compassionate observer evaluates the suffering of the observed: its gravity, its undeserved nature, the possibility of the observer to find her or himself in similar circumstances, and the attachment of importance to the suffering person. Nussbaum points out the problematic aspects of compassion found in judgement where the possibility of misjudgement exists.

Lauren Berlant's definition, while not significantly differing from Nussbaum's, emphasises spectatorship: "compassion implies a social relation between spectators and sufferers, with the emphasis on the spectator's experience of feeling compassion and its subsequent relation to practice" (1). Of interest are Berlant's ideas regarding political responsibility, justice, and the withholding of compassion. In the novel the roles of spectator and sufferer are complicated by the fact that each fictional character implicated in the encounter of compassion in the city is simultaneously both spectator and sufferer. Onai feels compassion for the beggar (43, 53, and 88) who in turn sees marks of spousal abuse on her body. In the novel women are the ones who suffer most from spatial injustice in the city; they are the sufferers who deserve compassion. In times of crisis, when Onai's house is burgled and when the police come to demolish the shacks, the husbands are not at home. Onai Moyo, mother, dressmaker and the most abused wife in the novel, has an incredible capacity to receive hurt and hide the true extent of her abuse. She is trapped in a marital ethos of submission and suffering instilled by her mother, by her own sense of personal dignity and by the belief that both her doomed husband and her marriage are recoverable. Her friend who comes to her rescue on several occasions tells her that it's her naivety that makes her vulnerable. She becomes the target of rumours circulated by Maya, the township gossip, about her husband's outrageous womanizing. Her friend Katy has a husband who cares for his family and is resourceful in providing money for Faith, their daughter at university. However, there are the things that detract from John Nguni being seen as a paragon of virtue. As a cross-border truck driver he is exposed to the temptations of foreign currency deals, prostitution and human trafficking. Katy is a realist and acknowledges the weaknesses of men but she is not an agent of change. On her return from hospital, Onai "took in her surroundings with fresh eyes" and is convinced that Mbare "was not the best place where she wanted her children to grow into adulthood" (52). Neither is the country where Onai's children temporarily seek refuge when she loses the township house. Zhombe and Chiwundura represent the rural, but although they take in those displaced by Operation Murambatsvina, they are not places of hope, especially for women. Chipo, Gari's sister, a

"hard, scornful woman" (257) cannot understand the gender injustice experienced by Onai in the city and withholds compassion. MaMusara, Onai's mother, although concerned about her daughter's dispossession, advises Onai to respect tradition and the outrageous patriarchal demands it makes to avoid turning her children into "outcasts from the Moyo clan" (159). For Onai the country is a place where people come home to die, and this realisation gives urgency to her return to the city.

Escape from the township is premised on rescue by external agents: Tom Sibanda and Tapiwa Jongwe, two friends whose identities are ambiguous. Tom is portrayed as a Prince Charming who rescues Faith, a law student at the university, from her background of township deprivation. Tom is the more dubious of the two, as there are indications that he is too close for comfort to the centre of power: he has prior knowledge of the police plans to demolish illegal structures, is the owner of a farm with troubled history and seems to have unlimited access to foreign currency in times of crisis. Faith has a momentary feeling of "bewilderment and antagonism" (22), caused by Tom's refusal to tell her how he knows about the impending demolition. A number of questions about Tom remain unanswered in the novel. It is through him though the different threads of the narrative are interwoven. His relationship with Faith provides him with a direct connection with the township that enables, in part, Tapiwa Jongwe's philanthropic project to acquire its township anchor. Encounters with strangers in the city are posed by the text as more important than engagement with the collective in seeking the transformation of lives and escape from the site of trauma. On the day the police decide to demolish the market at Mbare, the main characters do not show solidarity with colleagues. It is left to Maya, the township gossip, and Beady Eyes who loves "running battles with the police" (132) to put up poorly organised resistance. The crowd, led by Maya, is dominated by "a mood of hilarity" and is excited by "the idea of challenging uniformed authority" (132). A more judgemental attitude towards the crowd comes out in the phrase, "ripples of unruly excitement" (133). In a comment on the character of Hondo, the ex-guerrilla fighter who loses both his shack and the goods he had imported from South Africa together (and commits suicide) is described as "a highly-strung man with a tendency towards political fanaticism" (153). This gives added emphasis to the novel's trivialisation of political action as a form of unruliness. Any sense of community in the novel is dispersed in private action, as shown by the suicide of Hondo and the ineffectual spectatorship of many of the township residents, in the face of brutal state power.

The sojourner in the township, Mawaya, does not show solidarity with those resisting the police because of his nature: "He abhorred violence in any form and wanted to get as far away as possible" (134). This distancing from the politics of engagement represents the alternative to it – in the form of compassion – as both voyeurism and a learning experience. Tapiwa Jongwe, who appears in the greater part of the novel as the madman and beggar Mawaya, chooses to adapt a traditional ritual, kutanda botso ("appeasing the spirit of a wronged deceased mother") (Gwandure, "Dissociative Fugue" 5), as expiation for wrongs that he has done to his deceased wife (301). The wandering beggar provides a contrast with Gari, Onai's wife-bashing husband. In a reverse migration from the suburbs of privilege back to the township, the inaugural space of the modern Zimbabwean urban subject, Tapiwa learns new ways of re-thinking gender relations and finding compassion for the poor. By entering the abject space of the township, Tapiwa Jongwe turns himself into a suffering compassionate spectator who observes the lives of the marginalised. He indeed suffers a willing deprivation in his performance of the role of beggar and lunatic (the name "Mawaya" literally translates as "loose wires") – but unlike the actual beggars and mad people in this society of scarcity, his return to a society of affluence is guaranteed. In Mbare he becomes the recipient of Onai's compassion and generosity, an experience that touches and transforms him. In the purification rite he redeems himself and learns compassion for the poor. When he returns to his home in the suburbs of privilege he responds to the request of his friend's girlfriend and offers Onai the opportunity to run his deceased wife's business. Tapiwa Jongwe's generous offer includes a house close to the workshop and his residence. This is the moment when Onai's dream is fulfilled.

From the very beginning Onai dreams of a house in one of the more spacious suburbs of Harare, like Belvedere, where one of Gari's colleagues owns a house: "How she wanted to live in a place like that….What she would give to have a spacious home with a garden full of flowers?" (34). Her own efforts to acquire the dream home with a dream garden, in a practical way, are unsuccessful. In presenting the failure of secular effort, both individual and collective, to transform lives, the novel offers, in its place, compassion and a fairy-tale rescue. In the race towards a happy ending, events happen with "lightning speed" (350). The transformation of Onai from "frump" to woman (353) is an important aspect of the narrative of hope that does not extend to the many recipeints of Martha's compassion in the township. This is in preparation for her unusual job interview with Tom Jongwe at the Meikles Hotel, an upmarket establishment for foreign tourists and local elites. The hotel rendezvous, which

reads more like an assignation between lovers-to-be (despite the strained decorum in the telling of the story), serves to accentuate the extremes of poverty and affluence that exist in the same city. It also is a halfway house for Onai on her road to her dream world of a house in spacious and beautiful surroundings. After her loss of home through unjust traditional inheritance practices, Onai is happy to be employed and accommodated by her benefactor: "It felt good to have her own address again" (362). Her happiness exceeds expectation when she discovers that the workshop's windows "opened out into a garden flooded by the morning sun and the bright colours of summer flowers; white and purple petunias; deep orange geraniums" (360).

Although political agency in the form of collective action is disavowed in the novel and escape from the township for Onai and her children does not come directly through individual effort, a re-thinking of agency is suggested in the compassion narrative of the novel. The moral aspect of agency in the re-making of gender, in both the private and public sphere, offers new ways of (re)imagining the city.

6.5 Conclusion

The unhomeliness of city spaces and houses that is evoked in the novels by Chinodya and Tagwira examined in this chapter is qualified by a refusal to romanticise the country as a cultural and epistemological asylum for those unsettled by the existential conditions of city life. Both contest the contemporary political investment in the discourse of autochthony residing in the land and the past. At the end of the migration to the city in Chinodya's novels and the "happy" ending in Tagwira's novel, new men and women are emerging in the city in ways that exceed the traditional and nationalist tropes of gender.

REFIGURING THE (DIS)PLACED SUBJECT IN THE POSTCOLONIAL AND POST-IMPERIAL CITY IN POST-2000 FICTION BY PETINA GAPPAH AND BRIAN CHIKWAVA

7.1 Introduction

From the very beginning of city writing in Zimbabwean literature, urban space has been highly politicized and marked by both horizontal and spatial inequalities that account for the production of some subjects who are able to speak, are visible and have the freedom of movement, whereas others are unspeaking, invisible and have no control over their movements. The socially and culturally/racially excluded occupy space that Georgio Agamben conceives as the "camp" – characterised by "absolute conditio inhumana" (97) where rights and the protection of the law are suspended. Agamben's term suggests both containment and exclusion, and this is apposite in analysing the portrayal of the state of exception in the city. Specific urban spaces like the township and the informal settlements at the edge of the city show what Agamben conceives as "the hidden matrix and nomos [law] of the political space in which we are still living" (95). In the parts of *Harare North* set in Zimbabwe where the camp nomos prevails, the state egregiously invokes a state of exception and unleashes violence on its own citizens. This chapter links the concept of "bare life" with the portrayal of those bereft of aesthetic capital in Jacques Rancière's complex concept of "distribution of the sensible"/ "partition of the sensible/perceptible". He defines it as "an enunciative and demonstrative capacity to reconfigure the relation between the visible and the sayable, the relation between words and bodies ("Dissenting Words" 115). He also elaborates it as "the distribution of words, time, space" ("Literature, Politics, Aesthetics" 8). I theorise the politics of the sayable and the visible as linked to the capacities of characters in the fictional to speak and appear in particular city spaces.

The inequality in the city is associated with this distribution of the sensible and this gets particular attention at the end of Marechera's short writing career in *Scrapiron Blues*, and receives a gendered focus in the novels of female novelists (*Nervous Conditions* and *Without a Name*). A re-distribution of the sensible occurs in Gappah's short stories, for example "The Sound of the Last Post" and "My Cousin-Sister Rambanai" (in *An Elegy for*

Easterly), in which city women claim power and authority to tell their stories. In Brian Chikwava's short stories the humorous narration and the focus on marginal characters as they traverse various country and city spaces brings into sharp contrast different worlds, as in "The Fig Tree and the Wasp", "ZESA Moto Muzhinji" and "Seventh Street Alchemy". In his novel *Harare North*, the narrator is a "shoe doctor", an ex-convict, a member of the notorious youth brigade (the "Green Bombers") who narrates his story from exile, caught up in a complex web of marginality yet enjoying the power of narrating his story with all its contradictory ironies. Although Rancière's concept of the sensible is broader than my deployment of it in my analysis of literary texts, I find it appropriate in examining the politics of writing the city. By arguing that prose fiction is particularly amenable to the redistribution of aesthetic capital, the analysis of selected literary texts in the present chapter focuses on shifts in narrative power, voice and the gaze as they signal reconstructions of gendered and class positions that contest the prevailing state of inequality in the city. Working against simplistic notions of inequality, Gappah and Chikwava complicate these by attending to the complexities that result from horizontal and vertical differences in a variety of city spaces. Figuring city space as politicized, the two writers offer narrative and genre as critical tools in the re-distribution of aesthetic power and the re-mapping of the city.

Chikwava consciously reworks Marechera's linking of the city and aesthetics in a relationship where the two become mutually constituting. I use this entwining of urban space and aesthetics to engage with Rancière's work on politics and literature and what he conceives as "a reconfiguration of the way we share out or divide places and times, speech and silence, the visible and the invisible" ("Politics and Aesthetics" 203). The idea of sharing or dividing implies a linking of aesthetics to democracy and the discourse of the right to the city. The right to the city discourse is grounded in notions of belonging and access to material and legal resources that are (or should be) accorded to citizens. Neither abandoning nor diminishing the right to the city discourse, the texts by Gappah and Chikwava engage in Rancière's reconfiguration as they portray new flows of aesthetic power in the city. This redistribution of aesthetic resources broadens traditional notions of democracy and suggests the possibility of initiating the process of re-routing power from the centre back to the dispossessed, displaced and marginalised in the city. It also initiates Henri Lefebvre's politics of the possible (232) that allows me to re-think the possibility of insurgent cities contesting the spatial and aesthetic regimes of the city.

This chapter focuses on aesthetic power as it allows the marginalised to free themselves from a 'grotesque thraldom' of the past in the form of the Chimurenga monologue that constantly invokes a Liberation War heroism. This discourse is locked in the past and Ranger ("Nationalist Historiogrphy")associates it with the partisan use of history in Zimbabwe. Ranger asserts that this ZANU PF version of history is largely an abuse of history. I use the expression 'grotesque thraldom' here to describe 'a politics of the cemetery' which enslaves the city and nation to the past, as exemplified in Gappah's short story, "At the Sound of the Last Post": "the youth choir dressed in bottle-green fatigues, voices hoarse in the August heat, singing songs from a war that they are not allowed to forget" (5). The anonymous narrator, who is constructed as complexly marginalised, seeks to claim narrative power at the margins state power. He ironically subverts the Zimbabwean nationalist master narrative by telling it from the perspective of a marginalised and abused insider. The stories of migration to the north conjure up an ambiguous feeling in immigrants, like the narrator in Chikwava's *Harare North*. The asymmetries in the distribution of aesthetic capital produce aesthetic inequalities linked to silences, invisibility and the misrepresentation of various marginalised groups in the city, especially women and migrants. Ellison's *Invisible Man*, a novel about those who are socially and culturally/racially excluded in the American city, provides a modern literary treatment of invisibility and how its protagonist sets out to achieve visibility.

In the focal texts by Chikwava and Gappah, the displacement is from the house, city or nation, and their imagining. This displacement explores the politics of the possible across various locations traversed by the displaced. Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (49) will be applied here to the postcolonial state and all microcosmic representations of it, including the city. To be displaced is to be denied participation in imagining the nation, denied meaning-making that is authorized by a nation's past. The displacement, despite the existential problems evoked in *Harare North*, produces an alternative and dissident narration of the city and the nation and contests the monologic narrative associated with Zimbabwean patriotic history, mentioned above. In the complex shifts in both aesthetic and political power that this chapter examines, place-making and the production of identity are conjoined in the production of aesthetics. This chapter argues that displacement in its various manifestations unsettles both the displaced and the city. This unsettling comes through the narration of both the postcolonial and post-imperial city, and in the case of Brian Chikwava's *Harare North*,

their linking by the socially and culturally invisible and voiceless. They (re)imagine the city as they subvert spatial and social hierarchies and contest iconic spaces in the city. The approach in this chapter focuses on the rejection of the notion of passive identities that are ascribed to the marginalised as they are displaced and disconnected from the hegemonic power structures of the city; they offer a form of resistance which emerges in the form of a re-appropriation of the power to re-imagine the city. I read this new politics of resistance, occurring within and outside hegemonic structures, as a revolt. Revolt in the popular imagination is a spectacular event or a series of spectacular events, but this misses the subtle ways in which the marginalised practice a politics of the possible.

In re-configuring the aesthetic regime of the city, various forms of fiction and narrative positions emerge. This chapter examines the formal and linguistic experimentation that is found in the focal texts as they enact the emergence of the power of the marginalised in the city and offer a multiplicity that is displaced in the monologic narratives of nationalist hegemony. I argue that the short story in post-2000 Zimbabwean fiction is the genre that is most suited to the re-distribution of narrative power in the city, a process whose political implications are suggested in the collapsing of boundaries between the historical and the fictional city. Narrating the city from a single position is associated with the univocal narrative power of the post-colonial state, operating from sites of power and authority. As stories proliferate in the aesthetic space of the city, they suggest a multivocality that is lacking in the hegemonic narratives of the state. The spatial spread of Gappah and Chikwava's stories and the variety of their narrators democratize narrative in their capturing of a multiplicity of positions. Their stories contest the monologic narration of the nation that occurs in specific iconic spaces of the city, for example the National Heroes Acre in Gappah's short story "At the Sound of the Last Post" and other sites where state rituals are performed, as in Chikwava's "The Fig Tree and the Wasp", and they question gender hierarchies in metaphoric and fictional houses in the city as metonymic space. Some of the stories, like "Midnight at the Hotel California" are closely related to the contestatory power of legends that circulate in the city and suggest the power and vibrancy of urban orality. Others like Chikwava's "The Fig Tree and the Wasp" and "Free Speech in Zimbabwe: The Story of the Blue-Stomached Lizard" rework traditional African fables to reconfigure postcolonial cultures and identities as they link the rural and the urban, the ancient and the modern. This re-working of genre and form connects with the writers' interest in new and old technologies of disseminating information and their interfaces and how they relate to a

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politics of genre, subversion, and survival in the city. This is seen in pieces like "An Elegy for Easterly" (the title story of Gappah's collection) and "One Dandelion Seed-head" by Chikwava. In Chikwava's novel, *Harare North*, the reworking of genre is both at the formal and linguistic level in a displacement of the aesthetic regime: the grammar of narrative power is complicated as the signifiers and signified of the postcolonial city of Harare and that of post-imperial London constantly shift in the ambiguous heterotopic space of the migrant.

In a return to the metaphor of the house that Marechera deploys to foreground belonging and location and the explicit and implicit pre-occupation with these aspects that runs through most the chapters of this thesis, I analyse the way narrative power becomes a tool to both unsettle and create homes, places and identities. Narrative enables the socially and racially excluded to re-inscribe the cartography of the city and the numerous imaginaries of which the city is a microcosm. While the texts celebrate the vocality and visibility of the marginalised, as illustrated in the final section on Chikwava, I place the textual exuberance in the context of counter-narratives of cosmopolitanism. The migrant space as portrayed especially in the Brixton squat in *Harare North* is viewed as the camp of the metropolis where the migrants, in their insecurity, experience several levels of displacement. Their attempts at self-location produce uncertain results, and the semiotic traffic between London and Harare fails to produce a reliable textual(-ised) space which the narrator can inhabit.

7.2 Women imagining the city in Petina Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly*

This section focuses on most of the stories from Gappah's collection as they explore how architecture and space reveal power relations. Stories such as "At the Sound of the Last Post" ("Sound") and "In the Heart of the Golden Triangle" ("Heart") deploy architecture and space to express state and class power respectively while in a story such as "An Elegy for Easterly" ("Elegy") the focus is on how space is used to exclude the marginalised. This subsection analyses the politics of subverting city space as male and the re-inscribing it (by Gappah) as female; subversion is achieved primarily by women claiming narrative power. It also examines the implications of migrant spaces as explored in two further stories in the collection, "Something Nice from London" and "My Cousin-Sister Rambanai".

This subversion and re-inscription of the city is a continuation of a literary tradition of women writers gendering city space initiated by her predecessors, Lessing, Dangarembga and

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Vera. Gappah's contribution to this tradition of writing by Zimbabwean women is seen in the way she complicates and deepens the politics of gender in the city. However, her reading of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* as a novel that is "not just about politics and prostitutes", and her allusion to what she perceives as a narrowness in the portrayal of women in Vera's and Virginia Phiri's novels, betrays Gappah's conception of both the political and womanhood. Gappah's own work is deeply political on several levels; it displays a politicization of aesthetics that has immeasurably contributed to the quality of her work. Gappah's stories portray women from across a large spectrum of Zimbabwean life acquiring voice and visibility in the city. Within this broad spectrum, Gappah's stories encompass different forms of marginality and offer an opportunity for comparative analysis. The stories also engage with Zimbabwe's postcolonial elite – especially the rulers that have not been subjects of fiction and who had escaped literary treatment. In one of her stories, "The Sound of the Last Post", rulers become objects of fiction and the female gaze. In placing her women characters in their different milieus in the city, Gappah portrays them as disempowered in most respects but she empowers them in ways afford them narrative power and the ability to reverse the gender gaze in the city. In contestation of the treatment of women as objects of the male gaze the narrator's in "Sound of the Last Post" and "The Cracked Pink Lips of Rosie's Bridegroom" turn men into objects of a critical female gaze.   This reversal captures complex spatial and aesthetic displacements that allow opportunities for imagining the city in relation to marginalised genders and classes.

The city is more than just its structures, its routes, and its maps. These aspects of the city are deconstructed, contested, and reassembled through subaltern voices, fictional constructions, and subversions. Fictional constructs and the "hard" city, in a relationship similar to one that is evoked in Marechera's short stories (see Chapter 4), are entangled in ways that reflect the realities of the post-2000 Zimbabwean state. In Gappah's short stories in *An Elegy for Easterly*, the imagined city and the real one reveal a similar entanglement. "Midnight at the Hotel California" illustrates this entanglement as it reveals the narrator's capacity to speak the unusually unsayable and point to the invisible in the city. This is one way of contesting city cartographies by bringing the reader's attention to those spaces that are officially un-mapped. Each story in the collection is narrated from a specific position that reflects gender, class, and city location in ways that do not privilege any one position. The stories use marginalised narrators from diverse classes, cultural and educational backgrounds to perform insurgent identities that contest fixed images of women in the city. Gappah's

version of insurgent aesthetics is inclusive as her stories about women traverse a broad cross-section of Zimbabwean society. She complicates simplistic notions of marginality by portraying women in the spatial hierarchy of the city experiencing gender exclusion and repression from their varied city and class locations. Gappah disrupts the narrative of a single-voiced, single-gendered and monolithic urban space in her subversions of the literary canon and the city as her women narrate their own versions of the city. Although the title of Gappah's collection focuses on the elegiac, the overall effect of the collection is complex as the writer combines both mourning and celebration in her constructions of the city in the context of the democratisation of aesthetics and cartographic power signalled above.

The stories that deal with the theme of mourning are "The Sound of the Last Post", "An Elegy for Easterly" and "Something Nice from London". Each of the three stories is about death in the city, grief and different cultures of mourning which are determined by class, gender, and position. In each there is a death that is grieved, but the ability to grieve for a lost life in the first and last stories is put in doubt by the writer's use of satire. "An Elegy for Easterly", the story that gives the collection its title, is about a life that is lost but not grieved for. The mad woman, Martha Mupengo, lives alone in a squatter settlement at the edge of the city. She is raped by Josephat, gets pregnant, delivers a baby alone and dies. Josephat's wife, who cannot have babies, steals the mad woman's baby (49). "Elegy for Easterly" closes with a perturbing image. On the day of the demolition of the slum, the power of the bulldozers contrasts with the fragility of "houses of pole and mud, of thick black plastic sheeting for walls and clear plastic for windows" (27) and with the extreme precariousness of the individual life, all of which are reminiscent of Agamben's conceptualisation of the camp as the place of "absolute *conditio inhumana*" (95): bulldozers "lumbered towards Martha's house and exposed her body, stiff in death, her child's afterbirth wedged between her legs" (52). The story's ending goes against the grain of the satirical tenor of most of the stories in the collection: it contrasts with the sense of a vibrant community at the beginning of the story, and probes the national conscience concerning the lives and spaces lost in the context of Operation Murambatsvina, the government's project of urban cleansing, on which the story is based. In contrast to the ungrieved lives of ordinary people, the state stages elaborate rituals of mourning for deceased members of the ruling elite, who, in a double subversion of cultures of mourning, become objects of satire in "The Sound of the Last Post". On one hand the President (in this story) subverts the funeral oration by turning it into a political harangue,

while on the other the reminiscences of the bereaved wife of the deceased government minister subvert the rhetoric and rituals of state-constructed heroism.

The setting of the story is Heroes Acre, the mausoleum built on a hill for the burial of "patriotic" Zimbabweans, a contested space that many Zimbabweans have come to associate with ZANU (PF) rather than the nation. Gappah deftly re-envisions this burial ground (an alleged symbol of national unity, patriotism, independence and enduring power) by offering both an insider's and an outsider's view. Belonging to a "band of foreign wives" (16) and to the category of woman accentuates the narrator's peripheral position in relation to the centre of state power, which is constructed as masculine. The social activities ("drank wine and watched films at State House"; "we raised children and hosted parties at which the talk was dialectical materialism and nation-building" (16) and charity work of elite women, despite the sheen of glamour, do not conceal their marginality that differs little from that of their less materially privileged sisters in the city, as depicted in many of the stories in collection. The narrator turns the state funeral into a subtle allegory of the nation-state as her subversion democratises the iconic space of Heroes Acre and turns those who enact its rituals into figures of fiction. This egalitarian impulse leads the narrator to turn public figures into symbols of human venality, frailty and mortality.

The male political body that dominates iconic space in the city features in official narratives as a site of enduring strength and hegemonic masculinity is a figuration that Gappah deconstructs as she interrogates the spatial, political, economic and social hierarchies which the ruling elite have established in the city. A paranoid and fascist regime has elevated the President's body to the plane of the sacred and any reference to it is deemed disrespectful and is treated harshly, but in the story the narrator desacralizes and humanizes it, and the iconic space in which state rituals are enacted is subverted by a dissident counter-narration. The story evokes images of power in decline, related to the senility of a masculine body (6). The masculine body as obscene, diseased and scandalous is reduced to metonym (the businessman who died with "red lips" [12]) as a result of the rampant sexuality of the political elite (11, 18, and 20). The reduction of the male body to a metonym continues in "The Cracked, Pink Lips of Rosie's Bridegroom" in a literary strategy that relieves the female body of its burden of signifying the nation. The communal voice reduces the male body to a symptom of disease, a scandalous inscription and mobile scarecrow whose meaning is lost on Rosie.

Not all elite women emerge from the spatial structures as successful initiators of a liberating aesthetic project. "In the Heart of the Golden Triangle" (103-110), a vignette that relies for its power on the setting, confirms conventional gender stereotypes, although it is narrated by a second person female narrator. Like "The Sound of the Last Post", this little story figures exclusive space as the carrier of hegemonic city cultures. Reflecting on the potential of place to produce a particular kind of citizen, the writer puts her narrator into a situation where she is not aware of the irony of her own narration and her situation. The "golden triangle" is an exclusive residential area where the narrator's neighbours are the Governor of the Central Bank, the French Ambassador and the British High Commissioner; it is a cultural and ideological trap of haute couture, foreign cuisine, elitist education, language and mimicry. While regaling the reader with the pleasures of affluent living and with anecdotes of "small houses" (108), the narrator betrays the sterility of her loveless life. Complacent in the power of place to confer privilege on its occupants, she enjoys her role as the modern black madam sharing gossip about maids with neighbours (104). This story exposes gender stereotypes and confirms the subalternity of women across class divides. This story of an affluent and better-educated woman adds a poignancy to her identity as a kept slave in a domestic economy of gender inequality. Despite differences she shares similar gender marginality with less privileged women portrayed in other stories in *An Elegy for Easterly*.

A girl narrator in "The Maid from Lalapanzi" provides a counter to the story of living in the affluent suburbs and portrays a housemaid as a living person. SisiBlandina, the maid, is an ex-guerrilla fighter from Lalapanzi, who tells stories about the country: "home to njuzu, fearsome creatures that sometimes took children and made them live under water" (156), a place where "lightning hunted out little girls and boys who played in the rain in red" (156) and where one might find "a goritoto, a ghost giant" (157). She also sings Liberation songs and recounts war stories. Her presence in this suburban house is a reminder of how war and rural archives migrate into the city to shape it. She was sexually abused during the war, and men continue to abuse her after independence. The poignant aspect of the story is the way that the black madam treats all her maids and her determined refusal to listen to SisiBlandina's story.

Two stories that are the most entertaining in their treatment of the dystopia of the postcolonial city are "The Mupandawana Dancing Champion" and "Midnight at the Hotel California". In these two stories Gappah makes use of what I consider to be an emerging

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urban orality that contrasts sharply with traditional orality that comes to the city through the maid from Lalapanzi. "The Mupandawana Dancing Champion" – in Gappah's irreverent way of dealing with public figures in fiction – is a satirical treatment of the late vice president Simon Muzenda's terminal days. Gappah's satire in the development of a story generally reserves sympathy for the satirical butt who has been subjected to abuse and abandonment. Mupandawana, one of the new sites of rural urbanisation, ironically known as growth-points, turns into a place of failed city modernity. In the story it is figured as dump and burial ground for the superfluous population of dystopian city modernity. The exchange of superfluous populations and death is not confined to national borders.

"Something Nice from London" and "My Cousin-Sister Rambanai" attend to this question of superfluity in the context of exchanges between the African city and cities in the north.   Goods, linguistic and semiotic signs, and identities flow along routes of exchange. Gappah puts the popular, redemptive, idyllic Zimbabwean migration narrative – in which a hard working relative in the diaspora sends remittances and exotic gifts to the family back home – metaphorically through a literary incinerator. Inverting the popular narrative of exchange of gifts along the London-Harare route, the story is about a bereaved family expecting the body of their relative who has died in London in an "area with many junkies" (79). After a long delay that requires several trips to the airport, what they get from London is not Peter's body but his ashes in a small parcel. Playing on the absence of the body and the panoply of funeral cortèges, the narrator disrupts the usual family discourses on final resting places and secure post-mortem identities. The brutal reduction of expectations based on a secure migrant body in exile gives a dystopian aspect to the more usual performance of unproblematic return staged at Harare airport by returning migrants.

"My Cousin-Sister Rambanai", though taking on the cultures of mourning in the city, offers a more sympathetic view on migration through its subtle change in the distance of the narrator from the focal character. At the beginning the narrator is distant from her cousin sister and tells Rambanai's story from a cultural nationalist position in the city where she mocks aberrations of diction ("faucet", "duplex" [207]), accent, dress ("too-tight clothes in vivid shades of pink" [207]) and behaviour. Rambanai has spent five years in America and comes home to mourn the death of a tyrannical father. Her brother in England who has been unable to come home sends money to finance a grand funeral. As the story develops the narrator moves closer to Rambanai and begins to appreciate what drove her from the family home into exile. A father with a fanatical belief in the value of education drives his children

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away from a home he has made into a space of abjection: "the forbidding exterior made it impossible for anyone to feel any warmth towards him" (209). The connection of the father with home signals the abandonment of the woman-as-nation trope in Gappah's writing. The father figure is here associated with the emptying of the superfluous population from a city that has become un-homely. Rambanai, whose American visa has expired and cannot be renewed, overstays in Harare as she mourns "the death of her American dream". According to the narrator, "Rambanai always seemed to be on the verge of departure" (213). This accentuates the restlessness that expresses a deep dissatisfaction with the postcolonial city of Harare as home. However, there is a positive aspect to Rambanai: during her stay she manages to draw the narrator out of her middle-class snobbery, associated with the exclusive suburbs of Harare. Rambanai travels various parts of the city that are associated with her Zimbabwe, "frozen in 1997, the year she left" (222).

7.3 Crossing boundaries in Brian Chikwava's short stories and *Harare North*

In "Free Speech in Zimbabwe: The Story of a Blue- Stomached Lizard", Chikwava, in his reworking of genre, crosses aesthetic, epistemological, temporal and spatial boundaries by bringing the folktale genre from the country to mediate the contemporary city. In this piece Chikwava reconfigures fable as critique and concedes his fascination with modern versions of the trickster figure. In the writer's critique one version is that of the "blue-stomached lizard" (19) or goblin, an enchanter who fascinates as much as he repels. This modern trickster figure has lost the folk-hero status associated with him in traditional African trickster tales. The short story "Dancing to the Jazz Goblin & his Rhythm" and the novel *Harare North* foreground the central role of trickster figures that have lost their folk-hero status by dominating urban space and fracturing fictional houses with a mad showmanship. In both the short story and the novel Chikwava complicates the goblin motif by portraying a hierarchy of tricksters who, while cheating their dupes, are engaged in mutually duplicitous relationships. In "Seventh Street Alchemy" ("Alchemy") and "ZESA Moto Muzhinji" ("ZESA") the goblin figure translates into the figure of a narrator and character who uses humour to bring out contradictions in the distribution of resources in the city.

Chikwava's prose writing acquires its unique character in the Zimbabwean literary canon through its formal and stylistic inventiveness. Far from being the mark of a quixotic idiosyncrasy, this experimentation emerges as a significant contribution to the innovative

narration of the city and the nation that has come to mark new writing from Zimbabwe. The formal and stylistic inventiveness that is associated with those on the margins of the city is part of an aesthetic endeavour to re-centre marginal identities and narratives in divided houses, fractured cities, and a polarised nation. Narrators and characters in Chikwava's fiction foreground those who are usually unheard and unseen in official narratives of the city and the nation, whether they are supporters or victims of a regime that silences and denies them visibility. Their voices in the stories and the novel are carried by goblin figures, narrators and characters performing insurgent identities and surviving in the city by their humour. In a complication of marginality, Chikwava reveals a broader view of the marginal by focusing on the implications of spatial divisions, connections and disruptions. Chikwava complicates the rural-urban divide by portraying the country as embedded in the city. In stories using the folktale mode, a supposedly outmoded genre, the superfluous population whose experience it mediates, migrate to the city to transform its cultural landscape. This migration of genre and population forms part of Chikwava's writing from a shrinking space of a politics of the possible that characterises postcolonial Zimbabwe; in this way he develops a democratic aesthetics in which characters from a variety of genders, generations and classes have access to the resources of imagining the city and the nation. Groups and individuals that define the zeitgeist of their times emerge from the heterotopic spaces of the frontline of the bush war, prison, the township and the postcolonial city itself to revision the city. This re-description registers cultural changes in the city, captures the rhythms that intertwine the private and the public life, and poses off-centric ways of imagining the city and nation.

In "The Fig Tree and the Wasp" ("Fig Tree") and "Free Speech in Zimbabwe: The Story of a Blue-Stomached Lizard" ("Free Speech"), Chikwava stages a fruitful interchange of genres, politics and spaces to forge a new grammar of cultures and identities. The interplay and mixing of genres in the two stories reflect "a constant interplay between antiquity and modernity" (Anyidoho 6) that runs through Chikwava's fiction from "Fig Tree" to *Harare North*. Chikwava figures the past spatially as the village and generically as forms of orature that help in the reading and shaping of identities. In one of his autobiographical stories, "One Dandelion Seed-head", which is about the diaspora and the complicated process of transitional subject formation, Chikwava foregrounds questions of genre, mode, style, technology and the exigencies of specific chronotopes. In this writerly text, Sam (who records a message for his father on a dictaphone) describes himself as "syntax-wrecking deviant, thief, and bi-polar lover, lost child, unable to belong neither here nor there" (253). In

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a description that points to "Harare North", "neither here nor there", the novel renders the heterotopic space of the migrant that produces new linguistic and formal elements.

Chikwava "writes back" to Dambudzo Marechera, but differs from his predecessor in his treatment of genre and space, aesthetics and marginality. Climbing down from the tall aesthetic hobby horse of his predecessor, Chikwava settles for a demotic style that uses fables and contemporary urban legends associated with popular culture to democratise the imagining of the city in stories like "Fig Tree", "Seventh Street Alchemy" ("Alchemy"), "ZESA", "Dancing to the Jazz Goblin & his Rhythm" ("Jazz Goblin"), "Free Speech" and "One Dandelion Seed-head". These stories contest the state's monopoly over narratives of the city and nation. It is argued here that transitions occurring across and between the rural and the urban, the local and global, the nation and post-nation, and the past and the present are often mediated by the marginalised who play a pivotal role in the production of new cultures and identities. "Fig Tree" marks the beginning of a trajectory of the production of stories informed by an aesthetics of the under-imagined – guerrillas, peasants, domestic servants, musicians, prisoners and prostitutes – that anticipates *Harare North.* Fixed notions of aesthetics carry with them formal notions of space and society that the stories and the novel subvert. One such subversion occurs when the folktale travels to the city to establish complex epistemological and aesthetic disconnections, to capture the zeitgeist of a particular era, and to explore various types of symbiotic and parasitic relationships in the city and the body politic. Chikwava does not fall into the trap of invoking a "dead genre" to create a sense of the exotic, or to give local colour to his writing or to confirm old moral and epistemological universes: he combines narrative, critique and a re-animation of the fable to narrativize the city and nation. "Fig Tree" portrays the transition from the heterotopic space of the liberation war camp where the insurgent elements, the guerrilla fighters, introduced the contestation of identity that liberated the formerly colonised and under-imagined. Chikwava is less interested in the violence and trauma of the war of liberation (this has been graphically evoked in many Zimbabwean literary texts): but focuses on the culture that despite its positive liberatory effect on the subaltern, gave birth to the HIV/AIDS tragedy and to other tragedies. In "Fig Tree" the folktale and the modern short story, autobiography and history, the country and the city as well as public and private narratives intertwine in the trope of the iskokotsha dance that the narrator describes as "a sex pantomime of outrageously suggestive moves that enthralled our young nation for the decade to come" (1). While Yvonne Vera uses the improvisations of kwela and jazz music to embody and contest city cultures of the

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1950s in her novels *Butterfly Burning* and *The Stone Virgins*, Chikwava uses the *iskokotsha* dance, associated with the liberation war guerrillas, to portray a collective performance of a postcolonial Zimbabwean identity.

"Fig Tree", a densely layered story about the narrator's encounter with the guerrillas, contradicts expectations of the much anticipated guerrilla brutality and turns into a learning experience about cultural and political transitions. The symbiotic relationship between the fig tree and the wasp in the natural world changes when it comes to sexual relations in society among men. In the natural world one gender is spared death while the other survives to continue with the propagation of the species. In human society no gender is spared. This mutation of this particular aspect of the fable is registered in the context of the isikokotsha dance in which host and parasite no longer benefit mutually from their relationship: neither the male nor female is spared from death to continue the propagation of the species. Starting in a rural setting and performed by ordinary guerrillas "who leapt into their dancing personas" (2), the dance stages an aspect of the liberation war that official narratives of political liberation have ignored. The cultural and political significance that Barbara Waxman attaches to dance in an African American context – the "self-affirmation, eroticism, spiritual renewal, and communal bonding" (91) that occur as performers dance – serves to shed light on iskokotsha as a dance defining the first decade of Zimbabwean independence. The iskokotsha dance encapsulates the sense of the new that the guerrillas bring from the heterotopia of the military camp. In the absence of the beat associated with their dance, the combatants "simply violated into submission" (2) the kwela beat of an older era. As it travels into the city where it initially is seen as a "bawdy rural aberration" (6), it is transformed into a tool of self-creation and serves as "shorthand of social survival" for the under-imagined like Screw Vet, the groundsman "with an athletic body sculptured by manual labour" (5), and Silingisiwe, the maid. The narrator describes as "places of excess" in the city where the dance is performed, but sexual relationships and their consequences are not articulated, and the HIV/AIDS narrative inverts the fig tree-wasp symbiosis of the fairy tale: "For in the fig-wasp world, when all the girls have flown away to lay their eggs elsewhere and propagate the species, the fig tree only goes down with the boys. In the world of men, when the rot set into the compound and townships, it spared neither sex" (6). The narrator, although mourning "unprecedented deaths coming soon after [our] liberation" (7), is not judgemental and concedes the dance's ambivalence as it "offered ample scope for anyone to transport themselves beyond the horizons that hemmed in everyday life" (7).

Chikwava's literary enactment of the newcomers with a re-contextualisation of fairy tale figures like the goblin and blue-stomached lizard, both associated with the trickster motif, to provide both description and critique of the grotesque in the city. In reworking the trickster motif in "Free Speech" and "Dancing to the Jazz Goblin and his Rhythm", Chikwava provides readers with the fairy-tale lens to read both the city and nation. In an essay that combines critique and folktale, Chikwava likens the Zimbabwean president to a roguish "blue-stomached lizard" (19) that has stolen colour from people's lives. In a further complication of the traditional trickster figure of African oral literature, the writer links Tafi, the jazz goblin, with another "creature of folklore" associated with the "wailing sirens" (55) of the presidential motorcade. These two goblin figures occupy the city's space, prop up their performance with "mad showmanship", are "cool with satanic deftness" (50); they perform noisy sonic dissonance in the postcolonial city and both invade space and overstay their welcome. Thus these figures of the modern trickster tale shed the folk-hero identity associated with the traditional trickster tale. In "The Jazz Goblin and his Rhythm" the narrator secures his freedom from one of the goblins who has invaded his private space, while he remains a captive of the national goblin.

"ZESA" and "Alchemy" portray a postcolonial dystopia conjured up by the "blue-stomached lizard" figure. The titles of the two stories indicate ways of seeing the city and surviving in it. The city with its stark contrasts of affluence and poverty demands a kind of humorous performance. In "ZESA", Ngoni the garden boy creates an identity with his trademark invocation of the power of ZESA and an action ("taking off his cap, and folding quickly like a deckchair, into a servile crouch" [41]) that defies the subservience that is demanded of him. The goat killing incident in which he wrestles obscenely with the goat is part of the grotesque humour found in Chikwava's writing that allows the marginalised to confront and mock the world that excludes them. The grotesque also features in "Alchemy" in the encounters between the official world and the parallel world of Fiso, a retired prostitute with no official documents. These two stories engage with the lives of the marginalised – musician, vendors, prostitutes and abused wives. One of the most powerful images of marginality in the city is Fiso who, because she has no identity documents, is considered to be non-existent in the official world. The unusual narrative method of the two stories accords recognition and visibility to social outcasts and their place in the city. In *Harare North* one of these social misfits is given the power to (re)imagine the city.

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Harare North's narrator is nameless, representing many of Zimbabwe's unemployed and under-educated youths enticed by politicians and used as political cannon fodder in the violent politics of post-2000 Zimbabwe. He emerges as a modern trickster who loses his folk hero status when he trains with the youth brigade, but this does not detract from his seductive performance of trickster attributes: he comes across as ambiguous and anomalous, as deceiver and trick-player; shape-shifter; situation-inverter; messenger and imitator of the gods and bricoleur (Hynes 34). He learns the style of outwitting one's opponents from Comrade Mhiripiri, his commander and mentor, through the use of linguistic and political terrorism in the city. The motif that colours the tenor of the novel: "For traitors punishment is the best forgiveness" (19), expresses this linguistic terrorism in a perverse displacement of signs and referents in postcolonial Zimbabwe where the city, dominated by a violent masculinity, as articulated by Comrade Mhiripiri (18), becomes a dangerous and uncertain place.

Riding the "hyena", a vehicle driven by a daredevil of a driver, the narrator participates in the performance of negative power to terrorise those opposed to the regime (18). The narrator quickly transforms from hunter of members of the opposition into the hunted of a compromised legal system. His flight to London is a way of raising money that he has to send home to make the police docket on him disappear. On arrival in the UK the narrator stays with his cousin, Peter, and his wife Sekai, but leaves when he realises there are changes in the family and gender dynamics that he finds unacceptable. He moves into a squat where his childhood friend stays with other Zimbabwean exiles and the London dispossessed. His commander, masquerading as the Master of Foxhounds, lives in the same neighbourhood and is exposed, despite the cover-up as the narrator threatens to mete out "forgiveness". The squat community collapses, the narrator's friend succumbs to drugs and the violence of junkies, and the narrator subsequently steals the friend's identity and money to complete a short chronicle of theft as performance and technique of survival in the city of exile.

The narrator is one of the goblins, the demonic tricksters of the postcolonial state. "Fig Tree" and "Free Speech" portray the sheer effrontery of his invasion of space, draining colour from people's lives and resulting in his dispersing of citizens across local and global borders. There is a longing for a home that cannot be accessed in *Harare North*, but unlike most migrant narratives, which express nostalgia for an idyllic ancestral imaginary, the anonymous narrator carries the burden of the violence and dominance he had previously wielded as a political thug in the city of Harare. It is not an accident that there is no reference

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to the narrator's father in the novel. He is portrayed as an adopted son of a revolution gone wrong as he finds a home in a political party in which Robert Mugabe and his commander become father figures; as a result he accedes to the logic of violence, dispossession and displacement. While one of the father figures disappoints, the other (Mugabe) remains as a constant model and sustains the collapsing identity the narrator carries into exile. The anonymous narrator differs, however, from these two father figures in that, contrary to his bluster and exaggerated claims of power, he is their victim. His victimhood continues in exile where he faces of the task of finding a place for himself.

The title of Chikwava's novel inscribes a misnaming through a linguistic exchange and performance that reflects the narrator's style as a daring bricoleur whose naming is intended to tame the foreign city. The displacement of city names, while attesting to the wizardry of the trickster, creates a problematic transition for the narrator and comes across as a misreading of both cities and also as a double displacement of the narrator. Place names like dreams, house motifs and modern communication technologies, provide the narrator with a imaginary retreat in the abject spaces of London. This transition is troubled, because in transferring an African signifying system to the post-imperial metropolis of London, the narrator misreads the city and becomes locked up in the temporal and spatial zone of ambiguity where his identity is in doubt   Neil ten Kortenaar (342), writing on postcolonial migrations, stresses the centrality of identity that features prominently in *Harare North*. While it possible to read *Harare North* as an example of "cheeky fiction" (Reichl & Stein) which provincializes London (and there is good deal of cheek in the novel), this does not come without various existential problems confronting the migrant. The narrator is aware of the problems of becoming a black Londoner and of placing himself in London. Connecting Harare and London does not minimise the thickness of the border and the insecurity of the resulting identities. In the very space of connection lies a treacherous border where the narrator slips as he tries to get up; a space that confines him to the margins, that keeps him walking not as a privileged nineteenth century flâneur but as a distressed man negotiating the multiple challenges of his migrant presence in post-imperial London. Despite the bravado, and the bravura of his narration, the reluctant migrant who seeks to return to Zimbabwe after accumulating enough money to pay the bribe and fulfil material expectations of relatives at home, pays little attention to the topographies of identity in the country of refuge. The irony built into the plot is that the initial exuberance of possible return is undercut by the impossibility of return to the homeland, and this gives the migrant narrative a particular

poignancy. The cosmopolitanism that is offered as redemptive of the imprisoning parochialism of Marechera's colonial and postcolonial houses, is questioned in Chikwava's novel, which focuses on the experience of less privileged migrants.

Harare North is Brian Chikwava's debut novel, one that is difficult to place in terms of setting, subject matter and language. Sean Christie's review of the novel claims that "the Zimbabwean elements of *Harare North* have a squeezed-in feel". This claim is contested here, since the Zimbabwean elements derive from the narrator's imagining the city and the nation-state from outside. The narrator is an ex-convict; a former township cobbler turned into a fanatical member of a youth militia, who celebrates his para-military identity. His narration is a performance of what Robert Muponde describes in his analysis of the Zimbabwean epic as nationalists offering a narcissistic "single-eyed interpretation of the bewitching war narrative from which they emerge as the action" (82). His enforced migration to London (a result of the duplicity of his former commander) allows him to narrate from a distance his story of bringing terror to both city and country. Multiple temporalities and spaces produce post-imperial London's heterotopia, which is occupied by immigrants. This space complicates narratives of the displacement and emplacement associated with the migration of the under-imagined. The persistence of the Zimbabwean elements in London attests to the thickening of the border. Etienne Balibar's description of the border qualifies cosmopolitanism ("not only is it an obstacle which is very difficult to surmount, but it is a place he runs up against repeatedly" [83]) and is useful for my understanding of the Zimbabwean elements as forming part of the border that the migrant narrator has to negotiate and as contributing to the ambiguity of both place and identity. Much of the humour in the novel comes from the narrator's negotiation of juridical, linguistic, cultural, and economic borders. These elements are also important in reading the postcolonial and post-imperial cities as foils of each other. The plausibility of these elements in a novel wholly set in London comes through the trickster figure, the house motif, and through the dreams and the various communication technologies – surface mail, mobile phones, the internet and British press – that function as narrative devices in the novel.

Two examples illustrate the importance of dreams: one is the narrator's dream of returning as a ghost to his deceased mother's house (14-16) and the other is when he returns to one of the sites of the Green Bomber crimes. The dream narratives link London with Zimbabwean spaces that have played a critical role in the construction of the identities of migrants. On his uncelebrated twenty-second birthday the narrator, newly arrived from

Zimbabwe and not quite street-wise, feels isolated. The dream of his deceased mother's house plays an important role in carrying the house metaphor and its affects into the diaspora. The trope of woman-as-nation is developed in this dream, where several motifs emerge: the similarity between house and mind (14); the red hens that point to ZANU PF's party symbol of political dominance; crows as birds of evil; "the black winds" that tear through the garden; "some big vex winds outside" and "some funny long breast roll out down and swing past my face like a pendulum" (16). The dream landscape evokes political instability, violence and terror in contemporary Zimbabwe to which the narrator (in no small measure) has contributed and to which he also has become vulnerable. The image evoked – "breast is cold; the milk dry up long time ago" (16) – deflates the mother trope that the narrator tries to resurrect in the figure of Tsisti and conveys the sense of an exhausted nationalism that recent studies of Zimbabwean nationalism characterise as a "grotesque nationalism". In the second dream Green Bombers are taken by their commander to some rural areas for survival training (113-114). Here they invite villagers to a game of tsoro in which the losers pay winners in kind. The winning streak of the youth brigade disconcerts the villagers, who are saved by an old man, a master of the game, who begins to win back all they have lost. The losing youths suspend the rules of the game and threaten violence. The oblique political satire in the dream is not lost in the context of post-2000 Zimbabwean politics. In both dreams the narrator subconsciously links his deceased mother and Nehanda, the icon of Zimbabwean nationalism, to suggest a mother figure dissociated from violence.

If dreams link the narrator and the home he has been forced to abandon, surface mail, e-mail, and the mobile phone are routes along which flow traffic of outrageous demands from Shingi's relatives (197, 199, 202), current news from home (106, 112-113, 120) and news of the Southern African diaspora. The links reflect the impossibility of imagining either the Zimbabwean city or nation as occupying homogenous space and temporality. Chikwava subjects the house metaphor he borrows from Marechera to a literary subversion by making it travel across boundaries, as the narrative questions the relevance of the "grotesque nationalism" or "war vet nationalism" offered as panacea to his country's problems by the naïve but confident narrator. Marechera's "house of hunger" is subjected to new postcolonial displacements where it occupies multiple sites and Chikwava proceeds to enrich and complicate it by introducing caring mothers and aberrant father figures. *Harare North* portrays the various houses it invokes as deeply implicated in the imagery of wind. The novel's title suggests semantic displacement, emplacement and travelling cartographies,

metaphors and affects that link all houses. The dominant figure of "house of stones" around which various aspects of the dysfunctional imagining of both city and nation gather is dominated by Robert Mugabe as a goblin figure; a "powerful wind" is associated with images of violence and insecurity (8). He is the authority behind the Green Bombers ,"the boys of the jackal breed; the boys that drink beer instead of tea for breakfast" (125) who are there "to smoke them enemies of the state out of they corrugated-iron hovels and scatter them across the earth"(8). The transference of the wind imagery to the Brixton squat and London streets (205, 207) carries with it the same effects of destabilisation and insecurity.

The two houses described in the short dream narratives are allegories of the dysfunctional, unstable Zimbabwean postcolonial house dominated by the narrator's hero, Robert Mugabe, celebrated in unqualified adulation as a "powerful wind" (8) in the "house of stones" (125), one that is both a typhoon and vengeful spirit (mamhepo) of Shona cosmology pursuing those fleeing its reach in the diaspora. A letter from MaiShingi describing the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe moves the narrator to say the following: "The winds is howling through house of stones, tall trees is swaying and people's lives is beginning to fall apart, everything start to fall apart now" (204). All the communication that Shingi receives in exile revolves round the traumatic chain of events associated with Operation Murambatsvina; the "harmonized" elections; the discovery of diamonds and political terror. On the death of politics of possibility that followed Zimbabwe's "harmonised" elections, the narrator says: "The winds is howling through house of stones, tall trees is swaying and people's lives beginning to fall apart, everything beginning to fall apart now" (205). By figuring Robert Mugabe, his national hero, as a tropical storm, the narrator in the characteristic verbal and dramatic irony that flows through the novel focuses on the failure of the post-colonial elite to re-imagine the nation.

Migrants, characterised by the precariousness of their lives, carry this failure into the diaspora, as illustrated by the old suitcase the narrator has inherited from his mother. In *Harare North* the house metaphor is linked to the suitcase that the paranoid narrator jealously guards. The suitcase is not important so much as a repository of material belongings, but as the carrier of identities, affects, the national imaginary and ideologies. The symbolic importance of the suitcase becomes clear when the author says it carries the "smell" of his mother, revealing the nationalist trope of the nation-as-mother. As longs as migrants carry the burden of the city and their nation of origin they are neither here nor there, their affiliations are divided and their language expresses placelessness. Jeroen de Kloet and Edwin Jurrieëns

describe the condition of the migrant as one of "distant belongings and close encounters" (9). The characters in Chikwava's novel are caught up in this space between the vanishing geography of their ancestral home and the intimidating physicality of the host country; they only exchange one geographic location of homelessness and abject condition for another (most of the characters in the novel from Zimbabwe and various parts of Africa come from insecure homes or houses).

The patriotic narrator says at the beginning of the novel, "I never wanted to leave Zimbabwe and come to this funny place but things force me" (16), to show that he has not abandoned his ideological attachment to the "house of stones", but as the plot unfolds he becomes more enmeshed in his emplacement in the foreign city. In a displacement of grammatical categories beginning with name place, Harare, the possessive pronoun shifts to the Brixton squat (145, 156, 175, 184), one of the two diasporic houses that carry the burden of the house metaphor, to indicate the narrator's unconscious transfer of allegiance to London. The two houses in London are homes for different kinds of migrant identities, the privileged and the precarious, and reveal how metaphoric houses are transformed in exile and how the narrative of return to the original homeland is re-written. On his arrival in London the narrator is accommodated at Sekai and Paul's house. The second house is the Brixton squat where Shingi, the narrator's friend, and other Zimbabwean migrants live. In the first house, what the narrator quickly notices are the changing dynamics of gender power and the difficulty of sustaining essentialist conceptions of sexuality and the family. Sekai is transformed by migrant experience into a new woman (5). The narrator does not feel comfortable with these changes, but on discovering Sekai's infidelity he reveals his hypocrisy when he proceeds to extort money from her, leaving Paul in the dark. In a variation of masculinity that uses corrective rape to control women's insurgent sexuality, the narrator blames his cousin for failing to give Sekai "some small baby to keep she busy" (7). The Brixton squat, "one heap of bricks that stand on its grey brick", has the appearance of Shingi's head (29). This squat, in which Aleck plays the tyrant and exploits fellow immigrants by charging rent, is a microcosm in exile of the "house of stone". The narrator uses his trickster skills to insinuate himself into this house and into Singi's head, thus preparing the reader for an elaborate, humorous and frightening identity theft by this prankster. In a game of survival that is not much different from the game of tsoro in one of his dreams, he takes over Shingi's name, passport and mobile phone. He breaks the lock on Shingi's suitcase, hacks into Shingi's e-mail account, and plays an elaborate hide-and-seek

game with Shingi's relatives as he abandons the squat for the streets. The houses in the diaspora and in Zimbabwe are portrayed as collapsing; and, the suitcase that carries the narrator's sense of home empties out (227, 228). This emptying out accentuates the contestation of   identity as territorially bounded and autochthonic. This recalls the rather brutal dismissal of the narrator's claims of Zimbabwean identity in the words, "Zimbabwe was a state of mind, not a country" (183). Stripped of affects, identities, and history, the narrator loses all the trickster attributes that made him invert situations to his advantage: he remains a very fragile, homeless immigrant sharing the backstreets of the metropolis.

In the migrations of the house metaphor and its carriers, what counts is not the uniqueness of the Zimbabwean diasporic experience but the ways in which it is part of a shared experience of being on the periphery of the metropolis. This explains why, despite the stubborn nationalist parochialism of the narrator, the novel portrays a cosmopolitanism of the displaced, dispossessed and exploited in the streets and squats of Brixton. The novel, despite its Zimbabwean colouring, is also about what Sassen describes as "the coming together of the most astounding mix of people from all over the world" (649).

7. 4 Conclusion

The under-imagined, those lacking the aesthetic and political resources to tell their stories in the texts discussed in this chapter, do not emerge as totally abject. Although Gappah and Chikwava do not seek to minimise and depoliticise the spatial asymmetries in the city and the material deprivations suffered by the marginalised, what they do is shift to a more complex politics of the city. They foreground, in a literary expression of a new form, a rather textual form of resistance, the right of the marginalised to aesthetic resources that enable them to describe the city from their position as women and the scorned ones in society in *Elegy for Easterly* or as demobilised fighters, domestic workers, young political party thugs and immigrants in Chikwava's short stories and in *Harare North*. Travel across spatial frontiers in the texts studied here implies a complicated loss or transfer of aesthetic power and the re-figuring of fixed notions of identity and belonging.

CHAPTER 8:

CONCLUSION

My emphasis on (dis)connections, troping the city and the motif of travel has made this thesis a palimpsest, a theoretical house with inter-connected rooms, and a surface where conceptual and literary journeys are undertaken. Each chapter like the different layer of the literary city it analyses is kept in conversation with previous layers and subsequent ones. Each chapter also marks a new beginning and measures the distance travelled in imagining the city that – as in Bauman's theorisation of modernity – can never be finalised. In this regard there is always a sense of the provisional as the city recomposes itself and is re-composed by the fictional characters in it who oftentimes without their being aware of it work with the remains of a prior city. It this incompleteness, despite the tendency to rigidity in the official imaginings of the city, that shapes both the city of fact and that of imagination.

The concept of the urban palimpsest in which according to Huyssen it is no longer possible to expect a "relative stability of the past in its pastness" (1) has been productive in my analysis of the significance of what rises to the surface and what travels along it. This has allowed me to attend to the city's different layers and tendrils of varying lengths that travel in multiple directions and at different speeds. Each layer represents a particular imagining of the city, episteme, spatiality and temporality that is never wholly erased or repressed. As the different layers infuse their interpenetrations invite a more complex reading of the colonial/postcolonial, imperial/post-imperial and national/transnational city.

In the interpenetrations between the colonial city and the postcolonial one emerge in different ways. There is the persistence of colonial city spatiality in the form of the township. In the colonial city evoked in the focal texts race and gender play a critical role in shaping the city. In the postcolonial city, race becomes muted in the politics of marginalisation and a category of exclusion suppressed in portrayals of the colonial city comes to the surface. In his critique of studies of the South African apartheid city Freund notes how ''the class dimension was subordinated to racial politics" (186). This subordination appears in both the portrayal and study of the pre-independence city in Zimbabwe. The surfacing of this repressed class category in the postcolonial city becomes an important aspect of re-imagining the city. In Marechera's portrayal of the postcolonial city in *Scrapiron Blues*, in Chinodya

and Tagwira's texts that I have analysed in chapter 6, and in the short stories of Gappah, class reasserts its dominance in shaping the city.

The township then becomes the space of class politics. Although Tagwira does not flatten out township experience by writing in material differences among different characters the township still remains a kind of social and economic prison for those that have failed to escape poverty and to whom the project of city modernity has become elusive. They continue in the main to be pariahs and nomads I have highlighted in the analysis of Chinodya and Tagwira's texts. In my placing of texts by Chinodya and Tagwira, writers who belong to different generations, I deliberately staged connections in the urban palimpsest to tease out continuities and departures in city re-imagining as different temporalities of the city speak to each other. The linking of *Harvest of Thorns*, Chinodya's text on the colonial city and Tagwira's novel, is a deliberate gesture created to provoke a rethinking the city beyond the colonial-postcolonial binary. The survival of colonial spatial patterns in the in *The Uncertainty of Hope* questions attempts to make city inequality and inaccessibility unique to the colonial city.

I hope I have demonstrated how the remains of the colonial city continue to shape those who have remained, those   who are unable to travel out of a dystopian urban space despite their ability to connect with transnational cities like Johannesburg and London in *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *Harare North*, respectively. The sense of un-belonging, unsettledness and nomadism in the city runs throughout all the chapters for those who come to the city trying to find some purchase in it. Un-mooring assumes a very physical dimension in the pavement laws of the colonial city and the hierarchy of urban space that finds urban blacks subordinated to the basement level of the city of Bulawayo evoked in *The Stone Virgins* and race-based spatial arrangements that are found in all the divided houses of the colonial city. In chapters 6 and 7, to quote from Judith Butler's "Afterword" to *Loss* ("Afterword: After Loss, What Then?", "the irrecoverable becomes, paradoxically, the condition of a new political agency" (467). In the pursuit of this complexity and deepening of the Huyssyen's palimpsest trope I have read city layers as ruins that encapsulate different kinds of remains and losses: "the loss that is undergone with exile; the loss that is effaced through colonization; the loss of culture that is performed by the mandatory production of a colonized subject" (Butler, "Afterword" 467).

Exile, an outcome of voluntary and coerced travel, appears in all the chapters. In the second chapter travel in one direction leads to an abandonment of the colonial city for the imperial one and entails loss of place and colonial identity. From chapters four onwards travel is complicated by return journeys that produce ambiguous senses of loss and gain. Such return journeys are described in their ambiguity in the endless (un)housings in Marechera's writing; in the shuttling between Bulawayo and Johannesburg by migrant workers in Vera's *The Stone Virgins*; in the travels between Harare and various transitional cities in Chinodya's *Chairman of Fools*; and in the return of the remains of the deceased in Gappah's short story "Something Nice from London". Abandoning the local city and embracing a foreign one simultaneously engenders both loss and gain, especially as portrayed in Chikwava's *Harare North*.

Travel from the country to the city, within the city and to other cities and across temporalities runs through all the chapters. The heroine in chapter two travels from farm to city, and in her nomadic outlook she crosses boundaries of race and gender in the colonial city of Salisbury. In the sequence *Landlocked* she signals her release from the colonial city as she heads for imperial city of London. In Chapter three I used the concept of the halfway house to analyse the significance of transitional spaces such as the rural store, the mission house and boarding school in the construction of citiness and city subjects. In *Nervous Conditions* the mission house and the boarding school are places of disconnection with rurality for Tambu in preparation for her location in the city. While a nativist aesthetic expressed by the poetic persona in Zimunya's poetry and the Old Man in Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* treats the city as foreign and the modern African city subject as an ontological aberration, I have argued for a recuperation of the city as an integral aspect in the production of the modern Zimbabwean experiences and identities.

I have also indicated how the departure from nativist aesthetics portraying the city as foreign space frees women from being treated as tropes of the nation closely wedded to the land. I have also indicated the aesthetic and ideological distances that the focal texts signpost as women travel to the city. Women writers place the city at the centre of their aesthetic and political struggles as they contest the masculinist figurations of women in the male texts. In a re-racing of these struggles that Lessing explores in her fiction Dangarembga, Vera and Tagwira portray women characters who struggle to escape the tyranny of the land. Their fictional heroines illustrate this in their search for new homes in the city away from the land portrayed as a place of lack and trauma. Owning space and contesting the gendered aspect of

the city becomes the focus of Vera's novels and is the defining feature of all the focal texts that are concerned with the cultural, colonial and postcolonial politics of city belonging, irrespective of the gender of the writer.

Although spatial inequalities in the colonial city are over-determined by race city space, in the literary questioning of postcolonial theory, it is class and political privilege that reconfigures the city. In any case, in my engagement with ruins and the palimpsest, I have pointed to a theory of ruins and persistent remains that necessitates a rethinking of the city in the palimpsest of temporalities. In the spirit of re-thinking the privileging of ruptures that is often associated with an amnesic imagination, I have pointed out how the imagining of subject, nation and city is placed in a complex set of local and trans-local (dis)connections by all the writers whose work I have examined in this thesis. One set of such (dis)connections is the country-city binary where the constant shuffling between the city and a rural home has not ceased, even in the recent fiction by a new generation of writers. It has remained important in the mutual co-production of rural and urban spaces, even in instances where city imagining has crossed national borders as in some of Gappah's stories and in Chikwava's *Harare North*.

I have placed the chapter on Marechera at the centre of the thesis as it looks back to previous chapters and anticipates subsequent ones in using the house trope to imagine the city as space officially bounded but constantly transgressed by an imagination that places it in a myriad of connections. In his writing Marechera portrays the city as a house of hunger, as a prison and as an unstable haven marked by escape and the uncertain benefits of return. In Chinodya city houses are haunted and the city itself becomes a hospital annex. In chapter six houses are subjected to a geographical and semantic shift as nomadic inhabitants of African city find themselves in challenging spaces of the diasporic city. In an unsettling interpenetration of the national city and the transnational one, the fictional city and the real one, the instability of borders and the uncertainty of city names produce migrant identities of those who un-moored from the two co-joined cities. While this un-mooring produces anxiety, dis-orientation and nostalgia in the migrant subject the accent on a narrative of failed return to the original city indicates an irreversible departure from thinking about the city nationally. It reflects a leaking of borders as cities and spaces flow into each that I hope I have emphasised. This openness of borders is not limited to cities only but is reflected in, for example, Vera's fiction in which I foreground the land-city connection as the writer's portrayal of new women in the city.

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Although above I have focused on travel and displacement in transnational contexts, all the chapters deal with internal displacement, especially that which occurs in the country-city dynamic where the constant traffic between the two entails different kinds of gains and losses associated with the production of the colonised subject. I have argued that citiness is produced in most of the texts in the way the rural and the urban are entangled. Their entanglement and mutual (re)composition engender loss and gain. Those who travel from the country to the city are caught up in the deprivations associated with the colonial city's logic exclusion based on both race and gender. Yet despite the spatial regime in the colonial city and the loss that is difficult to capture "the irrecoverable becomes, paradoxically, the condition of a new political agency" (Butler 467). I have read this agency as the capacity to re-fashion the self in which the city figures as a place of theatricality. The colonised and the gendered subject, against all odds, re-invent self while re-inventing the city. I have argued that music in Lessing's *A Ripple from the Storm*, Vera's *Butterfly Burning* and Chikwava's "The Fig Tree and the Wasp" is a key trope of this creativity. While emphasising the sense of the emergent and showing its efficacy as an instrument of resistance music also links different cities in ways that free the city from the stranglehold of claims of autochthony and sovereign isolation in the search for shared worlds.

The border crossings, geographical and aesthetic, characterise all the texts that I have analysed. In Marechera's texts, spaces, city and nation are portrayed as unstable and are repeatedly disrupted to create the sense of a cosmopolitan world order. Articulated in the context of living in the shadow of the bomb, dystopian vision of cosmopolitan cities united by war is given: "the cities were rotting, becoming mass graves, in which they were tiny pockets of plague outbreaks" (*Black Insider* 24). But in his contrast between the local city and the translocal one Marechera re-writes Lessing exasperation with and belittlement of Salisbury and a privileging of London as cosmopolitan city space in what he calls "a very personal conflict between Harare and I" ("Appendix: From the Journal" 132). Africa to Marechera is a continent of refugees (*Black Insider* 79) where " these new towns crowded with thousands of homeless unemployed whose dreams are rotting in the gutters, are only the new dunghills from which will emerge iron flies in a cloud to scatter all over the hills" (*Black Insider* 80). This privileging of an external city and the cosmopolitan utopianism it carries is eschewed in Vera's fiction where the border crossing, despite the existence of "the city beyond the border" (Samuelson, "City"), is intensely local revealing her concern for the creation of women subjects without reference to the West (cf Boehmer, 175). This calls for

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an acknowledgement of the resilience of nation and local city as important sites for the construction of the gendered subject and not their demise.

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