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Declaration

## **Abstract**

*This study explored the experiences of Tendai, a 50 year old migrant from Zimbabwe currently living and working in Cape Town. The approach adopted was that of narrative inquiry, an approach to research that advocates open and informal interviewing and brings theory into conversation with stories as opposed to using it as a kind of structuring framework. The field work for this study was carried out over a period of 4 months. Interviews were held in Tendai's home in Khayelitsha and were recorded and transcribed, along with detailed field notes. The inquiry generated multiple narratives and although many of these focused on life in South Africa, they also touched on childhood, work and life in Zimbabwe. Over time these narratives intermingled with literature on the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants (women in particular) and with theory on the nature of lived experience. Two theoretical concepts proved to be particularly helpful during the course of the inquiry and these were the concepts of 1) 'Continuous experience' which conceives of experience as dispersed, as the ongoing outcome of our interactions with places and people through time and 2) 'Tarrying with time' which conceives of agency as our ongoing response to experience, grounded in and generated through participation in life. These two concepts supported the study's iterative design, bolstered the open approach to interviews, and ensured that the value of the narratives, as expressions of experience and agency, was recognised and retained. Tendai's narratives comprised of many experiences but what seemed to emerge quite strongly over time were experiences to do with her mobility, her negotiation of relations and conditions as a domestic worker and her relations with family, friends and home. Ultimately, narratives on these 'themes' did not so much lend credence to the theoretical concepts as enrich them. This is a testament to the power of the narratives themselves but also to the concepts which proved capable of accommodating and celebrating the multiple meanings that constitute experience. Since her arrival in South Africa in 2007, Tendai has been striking out, working with all kinds of people in new kinds of ways and continuing to relate to friends, family and home. Her narratives illustrate the extraordinariness of this journey but also the extent to which she continues to become through encounters with new situations, new people and new challenges.*

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It is not the critique of experiential learning that is so significant here; it is the broader critique of theoretical approaches to experience. Why it is important to challenge the way that we look at experience? Why make the effort to evoke, express, attune to the incommensurability of experience? Because in doing so we draw nearer to life as lived and experienced. We move away from the standard theoretical readings of experience that tend to represent things as being this or that and, in so doing, encounter a world of multiple meanings, multiple identities, multiple positions. We join the ‘carnival’ – a metaphor that Michelson (1996) as cited by Edwards and Usher (2006) employs. ‘The carnivalesque marks an alternative—a rejection of fixed meanings, closed categories and transparent language in favour of incomplete and ambivalent possibilities for identity and positioning’ (2006, p.172).

### ***Continuous experience and tarrying with time***

Papadopoulos and Stephenson (2006, 2008) describe experience as a force that is dispersed, discernible in the *actual occasions* which emerge out of our ongoing communion with places, people and things around us. ‘Experience is scattered across different locales, across disjointed emotions, between disparate encounters among people, animals and things. Scattered in time and space, these discrete points are incorporated into the trajectories carved out in people’s encounters and movements’ (2008, p.152). This view of experience is disruptive. It suggests that experience can never be fully unified as the experience of something and it drives the undoing of stable, representable subject positions. Some would argue that it is an impossible conception because it renders experience beyond representation but this is not the case. Papadopoulos *et al.* (2006, 2008) maintain that experience is a constituent force in the ongoing transformation of life; what they argue is that standard ways of framing experience fail to evoke how this is so. ‘It works ...through materialisation – the very immediate, mundane, ordinary, grounded sphere of habits, perception and sociability’ (2008, p.152).

The notion of subjectivity has been central to theoretical work on experience. It has been a way to account for the singularity of a person's experience and position. Still accounting for the singularity of a person's experience/position, Papadopoulos *et al.* (2006, 2008) move away from this idea of experience *as* subjectivity and work instead with *continuous experience*. This concept (dis)locates the subject, placing it in motion with time, space, things, animals, others, rendering its 'position' fluid and contingent. *Continuous experience* is not exceptional, it... 'is simply there; it is particular neither to special actors nor to extraordinary moments of transgression. It is an ordinary, ongoing, largely overlooked aspect of being' (Papadopoulos and Stephenson 2006, p.444). Why overlooked? 'It operates at the level of everyday sociability... it is most closely connected to the surroundings, the vicinities, to the habits of everyday life' (ibid).

The authors discuss W.H. Sebald's (1992) novel 'Emigrants' which is about a number of characters from Germany, the generation after World War II whose lives have been touched by the Holocaust and the trauma of survival. Sebald's evocations suggest that experiences, above all, live through us:

'They live arbitrary lives, which are no more and no less exceptional than most. But in doing this, they let history emerge and flow through many different unconnected, small incidents of life' (Papadopoulos and Stephenson 2006, p.446).

If *continuous experience* is a way of thinking about subjectivity, then *tarrying with time* is a way of thinking about agency (Papadopoulos *et al* 2006, 2008). Tarrying is about understanding that we are all continually active within an unfurling present; that any other kind of representation is leaden and constructed, putting distance between ourselves and how the world is actually experienced and constituted. Crucially, tarrying stands apart from intentionality and entails the dissolution of this idea of the self-reflexive subject (intentionality and self-reflexivity being elements integral to more typical theorisations of agency). Intentionality may be relatively unproblematic for those working within a given regime of representation, with its rules and codes but it is unhelpful when one is trying to get closer to the nature of everyday experience where intentions cannot always be articulated. Tarrying then is about understanding that even without intentionality or self-

reflexivity, one is (in varying degrees and ways) active in the present. While this means that the effects of tarrying are not intended, they cannot occur without people's fidelity to change. In other words, in tarrying you 'invest in transformations which may or may not occur...(you) tarry with time... (not with) a concrete vision of an alternate future, but an expanded and slowed down present...which will only later and unexpectedly materialize in an alternate future (2006, p.436).

Two main ideas stem from *continuous experience* and *tarrying with time* a) that the nature of experience is such that we are continually 'becoming'; we live and work in certain places and we experience certain things but our experiences of those places, those things and the relations which constitute them are always in motion (like the carnival) b) forging a pathway into the future does not require intentional agency and self-reflexivity.

The concepts forefront the active and open state of our becoming (as we work, connect, relate, exchange). They (dis) locate the idea of the subject; they place the subject in motion, rendering 'position' fluid and contingent. Specifically, they highlight the contingent nature of the relations between any two people at a given time and the ability, at certain moments, of one or other of them to exceed the taken-for-granted nature of that relationship. Seeing things in this way attunes us (to the extent possible) to 'actual movement' within a given set up. We are sensitised to the ways in which ongoing relations translate into experiences and bring about occasions that we cannot assume to understand or predict but that we maintain are possible. If we think about this in relation to somebody like Tendai it's about recognising that 'what might be presented as a stable, representable subject of precarity actually arises out of (and glosses over) a myriad of imperceptible worlds which materialise in unrepresented actual occasions of precarious experience.' (Papadopoulos *et al.* 2008, p.231).

Literature on the experiences of domestic workers echoes this kind of conception in many ways mainly because of domestic work's highly relational nature. More than many other kinds of work, domestic work is heavily contingent on the particularities of a given home and the relations between a worker and the employer (Anderson 2000 & 2001). The



relational and contingent nature of the work environment means that pressure can build in unexpected ways and lead to unexpected outcomes (Hondagneu-Soletto 2001).

Tensions of course arise in such readings – how to reconcile the mobility of a migrant with the precariousness of the conditions in which she lives; how to reconcile the contingency (read variance) that is inherent in domestic work with the prevalence of systemic exploitation and abuse. Resolution of these tensions is not possible but acknowledging the presence of a broader set of meanings within a given set up allows consideration of the ways in which people are not simply acted on but are actors, actively and continually relating to the social fields in which they find themselves.

Looking at every day experiences in these ways forces us to confront the material complexity of the social world: the interconnectivity of different elements; the way in which the experiences born out of this interconnectivity, continually (dis) locate subjects from fixed positions and create ambiguous meanings. On the one hand it makes working with experience very difficult but on the other hand they generate such a rich picture of social life and create room for ‘subtle issues of desire, aspiration, frustration, anxiety and a myriad of other states of the soul’ (Agustin 2003, p.33).

### **Migrant life worlds and the Southern Africa context**

In his work on migration in the Southern Africa region, Niemann (2003) makes an important link between subjective experience and social dynamics. He discusses the tale of a Mozambican mother and daughter who, in 1997, were eaten by lion whilst trying to cross into South Africa illegally. He discusses the Mail and Guardian coverage of the tale - a story which seemed as though it were ‘little more than the perfunctory account of two lives lost in a part of the world that had seen more than its fair share of death’ (2003, p.115), but in actual fact ‘captured an important segment of the struggles and contradictions that constitute southern Africa – a glimpse at the subjective reality of migration in that region today (ibid). What Niemann argues is that migrants are a constituent force – they open up channels, construct social relations, create exchanges and

knowledges that didn't exist before. At the same time they emerge without objective, akin in a way to multiple actors *tarrying with time*. Niemann's perspective echoes through some of the more recent literature on migration within the region, particularly literature interested in women, their movement and their work. The significance of the literature (discussed below) emerged through the inquiry and contributed to the shaping of discussion around Tendai's own experiences.

The particularity of women's roles and experiences of migration in Southern Africa may be a familiar theme in research on migration today but this was not always the case – the consequence of historical neglect and marginalisation of women's voices (Barnes 1999). Over the years, feminist historians such as Bozzoli (1991) and Barnes (1991, 1999) have gathered oral histories from women and scoured archives in an attempt to remedy this. Barnes (1991, 1999) looks at Zimbabwean women who migrated to Harare from rural areas in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. She describes these women as having stepped into inhospitable surrounds but nevertheless doing so to achieve their own ends. She describes the particular initiatives that they undertook in Harare in order to demonstrate the ways in which they were more than merely subject to/responding to colonial structures and legislation. 'There were no precedents for the tasks .... In making a way for themselves, they drew on previous experience and constructed the rest' (Barnes 1999, p.21). Barnes says that far from 'rebellious' the women were working very hard for social reproduction (that is, 'to live properly according to one's own, African priorities' [p.22]) but in so doing they could easily be judged as having eroded the standards of respectability and thereby earn occasionally dangerous amounts of male condemnation. 'The complexity of risking such male responses for the sake of securing the long term fortunes of those very same men ideally gives an idea of the tightrope that urban women walked. Some saunter gracefully; others lurched dangerously at times but ultimately made it across. Others...fell into the abyss of social displeasure' (Barnes 1999, p.161).

Barnes (1999) likens the actions of these urban women to someone cracking someone else's ribs in a resuscitation effort. 'African women in towns cracked some of African

society's ribs in efforts to help it survive...the rib cracking is equated with rule breaking, the refusal to be oppressed' (p. 161). Barnes' key point however is that women's refusal to be oppressed did not point them in the direction of liberation from personal oppression but from oppression that was rooted in the colonial political economy. They worked incredibly hard to achieve social reproduction but it was a route that entailed careful manoeuvring within private and public spheres and it was a route that in no way lessened their burden. Barnes is describing in effect, movement – movement driven by necessity but also by desire; movement that, in retrospect, was a force for change but at the time was occurring outside any prior strategy or articulation.

Barnes (1999) looks at mobility and at Zimbabwean women in particular in the context of rural –urban migration in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial Rhodesia but perhaps explorations of women's mobility in the context of early 21<sup>st</sup> century cross-border migration need not be viewed so differently. One could argue that with the contraction of the Zimbabwean economy, there has been a new and extended cycle of movement outwards, motivated by oppressive and brutal governance, political strife and economic collapse. The economic climate and intensifying political strife (from the 1990s onwards but from 2005 in particular [Potts 2006]) resulted in increasingly constrained and uncertain daily life, particularly in urban areas. Morreira (2010) suggests that the constraint and uncertainty were experienced in a city like Harare both symbolically (with the decline of what had once been a well serviced and prosperous city) and materially (with increasing informalisation of the economy and the emergence of what could be described as foraging, but in an urban kind of context). 21<sup>st</sup> century mobility, suggests Morreira, has a means of 'safeguarding against the physical and symbolic uncertainties of Zimbabwean life' and reflects, she argues, 'the lived effects of structural violence in a profoundly failing economy' (2010, p.353).

Cheater and Gaidzanwa (1996) concur when they describe migrant Zimbabwean women of the 90s and 00s as having 'followed the pre-colonial traditions of 'voting with their feet' against oppressive and intrusive power' by becoming 'citizens of economic networks

or ‘communities’ that transcend the political boundaries of the region’s nation-states’ (1996, p.193). They are principally talking about Zimbabwe’s community of women cross border traders who swelled in numbers in the early 1990s (they state that there were 377,415 Zimbabwean women traders in 1992 and by 1993 it had increased to 1,000,000). Irrespective of the cross border economic activity, what Cheater and Gaidzanwa argue is that migrants move irrespective of policies and boundaries set down by the apartheid machinery of the past and irrespective of the post –colonial citizenship laws of SADC member states of the present; migrants move in ways that disturb these ‘hegemonic representations of space’ (Niemann 2003, p.118).

These readings again bring to the fore a set of irresolvable tensions - the tension between the profound structural violence that drives people’s mobility and the resourcefulness and ingenuity that sustains it; the tension between the optimistic view and dreary aspects of cross border trade, between its life-sustaining quality but conversely its vulnerability to further contractions in the Zimbabwean economy (Muzvidziwa 2010). The layers, agents and tensions are multiple. How to trace the relationship between structural violence and peoples desires? How to trace the relationship between every day experience and social change?

The whole area of migrants’ connection to home extends the possibilities for meaning even further. As part of his work on cross border traders Muzvidziwa (2010) developed the concept of double rootedness – a concept which captures the way in which migrants hold on to ‘kumusha/home’ while simultaneously being located in a foreign setting, partly as a survival strategy. Irrespective of whether it is a real or imagined connection Muzvidziwa’s argues that it is a force, or ideology, that drives a person to connect with people and places in particular ways and to make particular decisions. Muzvidziwa argues that kumusha ideology is ‘an important fact in explaining how Zimbabwe survived its worst political and economic crisis.’ (2010, p.86). He says that it goes a long way to explain why people sent remittances home and continued to invest in the places they had left. Longing and yearning for home no doubt drives this kumusha/home ideology. Sinclair (1999) gathered perspectives from migrants living in South Africa on migrant

community and networks and concluded that migration over all ‘brought a sense of solitary striving into the identities of most of those interviewed...migrants almost unanimously portrayed themselves as pioneers facing difficult and often solitary battles in a hostile social environment and ultimately for them this bred in turn into a sense of temporariness’ (1999, p.478).

The literature and theoretical concepts presented in this chapter embody a particular vision of experience and agency – a vision that was intrinsic not only to the field work phase of this project but to the handling of the narratives and the discussion of them as well. This material bolsters a perspective which sees migrants and precarious workers as more than people being acted upon or victims in need of representation; a perspective which sees them as persons knowingly engaged in the arduous business of sustaining life.

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## **Chapter Two: Building a Narrative Inquiry**

Emerging from the critical and moral concerns of cultural theorists and feminists (Merrill & West 2009, Gray 2003, Michelson 2011), narrative inquiry takes its cue from accounts of the world as lived and experienced, often re-shaping meanings, celebrating a multiplicity of perspectives and knowledge claims and challenging academic conventions of social science writing in the process. The distinctiveness of the approach will be reflected through discussion on the ethics that pertained to this particular project and how they were worked through, the approach to interviews, how the field work unfolded and finally how Tendai's narratives came to be presented and discussed in the way that they were.

### **Ethics**

Narrative inquiry has particular implications for ethics (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, Josselson 1996), implications which need to be faced squarely at the outset of any project and for its duration. The particularity is to do with a number of factors. One of those factors is that narrative inquiry invariably involves a single subject. The researcher is more exposed than normal, arguably feeling the burden of responsibility that is associated with social research but which other approaches can more easily shrug off. The approach to interviewing is open and informal, the idea being to create a safe space for sharing and this can sometimes lead to revelations that unsettle the subject. 'Is it ethically appropriate to perform such research?' asks Miller. 'On the other hand I contend that this kind of research is the quintessential ethical project' (Miller, 1996). Miller identifies narrative inquiry then as a quintessentially ethical approach but one which also harbours particular kinds of ethical challenges.

Narrative inquiry's central concern is the interview process and final write up. In terms of the interview process, inquirers avoid drawing on narrow theoretical frames, using carefully formulated questions or conducting tightly managed interviews all in an attempt to give space over to the narrator. The notion that inquirers 'give voice' to others in this way however (particularly subjects who would be considered subjugated or marginalised) is problematic. It has been critiqued by, among others, post colonial theorists who argue that all Western modes of knowledge production, regardless of intention, re-inscribe otherness and therefore the inferiority of the 'Other'. Some theorists have gone so far as to say that representation of the 'Other' by anybody other than the 'Other' is an impossible endeavour and that only the subjugated can voice their condition. Fine (1998) tries to work around this. She concedes that 'all narratives both inscribe and resist othering' (p.147) but argues that researching and writing on a subject does not inevitably re-inscribe the subject's 'otherness'. She sites Spivak who asks that researchers stop trying to know the Other and listen, instead, to the plural voices of those Othered, as constructors and agents of knowledge (p.148). In other words, we mitigate the risk of re-inscribing other by focusing not on *our* knowledge making but on the substance of what the teller is relaying.

The idea for this project grew out of the circumstances in which Tendai and I met (whilst working for the Dawkins) and my impression of her as an open and reflective person. Our friendship I think, accounted for Tendai's willingness to participate in the project. Nevertheless I battled at the beginning with the question of how to ask her. I had left the Dawkins house to go overseas in October 2010 and returned to Cape Town in February 2011 with the idea in my head. I was afraid at that stage though that if I contacted Tendai to ask her she would think that it was the only reason I had asked to see her. Aside from being far from the truth (I had always figured on staying in touch with her), I was afraid that my asking her would alter things between us. Neither of us was working for the Dawkins by that time which removed that complication at least. After a brief phone exchange we met in the Cape Town suburb of Salt River one Saturday morning. It was a scorching hot day and we were sitting in a small cafe sipping cool drinks when I asked her:

Her body language changes – she starts looking around the room and pushing the drink aside and thanking me for it. I almost think she is going to walk out. My gut is that she thinks this is a personal let down- that I didn't want to visit her today I just wanted to use her for research. That's my gut feeling but on reflection I think I was wrong. When I ask her if she wants to think about it she says 'But there is nothing to think about. You wouldn't ask me if there was anything bad about this or if this was something bad'. I think about it a great deal afterwards and I realise that she has a certain amount of trust and regard for me that I mustn't underestimate. (Field Note 2, March 19th 2011).

The following week I visited Tendai in Khayeltisha, to go over the terms again and to get a feel for the space where she lived (see Appendix B). We signed the agreement that same day (see Appendix A). The main points were that she was free to leave the project at any time, that all names would be changed to protect identities, that all interviews would be recorded and that I would regularly provide her with transcripts of all interviews to cross check.

The friendship wasn't simply put on hold once the interviews began and this, naturally, evoked various dilemmas. There was the initial awkwardness of the first interview; there were moments of discomfort during the first few interviews (her feeling stupid, unintelligent – I tried my best in these early sessions to encourage her: to remark on the richness of her stories, her insights, her clarity); there was guilt: 'She seems tired today. Am I taking valuable rest time away from her?'; there was uncertainty: 'She revealed something very personal to me today. What does this tell me about her understanding of this project?'

There is no doubt that a pre existing friendship makes the transition to a researcher–subject relationship challenging and there are aspects which need to be carefully managed. At the same time, 'connection' (something that we associate with friendship) plays a central role in narrative inquiry. Even if it is not there at the outset, the process needs to engender connection. Connection leads to trust and trust leads to a space where the narrator can narrate with the confidence that they are being listened to and that understanding will be driven by their telling.



## **Approach to the Interviews**

Narrating is very much a ‘present telling’ of experience which means that it sometimes might not flow nicely or seems haphazard or illogical. Sometimes, as researchers, we don’t ‘permit’ this. As Michelson (2011) says, ‘(f)or all our valorizing of individuality and uniqueness there are only some stories we allow to be told and only some forms of selfhood we allow to emerge in the process of telling them... there must be room... for narratives that are jarring, unsatisfying and/or structurally and emotionally jagged’ (p.18). We may present and discuss the narrative in very particular ways but for the gathering of it we must remain open.

In their discussion around interviewing on culture, Rubin and Rubin (1995) provide useful tips on how to proceed with a research process that is by nature open ended. They suggest using lead in questions like ‘tell me how you spend your day’ to get people talking about their lives. This kind of approach, they say, illicit examples, narratives, stories. They stress the importance of not forcing things and I learned that from the process early on. In the second week I asked Tendai if she had memories of the Zimbabwe’s (then Rhodesia) civil war in the 1970s (when the disenfranchised black majority took up arms against the white minority government). She said to me that day that no, apart from some gunfire that she once heard, that she hadn’t been affected. A few weeks later she spoke at length to me about her family and talked about her brother. She told me about how he had joined the liberation struggle in 1977 without telling them and partly to get back at their father who had taken a ‘second wife’ and in his eyes betrayed their mother.<sup>4</sup> For two years the family, without knowing where he had gone, prayed for his return even. He returned to them in 1979, shortly after the ceasefire. The incident taught me that things come out in all sorts of ways, that the more meaningful narratives emerge when we chose to recall them, and this isn’t always in response to questions. Her narratives suggest that with me at least she

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<sup>4</sup> The union was never sealed formally (traditionally or otherwise) but they lived together right up until Tendai’s father died in the 1990s. Tendai’s father continued to support her mother until her death which was sometime in the 1980s but they were separated from sometime in the 70s onwards

didn't associate the experience of her brother's disappearance with 'war', but instead with family.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) maintain that as you learn more a focus will emerge. The basic principles of iterative design apply. 'Namely that when you begin, you cast your net widely and only gradually narrow down your options as you get more material and understand better what you have' (Rubin and Rubin 1995, p.183). They recommend probes, to keep the narrative going, to understand the precise meaning of a point or to clarify something. There is a balance to strike between eliciting stories and probing for clarification vs. probing to deepen the level of detail or the feelings about a particular situation.

This idea of an 'iterative' approach manifests in the fact that most of the thinking about directions to take is done between the interviews rather than during interviews. In other words, one lets the interview itself unfold as it is wants to. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest a useful way of reviewing data/adapting approaches/steering inquiry over time. Obviously if the intention is to continually generate quality data, it is important to review the 'data' after each and every interview. Quality, they suggest, has several facets. Depth (which add solidity, clarity, evidence and example); detail (which adds layers of meaning, different angles on the same subject and understanding); vivid and nuanced examples (real not abstract, nuanced and broken down); and rich thematic material (extended descriptions and long narratives on what occurred) (Rubin and Rubin 1995)

### **Outline of how the field work proceeded**

In the initial proposal I reckoned on needing 6-8 meetings with Tendai and we agreed that they would run over two months. In reality though there were some Saturdays when Tendai was not available and other Saturdays when I was not available so the work ended up running over 4 months. The intervals between our meetings were not regular. Sometimes we would meet two weekends in a row, other times three weeks would go by before we met again. I sometimes felt anxious about these lags in time because I was

afraid that momentum would be lost but we always seemed to be able to pick up from where we had left off. We ended up meeting 10 times. One extra meeting was held because a previous meeting hadn't really happened. I had gone out to Khayelitsha but there were workman at the house that day and too much commotion so I requested a tenth meeting as a kind of final wrap up meeting to which Tendai was agreeable. I think Tendai grew quite fond of our meetings, as did I. At the close of our last interview she sighed and said *I wish you had more to talk about* (Interview 10, September 18<sup>th</sup> 2011).

As per agreement, all interviews bar three <sup>5</sup> were recorded. Tendai narrated quite comfortably into the recording device once she got into it. We often chatted on either side of the recording as well and some things we shared in that space complemented my understanding of things and were captured in field notes. Tendai understood that I liked to come out to Khayelitsha because it meant I could learn more about her daily life. This is what I tried to capture in my field notes (see Appendix E for example). There was always something going on at their place, something that they were busy with. Most weeks I would bring a homemade cake and once in a while a magazine, newspapers from home (which she would always scour for news on Zimbabwe) or a some kind of little treat (one week I bought her and Rumbi little key chains with their initials beaded onto wire that a Zimbabwean nearby my house was making). Sometimes we took trips in my car – twice to Nyanga where we picked up some chickens and once to the pharmacy to buy some medicine for Tendai's grandchild. For the first three visits I travelled to Khayelitsha by train and Tendai and I walked together to the shack and then back to the station again. The field notes described these events and the life around them. (For the most part I have worked with the transcripts themselves but the field notes have been an important data source as well).

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<sup>5</sup> 3 of the 10 'transcripts' had to be reconstituted from memory and from notes because they were not recorded. On one occasion the device malfunctioned, on another occasion the quality of sound was too bad and on the other occasion we ended up being seated outside in the sunshine and I just didn't get round to 'opening' the interview – we were chatting and then fell into 'narration' mode. I partly regretted this afterwards because the discussion on that day was particularly rich (very personal and reflective) but, at the same time, I listened to my gut at the time and it was telling me not to take the device out. Tendai was happy with my jotting down notes instead.

At the beginning of each meeting I would present the transcript of our last interview and we would discuss it. On one occasion Tendai took a look at the previous week's transcript and raised a confidentiality issue and on another two occasions (early on) she looked at the previous week's transcripts and berated herself for what she felt was poor English. After a while we didn't discuss them - she would take them from me and put them away. I do know that she read them though because in subsequent meetings she would refer to them here and there.

For the first five meetings I tended to start the interview off with a question like 'I'd like to know more about where you come from' or 'describe to me your typical day here'. The leading question was always either picking up on things she had said or nudging her into new areas. She would start off on in the given direction and I followed her flow. As the weeks unfolded I sourced literature on the various elements of her life that were emerging. I built a kind of 'conversation' between her narrative and the literature and this generated new lines of inquiry over time. In this way, the narrative intermingled with an evolving theoretical base. The main challenge was to remain grounded in the narrative - to ensure that 'the sense of the whole (was) built from a rich data source, with a focus on the concrete particularities of life' (Clandinin and Connolly 2000, p.147).

From the sixth session onwards – perhaps because I felt that we had touched on all major bases but also I think because she was growing in confidence - Tendai assumed more control over the direction of our conversations. We also were growing more comfortable with the routine of the interviews. For that sixth session we were seated outside, in the sunshine; her chores were done for the day and her grandchildren were fussing around, bringing her anything she wanted; the conversation just started to flow. We covered a lot of new ground. A mutual sense of purpose began to permeate our exchanges at this point and continued until the end. This sense of purpose manifested in a kind of synchronicity which moved me at times – she would raise subjects that I had wanted to talk about or go over events /relations that I was hazy on without my even saying anything.

Meeting 7 was mostly observation with a bit of scattered chat because men were around working on a piece of Tendai's kitchen. Meeting 8 and 9, building on meeting 6, were

among the most fruitful. In meeting 8 I finally felt able to broach the issue of her husband's death. This question led into an hour long discussion on 'muti' (magical charms/black magic). I left quite invigorated and challenged by our exchange but during the course of the following week kept asking myself, 'Is it relevant, is it relevant'. Muti is something that quite simply frames Tendai's understanding of the world. If certain things happen she uses muti to understand them; she explained to me at length the different ways in which muti intersects with her everyday life and her religious life. Muti is not a thread that has been picked up in the chapter three because she talked about it exclusively in relation to life in Zimbabwe and when it came to selecting narratives I tended to focus on those that were focused on her experiences here in South Africa. Nonetheless it was an extremely significant exchange. It signified (for me) that with the passage of time, she was assuming some authority over the research space itself. She was exercising authority over what was shared and seemed to have strong ideas about what was important to share. In session 10, our last session, Tendai began to talk about the future as we made our tea. This was completely in tune with my own desire to explore that with her on that day.

Biesta *et al.* (2004) argue that the very act of narrating is an exercise in learning, and an expression of identity and agency. In other words narrating may be the outcome of experience but it is also the continuation of it. Michelson (2011), who explores the role of narrative in adult education, says the same. She says that narrating the events of one's life can help people to understand how experiences have led to knowledge or to think about experiences in new ways and with implications for present and future. In fact it could be argued that narration constitutes reflection. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, narrating is a form of theorising because the narrator is selecting what to share and how to share it.

### **Writing up**

Sustaining the narrative gathering process is one task but write up presents the inquirer with a whole new set of challenges. A shift in text must occur (the shift that enables one to call the final outcome 'research') but how to execute this shift? A central task for the

narrative inquirer is to retain the integrity of the narratives. Obviously retaining this integrity cannot be about reproducing all the narratives but can be achieved by ensuring that the storied life is presented in a storied way as opposed to being advanced as an exemplar of formal categories (Clandinin and Connolly 2000).

Clandinin and Connolly (2000) suggest an approach to write up that allows one to stay as close as possible, for as long as possible, to the 'field text'. Firstly, they differentiate between the 'field text' and the 'research text'. 'Field texts are not constructed with relative intent in other words they are close to experience, tend to be descriptive and are shaped around particular events' (Clandinin and Connolly 2000, p.133) while research texts are the final, published research texts. Secondly they introduce this idea of interim texts that is 'texts (that are) situated in the spaces between field texts and final, published research texts' (ibid).

The presentation and discussion of Tendai's narratives that is presented in chapter three is the outcome of this model – field text to interim text to final text.

- 1) I went over each and every transcript and created a table which contained a breakdown of what was discussed during each interview as well as notes on the interview itself and/or narrative. I wanted at this early stage to keep everything very open (see Appendix C)
- 2) Having established this overview for myself, I started the work on building the interim text. I combed the transcripts not for themes but for stories, particular incidents, relationships that seemed to have been significant for Tendai. It was difficult but I chose to 'background' narrative on childhood, episodes in family history and foreground accounts that pertained to life, work and relations in Cape Town. Depth of detail and was also a factor that influenced my selection. What I ended up selecting were accounts of work and employers in Cape Town; accounts of work as a cross border trader (subsequently excluded – very reluctantly - and not because it wasn't relevant but because of space); accounts of her interactions with children, friends and family in Cape Town.

- 3) The third step was to cut out the various narratives and paste them into an interim text under these loose headings. Once they had been laid out on fresh pages like that I began to write around them. I began bringing in theoretical ideas to help me think through tensions and connections as well as recovering narratives from the transcripts that were assuming new relevance. I also cut things out if I found that they didn't fit as time went on. I did this over and over again – continually consulting the transcripts - and finally fixed on sets of experiences (mobility, domestic work, relations) that appeared to be relatively speaking, predominant.

In terms of final text, Clandinin and Connolly (2000) speak of a rich steamy soup. 'Parts of our research text can be composed of rich descriptions of people, places and things; other parts can be composed of carefully constructed arguments that argue for certain understandings; and still others can be richly textured narratives of the people situated in place, time, scene and plot' (p. 155). Chapter three is a blend of these aspects. One thing that is notable is the inclusion of a lot of Tendai's own words. This is not only because of the narrative's descriptive quality, but because of its analytical quality. In keeping with the ideas presented in chapter one in particular, it is not that these were the narratives of experience and then a 'better analysis' was enabled by theory. The act of narrating is itself is a theorising of experience.

How to assess the value of a write up such as this? It comes back to the point that Fine (1998) makes about somehow avoiding a situation whereby we assume the right/privilege/authority to represent another person's experiences as exemplars of formal categories. We do assume the right/privilege/authority to make our own sense out of someone else's experiences but in doing so we commit to preserving the storied nature of narrative. If this is what the writer strives to do then the measure of the quality of the text is not credibility or validity but fidelity and this we can only gauge – that is, the extent to which the writer has been true to the meaning of what was told, and the extent to which the 'worth and dignity of the teller (has been) preserved' (Blumenfeld-Jones 1995, p.27).

### **Chapter Three: Tendai's narratives**

One of the challenges of writing up on narratives (as mentioned in chapter two) is the variances in the texture of the narratives gathered. The variance is an inevitable outcome of the open process of inquiry – one that generates narratives that are storied, descriptive, reflective or even disjointed that is, assembled from fragments of conversation over time. Just as this variance in texture is an inevitable outcome of the process it too must be a feature of the final write up. Another feature of this chapter is the role played by literature and theoretical concepts, in particular theoretical concepts (a role that was outlined and explained in chapter one). The presence of theoretical concepts is felt in this chapter not so much via direct reference but via the narratives themselves which are discussed as articulations of experience and agency.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section one gives some background on Tendai's life in Zimbabwe, how she came to be in South Africa and how she has generally found living and working here. It draws on Tendai's words, field notes and observations and sets the scene for what is to follow. Sections two, three and four are slightly different constituting as they do a discussion against three themes that emerged from the narratives. Each of these sections is structured as follows: a presentation of Tendai's narratives under that particular theme followed by a discussion. The three themes are mobility, domestic work and relations with family, friends and home.

The first theme explores Tendai's mobility, which was fairly pronounced during the course of her first two years in Cape Town and discusses the links between this mobility and her experiences of work. The second theme focuses on domestic work specifically. In her narratives on domestic work, relations take centre stage and this forms the backbone of the subsequent discussion. The third theme which looks at relations with family, friends and home is slightly different in texture, drawing as it does on fragments of conversation as opposed to long, descriptive accounts. As would be expected, when Tendai spoke about her family and her friends she didn't tend to give long descriptive accounts. Her accounts of relations with family and friends resided in snippets of conversation here and there and



were not confined to one or two weeks but instead surfaced in almost every single interview. The discussion here is about how she has experienced the distance from family, what her friendships mean to her and how these relations are reflective of a broader connection to and yearning for home.

### **Introducing Tendai**

Tendai lives in a two room *hokkie* in the Harare area of Khayelitsha. Their place is a fifteen minute walk from the train station and from Khayelitsha's mall. She has lived here with her friend Rumbi and Rumbi's niece for the last three years. When I first started visiting in May, they had just one room. The three of them shared a small bed and into the corner they managed to squeeze a cooking table (with two ring plate, spices, plates) and, along the side of the wall, a wardrobe for clothes and suitcases. In June the two, young Zimbabwean men that occupied the adjoining room moved out and the three women took it as a second room. They used one of the rooms for sleeping and converted the other room into a kitchen area. In July, Tendai's daughter Emily and her two children aged 3 and 7 travelled over from Zimbabwe. They reorganised the space again with one room now being for Tendai and her family (complete with cooking area) and the other room for Rumbi and her niece (also with its own cooking area). The two rooms are connected via an archway and because Rumbi has a big wide screen TV the children move freely between the two spaces. Tendai and Rumbi don't like their shack – Rumbi has no oven for baking and no garden to plant vegetables and they complain about the lack of space, the stale air, the mites and the fact that they can never get it clean. It's cheap though and for Tendai who struggles to send money home and wants to save to go home next year, it would be hard to justify upgrading.

A few weeks into our time together Tendai talks about, not for the first time, the fatigue that she feels in Cape Town. It's something she struggles to understand because –in spite of always having worked hard, her energy levels seldom flagged in Zimbabwe. She wonders if it is because of the procedure she had last year to remove pre cancerous cells from her cervix (she feels aches and pains that she never felt before) or if it is old age

catching up. In the mornings here in Cape Town she says she never wakes up with the feeling that she has rested and always has to reluctantly pull herself from the bed. Once she is up and moving it's okay again but momentarily, during the course of the day, that feeling of exhaustion rears its head. Rumbi and me, she tells me, we often wonder how the Xhosa women on the train have so much energy. *They blab blab blab all the way to work. We asked them once and they told us they take pills.*<sup>6</sup>

She says this with a light heartedness but she must be quite exhausted. It was toiling work in many respects but Tendai says that trading work she did back in Zimbabwe never tired her like the domestic work in Cape Town does. With trading work she says, she would trade for two weeks at a time and then come home and sew for two weeks in preparation for the next trading trip which may have been why her energy levels didn't get so depleted. Her work was also varied and she was her own boss.. The work is different in Cape Town – it is physical, monotonous and entails long commutes. When we first start meeting, Tendai is waking up between 4.30 and 5.30 am Monday to Friday. On Tuesdays and Thursdays she has a three hour round trip commute to work while on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays her commute is up to four hours. She is mostly home by 6pm, sometimes later. She is cleaning every day and she is a fastidious cleaner (even her Sea Point employer has been insisting that she not clean every corner every single day but instead do different chores for different days).

Tendai's talk of aches and pain is at odds with her invariably cheerful and vital demeanour. There is always time for laughing about incidental things and she has a keen sense of irony. Just as her talk of aches and pain is at odds with her outward vitality, the modesty inherent in the accounts of her working life belies a long and arduous journey.

She was born in Seke, Zimbabwe in 1962, second of five children and the first daughter. For the first few years of her life she lived the traditional way in a village homestead. Her father worked in Harare (about 40kms away) during the week and returned to the family at weekends. When Tendai was about 8 years old the family moved to a new, modern home

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<sup>6</sup> Text that is italicised and embedded in the text in this way indicates a paraphrasing of something the Tendai said

in the satellite town of Chitungwiza. They retained the family homestead and to this day, while there is no one living there, somebody is paid to mind it. Tendai married Samuel in the late 1970s and together they moved to the high density suburb of Mbare. She and her husband lived there for a few years, renting. Towards the end of the 1980s, with her family growing, Tendai convinced her reluctant husband to buy a small plot in an area outside of town called Epworth. The area was not within the city's official boundaries and to this day is not 'on grid' (it's not serviced by the city council) but it was affordable and there was plenty of space. The couple raised their five girls there – Angela (born 1980), Emily (born 1984), Gracious (born 1987), Joy (born 1990) and Bridget (born 1996). In 2005 Tendai's husband died following a short illness. By that stage three were grown with children of their own but Joy and Bridget were still in secondary school. Bridget, Tendai's youngest, was 11 when her mother left for South Africa in 2007.

Tendai had always done a little buying and selling (from home) but started her cross border trading work in the early 1990s. Over the years, she made children's clothes and blankets from factory off cuts and traded them for pula in Botswana, traded plastic goods, towels, baby clothes for beans, goats, chickens in Mozambique and, at one stage, was making good cash by selling liquor bought in Zimbabwe to traders in Lusaka. By 2005, Tendai owned her own sewing machine as well as her own knitting machine; she was familiar with trading routes across the region, adept at crossing borders, negotiating transportation, and sourcing and trading a huge variety of goods. Moreover, her husband – a clerk - was only periodically employed from the early 1990s onwards (he managed to get contracts here and there but it was only ever sporadic) so she was the main breadwinner in the household, spending two weeks out of every month travelling. While Tendai insists that she was not exceptional in doing this work, studies have singled Zimbabwean women cross border traders as among the most enterprising and energetic of contemporary migrants.

As part of our discussions around trading work Tendai tells the story of 'successful trader', Amai Georgina, who was known to the family from Chitungwiza. Amai Georgina, Tendai explains, started going to South Africa, before anyone was going there and slowly

built up a successful business. Early on she divorced her husband (which at the time was highly unusual) and went on to support her family of four through her work. She put them through the best schools and they lived in lovely homes. All through the years her husband begged to come back. Tendai said this often caused awkward moments at family funerals because he would insist on coming as her husband. By the time she died, Amai Georgina had four homes in up market areas of Harare with children successful and scattered across the globe. I asked Tendai what made Amai Georgina so successful – what was her secret. She laughed saying that it was well known in the community that well before her actual death Amai Georgina had already bought her gravestone. *She was calculating... she was stingy.* Muzvidziwa (2001) writes about women such as Amai Georgina who would travel to South Africa to trade and who came to be known as Vakadzi ku South (Women of the South). In other words, over time, trade was not just as a refuge from un-employment or a means to make money but a way of being in the world.

The single story of Amai Georgina shows the extent to which in ‘doing what was expected of them’ women were in fact charting new waters – they were mobile in ways they hadn’t been before and they were placed in a breadwinning role, factors which inevitably affected gender relations. When I asked Tendai about this – if her husband minded or if she knew of women who had got into conflict with their husbands over cross border trading – she said that it all depended on the husband, the wife and on the nature of their relationship. Her own husband didn’t mind as long as she always returned on the day she promised to while her elder brother didn’t like her doing the work but obviously couldn’t stop her. At the same time she said you were bringing in money when times were hard so how could anyone complain. She said it wasn’t a choice – to go and trade – it was because of the circumstances, and this was mostly understood.

In spite of the ongoing contraction of the economy (which had begun back in the early 1990s) and the increasing political tensions (which began mounting at the end of the 1990s), by the early 2000s life was okay for Tendai. The family home in Epworth was complete (they had slowly worked on it over the years) and they were settled there. Her own family had never been happy with her decision to move there and when her father

died in 1998 her brother tried to convince her to return to the family home in Chitungwiza but she didn't want to leave.

*T: I had veggies. There is a watershed not far from the house and there I grew sugar cane. When I left the house in 2007 there was a guava tree and mango trees and even a banana tree. I liked ploughing my own little bit of land, I liked picking my own tomatoes, sugar cane and sweet potato from the field. Only it was a bit boring at night with the candles. So yes I was happy I can say I was happy. Me and my children I can say that we never slept with hunger (Interview 2, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2011).<sup>7</sup>*

By 2005 however the economic situation in Zimbabwe, compounded by election related insecurity and political violence, became virtually untenable – even for the most resourceful and resilient. Tendai singled it out as a year of change:

*T: I was trying but the situation when the when the what, when Gono, when Gono flushed the zeros<sup>8</sup> (Interview 2, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2011).*

2005 was also the year that Tendai's husband died, after a short illness

*T: He was okay then he just started saying this part of him was paining (gestures to the left kidney) and there was something like a lump then we thought maybe it was an abscess but it was big and it never, it didn't open it was just like hard. He was going to the clinic but it seems it didn't help. He was complaining; he was even crying about that leg and it was not painful on the lump but it was the leg. The lump was okay it was the leg - until he died.*

*... Even when he died people were shocked because they were saying 'We saw him yesterday morning sitting on the veranda eating porridge very nice it was.' And the other Sunday he had dug something like a pit for me in the garden... so he dug it for me on a*

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<sup>7</sup> This reference (Interview 2, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2011) indicates the precise source of the narrative. Any narrative that follows it should be assumed to be from the same interview, unless otherwise indicated

<sup>8</sup> In August 2006 the Reserve Bank Governor of Zimbabwe, Gideon Gono, demonetised the country's old bank notes. Each new Zimbabwe dollar was worth 1000 old Zimbabwean dollars – in effect, he dropped three zeros, a decision which exacerbated the country's hyper inflation

*Sunday - Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and on Easter Friday he died (Interview 8, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011).*

For a while Tendai continued to trade at her usual pace but was earning less from it and battling against rising costs of living

*S: So how did it affect things? For you? (Interview 2, May 21<sup>st</sup> 2011).*

*T: It was like the stuff now like the lets say for example the Smirnoff or even the knitting yarn... it was expensive now when you go there you couldn't sell it for a better price to make a profit*

Tendai concentrated more and more on making clothes from factory off cuts and trading them in Zimbabwe's reserves for food.

*T: You get beans, groundnuts, sunflowers, sorghum then you come and you sell at Mbare... You sell for cash but when you get the cash you are not going to have very much. You are just managing to survive*

Towards the end of 2005 in an effort to get some cash together, she invested time and her last bit of money sourcing factory off cuts, sewing and filling bails with her homemade clothes. After weeks and weeks of work she set off for the reserves with her goods.

*T: I sold the clothes for big bags of peanuts, groundnuts, sunflower seeds – for the chickens because I was going to use the seeds as feed for the chickens. I had so many goods. Even live chickens because you know people like these village chickens. Ye-oh you had to walk the mountains alone, carrying things. It was in Fombe in the mountains there, a place called Fombe*

Tendai spent a number of weeks moving around the reserves. She describes journeying up and down the hills on foot with piles of clothes or goods on her head. By the end of her trip she had amassed a significant volume of goods. She employed two boys to help her cart the stuff through thick bush in the dead of night and caught an early morning 4am bus back to Harare.

*T: So I arrived in Mbare with all my things. I had so many things. And people could see they were saying 'wow this mama has worked really hard'. I couldn't walk with all my goods so I had to find a cart- you know like a cart with wheels but you can push with your hands. So I had one of those and I was pushing my things along the road and on the way I met my neighbour and she said and 'how are you and you have lots of things but that's good because you have been robbed'*

Tendai returned home to Epworth to find the house stripped of belongings

*T: They took everything. My knitting machine, my sewing machine, pots, TV. I said 'My machines, they were my husband.' I sat down on the sofa and I cried. Oh my god I just cried.*

*S: And that is the start of your South African story*

*T: You see... I sold the sofa, everything I started selling. I had nothing else to do and that's when I started thinking about South Africa*

Tendai has had 7 jobs since arriving in South Africa. Her first job was in the laundrette in Southfields. She then worked for a short time for a single mother, *the Indian lady* and her two children in Sea Point. At the end of 2007 she left *the Indian lady* to take up a job in a fish and chips shop in Milnerton. The work was only for the holiday season though so she found herself without work in early 2008. Following a short stint of unemployment she worked briefly for a family in Parklands (for about 6 weeks) and subsequently for a family in Kuils River. Towards the end of 2008 she returned to *the Indian lady* in Sea Point. In early 2009 she was charring for three different families and working 7 days a week. One of the families that she worked for at that time offered her a full time position in March 2009 and she worked for them as a full time domestic and nanny up to March 2011. She subsequently took up a 3 day a week cleaning job in Simonstown as well as a 2 day a week char job in Sea Point. In July the Sea Point family offered her a full time position as domestic and nanny, which she accepted. She has been with them ever since.

The pressure to stay working and keep money flowing home has only let up recently. At the end of 2007 Tendai's brother announced that her second last born daughter Joy was

bright and that she should be sent away to boarding school to get her A-levels. The decision was supported by Tendai but generated a lot of stress. At the time she was working for *the Indian lady* in Sea Point and was sleeping on her floor in the living room during the week to save on transport money.

*T: I didn't mind I didn't mind... I wanted to work for my kids. Ye-oh it was a hard time for me... because the money I was making at that time was very little and there at the boarding school they were taking lots of money. So when I got my pay at the end of the month it was not enough to send home. I had to go around begging from people please borrow me, please borrow me then they borrowed me and I sent home. The next month you get your salary you need to... (Interview 3, June 4<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

*S: Pay back all the debt*

*T: You see*

*S: And your brother did he also help a bit?*

*T He did he was helping he was helping but he was like phoning each and every time. I remember one day oh I couldn't even sleep because that's when she was now doing the 6<sup>th</sup> year. They phoned me - I sent money for fees. They phoned me again for I don't know what. Then they phoned me again for the third time! They wanted money for examination fees. I didn't even have a single cent. I didn't sleep and the following day I woke up very sick. I said oh my god. It was a hard time for me at that time. I had to borrow, I had to borrow you see. I think it's only this year that I'm starting to be like settling down even though she is going to school...I can see its far much better this year*

*S: Why?*

*T: It's like this year you know what I did to tell you the truth I lied to them I said I am not going to work, that's what I said*

It is not entirely clear when Tendai deployed the 'white lie' because she has in fact been sending money home this year - perhaps she deployed it at various times when money was just too tight. In any case, things would seem to have eased up. She is in a position now -



with more experience, and references from previous employers - to find better jobs and negotiate higher wages. In terms of monthly expenses she currently pays R250 for rent, R100 for electricity, R350 for transport, R500-600 on food and then keeps a little aside for emergencies (medicine or whatever). She and Rumbi eat fairly well but strictly manage the food budget - nothing is wasted and monthly trips to the Nyanga chicken factories provide them with a steady and cheap supply of chickens feet, eggs and whole live chickens which they kill themselves in the back yard, chop into bite size pieces and freeze. '2 pieces per person each time we have meat'. Often they have cabbage and pap without meat but there is fresh milk in the fridge and always plenty of eggs and bread. Pleasure is taken in small extras - Tendai is always teasing Rumbi about the fact that she can't come back from the supermarket without a treat of some kind (a copenhagen or drinking yoghurt) and Tendai invests a little money in upgrading her side of the shack once Emily arrives when she pays two Zimbabwean men to make shelves for her out on an old table (*you see, it's like we have to at least try and make it like home* she says to me. She says at home they would take pleasure in adding to their houses, making them look nice. This is her Khayelitsha effort).

Roughly then Tendai's monthly expenses come to R1,500. She is currently earning R3,500 which means she is left with roughly R2,000 per month extra. Joanne's tertiary fees have been R10,000 a year (paid in two instalments) and then she has her youngest daughter as well for whom she must provide money for fees and clothes. After those costs are covered there is very little left. The R3,000 for example that she paid the *malaitsha* to bring her daughter Emily and kids over in June was her month's salary for June so she was left with nothing for July and was facing school fees in August.

*T: I was supposed to prepare fees for the other daughter. So I told her (Emily) look now you are going to disturb me. It's going to be difficult for me to pay fees in August – August is very soon but then anyway let's hope when she comes she'll get a job and she'll help me* (Interview 4, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2011).

Work has been the primary concern for her. This advice to secure whatever employment you can find but always be looking out for better was given to Tendai when she first

arrived and her work trajectory since that time seems to reflect it. She now earns three times what she was earning back in 2007. That said, she had to shift expectations at the outset

*T: And these people who were working in Cape Town when they came back home they were lying to us. They would tell you if you work say for the house you earn maybe 5,000, 4,000, 3,000. But when you came here it was a different thing, you see? (Interview 1, May 14<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

And she had to grow familiar with the expectations of prospective employers. She had never done domestic work before

*S: So how did you find that – your first time working doing domestic work because it's another kind of job (Interview 3, June 4<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

*T: Okay it was so hectic... I didn't know what to do... I didn't even know that when you want to do some washing you have to look at the labels and to follow the instructions, because we are just used to hand washing. And those washing machines I didn't know how to operate them so the boss had to show me....she asked me have you ever used such a machine and I told her it's my first time*

While something of a distant memory now (in her current jobs she uses washing machines, microwaves, tumble dryers, irons, vacuum cleaners) she continues to this day to contend with the ever changing, everyday demands of domestic work. Her search for decent work also continues.

### **Tendai's mobility as a migrant, specifically in relation to work**

*My God doesn't want me to do this work!*

This section examines Tendai's mobility as a migrant, specifically in relation to work. She journeyed to Cape Town in the winter of 2007 but her journeying didn't end there, it has continued. Where certain sociological readings would tend to highlight the precariousness

of her ongoing situation, she describes the ongoing business of securing and sustaining life.

Tendai's first job at Brian's laundry was difficult. She was informed that Brian was looking for workers the very same night that she arrived in Khayelitsha and traveled to meet him in Southfields the next day.

*T: I talked to the Manager. He said do you have an asylum [says this very clearly, singularly<sup>9</sup>] something that will permit you to stay in South Africa? I said no I don't have a permit. He said what do you have? I said I have my passport. He took the passport. He said your visa is cancelled you are not allowed to stay and even if it was not cancelled it is only allowing you 30 days...No I can't take you for 30 days. I want someone who will work for a long time. I said 'on my God ye-oh'... I talked with him, I talked with him, I asked but he was refusing. But in the end he could see this lady she is serious and you could feel pity. Then he said, ok. I am going to employ you but you have to go and apply for asylum.<sup>10</sup> So I said yes. I started working [sigh] (Interview 1, May 14<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

The work – she explains – was demeaning and poorly paid

*T: There were many Zimbabweans...<sup>11</sup> the South Africans... how many South Africans did we have there? ... There were only two South Africans because this person, these South Africans they were complaining he doesn't want to pay that's why he wants foreigners because he can pay them sick money... he was paying very badly. People were saying... if*

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<sup>9</sup> Non italicised adjectives in brackets like this denote the particular way in which something is said (tone) or a reaction by either one of us to something that is said. These tones or reactions were significant enough to have been noted during the transcribing process and so are considered significant enough to reproduce here

<sup>10</sup> Tendai and Rumbi paid for forged visas to be stamped in their passports before leaving Zimbabwe but they were identified as forgeries at the Zimbabwe border and a big black X was drawn through them. This is why they were forced to wade across the Limpopo in fact. As she herself says here the visas would only have allowed entry for 30 days in any case. Tendai has since secured asylum and currently has a permit to work ('general work' only). Tendai arranged for Emily and her children to secure asylum just days after they arrived in South Africa in August 2011. Her daughter and two grand children also crossed into South Africa illegally and without passports

<sup>11</sup> A row of three dots (...) denotes pause

*you want to go there okay you have just arrived, you've got nothing to do, you don't know anywhere, its okay you can go but you have to make sure you find a better job*

The women pressed clothes from 7am to 5pm standing up or else spent the morning peeling potatoes in freezing conditions outside (Brian also ran a take away) and lunchtimes running around the neighborhood in gum boots delivering food to clients.

*T: You would be running around the area with food wearing something like... overalls. We had white trousers and a white top and some gum shoes... they are not good for running. Just imagine, they are heavy. You can't run wearing gum shoes and at my age...the worst of it (Interview 1, May 14<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

When Tendai's daughter Emily arrived earlier this year Tendai set her up, via a contact, with a poorly paying domestic job. Tendai said that she gave Emily firm advice – to stick with it and work hard at it until something better came along. After a couple of months in Cape Town, Emily was offered extra char work which would have meant working Saturdays and Sundays and Tendai advised her to take it. *She is saying it will mean she is working 7 days a week but I said to her that she is young, she has energy, she must at least try for a while. I told her that at one time I worked 7 days.*

One day Tendai tells the story of Beatrice – a young, bright Zimbabwean girl who worked with her at Brian's laundry. After a few months at Brian's laundry, Beatrice decided she'd had enough; she simply couldn't take the work anymore. Tendai recalls her joking with them saying 'My god doesn't want me to work like this!' She gave the two weeks notice that was required of her (Brian held onto first week of salary as a deposit) and counted on the extra week's salary lasting her two or three weeks of no work. Sadly Brian made all kinds of reductions which she didn't have the energy to fight and she left the place with R30.

*T: She was going to the firing points you know, where they go and wait for walungus<sup>12</sup> to come. She was going there. Some days she could get, some days not... she was struggling*

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<sup>12</sup> Walungu is a Bantu word used widely in Eastern and Southern Africa – it means 'Whites'

for a living and her son. She had only one son - her son had just arrived from Zimbabwe so it was difficult to feed the two of them but then with god's mercy a lady took her for a char to clean her house then she said I want you twice every week. Then after one month this lady told her she wanted her to work for her mother as full time stay in and she said 'oh thanks my god' because she was always praying, she was always praying. Then she got this full time job staying in, she would go home Fridays. She worked there for I can't remember how long then this lady told her there is no job anymore because I want to take my parents to the old folks home. After a month again she was phoned by that lady to ask her please can you come and help me. My parents they've not yet gone... and now mother has had an accident, she has a broken leg, so can you please come. She was so happy. She looked after the old lady and when it was time now for them to go to the old folks home you know what this lady did? This lady she's a manager at a big company... can't remember the name of this company... it does about internet what what I don't know. It's in Durbanville. She's the manager. Then she said I'm going to find you plentiful opportunity at my work. Then she gave her a nice job - she's the one who prepares the tea for breakfast, cleans everything. And she has left Khayelitsha now. She's in Claremont. They started giving her 3,000 but now she's getting 4,000. Then at the same time that lady she found her another job. After every 4 o'clock she goes there and cleans. That lady gives her 1.500 to make 5.5. Now she's well, her life is good (Interview 1, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011).

Like Beatrice, Tendai's first year and a half were also shaky in terms of employment – short term stints, two or three part time jobs concurrently. She was under a lot of stress in 2008 in particular – to stay employed, to send money home. Tendai left Brian's laundry towards the end of 2007 and started working as a domestic for a single mother in Sea Point, *the Indian lady*. Although the Indian lady couldn't pay her much she did offer to put Tendai up in the flat during the week so that she could save money on transport. It was a tight arrangement because the flat only had one bedroom - Tendai had to roll out a mat and sleep in the living room every evening – but she didn't mind. She liked *the Indian lady* and accepted the low wage because she believed that it was all that the lady could manage.

*S: So you didn't have your own space? (Interview 3, June 4<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

*T: There was no space it was a small house*

*S: And what did you do for eating?*

*T: She could cook*

*S: Oh ok*

*T: But most of the times I could cook for myself because of the... you know... the Indian food*

*S: And when would you cook it? During the day when she wasn't there?*

*T: Even when she was there*

*S: Okay*

*T: She didn't mind... Like some they would say 'No, you can't cook... you have to cook when I am away because the pap is smelling'*

*S: Really? [smile]*

*T: That's what some would say but she would say can you just cook a little bit for me*

*S: Oh she liked it*

*T: She liked it but she would only eat maybe two spoons*

At the end of 2007, Tendai left to take up a better paying job with a fish and chip place in Milnerton. Tendai hadn't realized that fish and chip job was seasonal, for the summer period only, so in early 2008 she found herself without a job again. At this very same time, xenophobic violence was intensifying in townships across South Africa. In a period of a few weeks local residents across the country turned on their foreign neighbors, assaulting them and burning down the homes and businesses. Like many of the foreigners in Khayelitsha at that time, Tendai and Rumbi had packed up their belongings, locked their shacks and were living out of a church hall.

*T: ...and then I got the job. One of the days me and Rumbi we went out to Parklands and we put you know those cards where you write 'I am a Zimbabwean I am looking for a job. So I was phoned by a certain lady. ... she phoned me and then I went for interview. We agreed but it was for R1000 so we talked about it and I said I wanted 1.6. We agreed. Then when I went there, when I started working, she had to sit down with me again and she said okay you want 1.6 but you are going to stay here so I am going to deduct this for rent and I am going to deduct this for food - then I remained with 1000. Then I said okay it's fine because I had no option (Interview 9, September 10<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

Tendai describes the difficulty she had negotiating days off

*T: When I wanted to go for the weekend off she would say 'no you can't go because I am busy and I told you Tendai you can stay here until whenever you want, please stay here as family.' The first day I started she said welcome to our family. I didn't know what she meant*

She describes the difficulty she had in negotiating food

*T: She asked me 'what do you want for your food' I told her 'I want pap'. She said 'pap with what?' I told her 'I can eat pap with cabbage, I can eat pap with meat, I can eat pap with lentil'*

Tendai suggested turkey because she liked it and could buy it cheaply in Khayelitsha. The employer wasn't familiar with turkey but went and bought it anyway but a first grade kind *T: Then she said 'so you mean this is the 'cheap' meat?' ... I told her we buy it cheap in Khayelitsha. She said she couldn't buy it for me*

Tendai says that this lady employed her because she knew she was a Zimbabwean

*T: She took advantage of this xenophobia so she wanted to use me*

Tendai hadn't had a job for some time and her belongings were sitting in bin liners in a town hall somewhere in Site C. Job or no job though, Tendai could not abide the conditions and, after 6 weeks she left the job.

*T: I left there.... I had to run away I found that was the only solution*

Tendai describes her flight in detail. She decided on a Saturday that she would escape the next day. The woman had asked her to rise early to clean the house in preparation for her mother who was due to visit so Tendai had good reason to rise early without arousing suspicion. She rose very early that Sunday. They had forgotten to close the windows in the kitchen that night so she described how the wooden blinds were hitting against the windows and making a racket, rousing the woman who got up to see what was going on. She ushered the woman back to bed saying it was just the wind and that she would now clean the house and ma'am wasn't to worry if she heard any unusual noises. The ma'am went back to bed but left the bedroom door open.

*T: ....Then I opened the door I went out, locked the door and threw the keys through the open window. I didn't take anything that wasn't mine (says last sentence with emphasis)*

*S: Yeah*

*T: But I took a tracksuit she had given me ... she didn't want me to wear dresses, she wanted me to wear trousers but I'm not used to trousers so she gave me a tracksuit - a nice tracksuit, a black one. I had to take it because she gave it to me*

*S: Yeah*

*T: So off I went I had to run... I had to run because I was afraid ye-oh maybe they are going to follow after me so I had to run. When I was running there I saw a taxi - I took the taxi and came to Khayelitsha. I had switched off my phone but when I got home I switched it on and saw a message. It was saying 'how can you do this to us?'*

*S: That's very difficult*

*T: So I replied that the working conditions are too bad... I said I can't stay without bathing (they had not allowed her to use their bathrooms but had instead given her a bucket to wash with in the garage). I can't stay with an empty stomach. I replied like that*



Sometime later on in the year Tendai returned to the Indian lady and worked there for another few months before the family moved away.

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Tendai's accounts reveal the ways in which both herself and Beatrice continually assessed and responded to the situations they found themselves in – and continue to do so. They moved from one job to the next for particular reasons and in particular ways. Their mobility is driven by a desire to earn more money and work in better conditions but they don't necessarily move from one job to the next because opportunities arise, they instead seem to create the space for this to happen. Their mobility cannot be untangled either from the actual experiences and encounters that materialize through their work.

Beatrice left Brian's because it got too much. She didn't think too much about the future but was resolved to find more work and better work. Beatrice had a likeable personality (Tendai described her as the one that Brian liked most; as *intelligent, cheeky*) and there was luck involved – in charring for a lady who eventually gave her full time work with her company – but in striking out, in making connections and building relations she may not have had a vision of an 'alternate future' but she was being active in the present. Tendai's early years in Cape Town – her movements in and out of *the Indian lady's* Sea Point home, her departure from the Parklands house - can be understood in the same terms. *Actual departures* were carefully planned (in Tendai's case down to what was reasonable to take with her from the Parklands house and why) but what was to follow and how things would work out wasn't clear to her at the time.

Tendai moved around for most of 2007 and 2008 – taking jobs, leaving them, returning to old employers, balancing two or three jobs at a time (the precise details of her work trajectory for those years were actually very hard to pin down). This initial mobility involved adjusting to new kinds of work, testing waters, building relations, accruing references, strengthening contacts and these things led to better jobs, better pay. A lot of this movement in 2007/8 was not, on the face of it, part of a master plan – her accounts reflect this. Sometimes she would leave a job and not know what she would do next (Parklands); sometimes she would take a job knowing it would pay better but without

knowing how long it would be for (Milnerton). She was however active in the present (working, connecting, exchanging) and her present circumstances (she earns 3 times more now than at the end of 2008) are the continued testament of this. In this way we are able to see her mobility and that of Beatrice as being not simply a marker of precariousness but a marker of *ongoing achievement* as well.

Can we link the mobility to her accounts of experience? What is the relation between experience and Tendai's decision to leave Parklands and to leave it in the manner that she did? It is a 'myriad of imperceptible worlds' that shape our experiences of places. She explains to the Parklands family in an SMS that *the working conditions were too bad* but it is near impossible to discern the reasons why Tendai stuck it out at Brian's laundry until something better came along (*T: I was working at the chips. Sometimes the chips would sleep outside in the water and when you would come the next morning you would have to take them out with your bare hands. It was chilling. It was so cold* [Interview 1, May 14<sup>th</sup> 2011]) but left Parklands before day break one morning after only six weeks. Her account gives hints though; it alludes to more than simply 'low pay' or too many hours being the problem. Even though she lived under their roof, she was required to bathe in the garage with a bucket; that there was 'no need' for her to go and visit Khayelitsha on her off days because they were her family; when asked what she kind of meat she would like to eat, she suggested which they subsequently implied was excessive. These elements were central to her account – they have a lot to do with why she couldn't stay. Just as they explain why she couldn't stay, being able to cook pap in *the Indian lady's* kitchen whenever she liked, being invited to share meals with the family perhaps explains why, in spite of low pay, she worked for *the Indian lady* not once but twice.

### **Negotiating relations and conditions, in the specific context of domestic work**

*It's a little bit complicated. She's nice. I mean we talk; we laugh but a little bit complicated*

Domestic work, Tendai's sole source of income since 2008, is taxing work. Not only is there the physical monotony but it is heavily relational, taking place as it does in the intimacy of somebody else's home with arrangements seldom formalized in the way that they would be in other kinds of work environment (Anderson 2000 & 2001, Hondagneu-

Sotelo 2001). This section introduces and discusses some of Tendai's accounts of working in such a set up, described by Papadopoulos *et al.* (2008) as something akin to a complex and unstable balance. There are no more stories of dramatic escapes through back doors in the early hours of the morning but instead intricate accounts of every day incidents, the extent to which they have been bound up with relations and how they have affected her.

In May 2011, at the outset of our sessions together, Tendai was working in two homes. She was a char for a middle aged couple in Simonstown (three days a week) and a char/child minder for a young couple and their 1 year old daughter in Sea Point (two days a week). Although Sea Point was 'easier' (she found the commute to Simonstown three times a week very stressful) Tendai preferred working in Simonstown to working in Sea Point. She liked working in Simonstown because the work was straightforward.

*T: I like that nobody is following me, nobody is watching. And sometimes they're not in. They just wake up in the morning, they bath, then she sits there on the computer for a few hours then she goes (Interview 5, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

The Sea Point lady on the other hand didn't work and tended to stay nearby while Tendai was cleaning or minding the child. She had also been complicated when it came to negotiating the initial agreement. From the beginning it was difficult to negotiate hours and pay – they offered Tendai 2 days work but one day leaving at 1pm instead of 3pm and getting R30 less for that day. Tendai didn't accept this – she knew that she would be expected to do the same work on that day but just within a shorter space of time. They eventually came to an agreement but her finishing hour (3pm) has since become a source of tension.

*T: Three o clocks I am supposed to finish work three o clock. Sometimes the ma'am will delay to come home. Maybe ten past and then I leave at half past instead I was supposed to leave at 3*

*S: Does she say anything, does she say sorry?*

*T: At first she used to say sorry but no longer and it annoys me. She really annoyed me the other day. I told her I wanted to do something in town, that I must go three o clock. She*

*said why three o'clock. I said that's the time I am supposed to meet someone to do what I want to do but she said no, that must be on your time not in my time. Then I was wondering which time now is she talking about... (I chuckle) ...Because I'm supposed to finish at three*

*I didn't want to confront her and say oh no but I must finish at three, you know you just want to respect... like you can't complain. You can do like it's okay, it's fine. But then she will keep on taking advantage... Now she has come to the extent of half past three is like her time and she thinks... she thinks I don't know.*

*You know the problem is they think like when you're working for them you don't know nothing, you know nothing, you know nothing. They don't even know that some of these things we know and I know my rights*

Tendai didn't confront her employer about the three o'clock finish time – it is hard to question the boss on the matter of a half an hour here or there – but the decision not to do so ultimately irked Tendai (her frustration with herself as much as with the employer is apparent in the excerpt above). In an effort to make herself feel better she decided that she would find a way to raise it on another day. In other words, she wasn't going to let it go. The attitude of the employer frustrated Tendai

*T: I was thinking, she was saying she wants to put me on full time but then I must be frank with her. If she does it again next time, I have to tell her*

The frustration she felt (and she described a few incidents) stemmed not so much from the fact that she had had to stay on an extra half hour here or there but more that the employer appeared to assume that she wasn't touched by the manipulation of pre-existing arrangements, either because she was too cowed to say anything or was not switched on enough to understand that it was happening. Conversely, Tendai's feelings on the matter highlight just how touched she was. When the Sea Point family offered her a full-time position she entered the new arrangement with caution. It was an arrangement that would make Tendai's life much easier (less tasks, less commuting, more baby care which she likes) but she had things to consider. *What if they take me on full time and then when work*

*dies down for the husband in a couple of months, they reduce me back to part time?* (The wife was planning to spend more time helping her husband out at his office). In the end, Tendai accepted the offer (discussions went on for about 6 weeks or so) but told me *I have told her that I cannot afford to go a month without work so that if they are going to hire me full time they must guarantee that they will keep me on regardless*. They also agreed to new times – Tendai was to be paid up to 4.30 – mostly finishing at 3.30 sometimes be expected to stay on until 5.30. It was an arrangement that made Tendai a little nervous but nevertheless she accepted. She told me that she would be keeping a close eye on the average finishing hour though - it was likely to be a day to day struggle.

Finally, Tendai accepted the new job but she makes it clear that she moved with caution. It was not the prospect of better pay or an easier commute that was foremost on her mind but rather her feeling about the job and her relations with the Sea Point employer in particular. What seemed to be of concern to her once she made the decision about Sea Point was how best to make the move away from Simonstown.

*T: I don't know.... These Simonstown people I haven't told them about.... I'm failing to find how to start to tell them but I must tell them* (Interview 6, August 8<sup>th</sup> 2011).

According to Tendai the woman in particular had been very 'good' to her (she didn't elaborate) and this, she explains, is why it was going to be hard to them she was leaving. Tendai considered lots of different options, including a letter because she felt she could communicate better through writing. Emily was on her way and Tendai considered the possibility of asking her Simonstown employers if they would take Emily on in place of her. She doubted though they would want someone so young. She spent a lot of time thinking on how to make her exit and it coincided with preparing for Emily's arrival (shifting the shack around to make space, buying another bed, putting out feelers for work, arranging with the *malaitsha* to bring her over).

At the end of July the Simonstown people travelled to Singapore for a two week vacation. They said to Tendai that she needn't come in for all three of the days each week but that they would pay her the usual salary nonetheless. Tendai used this opportunity to work more days for the couple in Sea Point but encountered problems when the employer's

daughter called her up and asked her to come in to work on a day when she was unavailable because of Sea Point commitments. She collected the first week of wages from her employer when they left but the daughter, who was responsible for giving her the second week, never left the second week's money out for her. When Tendai raised it with her employers on their return they said they would sort it out but they never did. Tendai never spells out why that may have been the case but *alludes* to a tension having arisen between herself and the daughter over that second week. She also makes her own feeling on the whole thing very clear – that from her point of view, she carried out the work that was required of her during the employer's absence and was therefore very disappointed in their failure to come through with the money. She tells the whole story to illustrate why she finally *didn't mind leaving so much*.

In the end, it didn't come down to Tendai to give her notice. In mid August the Simonstown couple announced that they were moving to Noordhoek - too far a distance for Tendai to travel. She left on good terms – something that, in spite of the incident was clearly important to her. A few weeks after she left, she mentioned that she was intending to drop them a message to let them know how she was getting on and to thank them for everything that they did.

Another aspect that frustrated Tendai about the Sea Point employer was their under acknowledgement of her experience with children. The baby that Tendai cared for was the first baby for this couple and so they were quite protective of her.

*T: And with the kids... I don't know. They just take you like you don't know how to handle the kids... I just don't understand. I just don't understand. Because with the experience I got from Shelly<sup>13</sup> I know I am excellent.... (Interview 5, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

*S: Yeah... and also it's not even your experience with Shelly. Like how many other babies have you raised?*

*T: Well like there is the one in Sea Point...*

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<sup>13</sup> Shelly was the girl I also au paired in 2010. She was born in April 2009

*S: No but yourself... how many times have you been a mother!*

*T: [Bursts out laughing] No with us they think the way we raise our kids and the way they raise their kids...*

*S: They seem different*

*T: It's different*

*S: But surely it's the same actually?*

*T: Ahhhh [like she is not so sure, not agreeing] (Interview 5, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

She really enjoys caring for small children and it's one of the few areas that she talks about with self confidence (she knows she is good at it). At the same time care work clearly vexes her, it's not straightforward

*T: They think they are clever because when they are there they are watching you – what about when they are not there? It's up to me with my heart to keep the baby... You can't fake it*

For Tendai care work is something that is done with the heart so while its work that she does for money, it's more than simply straightforward labor. The work requires emotional investment on her part; it is not just a job, it is about caring for another person. It can mean that boundaries break down. At one stage last year she said to me how her biggest wish would be to see one more grandchild come into the world before she died so that she could teach her own baby all the things that she had learned from caring for Shelly.

At the same time however, she talked about nannies who try to treat care work as a job like any other to ensure that they are not taken for granted.

*T: And the thing is if you agree with your nanny that you finish at three o'clock and then you make her wait up to half past five she will be annoyed because she wanted to go home at three o'clock and so after three o'clock she will no longer concentrate... With me I don't know how God created me – I will be there - but I know that is what happens. All these afterhours she is annoyed, she is no longer interested you see. So it must be three o'clock*

*for your nanny to be happy and when your nanny is happy she is going to be good to your child*

It was not clear if she was indirectly talking about herself here (she used the analogy of the 3pm finish time which recalled her personal frustration with her own employer). Whether she was using third person to distance herself from a feeling or attitude that she didn't want to directly attribute to herself or not, it's not so important. What is important is what her narrative revealed and that is that her work stirs up strong feelings, conflicted at times.

In early 2009 Tendai secured full time employment with Rachel and Peter Dawkins. It marked her first full time, long lasting stint as a domestic/nanny. Tendai found the job through Rumbi's employer. The Dawkins lived in Vredehoek (they subsequently moved to Newlands) and were just about to have Shelly, their first baby. Tendai initially worked as a part time cleaner (she worked two days a week for them and another 5 days a week in two other locations – it was that period when she was working 7 days a week) but as the weeks went on and the household got busier she became full time and gradually assumed some responsibility for the care of Shelly. My impression (and Tendai confirmed this) is that 2009-11 wasn't an easy period for the couple. Rachel had a child in April 2009 and a second child in May 2010. The pregnancies coincided with a bad time for her husband's business so she had to keep working not only through the pregnancies but also while the babies were very small. She tried to keep everything in balance – rushing home for mums and tots, breastfeeding between business meetings – but as the months went on the strain began to get too much and Tendai explained to me that Rachel and Peter were fighting a lot by the time she left. She was empathic towards Rachel even though Rachel's stress levels often led to her losing her temper with Tendai. *She is a good mother, she knows her children* she would say.

Shelly was special to Tendai, who was there when she came home from the hospital. Tendai was enthralled by her and very taken with her intelligence. They shared a very strong bond (I was able to see that) and had a lot of fun playing together. Shelly was not the first baby Tendai had minded. She had minded infants in the Parklands house but only said about them that they called her 'nanny' all the time and she hated that. Her recent



job in Sea Point sees her minding a little girl and while she enjoys it, she doesn't talk about the child in the same way as she talks about Shelly.

When I returned to Cape Town in early 2011 I paid a visit to the Dawkins and was hoping to find Tendai there as well since I had failed to reach her on the phone. When I got to the house though, I didn't find her there. Over tea, Rachel and Andrew told me that she had left them two weeks ago. Sometime in January they had given her notice, having made the decision to move to Hermanus. They weren't moving for another two months though and had told her that they would be very happy if she stayed on for the remaining two months and that they would help her find a new job; she was also free to leave if she found something else in the meantime. Two weeks later, she packed her things and left. 'Apparently she has taken up a job in Simonstown for 2 days a week as a char ... it's such a long commute; it doesn't make any sense. We said we would help her find something full time but she said she wanted to leave and it was her choice so... There was an incident. Did you hear about it?' I hadn't.

At the end of January Tendai had been minding Shelly whilst ironing. At one point she left the iron on the board while she went to get something. Shelly came in, pulled on the iron cord and the hot iron fell on her arm. Rachel said she got hysterical with Tendai when she came home. 'Obviously mistakes happen but she should have called me, she didn't call me. I could have told her what to do. Instead she went and put Shelly's arm under a cold tap which is the worst thing you can do, and waited until I got home to tell me.' When I finally managed to make contact with Tendai (Rachel and Peter gave me another number to try) we spoke on the phone and agreed to meet. At the end of the phone call she asked, hesitantly *And did they tell you about Shelly and the iron?* When we met she told me that she hadn't been sure what to do after the incident and that she had felt *very bad* in the house. A few days after the incident Rachel, in frustration over what she viewed to be an ill timed request of Tendai for a morning off, Tendai told me that she shouted at her saying, 'You can go now if you want, we don't care if you leave'. That very same day Tendai put word out to her networks that she was looking for a new job and a few days later, just as Rachel and Peter had recounted, left the Newlands house.

By the time she left, Tendai had worked for the Dawkins for a total of two years. She had lived on their property for most of that time and she had received an average wage for 5 days full employment a week – it had been steady and relatively decent employment (after a year and a half of short term, poorly paying jobs). This goes some way to explain why Rachel and Andrew struggled to understand her reasons for leaving so quickly - why 2 days of char work per week with a long commute from Khayelitsha over their set up or a similar one that they could help her find? Tendai was feeling so ‘very bad’ that the only option available to her was to leave.

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Just as with her accounts of mobility in 2007/8, Tendai’s accounts of domestic work reveal the precariousness of her work situation – the ease with which employers over extend employees, the discomfort of working on the basis of ad hoc, unwritten agreements, the intensity of being paid to care for children that you come to love. While these aspects are significant, her experiences stemmed from the relations that undergirded the domestic arrangements. Her accounts reflect how she was an integral actor within these various sets of relations.

Tendai really struggled to find a way to leave the Simonstown people – she never elaborated on why but she said on more than one occasion that they had been *so good* to her. Why did she feel so duty bound towards them? Why wasn’t it a straightforward thing to tell them that she had been offered a full time job elsewhere? Through her accounts we can make a link between her sense of duty (i.e. feeling bad about leaving) and the particularities of her experience of the place. She mentioned that she liked that she was able to get on with her work without supervision and leave when she determined she was done (suggesting a degree of trust). She also spoke about how they would tidy up after themselves on the days when she was not there so that the house was always fairly tidy (suggesting a degree of respect). These ‘good feelings’, generated by/linked to the nature of her relationship with the employers, made it hard for her to tell them that she was leaving. What is significant is how contingent her sense of well being is then on relations and on multiple but very singular kinds of occasions. Those ‘good feelings’, the guilt

about leaving dissipated as a result of a single incident (with the daughter). Tendai simply didn't feel the same way about her employers after the incident. From the way she narrated it was clear that it wasn't so much about the money, it was about the exchange that she had with the daughter on the phone and it was about her discomfort with the fact that they didn't compensate her for the work.

Although it is more dramatic, the incident with Shelly and the iron is similar to the incident with the Simonstown daughter in that it illustrates the way in which a single incident can suspend a set of relations and allowing for the surfacing of unsaid feelings or for the surfacing of new feelings all together. As with the Parklands incident it is hard to pinpoint exactly why Tendai left the Dawkins. Stacked behind the decision to leave is that same myriad of imperceptible worlds. In trying to imagine why Tendai 'felt bad' one could postulate that, in the aftermath of the event and in the midst of Rachel's distress, the comfortable intimacy between Tendai and Shelly would have dissipated; she would have been reminded of her status as worker, not carer. It would have been hard to endure. How do you practically manage the demands of such a job? A job that generates so much (love, affection), but at the same time a job that can, in a moment's notice, be reduced to labour for which you are paid a basic wage with nothing more than a contract (if that) connecting you to your charge. Much like with the Simonstown people Tendai has stayed in contact with the Dawkins - she SMSes Peter from time to time, with news and to send love to the children, but things were never going to be the same after what happened.

Tendai's accounts show the extent to which her experiences of domestic work have been contingent on her relations. She provided a lot of detail around singular incidents and this suggests that they have been a significant part of her experience - pinning down exactly why is not easy or even possible but the depth of her detail and her own reflections enable us to discern the ways in which these incidents altered relations and consequently shaped her feelings and her actions.

### **Family, friends and home**

Tendai's accounts suggest that much of her time and energy is consumed by work – the long commutes and the everyday demands of the work itself – but her children, who continue to depend on her in different ways as well as her relations with other Zimbabweans, are naturally a part of her life in South Africa as well. This section explores Tendai's accounts of those relations and the way in which these relations are continually evolving and inevitably being shaped by her being in South Africa.

By the time she came to South Africa in 2007, Tendai's family would have been somewhat accustomed to her frequent absences from home and her role as mother-breadwinner. That said, during her years as a trader her absences from home were not so prolonged. She only left her children for a few weeks at a time and in any case – and as she explained to me – her husband was always there. The family home in Epworth functioned as what Muzividziwa (2001) terms a 'commuter home', the separation instigated by the trading work only ever being fleeting. Now though things are different – she has no spouse, her youngest daughter lives with her older brother and her other dependent, second youngest Joy, is at college. The family home in Epworth is full of lodgers.

In spite of prolonged bouts of separation from her children (she goes home once a year at Christmas time and is there for about two weeks), Tendai continues to mother, an idea that resonates with the idea that women migrant workers transform the meanings of motherhood to accommodate spatial and temporal separation from their children (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1997). One day I arrive at the shack to see Tendai hanging things out on the line (not so unusual). They are nighties and pyjama tops. She explains to me that the Simonstown people gave her a bag of old clothes and in the bag she had found some things that her daughters at home would like. She had carefully washed them and now they were drying. She explained that she had bought fabric softener especially for the washing *so that the clothes will smell nice* and that she would iron them neatly before packing them and sending them home. They may have been material things but the

tenderness with which she prepared and packed them amounted to an expression of love and care, even if the children weren't really to know the full extent of it.

Tendai speaks a lot about these younger girls. Perhaps it is because she still sees them as dependents, the others having their own families now but she also appears proud of them, particularly Joy who is studying business now at tertiary level. By contrast, Tendai on a number of occasions expresses disappointment over the choices that her three elder daughters made. Her eldest daughter Angela, who lives and works as a domestic in Belville, has a 12 year old child by a former relationship and has recently had a baby with her partner. Tendai disapproves because the partner has not paid lobola and is always intimating that he is a sponge. She sees this daughter and granddaughters from time to time but doesn't talk about them a lot, although there was a lot of excitement when she came to Khayelitsha to present the new baby back in September. Tendai tells me that she knew Emily's marriage was ill fated from the start, that they simply weren't a good match. Once Emily arrives in Cape Town she does start trying to patch things up with her husband (Tendai explains that their departure left him bereft, that he never thought Emily would take the leap) but it remains to be seen how that will go. Tendai's third daughter Gracious is, she says, simply a disappointment to her – she calls her 'the naughty one'. She eloped with a young man some ten years ago and had a baby with him but he died when the baby was just three months old. She is supposed to manage the tenants at the Epworth house and gather the rent for her mother but she is unreliable.

According to Tendai these three daughters ignored her advice and warnings - not one of them finished their O levels and all of them had children at a young age. She has big hopes now for the two that are still young and still studying. She tells me about her niece – a young woman who has studied medicine and who at 27 is only now looking to find a man and settle down. She gushes over her intelligence and her independence and tells me how she has asked this niece to play role model for her two youngest daughters. Indeed whilst her accounts indicate that she puts a lot of stock in tradition (the sacredness of marital vows, a woman's duty to her husband, a woman's duty as mother) she expresses admiration for educated and professional women.

On a few occasions she talked about the guilt she felt over not being in Zimbabwe for her two youngest daughters. Her sister in law she explains does a good job of caring for the two girls, particularly the younger one who lives at the house

*T: But it's not the same, mother is best (Interview 9, September 10<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

Tendai speaks fondly of her sister in law but also feels that she is burdened by Tendai's absence

*T: She loves her husband very much. She's from a well up family. She is beautiful; she is white in complexion; she is a giant. A strong woman of which if she was someone else, because she doesn't have a baby and she has all of these problems keeping Tendai's children and being the mother of the whole family, she should have gone. Her mother is in London. If she wanted she could have just said mummy can you buy me a ticket and then just left. But she said I love my husband. When I got this husband I prayed – she's a roman catholic. I prayed to god I said this is the husband you have given me under what circumstances he is going to be mine (Interview 8, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011).*

She tries to stay emotionally connected to her youngest girls but finds the distance makes this difficult, particularly the youngest. She often rings the youngest to see how she is but says that she knows Bridget will never worry her mother by saying that she is anything but fine, and okay. Tendai says she sometimes calls her late in the evenings when she knows she will be in her room and not around her Uncle or Aunt and so more free to talk about anything that is bothering her but even this doesn't result in her saying much. One day she tells me that she will stay in Cape Town until next year but before that she will get her youngest daughter a passport and have her come over for a visit. They will travel home together then when Tendai leaves.

*T: It's like I want her to visit here once to do that for her (Interview 8, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011).*

*S: Like as a treat?*

*T: As a treat because I haven't been there... when I left her she was young.... I send clothes and money and send her to school... I am providing just the material things*

One Saturday she tries on a new dress that she has bought for Joy. She bought it brand new at a shop in the mall – R50 monthly payments over three months. It is tight and long with a leopard skin print. *Do you think she'll like it?* she asks me. She is wondering if it suits her, she likes her waist and bum in it and asks me if she should also buy one. She laughs and sings a song to me that she had heard on the radio. *Give children rules, Give them love, Give them love, Not just material things* she sings.

In June Tendai announces that her second born daughter Emily is coming across from Harare. Emily, 27 and a mother of 2, had split up from her husband after a difficult few years of marriage and had decided that the only thing she could do was to join her mother in Cape Town.

*S: How do you feel about your daughter coming here?* (Interview 4, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2011).

*T: It's like I feel great. I feel like it's good. If she's in a bad situation then she can't help it. She must come... I have to let her come otherwise I will remain stressed the whole of my life here in South Africa because I will always be thinking how is she now, how is she surviving*

She explains to me at some length how impossible it would have been for Emily to remain in Zimbabwe without a husband given that she didn't work. Because of the economic situation there she simply wouldn't have been able to rely on relatives for help. Tendai's swiftly makes all the necessary arrangements. She starts thinking about the possibility of Emily taking over from her in Simonstown, child care arrangements for the kids, the organisation of the shack

*S: And then where will they stay. Here?*

*T: I was thinking for the time being I must stay with them here then if she manages to get a job, let's say a full time with a better salary then we can move to a bigger house*

*S: So you'll stay 5 or 6 here.... ye-oh it will be tight*

*T: [Laughs] Very tight but as time goes I don't know what we are going to do or maybe Rumbi will move then and I will remain since I have the bigger family. We will see when it comes*

*S: And this journey now where will he take them across the river like you went?*

*T: They do not have passports, it's a big problem. That's why I had gone to see the malaitsha because that's his business just give him money to bring them to South Africa.*

*S: So will you be glad to be with her*

*T: Very glad, I can't wait. I can't wait to meet them. I'll be very glad. I really missed my granddaughter and my grandson. I'm very happy I don't mind what's going to happen what I want is to see them here and be happy for that time I don't know what is going to happen afterwards. I am just saying let them come*

Emily and her two children arrive a few weeks later and over the course of two Saturdays (because Saturday is the only day they have for chores – Sunday being a day of rest) they rearrange the shack to accommodate them. It is quite a feat to see them making room for three others in a space where three people were already squeezed. Emily has quite a traumatic journey across. The two of us never get to speak about it in depth but through light conversation I gather that the malaitsha was only able to bring the kids across the formal border post (they were put, sleeping, into the back of vehicle and covered with blankets). Emily on the other hand – like her mother before her - had no option but to wade across the Limpopo River in the dark. The group she was with got jumped on by thieves on the South Africa side. Luckily all her valuables were in the vehicle with her children but her shoes were taken and others had their property stolen. Tendai had the job waiting for her and had organised crèche for Tamuka (the three year old). Cathy (7 years old) has been the worry because it isn't possible to enrol her in school mid- year. A problem that they face for next year is that all of the schools in the Khayelitsha area are Xhosa schools and she doesn't have the language.

Some weeks on – during our last session together in fact – Tendai reflects on Emily's coming



*S: How do you feel about her also now beginning to build a life here? (Interview 10, September 18<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

*T: [Sigh] Ah what can I say about Emily. Sometimes... sometimes I come to the extent of thinking oh why did I do this, I shouldn't have done this because it seems it's going to give her a hard time with the kids....if she was going to be alone it was going to be good but I think it's going to give her a hard time because like this time Cathy's not going to school, Tamuka ok it's ok he's going to crèche but she has to wake up early in the morning, bathe him and take him to the crèche before she goes to work. She's lucky she's starting work 9 o'clock. What if she was starting 7 o'clock? 8 o'clock? It would be difficult*

*I was talking with Emily the other day. I told her she had to... I was saying I read on the train there was a paper written 'October' - that's when they start to enrol for school for 2012 so I was telling her you have to be very alert. I told her you have to be very alert because if you wait for me to tell you everything, each and every thing... I am old and I have my OWN...*

*S: You have your own things*

*T: I have my own things to think about so... she said okay*

And what of Tendai? Her narrative on life here has mostly been about her work and her children and while she continually alludes to social contacts, when I ask her about friends she replies

*T: I think at my age there's no need to have a friend [laughs] that's what I think. The time for a friend is over...everyone is my friend at my age. Is it? I don't know if I'm mistaken (Interview 10, September 18<sup>th</sup> 2011).*

*S: I know what you mean*

*T: You see.... maybe when like when I'm at home okay even when I'm here I know if I run short of something I have to face Rumbi or Shelly maybe that's where the friendship comes in. Even at home I know when I'm stuck I go to Amai Farai or Amai Brenda that's... maybe that's the reason why I can say I have friends but not like... you know the*

*friendship when you are young and the friendship when you are... when you are young there's a lot to talk about um my husband did this... but now there's not much [Chuckles]*

We collect chicken feet from a Zimbabwean lady in Nyanga one Saturday that Tendai and Rumbi refer to as 'friend'. We sit with her in her house for a while and chat. Rumbi hands over Emily's CV and the CV of her niece (turns out this lady's daughter works on Robben Island and may be able to get the girls some holiday work). On the way home I ask them how and when they met the lady – it turns out that they had met her by chance just the week previously when they have been near her house buying chickens and Tendai, desperate for the loo (her stomach was upset) asked if she could use her bathroom. Are they 'friends'?

*S: Like who are your friends?*

*T: My friends in Cape Town?*

*S: Mmmm*

*T: My friends [Smiles] in Cape Town it's Rumbi*

And she distinguishes that friendship from others, such as the friendship that I have seen with Shelly (their neighbour) or other people she has discussed such as Beatrice

*T: With people like Shelly no ways. Even this Beatrice I talked about the other time – the one I worked with in Brian's laundry? No ways. Where we are in Khayelitsha it's a lot of Zimbabweans – you say hello, you discuss, you share...*

*S: Information*

*T: Information... but for that moment you see*

At the same time, the relationship between Tendai and Rumbi is difficult to work out. They crossed the river together in 2007 and they sheltered together in the church hall during the xenophobic violence of early 2008 and she calls Rumbi her one friend in Cape Town but still she seems to discount Rumbi as an intimate friend.

*T: When we go back to Zimbabwe I'm not going to mind about her or she's not going to mind about me. You see she has got her own friends there in Zimbabwe but ...I think with Rumbi we can visit because it's a long time we have been together*

She makes a distinction between friendships that have been forged at home and those that have come into being because of circumstances in South Africa

*T: Maybe it's because I'm here in Cape Town. It's different to if I was in Zimbabwe because if I was in Epworth I would know Amai Farai is my friend and this Amai Brenda. Now I am here in South Africa and we just met so I don't think I can say I have a friend*

Tendai's narrative on her friendships reflects a broader thread in her narrative and that is that South Africa was always intended to be a provisional arrangement, one that is coming to an end soon.

*S: So tell me about, back in Khayelitsha, you know when you first came you didn't know how long you would stay?*

*T: Mmmmm*

*S: And then now you are quite certain that you're going home*

*T: Yes*

*S: Did you ever feel this before, this certain?*

*T: Of going home?*

*S: Yeah or is this now the first time you are saying yes I am planning to go home?*

*T: I haven't felt about it so serious like this. This time I'm serious. It's like I would say we would agree when we are seated especially with Rumbi we would say oh no ladies what are you doing we are being stupid we must go home. We could say some people are making a lot of money home... maybe if I go in December I won't go back but not as serious as I am this time*

The last interview we have takes place in Table View (an upmarket, outlying suburb of Cape Town) where Tendai is house-sitting. Perhaps it's because it's our last together, perhaps it's because she is relaxed in the apartment and has nothing to do but lie on the bed and chat (no chores) but the interview was unlike any other interview that we had. Tendai is keen to talk about future plans. When she talks of where she would like to spend her last years it's at 'home' - home being not the house in Epworth (which is full of tenants and her wayward daughter in any case), nor her husband's home place near Mount Darwin which she explains is very traditional and strict, and 'full of bushes', but the old family homestead in Northern Seke where she spent the first part of her life.

*T: Normally I have to be at my husband's family... I have to be at my husband's family but now I choose to go to my own family because I can see I'll be.... free and safe. I'll be free and safe*

*S: What do you hope for yourself now?*

*T: Okay from now*

*S: Yeah*

*T: When I go back... okay. Like I always say about keeping the chickens that is the only thing that I was thinking about when I go home. Um keep the chickens, if I manage to buy myself a sewing machine, a knitting machine. ...but now I don't like it in town. I like it straight at the rural area*

*S: Deep deep rural*

*T: Deep deep in the rural area like where I feel I have got a big space, I have a garden, there will be enough for my chickens, enough space for my sewing if I manage to and my granddaughters will come and see me we have enough space, we have a big kitchen whereby we sit around the fire everyone talking stories mmmm I think that's my wish from here*

*S: And could it be your dad's... your mum and dad's place... that place you say has gone like ruin*

*T: Yes I would wish I could go there to that place I'm not going to my husband's... I have to go to my home area. And when they visit they will find me there and I will cook for them, do everything for them and I think that will even change my family. I think*

*S: How so*

*T: Because right now they can't go home. They just go maybe month end to see what's going and to give this person his money they come back. There are fruits there, people are just doing whatever they want so when I'm there I'm responsible I can even pick up the fruits take them to town for them they enjoy or they also be free to say anytime any weekend I'm going home because they know there is somewhere*

*S: So it will create like a centre again for the family and you can be like the mother of the family*

*T: [Chuckles] I could be like the mother but I won't be the mother, I'll be an auntie but I know they will like it, they will appreciate it*

*S: And how would I ever find this place?*

She writes the directions down for me:

Bus to Chirimamhunga Township Seke or bus to Tengwe Township, then to Chivhu Village or Macheke School, then to Mwami Kraal, then to Sanyati Village or Mbizi Village. Finally when I get to the village she explains, because it has been so long since the Machakaire have been there, it is best to ask for the Chivandikwa family. They will point me to the Machakaire place.

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Tendai's work as mother continues across borders, albeit altered in some way. Forced to invest most of her time and energy in work her accounts reflect the ways in which the demands of family life remain an ever present facet of her daily life. Her accounts reveal the ways in which her move to South Africa has altered her role as mother and reflect the way in which this role, like all the roles that people play as mother, brother, sister, father

changes with the course of time. This theme spills into her narrative on friendships which she clearly explains are not *a priori* but instead relationships that are sustained through ongoing exchange. Her narrative on friendships reflects the broader theme of her feelings towards South Africa and her ongoing connection to home.

Tendai gets pleasure out of showing me the dress that she bought for her daughter and which she spent months saving up for but, in virtually the same breath sings a song about how children need rules and love, not material things. She is excited about the arrival of daughter Emily and the two grandchildren and does everything in her power to ensure their safe crossing but a few weeks after Emily's arrival begins to wonder whether she has done the right thing. Her accounts reflect the ways in which feelings ebb and flow without any conclusion and the way in which they are shaped by time, space and interaction. The shift in her feelings towards Emily is an example of this. At the beginning she does everything to help her daughter get across and settled but as the weeks go by things unfold a certain way and her own feelings about and responses to the situation also evolve.

Her narrative on friendship also has several interesting aspects, principally that friends are not *a priori* but instead connections that have been forged over time and shaped by time. Those few that she counts as friends (and there are not many) were been forged through activity born out of necessity – Amai Farai and Amai Brenda inducted her into the world of cross border trading while Rumbi has accompanied her through life and work in Cape Town as a single woman. In other words, friends do not exist outside of some ongoing set of exchanges or material relations. Tendai met Amai Farai down in the market near her parents place one weekend; they chatted and it led to a loan of a sewing machine and Tendai's induction into the world of cross border trading. She grew adept at trading and the work sustained her family for most of the 1990s and 2000s. She travelled to Cape Town with Rumbi in 2007 (whom she barely knew) and Rumbi was the one who helped her find her first, proper fulltime domestic job with the Dawkins. These kinds of accounts speak more broadly to the intense sociability that accompanies Tendai's networking – her interactions with the two young men who built her new shelves, with the Zimbabwean women who trade Chinese goods at the train station in Khayelitsha, with the malaitsha

who helps her get people and things across the borders, with the Zimbabwean nannies that she meets out strolling with her charges. The sociability is part of a transaction that has yet to materialise, transactions which at times have led to friendships and even new directions.

It is her friendships with Amai Farai and Amai Brenda that mean the most to her and she explains that this is because they are friends from home. Perhaps this is the point – that these relations, forged at home, are relations that she associates with something that is fixed and constant and therefore dissociated from her ongoing but resolutely temporary existence in South Africa. This narrative on friendships reflects a broader feeling of hers and that is that everything to do with South Africa is temporary, almost at the point in fact of coming to an end. The fact that she has ended up staying longer than the initial year and has even done bits of work on her hokkie *to make it a bit like home* has done nothing to change her perspective on this. While she talks about going home and the number of times she and Rumbi have discussed going home, the fact is that she keeps on staying just a bit longer. Muzvidziwa's (2010) concept of double rootedness is quite evocative here – the idea that migrants hold on to a concept of 'kumusha/home' while simultaneously being located in a foreign setting as a means of sustaining yourself and surviving.

Muzvidziwa explains that his concept of kumusha/home can be based around an imaginary or real connection to home. What is interesting about Tendai's accounts is that they evoke both. Her impending return to Zimbabwe is a real possibility because of the family and house that she still has there but her plan to travel to Seke and re-build the family homestead is more of an 'imagined future. It seems a relatively distant possibility as well. Even Tendai concedes that so many years have passed since it figured as a real home that if you arrived at the village you wouldn't be able to ask directly for her family, you would have to ask the neighbours to direct you to the family place. Daily life for Tendai then is about being here, but being there and kumusha/home is about what is real as well as what is imagined and hoped for.

## Chapter Four: Conclusion

This thesis did not aim to generate a neat, seamless representation of Tendai's experience as a migrant in South Africa but instead a rich store of narratives around that experience. These narratives converged over time with literature and theoretical concepts and while this material supported the approach and assisted with the handling of the narratives, it was the narratives themselves that ended up giving us insight into Tendai's experiences; it was the narratives themselves that enriched the key concepts on experience and the experience of migration, not vice versa.

The 'role' played by the theoretical concepts of *continuous experience* and *tarrying with time* throughout this thesis, illustrates this in a clear way. These two concepts were not deployed to structure the study, nor did they directly inform the interviews (even as time passed) or figure as formal categories or phenomenon which the narratives were then used to affirm. Instead their vision of experience and agency supported the study's iterative design, bolstered the open approach to interviews, and ensured that the value of the narratives, as expressions of experience and agency, was recognised and retained. In this way, the concepts supported the emergence of Tendai's narratives. Conversely Tendai's narratives did not so much lend credence to them as enrich them. Concepts related to the experience of migrants (Barnes 1999, Muzividziwa 2010) were equally bolstered by Tendai's narratives. This boils down not only the substance of Tendai's narratives but also to the inherent value of the concepts themselves - concepts which accommodate, and embrace, the multiple meanings that lie in experience, even if it appears as entirely singular.

At the end of her book on 1950s urban women in Harare, Barnes (1999) discusses a photo of a Zimbabwean woman. It's a contemporary photo of a woman with three children holding her hands and a baby on her back. She is carrying bags on her head and bags on her shoulders and appears to be walking steadily under the weight of all this baggage. Her face is calm and composed, strong. The photo fascinates Barnes (1999). 'Her work – the bag, the bundles, the children – is hard, even extreme, but within the bounds of what



women are normally considered able to do' (1999, p.172). Twenty years on (2012) and the legacies of the colonial era enshrined in this photo have been further compounded by protracted political and economic crises. Tendai is, in many ways, our new image once again her gruelling journey and all that she had to learn to do and cope with being put down to, as she herself would say, simply what has to be done. Circumstances she would say, nothing more, nothing less, have compelled her to strike out, to work in new ways and in relation to new kinds of people. And yet, her narratives illustrate the extraordinariness of this journeying and the ways in which she is not simply migrant, mother, worker, friend but instead continually assuming positions and becoming in the process of encountering new situations, new people and new challenges.

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## **Appendix B: Notes on first visit to Khayelitsha**

April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011

I take the train from town (2 euro return, first class). I have taken the train many times at this stage but always in the same direction – I go from Cape Town through the Southern suburbs and then along the southern peninsula via places like Claremont, St James, Kalk Bay, Fish Hoek. This time I board the train but instead of going south to the scenic False Bay area I travel south towards the township of Khayelitsha (via places like Ndabeni, Nyanga, Nonlungile, Nonkquebela) Tendai lives in Khayelitsha – she is a ‘backyard dweller’ in the Harare/Litha Park area - and I’m heading out there today as part of preparation for my research.

It’s not a scenic journey – for the first half hour we pass eye sore factories and junk yards after which the landscape gives way to the informal settlements of the Cape Flats. We are cutting right through the heart of desperately poor housing areas. I feel as though I can put my hand outside the window and almost touch one of the houses – a metre squared unit, shoddily knocked together with pieces of wood and scraps of tin.

I arrive at Khayelitsha station at 12.50. The train ride is a long one – Tendai and her friend Rumbi make that trip into town every single day with thousands of other township residents. These trains have always run efficiently between this area and the city – shuttling labour into the heart of the city and perhaps out again along the southern suburb route before shuttling them back in the evening time. Most people’s maids and nannies come from Khayelitsha.

The station is cramped and teeming with life. Vendors selling fruits and crisps are lined up against the passages that lead out into the streets and people are occupied with various kinds of Saturday morning business. I am the only white person around and while I wait for Tendai to come and fetch me there are a few stares and smiles cast in my direction. Behind the station there is big shopping mall with what must be the world’s biggest ‘Shoprite’ – a horrible supermarket chain that sells low price, low quality goods to poor families. No doubt the mall also houses a ‘Hungry Lion’ or a KFC. Xhosa people (from Eastern Cape and in the majority here) love their fried chicken – possibly too much. The fast food chains make a killing in these poorer areas and don’t do anyone’s health any favours - childhood obesity, diabetes is on the rise.

After a fashion Tendai saunters up with a smile, relaxed in her Saturday attire of a wrap and slippers. We walk out of the station together and she natters to me about everything that we see. ‘All these vendors are Zimbabweans’, ‘There is where we do our shopping’, ‘There’s the police station – it’s called Harare like the area’. I ask her why this area is called Harare and if it has anything to do with Zimbabwe. She says she doesn’t know but she does know that the word Harare comes from a Shona word which means ‘never sleeps’. She says that when people from the rural areas used to visit Salisbury (now Harare) in the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) they used to be amazed by the busyness of the whites – how they always seemed to be moving around, socialising, drinking. When it came to renaming the city after independence in 1980, they gave it that very same name - ‘Harare’. We walk along a main road and then cut across a field towards a



































