

Memories, material culture, and methodology:  
Employing multiple filmic formats, forms, and  
informal archives in anthropological research among  
Zimbabwean migrant women

Roger Horn

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Supervisor  
Dr. Susan Levine

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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

This dissertation offers two components: the first, a written thesis, is focused on memories, material culture, and methodology in the representation of female Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town, South Africa. The second component comprises four films, which utilize multiple unconventional methodological approaches including split-screen presentation, found footage filmmaking, and combined film and digital footage in order to contribute to knowledge of the long-term transnational migrant experience through a sensory examination of memories and material culture in both South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Since gaining independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has faced many challenges as the result of poor economic and political decisions carried out by recently ousted former President Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF political party, amplified by international sanctions and corruption. The problems within Zimbabwe have led to approximately 25% of its population leaving the country, many of whom have migrated to Zimbabwe's long-time ally South Africa. This mass movement of people has resulted in profound effects upon the region as many Zimbabweans arrive in an unwelcoming South African society and face multiple challenges including obtaining work permits and jobs, and are often the victims of xenophobic verbal and physical abuse, with multiple reports revealing that 90% or more of these migrants remitted to family members in Zimbabwe who were dependent upon remittances for survival (von Burgsdorff, 2012:15).

Through my engagement with traditional ethnographic research methods, unconventional visual research methods, and working with informal archives, such as found 8mm footage, Super 8mm footage, and YouTube videos I have spent four years researching the crossroads of memories and material culture in Zimbabwe and South Africa. I produced four films to accompany this written thesis, each of which emerged from sustained analysis of my material, reflections upon the form and content, and gathering feedback from my interlocutors during and after the assembly of each film. In addition to contributing to an understanding of the role memories and material culture serve in the lives of the women with whom I worked to produce this work, this dissertation seeks to provide new ways to envision an engagement with visual media to convey the complexity of migrants' daily lives.

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## List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECC	Election Coverage Committee
FAMWZ	The Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
LAMA	Legal Age of Majority Act
LOMA	Law and Order Maintenance Act
LTC	Land Tenure Commission
MC	Movement for Democratic Change
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAMP	Southern African Migration Programme
TTL	Tribal Trust Land
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (1965)
WAG	Women's Action Group
WOZA	Women of Zimbabwe Arise
WCoZ	Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (armed wing of ZANU-PF)
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (armed wing of ZAPU)
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association

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All work presented in this thesis is my own unless noted otherwise.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Research

“Only I”

Only I can know, only I can tell

For only I have worn the shoes; and only I know how they fit

For that I deserve your accolade

Only I know the pain of mistakes made, only I know the grief that loss brings

Only I know how long and lonely the night can be

For only I have experienced loss and meditated with tears in the night

For that I deserve your respect

Only I know the turmoil of separation from loved ones, the guilt it brings

For only I have lived it

For that you should not be judge and jury

For if the shoe was on your foot, would you dare to take the walk?

Only I know the misery rejection brings, for only I have been rejected

Only I have mastered the art to look back at the roads once trodden

Dismiss bitterness and beam with an electrifying smile

Only I know how to laugh as I kick off the many different shoes and wait for the next pair

The journey is incomplete; many a pair of different shoes still await my  
battered feet

For that I deserve your accolade

For only I

Jele-Ncube, 2015:121-129/403

## Introduction

Regina Jele-Ncube's (2015) poem exemplifies my research experiences with Zimbabwean women in Cape Town, South Africa over the last four and a half years. Though I can never truly comprehend and translate the complexity of their lives, this dissertation, which predominantly focuses on an analysis of four vastly differing films created during my research are my attempt to convey what I learned about, the limits of my understanding, and to share several women's stories. The life of my interlocutors is one that mirrors that of millions around the globe who have been forced to flee their homes; a life that is sometimes filled with pain, loss, and separation, but despite these challenges can also be filled with joy, love, and celebration as they attempt to find a way to rise above their circumstance knowing that their journey is on-going, ever-changing and incomplete. The strength and determination of the women I worked with was exhibited time and time again as I witnessed events ranging from a young child who due to absence did not acknowledge his mother, and houses being flooded by torrential rains and a overflowing river, to moments of joyous family reunions and New Year's Eve celebrations; all taking place with the hopes of an eventually permanent return to Zimbabwe.

Deborah Potts', longitudinal research on migration within Zimbabwe, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe & Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa*, highlights a disturbing finding related to livelihood in Zimbabwe as she cites a 2001 UNDP's Human Development Report that states the country was, 'one of only three countries in the world where the general living conditions had fallen so far that they were below 1980 levels' (Potts, 2011:103). John Robertson adds to the grim statistics related to living standards, noting that in 2008

Zimbabwe had the most rapidly falling standard of living in the world and most rapidly falling life expectancy, currently around thirty-seven years for men and thirty-four for women (Robertson, 2011:83). Expanding to present an outlook related to the economic situation in Zimbabwe, Robertson reports that in 2008 Zimbabwe had the highest inflation in the world, peaking at around seven sextillion per cent, the most rapidly declining currency, the worst credit rating in the world, and the most serious exodus of skilled labor with three to four million people leaving the country (Ibid.:83).

Seeking to escape the ongoing economic and “crisis of governance” (de Jager & Musuva, 2015 cited in Charles, 2016:7) in Zimbabwe, life in South Africa often fails to live up to the economic rewards imagined. Upon their arrival in South Africa many of these women are exposed to numerous hardships including a lack of sustainable wage jobs, various issues in obtaining and maintaining legal documentation from the South African government (Department of Home Affairs), homesickness, as well as being subject to, ‘ “ordinary” or “everyday” xenophobia...deeply entrenched in South African society and directly experienced by African immigrants’ (Dodson, 2010:11) despite ‘a long history of cross-border migration and associated flows or remittances’ (Dodson et al., 2008:1) between South Africa and Zimbabwe, which ‘predates the colonial period both into and within what is now South Africa’ (Fine, 2014:4). Francis Nyamnjoh elaborating on the struggles many Zimbabwean migrants or ‘*Makwerekwere*’ (meaning those incapable of articulating local languages that epitomize economic success and power) as they are commonly referred to in South Africa, states that ‘To the police and authorities, South African modernity, like its identities, is all about appearances’ and being identifiable through their ‘accents, hairstyles, or dressing styles’ (Bouillon, 2001a:38 quoted in Nyamnjoh, 2010:67) makes them susceptible to mistreatment by the police and vulnerable to “excessive criminalization” (Nyamnjoh, 2010:65-68). As Ngugi wa Thiong’o proclaims of language, ‘any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture’ which can serve as a hindrance outside of the Zimbabwean community as I was told often that Xhosa speaking South Africans would refuse to speak English to Zimbabwean women telling them, “You are in South Africa now speak my language” despite a mutual capacity to communicate in English; the cultural difference stands as a roadblock (wa Thiong’o (1986:13). Mary Kwar (2004) notes that:

Despite the difficulties and constraints, migration offers women new opportunities and financial independence in addition to improved status within their homes and communities. Over and above the challenges they face, female migrants are now major contributors to their home country economies through their private remittances. (73)

Jonathan Crush and Daniel Tevera (2010) emphasize that, ‘every Zimbabwean working in South Africa supports an average of five people at home’, thus the continued presence of migrants essentially stems a greater number of migrants, a paradox of Zimbabwe’s recent migration history (3). Despite the minimizing effects of support from Zimbabwean migrants Janice Fine found that between 2000 and 2010 there was a growing number of Zimbabwean migrants which the South African government, ‘initially sought to deal with through mass arrests and deportations: in 2005 over 100,000 were deported and in 2008, over 200,000’ (Fine, 2014:9). For Zimbabweans allowed to remain in South Africa most find that the, ‘South African government’s policy towards Zimbabwean immigrants seems to lean more towards temporary stay than permanent residency or citizenship’ (Mpondi & Mupakati, 2018:231). In “Gender and Migration in South Africa: Talking to women migrants” Aimée-Noël Mbiyozo (2018), confirms the findings of Mpondi and Mupakt (2018) as she provides the following statistics:

Most work permits in South Africa go to skilled migrants from outside the region. Between 2001 and 2014, for example, South Africa issued 96 000 work permits, of which just under 25% were granted to Zimbabweans. ... South Africa has implemented six migrant regularisation schemes that have provided legal status to over 500 000 migrants since 1994. The largest of these schemes has been a series of three special permits for Zimbabwean nationals: the 2009 Dispensation of Zimbabweans Project (DZP), the 2014 Zimbabwe Special Dispensation Permit (ZSP) and the 2017 Zimbabwe Exemption Permit (ZEP). The objectives of the permits were to regularise Zimbabweans who were residing in South Africa illegally, reduce pressure on the asylum system, curb deportations, and give amnesty to Zimbabweans using fake South African documents. The DZP was offered to Zimbabweans living in South Africa with valid passports who could prove they were

engaged in employment, business or education. Out of approximately 295 000 applications, about 245 000 DZP permits were issued in 2010. It was supposed to be non-renewable, but the ZSP and ZEP were subsequently offered to permit holders to extend their stays. Just under 198 000 ZSPs were issued and Home Affairs is currently adjudicating over 196 000 applicants for the ZEP. While the Zimbabwe special permit processes were open to women, no gender considerations were applied. It is unclear how many women applied for or received the special permits, as gendered data is not available. However, the economic activities in which Zimbabwean women migrants engage are more likely to be informal, including domestic work, hairdressing, sex work or trading. Since eligibility for the permits was based on proof of employment or business, many women were excluded because they lacked the required official documentation proving the legitimacy of their businesses (9).

Adding to their dilemma, many of Zimbabwean women have no choice but to leave children with family or friends back in Zimbabwe due to financial difficulties and / or fear of the negative influences in South African society on their children, specifically drug abuse. These concerns echo the research conducted in Johannesburg amongst African migrant women by Caroline Kihato (2013). As one interlocutor stated of South Africa:

I was expecting a very beautiful country with a lot more opportunities than Zimbabwe; a place where I could make a lot of money and call for my son. Unfortunately, the reality is different in the sense that life is very difficult and for that reason I cannot ask my son to join me here. I prefer to take care of him in Zimbabwe and every month I send money to my mother for food and other things. But I am telling you this is a very huge responsibility for me, given that I am very limited financially. (56)

This research looks to contribute to an anthropological understanding of the daily lived lives of Zimbabwean migrant women living in Cape Town, South Africa and their lives when they travel back to Zimbabwe to visit their families. Through an exploration of their memories and material culture I am seeking to connect additionally to diaspora studies, specifically as

they relate to Southern Africa. My interdisciplinary research, which includes experimental ethnography, visual anthropology, African studies, anthropology, and film and media studies, along with the utilization of extensive methodological approaches, produced four accompanying films that I hope to be of use across the aforementioned disciplines. The films, their theoretical concerns and methodological choices, are discussed in four individual chapters (Chapters 3-6) as each film adopts a unique approach to the documentation of migration visually, aurally, and in terms of content, focusing greatly on often overlooked dimensions of migrants' lives. Elizabeth Colson's (2003) article, "Forced Migration and the Anthropological Response", focuses on questions related to the rights social scientists have to conduct research among vulnerable forced migrants. She provides justifications for researching in uncertain times, stating:

One answer rests on the old liberal assumption that good research should inform policy to its betterment. Another answer, perhaps more realistic, might be, 'Since any one, including social scientists, may be uprooted, we want to know what to expect and how one learns to live with the uncertainties, the loss of trust, and the indignities that you are experiencing and surviving.' This includes understanding how countries of asylum and international agencies will relate to us when we too are in need. (3-4)

The Forced Migration Studies Programme at Wits University argues that given a multitude of circumstances Zimbabweans 'should for the most part be considered as a form of forced rather than voluntary migration' (Kiwauka & Monson, 2009:6).

### **Intracontinental Movement: Feminization of Migration**

Upon independence in 1980 male migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa in order to work in mines and on farms declined considerably (Mlambo, 2010:70) as a majority of Zimbabwean migration in the 1980s, including women, was in the form of rural to urban areas within the country (Potts, 2011:80), though a lack of formal employment led many internal migrants to engage in cross border trading (Jamela 2013 cited in McDuff, 2015:5-6). By the 1990s this demographic of workers also began to shift as the informal sector grew and men also began taking up occupations as traders (Crush, Chikanda & Tawodzera 2012:9). In the 1980s around 200,000 people crossed from Zimbabwe to South Africa per

year, increasing considerably in the early 1990s due to increasing economic hardships, peaking around 1994 at 750,000. Daniel Makina (2010) cites evidence from SAMP (Southern African Migration Programme), which found that one-third of Zimbabwean migrants who arrived in Johannesburg before 1998 were female providing evidence that extensive female migration can be dated back to at least the early 1990s (230). In “ ‘Kids sold, desperate moms need cash’: Media representations of Zimbabwean women migrants”, Aquilina Mawadza and Felix Banda (2016) cite Nyangairi (2010), gathering literature from Hungwe (2006) and Muzvidziwa (1997), who point out that female migration is not a recent phenomenon for Zimbabwean women as during colonial times cross-border migration and rural-urban migration was taking place in order to seek economic opportunities or to join their husbands (Mawadza & Banda, 2016:122). The post apartheid government in South Africa tightened restrictions on Zimbabweans leading to a decrease in movement between the two countries until the passage of the 2002 Immigration Act which eased restrictions on Zimbabweans finding their numbers crossing into South Africa reach an estimated 1.25 million by 2008 (Crush & Tevera, 2010:4). *Migrant Remittances and Household Survival in Zimbabwe* conducted by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP), highlights that women make up approximately 44% of the migrants who have left Zimbabwe following the economic collapse of 2000, with the highest percentage coming to South Africa, thus locating South Africa as the only Southern African country that is not male dominated in terms of migration (Tevera & Chikanda, 2009:2). As argued by Ambalavaner Sivanandan in Steffen Köhn’s book, *Mediating Mobility: Visual Anthropology in the Age of Migration* a majority of migrant women can additionally be labeled as refugees, stating, ‘the economic migrant is also a refugee, because the forces of global capitalism and its financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have eroded the integrity and economies of Third World (and even Second World) states’ (Köhn, 2016:5).

Deborah Potts (2011) in her longitudinal research on migration in Southern Africa found:

Gender influences migrancy in many ways in sub-Saharan Africa. Urban migration streams are gendered – the traditional characterization being that they were dominated by men, with the main component of adult women being associational, as wives of these men. In the past few decades it has become abundantly clear that this characterization has become less reliable, as more women migrate on their own. (eg. Findley 1997; Gugler 1989, 1997; Lambert 1999; Gugler and Ludwar-Ene 1995; Mberu 2005) (162)

Kudzai Chireka quoting multiple sources in her study of migrant women in Bellville, a

suburb of Cape Town, South Africa, notes that women are becoming independent economic and social migrants, serving as the breadwinners for their families instead of migrating under the assumed role of wives and sisters (Dodson and Crush, 2004; Lefko-Everett, 2007; Caritas International, 2010 cited in Chireka, 2015:18). Elaine McDuff, notes that women who migrate tend to keep closer familial ties than do male migrants due to multiple factors including their ability to, 'provide financial support and long-distance guidance to their families...that allows women to meet their normative obligations to family without being physically present' (Rossi & Rossi 1990) and their movement from patriarchal control, financial independence, and less constricting gender norms have, 'enhanced their sense of autonomy and empowerment, encouraging them to continue working abroad and to keep contributing to their families and communities' (Rossi & Rossi, 1990, Hofmann & Buckley 2011 quoted in McDuff, 2015:5). Dominic Pasura (2010) in his research among Zimbabweans in Britain notes that life there becomes the sight of cultural conflicts as most Zimbabwean are confronted with rethinking their social and gendered positions in society with these conflict becoming most visible at religious and social gatherings. Pasura (Ibid.) provides an example from one of his interlocutors as she states:

The Zimbabwean man is an African man, he is used to be the one who brings money in the house and the woman does all the cooking. The husband is a husband, there aren't equal partners. Once they were brought here, this equality whereby the woman comes from the job where she has been working 12 hours, probably she has been working from 8am to 8pm. By the time she arrives home, she is tired and wants to relax. In Zimbabwe we don't do that. In Zimbabwe we both go to work, we come back and the husband picks the newspaper and read it and the woman might go and cook the meal. There are no problems whatsoever but here it suddenly becomes a big, big problem (208-209).

Pasura (Ibid.) continues revealing that a number of his respondents acknowledge that some women, "are now the main breadwinners for their families", such as the response from a married father of three who states:

We have situations where women are breadwinners because probably the

wife has got the visa that allows her to work. If you come here and you are a teacher and a nurse, then automatically you are the breadwinner because you have the work permit. But if you come here and you were the Chief Immigration Officer no one can give you that job here, regardless of how powerful you were and how you used to boss your wife, here you have to baby-sit because nobody is going to give you a job (209).

The roles women are taking on in contemporary migration streams are often in contrast to their roles in traditional Zimbabwean society where even if the women in the house are working for money, 'they are still expected to carry out all the household duties... the male partner was "expected" to be the main or only breadwinner. Although some women in Zimbabwe are in paid work and make a financial contribution to their households, this happens without challenging prevailing gender norms' (Ibid.:208-210).

Although the "feminization of migration", (Crush & Tevera, 2010:17) which includes a greater deal of autonomy and migration for the purpose of employment, women, for the most part have been overlooked not only in terms of academic research in Southern African, but also generally by South African society, partially due to their foreignness, but also because of their high levels of employment (documented and undocumented) in what is considered low skills level jobs within the domestic sphere. Research also tends to exclude facts related to migrants, both female and male, such as key findings by Elinor Sisulu, Bhekinkosi Moyo, and Nkosinathi Tshuma, as they note in their chapter titled "The Zimbabwean Community in South Africa" from State of the Nation: South Africa 2007 that 45% of Zimbabweans had higher education qualifications, which include engineers, nurses, doctors, journalists and teachers. (Sisulu, Moyo, & Tshuma, 2007:555 quoted in Onslow & Plaut, 2018:135).

In order to create a more complete theoretical and sensorial understanding of daily life regarding female Zimbabwean long-term migrants, my material seeks to present, 'a better understanding of migration as a complex social process rather than as a problem to be solved', in opposition to multiple prevailing myths and mass media representations (Berriane and de Haas, 2012:14). The aforementioned 'complex social process', often presented as a new 'problem', fails to acknowledge the history and research that has taken place in the past

as Jonathan Crush and Daniel Tevera (2010) note:

the history of cross-border migration in Southern Africa was one of the major pre-occupations of progressive researchers in the 1970s and 1980s. The disconnect between this body of work and contemporary writing on migration is striking. This is not simply a matter of acknowledging that migration has a history but also of understanding the relevance of this history in the present. (21)

The past “pre-occupation” with migration, remittances, and their effects in Southern Africa has been thoroughly researched by the likes of anthropologists Colin Murray (1981) highlighting the impact that migration to South Africa from Lesotho had on the family unit and in Jane Guyer’s (1981), “Household and Community in African Studies”, in which she declared, ‘many of the populations of the Southern African homelands were unable to subsist without remittances from labor migrants’ (Guyer, 1981:114). More recently Andrew Spiegel, Vanessa Watson, and Peter Wilkinson’s (1996), put forth the notion of the “stretched” domestic household in Cape Town, defined as households in which the members may not live together, but share a common commitment to contribute to the maintenance of the household (Spiegel, Watson, & Wilkinson, 1996:12). France Maphosa (2010) adds that children are often the most strongly affected in terms of transnational migration declaring:

Migrating parents, especially mothers, transfer the care of children, including socialization, to grandparents, other relatives or even domestic workers. Motherhood is stretched across national boundaries creating transnational motherhood, an arrangement whereby migrant women work in South Africa while their children live in Zimbabwe. Many migrant mothers of newly-born children must send their infants back home to be cared for by the extended family. (358-359)

The effects of leaving or sending children back Zimbabwe while the parents, specifically the mothers engage in wage work in South Africa are mixed as some studies have found that this situation, ‘increased the workload of children and adversely affected their education’, while

others found, ‘the migration of parents has a positive impact on children because of enhanced income’ (Ibid.:359).

As the majority of contemporary theories related to migratory concerns in Southern Africa are based out of and funded by the global north and often include only the experiences of those from the global south who have relocated to the north, Mohamed Berriane and Hein de Haas point out a problem with this imbalance noting, ‘most African migrations are not directed towards the global North, but towards other African countries’, continuing, ‘(this) obscures numerically much more important forms of migration *within* the continent, and contributes to the ‘myth of invasion’ (de Haas 2007 cited in Berriane & de Haas, 2012:1). Corroborating these findings, Kim Richard Nossal, quoted by Francis Nyamnjoh reached similar conclusions, remarking that textbooks associated with migration:

portray the world to their readers from a uniquely *American* point of view: they are reviewed by Americans; the sources they cite are American; the examples are American; the theory is American; the experience is American; the focus is American; and in . . . [some cases], the voice is also explicitly American. (Nossal, 1998:12 quoted in Nyamnjoh, 2012c:144)

As I am an American who has lived in South Africa for a decade I have attempted to avoid as many pitfalls and misrepresentations as possible through long-term engagement in both South Africa and Zimbabwe, seeking to provide glimpses of Zimbabwean migrants’ daily lived lives framed through the referencing of as many contemporary academics, writers, and filmmakers from the African continent as possible. Additionally, I should note that one of my primary interlocutors, Media Tembo was employed as a domestic worker within my home from 2014-2016 and for several months during early 2018 before she moved back to Zimbabwe with her husband. Domestic work is defined by the ILO (International Labour Organization), ‘as work performed in or for a household, or households, and a ‘domestic worker’ as any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship (International Convention on Domestic Workers, 2011, No. 189) (Deshingkar, Zeitlyn, & Holtom, 2014:5). In order to define the scale of domestic workers Deshingkar, Zeitlyn, & Holtom (Ibid.) point out a South African national statistic that revealed:

domestic work is the second largest sector of employment for black women

in South Africa, employing roughly 755,000 women, and is also a significant area of employment for internal and cross-border female migrant workers (Dinat and Perberdy 2007). (9)

A sub-heading within this chapter, *Ethical Considerations* elaborates on my position working with female interlocutors as a white male originating from North America.

The women who took part in this research range in age from twenty-three to forty-six upon commencement in 2014, with the majority hailing from the capital of Zimbabwe, Harare. Media Tembo, a domestic worker employed intermittently in my home originates from Kadoma (145km west of Harare), one woman is from Kwe Kwe (212km southwest of Harare), one from Gweru (277km southwest of Harare), and several others from smaller cities southeast of Harare. These women's occupations vary greatly ranging from a primary school teacher's assistant and dental assistant to a part-time pet store employee and car washer, with a majority of the women working within the domestic sphere as either house cleaners, dog walkers, nannies, or a combination of one or more of these occupations. Jonathan Crush and Daniel Tevera (2010) add that the Zimbabweans in South Africa are varied in their employment stating, 'they are highly-read and illiterate, professionals and paupers, doctors and ditch-diggers' (9). Over half of the women I worked with had some form of higher education and a couple of these women were / are university students in addition to their jobs. A representative household survey commenced in 2005 by SAMP found the following, which coincides closely with the averages of my interlocutors:

The majority of migrants were relatively young (72 percent are under the age of 40) and well-educated. Less than 1 percent had no schooling and over 50 percent had a post-secondary diploma, undergraduate degree or post-graduate degree. Migrants were employed in a wide variety of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled jobs outside Zimbabwe. In other words, this is a generalized out-movement of people, not confined to one or two professions or sectors. Twenty percent of migrants were in the informal sector as traders, vendors, hawkers or producers. Also significant were skilled professionals (15 percent), health workers (12 percent), services (9 percent), teachers (7

percent), manual workers (6 percent) and office workers (5 percent). Crush & Tevera, 2010:10-12

The methods I employed for collecting my data took place from late 2014 to mid-2018 in Cape Town, South Africa and Harare, Kadoma, and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe and included casual conversations, writing and audio recording, field notes, participant observation, informal interviews, unstructured interviews, hanging out, recording ambient sound within and around my interlocutors' homes, and filming on multiple cameras and formats (Bernard, 2006:210-213).

## Methodology & Chapter Descriptions

As opposed to having a finite definition like most other practices, experimental ethnography appears to be defined by a series of questions.

Gugolati & Liverpool, 2012:68

Initially, researching daily life among my interlocutors proved to be a challenge, particularly in relation to participant observation and filming as the majority are engaged in occupations within the domestic sphere and their employers were resistant to my presence. My interlocutors' occupations, in addition to their either residing in the homes where they worked or residing in small lodgings throughout Cape Town, rendered me unable to be in their presence for extended periods of time during research. My temporal and spatial restriction, similar to the restrictions faced by Mamphela Ramphele in her research in the migrant labor hostels of Cape Town, led me to mimic her research design through the utilization of multiple methodologies in order to supplement my data collection (Ramphele, 1993:58).

Alberto Corsín Jiménez (2003:140) quoted by Rebecca Savage (2012) states:

The world is not a known place that exists prior to our engagement with it, on the contrary, the world happens with us and, in choosing what world we

want to live in through our engagement with the world, we become the spaces to which we have invested our practices. (44)

Many of the most defining moments over the course of my research came from experiences I shared with my interlocutors and their families during multiple trips to Zimbabwe between December of 2014 and January of 2018. These moments were particularly significant on a sensory level as I was able to experience many of the conditions that were articulated to me first hand during informal interviews and casual conversations. The sensory experiences of being subjected to the extreme heat and humidity of Kadoma in December, the bone chillingly cold nights of Harare in July, eating local foods, listening to local music, attending family events (birthday parties, memorial services, Christmas, and New Year celebrations), excessive alcohol consumption during the December holiday season, police harassment, suffering through the often difficult and slow travel within the country in various buses and kombis, power outages, and playing games with the children of my interlocutors, brought me closer to an understanding described by Maurice Bloch (1998:24), quoted by Alyssa Grossman (2014) in *Experimental Film and Anthropology*, regarding memory and experience stating:

It is possible to come close to “living through” another person’s memory if, as you encounter it, you flesh it out with your own experiences and emotions – an activity that involves you in processes similar to what the other person undergoes as they are doing the remembering. (133)

Francis Nyamnjoh (2013), in his article, “Fiction and Reality of Mobility in Africa”, advises academics to supplement scholarly texts with fictionalized accounts which take place in a similar reality to those being researched, stating:

I argue that the physical and social mobility of Africans is best understood as an emotional, relational and social phenomenon captured in the complexities, contradictions and messiness of their everyday realities. In conventional scholarly writing, even when such dimensions are recognized, the standard expectations of what constitutes a scholarly text do little justice to the

multilayered, multivocal and multifocal dimensions of everyday negotiation and navigation of myriad identity margins. (653)

Upon accepting Nyamnjoh's advice I found that reading multiple Zimbabwean novels, short stories, autobiographies, and poetry greatly assisted in my comprehension of the experiences regarding my interlocutors' childhood and adult experiences. These multiple forms of literature, varied and often emotionally impactful, mirrored many of the stories and moments I would go on to experience, moments such as those communicated by Darling, the young Zimbabwean protagonist in *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo (2013), multiple tales relaying life in Zimbabwe under the rule of Mugabe such as, *Sunflowers in Your Eyes: Four Zimbabwean Poets* (2010), *Sweet Medicine* (2017), *African Tears* (2001), and the collection of short stories, *Women Writing Zimbabwe* (2008), just to name a few. Didier Fassin (2014) proclaims:

The novelist makes sense of life inside a book by affirming that doing so is different from making sense of real life, whereas the anthropologist makes sense of life inside a book with the more or less explicit idea that doing so is connected to making sense in real life. ...However, this distinction is certainly subject to debate. (43)

In the case of Zimbabwean novels, poems, and autobiographies, 'making sense of real life' and the worlds inside the novels are often difficult to separate as a, 'majority of the post 2000 literature by white Zimbabweans is autobiographical...with the politics of land ownership as a backdrop' and, 'Post 2000 writing by black authors...tends to be fiction, which focuses more on societal problems such as political repression, violence, poverty and disease', presenting multiple opinions and methodologies to the documentation of contemporary Zimbabwe (Charles, 2016:11-13). As the majority of previous writing on Zimbabwe relates to the liberation struggle, contemporary writing is crucial to documenting the post-2000 history of Zimbabwe; as Kizito Muchemwa states of this critical moment in time, the importance of these writings as the 'new millennium has [heralded] the age of the wandering Zimbabwean scattered to all corners of the world' (Muchemwa, 2010:135 quoted in Charles, 2016:23).

Hence with the multitude of approaches I have taken and the scope of my research it could be defined as *topographic*, which is defined by David MacDougall as, ‘encompass[ing] the anthropology of place and space; of rootedness and displacement, migration, diaspora, and memory; questions of cultural boundedness, locality, and history; colonial and post-colonial struggles for identity; and the study of social life-worlds as they are materially and culturally constructed’ (MacDougall, 2006:272).

Kevin Anderson in his article, “Towards an Anarchy of Imagery: Questioning the Categorization of Films as "Ethnographic” ”, which uses *Forest of Bliss* (1986) by Robert Gardner as its main example, quotes Lucien Taylor who offers three definitions for visual anthropology, ‘subject before methodology (an anthropology of the visual), methodology over subject (a visual representation of culture), and the third envelops a hybridization of both (the visual representation of visual aspects of culture’ (Taylor, 1998 quoted in Anderson, 2013:12). The first definition states:

almost any focus of cultural study might fall under this definition, though particular aspects such as ritual, art, and material culture might seem to take precedence. While noted anthropological scholars such as Banks, Murphy and Crawford have championed this first definition, Taylor implies that their position might be considered as a reactionary stance to the all-too-common assumption that anthropological filmmaking encompasses the entirety of visual anthropology. (Ibid.:12)

The second definition proposes visual anthropology as a discipline that:

can be further subdivided into anthropological films and films about anthropology, (Ruby, 1975:109), although it has been indicated that there are few of the former, and perhaps far too many of the latter (MacDougall, 1998:76). MacDougall suggests that a distinguishing feature between the two types of anthropological filmmaking might be "to assess whether the film attempts to cover new ground through an integral exploration of the data or whether it merely reports on existing knowledge" (76); amounting to little more than filmic illustration of extant ethnographic studies. (Ibid.:13)

The third definition and what I am engaging with in my research is viewed as an integrative and comprehensive version of visual anthropology, which leaves the definition open-ended and, embraced by other, ‘enthusiastic filmmakers and writers who find in film the unique ability to translate non-verbal and aesthetic domains of experience’ (Ibid.:13-15). Those in this collection generally hold the view that, ‘film can stand on its own, and emphasize film’s ability to provide specifically visual forms of knowing’, while additionally, ‘support the use of film for developing purely cinematic means of anthropological inquiry, and in turn, advocate for film’s potential to inform the discipline as a whole’ (Anderson, 2003:18).

Lastly, the aforementioned “open-ended” adoption of an understanding of visual anthropology supported by myself, locates a defining aspect of my research to be concerned with methodology in visual anthropology, specifically situated at the crossroads of experimental film and visual anthropology. Catherine Russell (1999), in *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video* states:

The effect of bringing experimental and ethnographic film together is one of mutual illumination. On the experimental side, ethnography provides a critical framework for shifting the focus from formal concerns to a recognition of avant-garde filmmakers’ cultural investment and positioning. On the ethnographic side, the textual innovations that have been developed by experimental filmmakers indicate the ways that “the critique of authenticity” has been played out in the cinema. Experimental film can be seen as a kind of laboratory in which the politics of representation and the conventions of observational cinema are brought under scrutiny. (xii)

It is equally important to note the importance of sound recording and the post-production inclusion of, ‘ “effects,” i.e. sounds which arise from the natural or human-made environment in which the action of the film takes place’ (Henley, 2007:56). This is an aspect of ethnographic filmmaking that Paul Henley notes is often neglected. Discussing the attention that should be paid to creating a “soundscape” Henley (Ibid.) argues for:

taking greater care to record these environmental sounds in the field and by handling them in the editing suite with the attention that is normally reserved

for images, we should be able to improve the quality of our films in three related ways: by “thickening” the ethnographic description on which the films are based, by enhancing the spectators’ understanding and vicarious experience of the subject matter presented in the film, and by enhancing the modes through which the filmmaker can propose an interpretation of the significance of that subject matter. (56)

As described by Domitilla Olivieri, the films I have made as part of this research seek to, ‘activate and enable an encounter with other subjectivities and (un) familiar social realities...an engagement with the materiality of the everyday experiences’ (Olivieri, 2016:137). Russell adds, ‘the failure of realism to present evidence of the real is the radical possibility of experimental ethnography.’ (Russell, 1999:25). Anderson, on realism in ethnographic film, makes the claim that it should not be seen as integral to judging a film’s, “anthropological worth”, suggesting that maybe we should instead consider questions such as, ‘in what ways does – film viewing facilitate a phenomenological experience in which a “sense of place”, a “sense of experience”, a “sense of knowing” informs the viewer?’ (Anderson, 2003:27).

Rebecca Savage, citing Gilles Deleuze describes the films of Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, and Yasujiro Ozu as commanding a deeper kind of perception, stating:

When images are not linked together ‘naturally’, when they relate to a systematic use of false continuity, a turning round and grasping them requires a considerable effort of memory or imagination, in other words, a reading. (Deleuze, 2000 [1989]: 235 quoted in Savage, 2012:48)

*Mediating Mobility: Visual Anthropology in the Age of Migration* highlights the contemporary epistemological challenges to anthropology as it relates to the implementation of new spatial and temporal formations as research interlocutors have become mobile or ‘traveling cultures’ (Clifford 1997) and ‘global ethnoscares’ (Appadurai 1996) (Clifford 1997 & Appadurai 1996 cited in Köhn, 2016:9). An acknowledgement of the ‘intense proximity’ (Enwezor et al. 2012) in which anthropology finds itself defies what Johannes Fabian (1982) describes as anthropology’s situating of cultural worlds in in a timeless realm and sometimes archaic,

‘denial of coevalness’ urging an engagement with new forms of visual expression (Köhn, 2016:9). Citing Alan Grossman and Àine O’Brien (2007:6), Köhn advises visual practitioners to attempt an engagement with, ‘a deeper understanding of the lived, contradictory and at times ephemeral conditions shaping the lives of migrant subjects (Ibid.:9-10). This call for change is due in part to representational issues presented by corporate mass media, which are often distorting images of migrants’ daily lived lives, a form of visual representation I seek to counter through my accompanying films.

The four films which have been briefly discussed up until this point are each presented as individual chapters and discuss the presentation of migration, memory, and material culture as it pertains to Zimbabwean long-term migrant women residing in Cape Town, South Africa. Utilizing multiple film and video formats ranging from found 8mm and Super 8mm home movies to smartphone footage and high definition digital footage, the forms of presentation are just as diverse, ranging from split-screen digital footage to the haptic (Marks, 2000:xi) presentation of contemporary Super 8mm film and digital video intermixed. Each of the four films discussed are stand-alone films, developed from reflections, feedback, and continued analysis of the material presented in the preceding films culminating in the last film *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), which incorporates elements from all of the previous films. The multiple formats and unconventional forms through which I present my visual finding are best characterized by Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev who note, ‘Film can express social reality only by making it alive again through tampering with its source material’ (Suhr & Willerslev, 2012:293). Catherine Russell providing her views seeks a specific form of ethnography adding, ‘Experimental ethnography involves, above all, dismantling the universalist impulse of realist aesthetics into a clash of voices, cultures, bodies, and languages’ (Russell, 1999:xvii). Additionally, building upon my presentation of multiple films that evolve in response or as a continuation of the previous films and the additional knowledge attained between their productions, Magali McDuffie (2016) quoting multiple sources states:

Film is both product, and process: a ‘finished’ film can only offer a small window over a much broader process of collaboration (Falzone 2004: 331) and cultural mediation (Ginsburg 1995: 256) in time and space. Over time, kaleidoscopic parts of stories and country, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle,

slowly assemble to create a broader web of meaning from which emerges a film which can be re-visited and re-edited at regular intervals for the needs of different audiences, or as external circumstances evolve and change. As such, our films are never a ‘finished product’... illustrating the notion that culture is always ‘poised, in transition, between different positions’ (Hall 1992: 310).  
(13)

Chapter 3 discusses, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) a split-screen digital film focusing heavily on material culture, specifically personal items brought to and sent to South Africa, memories associated with these items, and the general stories behind three different women’s migration to Cape Town. As a continuation / follow-up, Chapter 4 focuses on *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), a found home movie film divided into two parts. Part I, *Research*, is a presentation of my first two trips to Zimbabwe with audio of voice notes and re-recordings of my field notes from the field presented. Part II *Souvenir (Dialogues)*, provides the three women from *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) the opportunity to question me and comment on my choice of souvenirs from the field, continuing the discussions about material culture and introducing a highly political aspect to the research. *Scenes From a Transient Home* (2019), discussed in Chapter 5, was filmed entirely on Super 8mm between May 2017 and May 2018 and presents a fractured portrait of life for Zimbabwean migrants when they travel back home to visit and includes footage not commonly seen regarding films about migration including Christmas and New Year’s Eve celebrations, illegal gold panning outside of the city of Kadoma, house floods, and Zimbabwe’s thriving international tourist destination Victoria Falls (Mosi-oa-Tunya). The last film presented in Chapter 6, *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), follows four years in the life of Masie Chachona as she visits her children in Zimbabwe and oversees the building of her dream house, intercut with videos found on YouTube that present a non-linear history of events in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980.

In addition to the individual film chapters, Chapter 2, Infinite Potential to Uncertain Futures: Contextualizing Contemporary Zimbabwe is a profuse chapter, necessary for establishing the many complex dimensions of colonialism, post-colonialism, land rights, mass media control, and women’s rights, all of which collectively contribute in one form or another to the mass exodus of Zimbabweans.

## A Contested Past

I am aware of the contested history between written anthropology and visual anthropology, but feel that this is not the appropriate space to rehash all the minute details of this debate, as anthropologists are aware of P. T. W. Baxter, Maurice Bloch, and Kirsten Hastrup's position that visual anthropology is a "thin" description of events, with written accounts providing a "thick" description of events. I chose instead to subscribe to Cristóbal Escobar's view of, 'the worlds of anthropology and film ethnography as an interdisciplinary field that shares a community of practice' as he borrows from Pink (2006:4) quoting Wegner, McDermott, and Snyder (2002:4) who define a community of practice as, 'a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis' (Escobar, 2017:2). Escobar continues elaborating:

Parallel preoccupations have governed the practice, concerns and viewpoints of anthropology and film ethnography. They share a common body of knowledge that frames, in different periods of time and space, similar assumptions about a given Other. (2)

As my research deals heavily with multiple forms of visual representation I find that Clara Carvalho (2011), in *Readings in Methodology: African Perspectives*, provides a noteworthy analysis regarding the benefits of visual research stating:

The camera creates records that are mimetically thick and emotionally more powerful than traditional written annotations. Furthermore, movies use a language that is easier to share and disseminate, where the voice of the players and their collaboration in the ethnographic construction is obvious. Films are more easily shared than written annotations, and this potential enables a new dialogue between researchers and the people they work with in their projects and who are not any longer considered as mere 'informers'. ...these films may be shared via the Internet, providing research with greater transparency. (167)

While Carvalho provides a noteworthy analysis, Angela Torresan (2011) seeks to finally lay this ongoing debate to rest quoting Marcus Banks (1992) and David MacDougall (1998) respectively, as they state that visual anthropology should not, ‘rely on . . . legitimating attribution from a parallel field’ (128) as it is a ‘quite different way of knowing related phenomena’ (63) (Torresan, 2011:121). Torresan, echoing my thoughts on this matter states she was drawn to visual anthropology, ‘not as a substitute for or as a more humanizing way of doing anthropology but as an exploration of another form of discovery and expression’ (Ibid.:121-122).

Lastly, I feel that a different kind of contested past should be acknowledged as visual anthropology’s history includes countless controversial films and filmic moments through its representation of society through cinema, many of which are still actively debated. My acknowledgement of past visual anthropologies does not seek to exonerate or deify “pioneers” of the field, but to simply acknowledge the visual legacy that has been inherited. Jean Rouch and Robert Gardner whose films *Les maîtres fous* (1955) and *Dead Birds* (1963) respectively, are viewed both as classics of visual anthropology and troublesome by some, criticized for rendering the “other” frozen in time and voiceless, spatially and temporally unlike the anthropologist (Fabian 2002 [1983]). Additionally, Rouch has been criticized for his invasive use of the camera, particularly his employment of “cine-trance”, along with Gardner for the excessive utilization of “voice of God” narration early in his career, with the most well-known example being *Dead Birds* (1963), a film in which all 84 minutes contain voice-over. It should be noted that despite my own sometimes conflicting views regarding some of visual anthropology’s early films, I have been influenced by many of Rouch’s works particularly *Jaguar* (1967), due to the presentation of unconventional forms of representation regarding migration and material culture. The long-term involvement of Rouch, and the addition of voice-over from the subjects a year after filming, are pioneering examples that could be filmically equated to what Fiona Ross describes as, ‘know others not through the categories assigned to them by mainstream society or theoretical ideas imposed from outside, but in their relationships and routines, through sharing the rhythms of daily life’ (Ross, 2010:10).

## Ethical Considerations

In *Ethical quandaries in social research*, Fiona Ross and Jennifer Grant proclaim in Chapter 11, “Ethical entailments: Publics and Responsibilities in social research” that, ‘an ethical quandary is revealed as a complex site of decision-making with different participants and consequences, and a long afterlife in our scholarly and personal worlds’ (Ross & Grant, 2014:168). As my research took place among Zimbabwean migrant women who reside in the Atlantic Seaboard and Central Business District CBD of Cape Town, both the places of my current residency (Atlantic Seaboard) and for a majority of my time during research, short-term contractual employment (SAE Institute, Orms School of Photography, & the University of Cape Town), this afterlife in the ‘scholarly and personal worlds’ become entanglements which are also essentially part of my daily lived experiences as a South African resident. The process of gaining access and trust among multiple Zimbabwean women took an understandably extended period of time with eventual snowball sampling occurring, encouraged by Media Tembo, the aforementioned domestic worker employed within my home at various times and Masie Chachona. These two women were crucial to providing me with additional interlocutors in the early stages of my research, coming to fruition as people heard of my visits to their respective homes in Zimbabwe in December of 2014. Through discussion around Cape Town related to my initial and subsequent trips to Zimbabwe in June – July 2015, July 2017, and December 2018 – January 2018, I was able to build rapport with several additional Zimbabwean women.

Mindful of the ethical entanglements that come along with a North American male working primarily with Zimbabwean women, I found early justification for focusing on women from my personal life as I was raised mainly by the women in my family, leading me to view women in a powerful light and in my adult life generally feeling more comfortable in their presence. My upbringing combined with my knowledge of the under and misrepresentation of women in academic research and film has led me to focus all of my previous films on the lives of women, as Kuehnast (1992), quoting Conkey and Spector (1984) in *Film as Ethnography* validates my views stating:

the male perspective [is] taken to be representative of the culture, whereas

the female view is typically portrayed as peripheral to the norm or somehow exceptional or idiosyncratic' (Conkey and Spector 1984, p.4). In many contemporary ethnographic films there are numerous examples of how women are filmed in a peripheral role. (188)

Additionally, several key dilemmas pointed out by Mamphela Ramphele in her work in the migrant hostels of Cape Town are worthy of highlighting as they relate directly to my position as a researcher working with participants from cultural, socio-economic, and geographic backgrounds distinctive from mine as she states, 'the entrance of an outsider into any social setting alters that setting in a significant way... the appearance of an outsider challenged many of the hitherto unquestioned social categorizations about gender roles at a number of levels', the later statement being of tantamount importance given the patriarchal society from where my participants originate and again my location as a male researcher among them (Ramphele, 1993:108-109). Adding to this consideration, but rejecting the notion of the insider-outsider dichotomy, Nosipho Mngomezulu prefers to speak of metaphorical mirror masks scholars wear to make sense of the processes of reflectivity and reflexivity (Steier 1991) as the line between insider and outsider becomes muddled and 'skews the fluidity of notions of belonging' (Mngomezulu, 2016:12). Mngomezulu (Ibid.) warns of the danger in choosing a mask to mirror around interlocutors and their social groups as she comments directly on her own research among the Creole in Mauritius stating:

I wore different mirror-masks in different contexts, sometimes more than one mask at once. Each presented both benefits and limitations for my work. Being a foreign researcher allowed me access to ask seemingly inane questions of my participants... ...The preferential treatment I received in most spaces, however, could not go unnoticed. Being a young educated South African, I had access to different sets of cultural capital than other Black/Creole persons I encountered during my time in Mauritius. My job title (IJC researcher), the languages I spoke there (English and Afrikaans), my accent, and my very uniquely young Black South African middle class habitus allowed me access to spaces and persons I simply would not have had, if I was a local Creole woman.' (15)

## Review

Christopher Colvin, states that research should at the very least seek to provide, ‘advances in our basic knowledge about the social and physical world’ (Colvin, 2014:54). My proposed research seeks to not only provide advances to basic knowledge related to memories, material culture, and female migration, but on a practical level to provide my interlocutors with what Ramphele describes as the opportunity for participants to think ‘critically about their social actions’, continuing that migrants participating in research are able to, ‘engage legitimately in the luxury of letting their minds contemplate their living conditions philosophically’ thus providing, ‘an opportunity for them to hear their own voices on various matters and to re-examine their views’ (Ramphele, 1993:108-109). Sarah Pink (2006) elaborating on David MacDougall’s (1998) thoughts related to reflexivity or remaining aware of the ‘differences in levels of understanding as well as the shifts of mood and rapport characteristic of fieldwork’ adds:

reflexivity should be integrated fully into processes of fieldwork and visual or written representation in ways that do not simply explain the researcher’s approach but reveal the very processes by which the positionality of researcher and informant were constituted and through which knowledge was produced during the fieldwork. (35)

My work is steeped in reflexive engagements throughout in an attempt to avoid a methodological shortcoming highlighted by Nyamnjoh, as he advises anthropologists of the importance to utilize, ‘reflexivity as a process something deserving of more than token mention in the prefaces, introductions and methodology sections of the books and journal articles we produce’ (Nyamnjoh, 2012a:66). Nyamnjoh (2012b) further discusses his apprehension regarding research among migrants and potential shortcomings in some research stating:

The perspectives and experiences of migrants themselves are absent. Studies reflecting them would require getting to know them as human beings, spending time with them in intimate circles, and developing research questions not of a slash and burn or rapid appraisal nature, but of an

ethnographic type, with a focus on the complexities and contradictions of what it means to claim and deny belonging. The predicaments of migrants 'complexify' once they arrive in their host country or community. Their reality is not as simple and straightforward as often suggested in the catalogue of stereotypes with which they are portrayed. (66)

In conclusion, one cannot overlook the value of this type of research relating to what Roger Sansi in *Art, Anthropology, and the Gift* refers to as 'the social turn' or how the process of conducting my proposed research and filming can be looked at as a form of 'social practice' (Sansi, 2015:2-3). One of Sansi's ideas situated as "social practice" was utilized during my previous research through network / community building between the women involved in the form of introductions to each other in order to assist in the expansion of local support systems, which essentially extend to include Zimbabwe (Media Tembo discovered that an affinal relative lived only a couple blocks away from my home and Media's place of employment). Through these introductions the objective was, 'not necessarily to generate "Change" with a capital C,' but to 'contribute to the construction of social relations...in the neighborhood' (Ibid.:2).

## Chapter 2

### **Infinite Potential to Uncertain Futures: Contextualizing Contemporary Zimbabwe**

Without a historical perspective, it might be impossible to fathom the full extent to which the very ethnographic encounters of the present are productive of cultures and cultural identities

Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983 quoted in Nyamnjoh, 2013:655

#### **Introduction**

The government of Zimbabwe under President Robert Mugabe, much like its colonial predecessor, Southern Rhodesia, operated under strict levels of media control, relying heavily on the dispensation of propaganda through print, radio, and television. It is within this climate of fear and tight media controls that I cautiously filmed for the first time in December of 2014 and subsequently in June-July 2015, and July 2017 careful to not be perceived as a foreign media journalist. From December 2017-January 2018 I returned for my final trip to Zimbabwe and entered a much different climate as President Mugabe had been removed from office and replaced by his long-time supporter and former Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa. With the police temporarily replaced by the military on the streets I was allowed to film for the first time in the airport, downtown Harare, and able to generally speak more openly about the political and economic crisis that has gripped Zimbabwe since the 1990s. Though the change of presidency after 37 years of Mugabe rule brought initial feelings of respite for many, the early optimism quickly soured as Mnangagwa has accomplished little in regards to economic reform and by the end of 2018 fuel shortages were widespread across the country.

Returning to the discussion of my initial trip to Zimbabwe in December of 2014 it became immediately clear to me that the visual representation and misrepresentation of Zimbabwe's long serving president His Excellency President Robert Mugabe (1980-2017) was not an

issue to be taken lightly in Zimbabwe, as prior to Mugabe's coerced resignation in November of 2017 one could not look in any direction in the capital city, Harare without seeing a t-shirt, billboard, poster, or flag with either Mugabe's face, the logo of his political party ZANU-PF, or both. I would learn quickly upon entering Zimbabwe for the first time in 2014 that the official state photo of Robert Mugabe, while not officially mandatory is in the best interest of businesses to display in their entrances; this photo is of a more youthful president that almost makes one forget the often humorous memes and images the international media and social media share of Mugabe napping at a countless assortment of official meetings or of tumbling down a flight of stairs at the airport in Harare upon his return from a trip to Ethiopia in 2015. My first gaze from the state sanctioned photo came on my aforementioned 2014 trip to Zimbabwe upon my entrance to the Harare International Airport, renamed Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport just weeks before his resignation and jokingly relayed to me in December of 2017 that the renaming of the airport was Mugabe's parting gift. As I walked underneath His Excellency's photo the stories I had heard and read of this man who ruled the country with an iron fist made me question why I had traveled here as many friends and colleagues warned me of traveling to Zimbabwe. As my imagination began to run wild, Novuyo Rosa Tshuma's (2012) description of Mugabe's official portrait in her novel *Shadows* came to mind as she wrote:

Somebody has written "Pamberi!", and above the slogan sits the framed photograph of His Excellency, the President. You stare at that picture and it stares back at you; you scowl, and still that man is smiling at you, captured in a moment of benevolence. That face, is the hallmark of authoritarianism in the shape of a fist: the one-party state is held firmly in that fist, even as it fizzles into a rancid effervescence in the corroding acid that democracy has become in this place. You may carefully follow every line on that face: nothing in it will ever change. (64-65)

In a more humorous, but no less poignant example of the seriousness in which this official portrait has established itself in Zimbabwean society, *Absent: The English Teacher* by John Eppel (2009), a novel in which the point of departure is a Zimbabwean teacher, George J. George, being imprisoned for a short time and losing his job after a mishap regarding

Mugabe's official portrait being substituted by a student with that of former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith, Eppel writes:

George had been entrusted with the job of making sure that the President's portrait would be hanging in any of the rooms that the Deputy Secretary cared to visit. Unfortunately there was only one portrait of the President. It used to hang in the school hall but was now nowhere to be found. George made the mistake of consulting the class for which he was Form teacher: 3 Remove, the bottom stream. The naughtiest boys and girls of the entire school were in this class, none naughtier than Ivan 'the terrible' McKaufmann. George should have smelt a rat when Ivan offered to help him find the missing portrait, but George was desperate, and exhausted. (5)

After my initial apprehensive meeting with Mugabe followed by an equally nervous situation with an immigration official who asked if she could keep the five U.S. dollars in change from the purchase of my visitors visa, a request I thought would not be in my best interests not to deny I began to settle into what would become my new reality for the next several weeks. The next step of my journey, one that I was equally underprepared to undertake at the time was to secure a ride to Rimuka, Kadoma located 140km (87 miles) southwest of Harare. After an estimated 20 minutes of debate between several airport employees, all of which were shocked I was looking to travel alone such a distance they found a taxi driver they felt would best "look out for my safety". As the kind older gentleman assigned to me by the airport employees drove me to the Showgrounds Bus Station he was more than willing to field my novice questions. A couple of kilometers outside the airport the roads were suddenly no longer perfectly paved, but instead littered with potholes due to a just short of completely non-operational government services department. The only consistency I could note at this point was the continued barrage of Mugabe images, expanded to include His Excellency's wife, Grace Mugabe, whose face adorned the side of all the bright yellow and blue government owned buses throughout the city. Grace's facial expression, frozen and located somewhere between those of the worrisome eyes of an over protective mother and the menacing glare of an underpaid and overworked prison guard seemed to pass before me every couple of seconds. I cautiously snapped photos through the front window of the taxi

on my iPhone, asking permission from the driver each time in order to protect both of us from potential trouble with the notoriously corrupt and violent police force.

When we arrived at the Showground Bus Station after an approximately 20 minute journey my driver literally walked me onto a kombi (small white taxi bus), told me to sit, and wished me well. It was at that moment that it hit me that I had no clue how far Kadoma was from Harare and even worse I did not know where to get off when I got there. As the kombi filled up, so did the number of eyes that stole side-glances of the *murungu* (Shona for white person) and what seemed to be the deafening silence of approximately 20 baffled passengers as it is unheard of in Harare to spot a *murungu* in a kombi. As the bus departed I let the driver know that I would need to get off in Kadoma; he gently nodded without turning around (I repeated my destination to him multiple times throughout the journey, eventually he ceased with the gentle nods). As the bus roared away from Harare in the rain after an hour of waiting for the bus to be completely full, I quickly realized that my feet would need to serve as a plug for the duration of the journey to block the small hole in the floor which was slinging water up my leg. Fortunately the journey from Harare to Kadoma is beautiful, providing a glimpse of the varied landscapes and fertile land that has been a point of contention since the arrival of colonizers. After a couple of hours the kombi came to a halt in a bustling area filled with roadside pool tables, tuck shops (vendors), buses, and people carrying various forms of luggage and goods. Slowly people exited and as I looked around in an attempt to spot a sign that would reveal my geographic location, I was tapped on the shoulder by a kind woman who had earlier shared a grilled ear of mealie (corn) with me and she motioned for me to exit. I had made it to Kadoma (the driver, acknowledging me directly for the first time, laughed as I exited).

Upon my arrival in Kadoma my hosts, Robert and Media, with whom I would spend the next couple weeks living in the home of Robert's mother, promptly greeted me. It should be noted that Media was employed as a full-time domestic worker in my home back in Cape Town at the time of this visit, posed a potential ethical dilemma that I will address in the following chapter. After being shown to my room and dining on *sadzza* ('pap' in South Africa), greens, and chicken, slowly the people who had gathered to witness my arrival were permitted to enter the house. The first stand-out introduction to me was a man whose

physical characteristics I can only vaguely recall as my eyes were drawn to his t-shirt, bright red and featuring a picture of opposition party leader, Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change). Having heard and read from numerous people prior to my trip that I should not discuss politics in Zimbabwe as, “you never know who is a spy for the ruling ZANU-PF party”, I asked the man if it was dangerous to wear the shirt he had on. He replied, “Yes, but don’t worry you are in MDC country”, referring to large amount of support for the MDC in the area, continuing, “The head of the local branch lives on this street”. His reassurance brought me no relief as the words from Catherine Buckle’s (2001) biography, *African Tears* ran through my head as she recalled the beginnings of the Fast Track Land Reforms in 2000 stating:

We don’t know whom to trust anymore. I never talk to my customers in the store now because the squatters from our tent have taken to wearing MDC t-shirts and hanging around in the store to see whom they can trip up. (76)

Later that night while typing notes into my phone from the day I visualized Mugabe staring down at me in the airport while his wife, Grace circled me on her buses and simply wrote regarding my encounter with the MDC supporter, “Robert’s friend had a nice red shirt”, in hindsight an easily decipherable code.

## **The Zimbabwe War of Liberation (1964-1979) & Continued Repression in Post-Independence Zimbabwe**

*Chimurenga* slogans:

Forward with the war of liberation!

Forward with the people of Zimbabwe!

Forward with just causes all over the world!

Forward with the mujibas!

Forward with the chimbwidos!

Forward with the mothers who cooked for the boys!

Forward with the cooking stick!

Frederikse, 1982:74

Rory Pilosof (2012) in his book, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe* cites Lawrence Vambe's (2004:16) definition of chimurenga stating:

The term *chimurenga* comes from the name of a legendary Shona ancestor, Murenga Sororenzou. Believed to be a huge man with a head (*soro*) the size of an elephant's (*renzou*), Murenga was well known for his fighting spirit and prowess, and legend has it that he composed war-songs to encourage his soldiers to continue the fight against their enemies in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. In the 1970s, African freedom fighters in bases in Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia, and some local Zimbabwean artists struggling for Zimbabwe's independence, derived inspiration from Murenga's fighting spirit and composed songs in a genre that they called chimurenga. The word chimurenga refers to war or the struggle against any form of tyranny. (1629/6637)

Julie Frederikse (1982) in *None But Ourselves: Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* offers a prolific account of the role of both colonial and liberation fighters' use of media during the Zimbabwean War of Liberation and states that though the regime was in control of the mass media of Rhodesia, they were unsuccessful in controlling the masses who had their own media outlets. Disenfranchised by the regime's insistence on silencing the voice of opposition blatantly, 'the masses' media relied on giving voice, sharing grievances, covertly and subtly.' In their mission to preserve white privilege throughout Rhodesia the regime had produced a largely illiterate rural population, therefore rendering null one of their primary mediums of spreading and enforcing white supremacy, the printed word. This led to alternative forms of communication for the black majority through informal networks in the urban ghettos and the government enforced rural black areas known as the 'Tribal Trust Lands' (TTLs) (Ibid.:33).

April 28, 1966 would be the date that would bring forth a propaganda victory for the liberation forces; it would become known and celebrated as 'Chimurenga Day'. This day marked the killing of seven ZANLA (Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army)s fighters who, despite being heavily outnumbered by Rhodesian ground and air troops

outside the town of Sinoia, refused to surrender, thus marking the opening barrage of the armed struggle. Behind these fallen troops thousands of additional liberation fighters from Zambia and later Mozambique carried with them thousands of publications to circulate amongst the masses (Ibid.:111). Rhodesian historians mark 1972 as the year in which the periodic liberation fighter activity that had taken place throughout Rhodesia since UDI could no longer be regarded as a mere 'nuisance'. In Johnny Ryan's (2004), article "Principled failure: British policy towards Rhodesia", 1971-1972, Ryan states:

In May 1972 the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary told the British Parliament that the peoples of Rhodesia stood at the crossroads between two destinies: they could accept a compromise settlement or suffer total racial polarization and civil war. By then, the choice was already made. Despite attempts to initiate dialogue between the European and African parties in Rhodesia, British diplomacy failed to avert slaughter. The Anglo-Rhodesian Agreement of November 1971 had indicated the possibility of finally resolving the Rhodesian issue. Yet by the end of 1972, an opportunity for a settlement between Britain and Rhodesia had been lost, and the last British colony in Africa was set upon the course of catastrophe. By 1978, Rhodesia's ferocious civil war claimed an average of thirty casualties a day. (Paragraph 1)

One of the methods used against the Rhodesian government was the night meeting, or *pungwe* in Shona, which means something that keeps going all through the night. Eddison Zvobgo, Deputy Secretary, ZANU Publicity and Information Department, describes how lecture material would be prepared in Maputo, Mozambique and then brought to the department of Publicity and Information where it would be printed into pamphlets and magazines, such as the *Zimbabwe News*, before being flooded into the country. Zvobgo describes the lectures prepared in the pamphlets as, 'short, in the vernacular and to the point. ...helped make people understand what the war was about' (Frederikse, 1982:60). In Petina Gappah's (2015) novel, *The Book of Memory*, the protagonist, Memory, recalls her adoptive father's curious role for a white Rhodesian during the War of Liberation as follows:

Instead of answering the call up, or staying as long as he could in England, Lloyd had actually returned to join the comrades – or, as the whites called them, the terrorists. He worked in the refugee camp at Nyadzonia as a teacher of English and civic studies, and he wrote the pamphlets that were scattered from helicopters across the eastern regions. He was there when Nyadzonia was bombed.

Lloyd's refusal to join the war – I should say, his joining it on the wrong side – put him in direct conflict with his family. ...

Lloyd became another of that special class of Rhodesian eccentrics who were considered to have gone native in preposterous ways;' (157-158)

Abraham Mbuya, the ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army) political commissar notes that the radio would always try to distort the facts. In an attempt to boost morale and divide the enemy the Rhodesian radio would often report that a majority of the clashes taking place within the country were between the armed wings of the opposition liberation forces, ZIPRA and ZANLA, a claim that Mbuya denies, stressing that ZIPRA and ZANLA often worked together in operations. This distortion of the facts stems from a long history of manipulation by the colonial government regarding the minority Ndebele and majority Shona within the country, as Mbuya states, 'The authorities here, ever since their hoisting of the flag in Salisbury, tried to play up one community against the other, in order to divide them and rule them effectively' (Frederikse, 1982:228). Bob North of the Rhodesian Intelligence Corps confirms Mbuya's claims, stating that the early colonizers had more respect for the Ndebele than for the Shona, as the Ndebele were seen as a warrior tribe and a prouder race. The primarily Shona ZANLA troops were, in contrast with the Ndebele ZIPRA troops viewed as, 'a bloody shambles. They would never stand and fight – it was all, well, terrorist tactics you dealt with' continuing, 'But they had the advantage of numbers and being on the ground with the locals. So, you see, the whites had more respect for ZIPRA than ZANLA' (Ibid.:229). North reiterates the influence of early colonial ideologies stating, 'Our opinions were shaped by information passed down over the years, and now we find that a lot of history has been glossed over' (Ibid.:229). An additional attempt to win the 'minds and hearts' of those in the rural area, which is viewed as a failure on behalf of the

UDI Government, was the implementation of a Mobile Cinema Unit which targeted those in the protected villages (Ibid.:92).

**Comrade Prince, ZANLA political commissar:**

We used to go to those film shows, in disguise, to see what they were showing the people, which was rubbish.

**Why did you go?**

To get information, to see that propaganda. We could counter that because we were staying with the masses. We could later analyze the propaganda and tell the masses the truth.

Frederikse, 1982:94

A key objective of those engaged in the conflict within Rhodesia from 1964-1979 was to battle for a free press in what would become known post-independence as Zimbabwe. Both the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) declared that several restrictive media laws would be repealed as the independent press struggled for many years to report within the country due to laws imposed by Ian Smith's minority government. Laws such as the Official Secrets Act made it a crime to report on 'classified information' and violation of the Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) could lead to 20 years' imprisonment. These laws were utilized to impose a media blackout on the heavy casualties suffered by the Rhodesian Government Forces, and highlight the casualties suffered by the state's enemies and their retreats to neighboring Zambia and Mozambique. The contemporary form of the state-run media began with the establishment of the Southern Rhodesian information service in 1962 by the Rhodesian Front upon UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) from British rule (Windrich, 1981:7) and has been continued by the Zimbabwean government through to the recent social media suppression of movements such as #thisflag. As Dumisani Moyo (2004), in *Media, Public Discourse and Political Contestation in Zimbabwe* states:

the ruling elite has always used broadcasting as a tool for political control and manipulation of the masses. In the name of 'national interest', 'national

security’, and ‘national sovereignty’, broadcasting, from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, has been characterized by two salient features: first, its *legal* status as a state monopoly, and secondly, its location under the Ministry of Information which rendered it a *political* tool in the hands of the government of the day. (12)

Upon independence in 1980, newly elected Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe’s only media reform carried over from the colonial administration was the repeal of the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament Act, which prohibited the media from reporting on parliamentary debates (Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2013:82-83).

In *Zimbabwe’s Cinematic Arts: Language, Power, Identity*, Katrina Thompson (2013), notes that historically the power of film and television has been utilized during white rule due to its power to influence people’s perceptions, behaviors, and opinions more effectively than the printed word. Often the primary purpose this form of media served was through the dissemination of colonial propaganda as was the case of the Rhodesian UDI government. Unfortunately the use of film and television as a means of disseminating propaganda did not cease when a black majority government assumed power in Zimbabwe in 1980 (Ibid.:7). As Robert Mugabe articulated in July of 1981:

In the final analysis, the mass media in any country is an instrument of the dominant social forces in that particular country (...). In independent Zimbabwe, the formerly oppressed masses have now become the dominant social force. The media should reflect their wishes, and help them consolidate their political gains as a result of achieving national independence. (Saunders, 1991:1 cited in Moyo, 2004:18)

For Robert Mugabe and the ruling ZANU-PF party the media went from a means of broadcasting during the liberation struggle to mobilize the people’s support for their programs to promoting national unity and spreading the ideology of the ruling party (Moyo, 2004:18). This ideology quickly turned to one used as a tool of division amongst the people of Zimbabwe as a report released in 1988 titled, “The Democratization of the Media in

Independent Zimbabwe” found the ZANU-PF government quoted as saying they have made, ‘great strides in making mass media responsive to the needs of the majority of its citizens.’ Key to this statement is, “*majority of its citizens*, interchangeable with *the black majority*, but defining the majority solely in terms of race ignores the ways in which Zimbabweans’ interests may not be served by the mass media” (Thompson, 2013:18). Thompson (Ibid.), further expands upon this debate citing comments from novelist and poet Chenjerai Hove given at a public discussion in 2001, where he connected the issue of belonging and the government’s attempted legislation of film and television stating, ‘There is a way in which people want to believe that those with no totems are not Zimbabwean.’ This remark stems from the belief that the majority Shona and minority Ndebele have patrilineal associations with an animal that symbolizes group unity through the sharing of the same ancestor and forbidding the eating of the meat of the totem animal. Through the formulation of Zimbabwean identity by means of a totem, migrants and whites are easy to exclude as Hove continues:

People want to have the fiction of thinking that Malawians and Zambians are a very small percentage of our country. But I know they are at least thirty per cent of the population in this country. Now if they want to do a film in this country about their experiences – since they have been here for generations – it would probably not have a chance to be shown on television, because our local content is... only those who have a totem must be on television.’ (Ibid.:19)

James Muzondidya (2005) in his book, *Walking a Tightrope: Towards a Social History of the Coloured People of Zimbabwe*, adds another dimension to this debate as he discusses the challenges faced by the colored community during the build up to Zimbabwe’s first post-independence elections as to which side of the race divide this community should be included. Muzondidya (Ibid.) cites an interview with David Klipin, a 45 year old colored political activist upon his release from prison, ‘for aiding and harboring terrorists at his farm’ who rejected being classified as white. Highlighting the fluidity of the colored community in Rhodesia, Klipin argued:

They say that this is to protect minority interests but I fail to see how Coloureds can be identified with the minority when, in fact, they are children of the majority and should thus be identified with them. Minorities are those people who are deportable because they have somewhere else to go if they are not wanted here. Coloureds...have no other country besides that of their birth. [A Coloured person's] interest does not need protection because he is Zimbabwean. Zimbabwe is his country of birth...So far as the Coloured interests are concerned the question of protection does not even arise...[and] our interests cannot be identified with those of the whites.' (Ibid.:274-275)

This issue is further problematic considering the contemporary government's identification policy as told to me by my long-time interlocutor, Masie Chachona who explained on March 1, 2018 that her surname, Chachona, means, "the one who never returns home". Masie's grandfather on her father's side of the family was from Mozambique, therefore her father had "alien" on his state-issued identification, but Masie being a second generation Zimbabwean was part of the first generation of her family to have "Zimbabwean" on their ID cards. This is a not uncommon situation in Zimbabwe as Horace Campbell states that, 'After UDI in 1965, more than 54 per cent of rural workers were from neighboring countries' (Campbell, 2003 quoted in Thompson, 2013:18). A final layer of the complications of national identity, again regarding Masie, is due to the fact that she and her family identify as Shona, but are quick to mention, at least to me, that they have "white blood" as her great-grandfather on her mother's side was a British soldier stationed in colonial Rhodesia. Nyamnjoh (2010) notes the inherent danger related to identity and the media stating:

Racism and ethnicity become issues of concern for media when tracing belonging and identity through exclusion becomes *obsessive* and *problematic* – forcing upon others exclusion when they expect inclusion, and seeking to justify such exclusion with porous arguments, stereotypes, stigmatization and scapegoating. ... Racism and ethnicity in obsession link culture and place in very essentialist and politicized terms. This makes it difficult to account for cultural differences and similarities within individuals and communities in a world where particular cultures are mapped onto or confined to particular

spaces, places and races... Qualifying to be considered “authentic”, “autochthonous”, “indigenous” or “bona fide” is a function of the way race, geography, culture, class, gender, and generation define and prescribe, include and exclude.’ (58-59)

In addition to the role media would serve within the newly recognized Zimbabwe the post-independence period led to, ‘a reassessment of gender relations and...profoundly affected all aspects of social and political life, disrupting pre-existing gender relations and cultural norms’ (Essof, 2013:848-855/2505). The changes to gender roles were spearheaded by two areas of society, women who were active during the nationalist liberation movement and those forming a small group of university-educated and professional women (Ibid.). Upon their return home to their villages and families, women who fought in the liberation war were met with mixed opinions perpetuated by the media, and many did not receive the warm welcome they were expecting. One example of an early welcome reception came from *The Sunday Mail*, an independent publisher, in May of 1981, reporting, ‘if Zimbabwe’s women libbers wish to prove the point that women are equal to men, they only have to point at one place - Assembly Point Tango.’ At Assembly Point Tango 1,800 former ZANLA women fighters were demobilized from service ranging from those in grade one to grade seven. These women were publically celebrated for running all aspects of areas such as Mt. Darwin, Mtoko, Buhera, and other areas as stated by *The Sunday Mail*:

the girls are tough, healthy and fit: indeed some look tough enough and strong enough to take on Langton Schoolboy and to hold their own in a rough house with Muhammad Ali. They have muscles that would be the envy of a good many nightclub bouncers... Until the girls are all rehabilitated, life will go on at Tango with an efficiency that adds weight to the argument that, given the opportunity to prove themselves, women can, and do, provide as good leadership as men. (*The Sunday Mail*, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1981 quoted in Lyons, 1999:223)

*Sweet Medicine* by Panashe Chigumadzi (2017), presents a different aspect of women libbers and their potential to provide ‘good leadership’, from the viewpoint of more traditionally orientated women who sympathized with men having to put up with the strong-willed

women returning from the liberation struggle as noted by the excerpt below:

wasn't she supposed to become the Minister of Women Affairs, Gender, Community Development and All Things Considered Unimportant in the Greater Scheme of Things when there was that fall out with the first minister?

To which the other would confirm: Yes, that was before her arrogance got in her way and she caused some trouble in the department. Very arrogant woman that. Yes, even during the *Chimurenga* we warned against that sort of bourgeois imperialist feminism, women's lib what-what of hers.

To which they both agreed: With all of this to have had to put up with, perhaps it was understandable that the old man had to put the Small House in the Main House. Poor old man. (124-125)

The "Small House" in Zimbabwe is a reference to the mistress of a married man or more specifically as described by Petina Gappah in her collection of short stories, *rotten row*, 'She was a small house, meaning she was not a proper wife but an official mistress and more elevated than a girlfriend' (Gappah, 2016:291). Therefore, putting the 'Small House in the Main House' was seen by these women as the only way for this particular man to continue a generally accepted traditional form of marriage in Zimbabwean society.

On the other side of the coin these same women were viewed as loose women or 'prostitutes', with many traditionalists and conservatives feeling that they should have stayed in their homes (Essof, 2013:1031/2505). This negative portrayal of women ex-combatants in media reports during the "demobilization process" found them deemed non-deserving of their demobilization pay-outs. One particularly harsh headline, "prostitutes Got Army pay", went on to detail how approximately 50 to 60 "high class African prostitutes" were:

rushed by high-ranking party members in official cars to ZANU (PF)'s Grazely Farm Camp at Arcturus, near Salisbury, to pose as guerrillas and claim \$100 a month pay... Mr Landau said it was an impossible situation to control when there was no means of positive identification of the ex-

guerrillas.' (Lyons, 1999:218 footnote 28)

Responding to these accusations:

Mr Mugabe also criticised former Army Pay Corps Director Lt. Col. V/G. Leen who told the Public Accounts Committee that he had had to pay prostitutes among guerrillas at Grazely Farm. Colonel Leen told the committee that the army expected to pay about 500 guerrillas at the farm, but when they counted them the number was nearer 2000. Mr Mugabe described Col. Leen's evidence as a 'dishonest' expression of what transpired. "If in fact he was satisfied that there was a group of prostitutes, why did he proceed to pay them. I ask you?" Col. Leen would have to answer for his actions, Mr Mugabe said. (Ibid.:footnote 29)

Many claim that these women who received pay-outs for their services were almost certainly ex-guerrilla fighters and to label them as prostitutes highlights their male counterparts' inability to accept their war-time roles, stigmatizing them post-independence (Ibid.:218-219).

The women who did stay home, living with the repercussions of war, have seen their stories mainly excluded from the official discourse. Through fiction some mothers have found dual representations as they, 'emerge in this literature as victims and sometimes as heroes.' In, *Echoing Silences*, a novel by Alexander Kanengoni (1997), the main character, Munashe, a male guerrilla fighter is approached by an elderly woman looking for her son at a demobilization point, highlighting the pain of loss as she states:

"There is no need to be afraid, my son ... We have become accustomed to death. Tell me, is he still alive?" "I don't even know him, mother. We were so many out there. Thousands of others are still in the camps in Mozambique. He is alive."

"Then whose children were they that we saw dying in battle and those we were told were massacred at Nyadzonia and Chimoio?" Munashe shook his head. He felt helpless before her pain. "Take these sweet potatoes and roasted groundnuts and eat them. You are the son that I shall never see."

And she walked away as the others had done before her. (Lyons, 1999:148)

With nothing to show for their “war effort”, the only consolation many of these women used to heal was the knowledge that their children died for the independence of Zimbabwe (Ibid.:147-148). Despite their call to participate in the nationalist struggles for independence, independent Zimbabwe has legitimized inequality based on gendered differences through unequal access to resources in the form of political representation, legal rights, land acquisition, and income. Additionally, independence failed to provide women with full citizenship rights despite their sacrifices for the nation. Tanya Lyons (Ibid.) quotes Cynthia Enloe (1990), as she states her lack of disbelief regarding nationalist and nationalist movements as they:

have rarely taken women's experiences as the starting point for an understanding of how a people becomes colonised or how it throws off ... domination. Rather, nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope. (209)

“Masculinized memory”, in Zimbabwe provides reasoning for early nationalist engagements developed from the actions of men, based upon their plan for Zimbabwe’s future (Ibid.:209). Even to this day in Zimbabwe the, ‘silences in history and the lies that are told, speak to the general problems in Zimbabwean popular history and politics, surrounding the history of the liberation struggle’ (Ibid.:240). In early 2018 while having a discussion about the history of Rhodesia and Zimbabwe with one of my interlocutors’ relatives just outside the high-density township of Epworth, the following was communicated to me regarding the war and the early years of independence:

I have been reading a lot lately about the liberation and I realize that most of what we were taught growing up is not true. There are many books that I am reading at the moment that tell a different version of many of these events. It has made me rethink everything that we have been told. You know, I was a little boy in town the day that the guerillas blew up that petrol station in Harare.

In December of 1982 the Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) was passed into law affording

all Zimbabweans legal status at the age of eighteen, sparking outrage from traditional men. The longstanding tradition of exercising total control over wives and daughters was now being brought into question in the national spotlight. LAMA provided women with the opportunity to choose their sexual partners, inherit property, and engage in economic and political life. LAMA was complimented by a series of additional laws, which extended to include those women involved in unregistered customary marriages and making provision for the equitable distribution of matrimonial assets in the event of a divorce, and attempted to put an end to property grabbing by the relatives of a deceased husband (Essof, 2013:863-871/2505). Shereen Essof (Ibid.) notes that despite the passing of LAMA and other pieces of legislation there remained in Zimbabwe:

the desire to regulate and control women both in the private and public sphere. This was done through the very sophisticated and powerful invocation of counter-revolutionary nationalist and cultural discourses that tended to interpolate any women's organizing as feminist and feminism as being anti-nationalist, and pro imperialism. (72/2505)

Essof (Ibid.) continues, highlighting that LAMA was unsuccessful in being repealed numerous times and blatantly rejected by some families through the continued denial of legally established inheritance rights, which often clash with customary law. I was told in early 2018 by my interlocutor of over four years, Masie Chachona, that she still has very little contact with the family of her deceased husband, father to her two oldest children as they still claim that she owes them money and property from his passing over 20 years ago. The lengths to which some men would go to combat the advancement of women's rights in society not only took place in the courtrooms, but on the streets as it is well documented that men would strip women of their clothing on the street if they were wearing items such as mini-skirts (Ibid.:72/2505).

In October 1983 the rhetoric of ex-combatants as “prostitutes” returned in the form of shocking human rights abuse in what was known as “Operation Clean Up”. One female ex-combatant's accounts of “Operation Clean Up” was published as follows:

Zimbabwean women were subjected to the shameless, degrading and totally

unjustifiable humiliation at the hands of the police and soldiers who forced, beat and generally mishandled women on the dubious allegations of being prostitutes ... women found travelling alone unaccompanied or in a group are defined as [prostitutes]. The only common factor among these women was their sex. To our disgust, there is silence from the politicians and concerned citizens who preach equality and socialism. Does equality mean that one can be randomly picked from a street, shop, theatre, flat and be bundled away on the pretext of being a prostitute. Our national press again was nowhere to be heard and found except the "Sunday Mail" which condemned the arrests. ZBC and ZTV were silent as graves.... I thought women also fought to liberate this country from tyranny and arbitrary laws or am I dreaming? Please someone tell me I am dreaming. (Lyons, 1999:226)

“Operation Clean Up”, as a “manifestations of power and patriarchy” resulted in over 6,000 women being arrested including the elderly and girls as young as 11 years old, with the majority of these women being housewives, secretaries, or unemployed women. The events associated with “Operation Clean Up” proved that state patronage would not permit the advancement of women’s rights. This realization provoked a change in the consciousness of women throughout Zimbabwean society leading to the formation of the Women’s Action Group (WAG) in 1983 formed by women of multiple, still divided spaces of society standing together to work in the interest of women’s rights for the first time (Essof, 2013:899/2505). Inspired by WAG other organizations working across various sectors of society were founded including the Federation of African Media Women Zimbabwe (FAMWZ) in 1985, focused on women in the media (Ibid.:907-916/2505).

## Zimbabwe in the 1980s

### **Zimbabwe-Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation, 4 February 1980:**

We are crossing over now to our studios, ladies and gentlemen, for the official announcement of the results of the election. For the Zimbabwean African National Union – Patriotic Front (of Robert Mugabe): 57 seats. The

Patriotic Front (of Joshua Nkomo); 20 seats. The United African National Council (Bishop Muzorewa): three seats.

**Johan Meiring, Psychological Operations Unit:**

A Mugabe landslide! My ass fell on the ground with a thud that could be heard round the room. I mean, I knew there'd be guys who'd vote for Mugabe – but not fucking 90 per cent of the black electorate! I went straight to the bar and I had a double.

**Godfrey Kororo, telex operator, News Services, Salisbury:**

**Why were the media so wrong in predicting the election results?**

It was the same old story of the whites thinking they know the African, because they'd been in the country for some time or whatever. But they didn't know the black man. ... They didn't know about the people in the TTLs and they didn't know who those people in the TTLs supported. They just didn't know. And even if they tried to ask those people, well – after staying four or five years with the Security Forces and the guerrillas, people knew where their bread was buttered. You couldn't say you were going to vote for ZANU-PF. Nobody could say that. You just gave an answer, which would please whoever's asking.

Frederikse, 1982:323

In January of 1980, in the lead up to the first elections in Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe returned from Maputo, Mozambique to a boisterous welcome in the renamed Zimbabwean capital city, Harare (pre-independence Salisbury). Prior to Mugabe's departure the president of Mozambique, Samora Machel advised ZANU-PF officials to “adopt a moderate and pragmatic approach in drafting their election manifesto” (Nyarota, 2018:16). Additional advice from Machel was reported stating:

Cut out the rhetoric [...] because you will scare away the whites and you need them. You will face ruin if you force the whites to take flight. Don't try to imitate us. Don't play make-believe Marxist games when you get home.

You have no Marxist party yet, so you can't impose Marxism. It's difficult enough in Mozambique and we are a Marxist party. (Ibid.:16)

Shortly after Mugabe's return in March of 1980 Zimbabwe held its first democratic elections and ZANU-PF headed by Liberation War veteran Robert Mugabe won a landslide victory. Mugabe's victory in the 1980 elections came as a shock to much of the white establishment, not least to white farmers. An editorial in *The Farmer* summed up the community's surprise:

Events over the last few weeks have completely taken the proverbial wind out of our sails...The landslide election victory of Robert Mugabe and his ZANU (PF) shocked and dismayed most white Rhodesians who had put their money on the moderate Bishop Muzorewa as a 'dead cert.' (Pilosof, 2012:2139/6637)

The shock and dismay felt throughout the white community, given Mugabe's rhetoric on land issues, was logical. Mugabe's election sent fear through the farming community that is summarized by Denis Hills, an Englishman who lectured at the Teachers College in Gwelo (presently Gweru) who wrote:

At the back of every white Rhodesian's mind is fear: fear of economic uncertainty in the new Zimbabwe, of losing jobs and property, of being outnumbered and humiliated; fear of the black man's latent frustrations and violence. (Ibid.:2138/6637)

In addition to Mugabe's rhetoric on land reform the white community was also aware of the resentment felt by nearly three-quarters of a million people who were treated like animals and moved to "PVs" (Protected Villages) or "keeps" between 1973 and 1978 during the War of Liberation (Frederikse, 1982:84).

The white community was not the only group apprehensive as several other minority groups in the country including but not limited to the coloured community and especially the minority Ndebele wondered what their position would be in the new Zimbabwe as liberation era divisions and intolerance directed by ZANU against the predominantly Ndebele ZAPU, carried over from the liberation struggle. The end of the liberation war found the

Zimbabwean military in the precarious position of merging 20,000 guerrillas from the armed wings of ZANU and ZAPU, ZANLA and ZIPRA, together with the Rhodesian National Army, leaving an estimated 45,000 guerrillas to fend for themselves leading to occupation in the countryside soon after independence (Mamdani, 2009:4-5). Mugabe wasted little time putting his plan to control the country with an iron grip into action. In October of 1980, just over six months into his election as Prime Minister, Mugabe finalized an agreement with North Korea to arm and train a brigade of the Zimbabwean Defence Force. Less than a year after the agreement was made North Korean instructors arrived and began training the '5<sup>th</sup> Brigade', the brigade that would be used specifically to 'combat dissidents'. These 'dissidents', the Ndebele supporters of the opposition ZAPU, were purported to be staging an armed rebellion in the southern part of Zimbabwe that would soon be crushed with relentless brutality (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008:43-44). A short four months later the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade had its 'passing out' parade and the following month they were deployed to Matabeleland North and began their brutal campaign of terror which would become known as the Gukurahundi Massacres (1983-1986) within days of arrival (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, 1997:7-8). By the time 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade finished its assault it is estimated that approximately 20,000 people were murdered.

In February of 1987 an announcement was made that unity between the two liberation parties was imminent, but within less than two months talks broke down and by June ZAPU rallies and meetings were banned. ZAPU offices were raided, officials were detained and it seemed as though no end to the intimidation was near. Due to the intimidation and political turmoil, in October of 1987 unity talks between the two parties resumed and in December The Unity Accord was signed by Robert Mugabe (ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU) (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, 1997:10). The Unity Accord led to the merging of the two political parties into the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), ultimately resulting in a de facto one-party state. The results of the accord were met with resistance from human rights advocates and international observers at a crucial point in which Zimbabwe was seeking more access to global markets (Essof, 2013:555/2505). With the formation of ZANU-PF, Mugabe and the ruling party cemented their desire for a one-party state, but the anger over Gukurahundi and a united political party found resistance from the youth in the late 1980s at the University of

Zimbabwe as students began demonstrating in favor of a multiparty democracy. Mugabe responded to the student protest in the media labeling them a:

bunch of rapists, drunkards and drug addicts who could not be allowed into the city because they were given to violence . . . They are our children. We will discipline them our way. (Moore, 2011:66)

Upon initially taking power, ZANU-PF's economic plans, constructed during the War of Liberation saw the average standard of living rise during the 1980s with the first two years of independence GDP growth rate at 21%. These plans were based upon, 'a strategy of growth with redistribution through provision of universal education and health services and investment in peasant farming', leading to confidence among investors, the removal of economic and travel bans, and international legitimacy (Essof, 2013:538/2505). Unfortunately, by decade's end economic mismanagement and the use of political criteria as a basis for making economic decisions through overregulation of the private sector, the expansion of patronage jobs in public corporations, and corruption on the part of officials led to economic benefits being concentrated within the powerful echelons of the party state (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008:46). The revelation that cabinet ministers were purchasing new cars at a reduced cost and then reselling them at greatly inflated prices, referred to as the Willowgate scandal, led to the suicide of Mugabe's long-time friend and former liberation struggle cellmate, Maurice Nyagumbo. This scandal and the suicide's emotional effect on Mugabe led to another destructive economic decision for Zimbabwe; the limits of calling Mugabe's allies into account for their questionable economic transactions (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:142).

### **1990s: A Decade of Decline**

By 1990 Zimbabwe's initial success was declining, exposing the realities of the country's economic woes. Author and researcher James Muzondidya remarked of the time, 'from the late 1980s onwards, Zimbabwe's positive record abroad could no longer mask the growing social problems and contradictions at home' (Muzondidya, 2009:188 cited in Pilosof, 2012:858/6637). With economic decline leading to the disappearance of formal employment

opportunities the introduction of Structural Adjustment programs in 1991 found the much celebrated War Veterans as their first targets with entire departments and ministries disbanded. The adjustments led to several high-profile confrontations between war veterans and government officials throughout the 1990s. During the inaugural Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) conference in April of 1992 Mugabe accused the war veterans of being ‘armchair critics’, enraging the veterans and setting the stage for street demonstrations, the locking of government officials and ZANU-PF party members in their offices, besieging the State House, disrupting court sessions, and interrupting Mugabe’s Heroes’ Day speech in 1997 (Mamdani, 2008:5).

In addition to the growing economic troubles the 1990s found the country’s presidential elections marred by controversy. The 1990 election found the ruling part violating the requirements of equal access and ethical standards by running intimidation adverts on radio and television (Moyo, 1992b:74–75 cited in Moyo, 2004:18). Dumisani Moyo describes one of the controversial ads explaining:

One of the ads featured a coffin being lowered into a grave, accompanied by a stern warning: “Aids kills. So does ZUM. Vote ZANU PF”. The opposition was generally denied access to the electorate both in the state-owned media and in terms of holding political rallies in different parts of the country. (Ibid.:18)

Prior to the 1995 election campaign an Election Coverage Committee (ECC) was appointed by the Zimbabwean Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), deciding that any party which ran in fifteen constituencies would be allocated 30 minutes of free time on TV1, with small parties with fewer candidates receiving five minutes. The caveat was that the ZBC reserved the right to edit party tapes before airing them (Darnolf 1997:59 cited in Moyo, 2004:18). In 1999 the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) took the ZBC to court over their refusal to broadcast their adverts. In court the NCA claimed:

ZBC is a public broadcaster, and the sole broadcasting house in the country. It is funded mainly by the state, as well as by fees paid by the public. As a public broadcaster, it has a duty to reflect a broad spectrum of views across

the nation, and not just those of the government and Zanu PF. (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 26 February 1999 cited in Moyo, 2004:19)

The case was eventually withdrawn when ZBC promised, though did not fully adhere to airing the NCA's adverts (Moyo, 2004:18-19).

A series of events in 1999 and 2000 are attributed to government's withdrawal from a liberalization of the media. The release of the *Daily News*, an anti-government newspaper in March of 1999 and the launch of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the first serious challenge to the ruling ZANU-PF political party since independence were at the forefront of the government's radical shift (Ibid.:23). With the establishment of the *Daily News* the government began to label independent newspapers as 'enemies of the state' or 'opposition' or 'white' mouthpieces (Willems, 2011:9-10). These labels extended to refer to the newly formed MDC as well, curious labels to be applied to a media outlet and political party especially when one considers that in the 1990s - 2001, 'the ZBC "local" news was actually an amalgamation of local and international news, the latter purchased from the BBC, Reuters, CNN, and other agencies' (Thompson, 2013:115). The MDC's slogan: "Chinja, Maitero, Maitero Chinja," "Guqula Izenzo, Izenzo Guqula" ("Now is the time. Fight for change."), embodied hope and a change for the future, but the party's, "subtle alignments and connections with the West were manipulated by the ZANU-PF regime to paint the MDC as a 'white' western-backed party", in an attempt to further discredit the party (Essof, 2013:673/2505). The *Daily News* described the focus of the paper stating, 'We are writing for Zimbabweans who want the truth. Not for anyone. For Zimbabweans who want the truth', aligned to the paper's slogan, "telling it like it is". Sandra Nyaira, the political editor for the *Daily News*, elaborates on the paper's task stating it sought, 'to give the ordinary Zimbabwean a chance to know the truth about the political violence going on in the country, the corruption, the nepotism and related issues and policies that were bringing Zimbabwe down slowly but surely', relying on ordinary Zimbabweans for their opinions instead of the views of experts and politicians (Willems, 2011:8).

The crackdown on media and the increase controversy surrounding political elections were problematic for the average Zimbabwean and in hindsight two key political events are assigned responsibility for Zimbabwe's ultimate meltdown. The first was the increase in sales

tax, income tax, and petrol tax, imposed to cover the cost of Mugabe's pay-outs to silence approximately 50,000 war veterans whose continuing demonstrations in the capital of Harare embarrassed and threatened the ZANU-PF power base. Mugabe's failure to deliver on promises made almost two decades earlier to war veterans ended up costing pay-outs in the amount of Z\$50,000 to each veteran, in addition to Z\$2,000 per month, leading to resentment towards the war veterans by the general public. The second key event was the announcement in September of 1998 that the government would finally begin the implementation of the 1992 Land Designation Act (Essof, 2013:594/2505). This was the government's attempt to be seen as doing something through the 1994 appointment of a Land Tenure Commission (LTC) to examine the appropriateness of each of Zimbabwe's land tenure systems for its different farming sectors, which did not satisfy the war veterans (Ibid.:602-609/2505). In his 2016 book, *Ordered Estates: Welfare, Power and Maternalism on Zimbabwe's (Once White) Highveld*, Andrew Hartnack succinctly summarizes the initial relationship between the ZANU-PF government and white farmers stating:

after Zimbabwe's independence the ZANU-PF government, for pragmatic reasons, allowed white farmers to remain farming and largely maintained a system of (adapted) domestic government (Herbst 1990; Pilosof 2012; Rutherford 1996; Selby 2006). While white farmers may have thus come to see themselves as a 'protected species' or 'royal game' under the new regime (Selby 2006:74-75), in reality farmers and farm bodies had to negotiate their position very carefully, diverting attention away from their privileged position as land owners and elites and reminding the government and Zimbabweans generally of their indispensable value to the country's economy. (24)

By the 1990s, this relationship started to transform as white farmers, isolated from much of society began to generate an abundance of negative press. Though these feelings were nothing new, the perceived wealth of white farmers contrasted with the country's economic woes found the government modifying its attitude to white farmers. An additional element key to generating negative press was what was perceived as the white farming community's general attitude being, 'still infused with the racial prejudices of the country's colonial past' (Pilosof, 2012:2337/6637). With little progress made on the land issue by 1997, less than 150,000 hectares or roughly 2% of the commercial farming sector's land holdings changing

hands, skepticism surrounding the ruling party's ability to deliver on its land redistribution policies was growing along with mounting resentment towards a white community that was deemed an easy target. Rory Pilosof (2012) concisely summarizes the historical position of debates related to land issues in Zimbabwe stating:

Throughout Zimbabwe's tortured past, land has been one of the categorical focal points for control, mobilization, resistance and nation building, evidence in both its colonial and post-colonial manifestations. (209/6637)

The political dynamic between ZANU-PF and the war veterans in Zimbabwe's post-colonial history is one characterized by, 'collaboration, conflict and accommodation. Veterans and the party have used each other to pursue their different, though often overlapping, objectives' (Ibid.:893/6637). The delicate relationship between ZANU-PF and the war veterans in combination with the internal changes taking place within ZANU-PF, having more radical elements of the party coming to the fore, would bring about serious implications for land issues and fast-track land reforms in the new millennium (Ibid.)

Though the two aforementioned political events, the increase in sales tax, income tax, and petrol tax and the implementation of the 1992 Land Designation Act, which eventually lead to the implementation of the FTLRP in the early 2000s are viewed as the defining moments of Zimbabwe's across-the-board collapse, additionally Mugabe's decision in 1998 to deploy troops to the conflict in the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) at a cost of Z\$30 million per month was extremely abhorred. This was yet another arrangement that was thought to only benefit the top brass of ZANU-PF and so-called 'business-generals' as they gained access to the region's lucrative diamond sector and other financial enterprises (Ibid.:681/2505).

### **Zimbabwe in the New Millennium and the Heavily Publicized Fast Track Land Reform Programme**

Look, the whole farm business, the *hondo yeminda*, was often ugly and unpleasant. Only those who were on the farms when these things took place

will ever know the whole truth of it all. Not people like you and I who have to rely on hearsay and conflicting media reports.

Tagwia, 2008:202

Prosper Matondi (2012), in Chapter 1 of, *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform*, offers his reflections on the implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme that began in 2000 stating:

The FTLRP in its entirety, but especially the land allocation process, is characterized as having been 'chaotic' and lacking orderliness, being permeated by violence and self-serving interests through self-allocation of land by the well-to-do (Alexander, 2003; Alexander, 2006; Alexander and McGregor, 2005; Marongwe, 2003; Hammar et al., 2003; Derman, 2006; Zamchiya, 2011). Evidence derived from the press and selected case studies obscure the actual patterns and the stated outcomes. ...In fact, on the ground there was generally a certain level of orderliness amid the mayhem. ...the government may seem to have failed to put in place appropriate mechanisms for controlling the 'chaos'. Yet, at district level, one could identify some semblance of institutional order, even as the government struggled with various aspects of implementation. (13)

Rory Pilosof (2012), provides a somewhat conflicting view of the FTLRP as he discusses the 2001 departure of a large number of white farmers from their farms know as Operation 'Give Up and Leave' stating:

No one seemed to know who was in charge. Countless stories were recorded of farmers receiving assurances or instructions from war veterans or occupiers, only for these to be contradicted by the district or provincial administrator, who was then in turn criticized or overruled by representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, or more senior war veterans. The politics of co-ordination and control of the invasions became a tangled,

overlapping and intricate web that was often deliberately confused to further undermine farmers' and their representatives' efforts to manage the situation. (1443-1451/6637)

Regardless of the extent of organization in which these 'farm invasions' took place, thousands of Zimbabweans both black and white had their homes and livelihoods stripped away during the most intense periods of the FTLRP from 2000-2004.

The pressure to commence land redistribution for public resettlement had been building throughout Zimbabwe since independence.

With building pressure since independence, land redistribution, one of the central promises made to the people of Zimbabwe would eventually come to fruition as a way to leverage declining support for ZANU-PF. When the land invasions began in 2000 war veterans and peasants sought to tackle the issues of delivering on the promise of redistribution of land with or without the government through what is known as *jambanja*. Joseph Chaumba, Ian Scoones and William Wolmer (2003b:540) are quoted in Matondi (2012) as defining *jambanja* as follows:

Literally meaning violence or angry argument, *jambanja* has been used in subtly different contexts to refer to different people and places, including the ex-combatant farm invaders themselves, the farm invasions, and more broadly political instigated violence. A popular war veteran catchphrase was *jambanja ndizvo* (violence is the answer). In some cases the term has been appropriated by opposition supporters to mean fighting back against a bully, or by the workers' movement to refer to mass protests and direct action. But in essence it has come to refer to a time and space of at best confusion and nonsense, and at worst disorder and chaos. (22-23)

Catherine Buckle (2001), a white farmer and author, published her account of the mayhem, intimidation, violence, and confusion that took place in 2000 in *African Tears*, a stand out among biographies written by white Zimbabweans as it is one of the few that takes into account the wider effects of the FTLRP within Zimbabwean society. In an email sent to a friend who was not a farmer Buckle (Ibid.) summarizes the situation within the farming

community stating:

There is a real and increasingly dangerous division in the farming community between those who are squatted and those who are not. And again between those who have been squatted and pegged and those who still have squatters living on their properties. The feeling in the former is that if you've been pegged you're sort of okay because the law will take its course. If you're still actively squatted you see them every day and know for sure that there is no law and that you are completely alone. (41)

As War Veterans along with their 'rent a mob' supporters took to the violent rhetoric being spewed by Mugabe and the ZANU-PF government the land invasions quickly intensified. Buckle (Ibid.), questions the occupations of 2000 stating:

How was this possible? How could a peaceful and prosperous country collapse like this? It was, after all, only 62 days since the farm invasions had begun. By 30<sup>th</sup> April 2000, two months and two days since the madness had begun, over 1,000 farms had been invaded. Five thousand and seventy-eight violent incidents, on and off Zimbabwe's farms, had been documented by human rights organizations. This included 1,012 people assaulted, eight women raped, 19 people murdered, and 417 cases of house and property destruction. How was this possible? (71)

In his 2006 memoir, *When A Crocodile Eats The Sun*, Peter Godwin recalls the ruling party's dissatisfaction with the election results, which many claim is one of the main reasons for moving ahead with the FTLRP stating:

The President's rhetoric gets steadily more incendiary. At his party's congress, he says the whites have 'declared war' on the people of Zimbabwe.

'We must continue to strike fear into the heart of the white man, our real enemy,' he tells his audience of party faithful, and they cheer him wildly and chant, *'Hondo! Hondo!' – War! War!*

And Hitler Hunzvi takes the stage to warn, 'whosoever is killed, it's

tough luck.’

I phone my parents from New York and say it might be time for them to think of leaving. But my father is still unimpressed with the President’s blood-curdling threats. Ordinary people don’t hate us, he says. They couldn’t be nicer.

And anyway, he says, he’s no *soutpiel*. It’s an Afrikaans word meaning ‘salt penis’, a term for us Anglo-Africans who, they say, have one foot in Africa and the other in Europe, causing our genitals to dangle in the ocean where they pickle in the brine of cultural confusion. *Soutpiels* are not ‘real Africans’. We are the first to cut and run. (100)

These autobiographies along with poems, short stories, novels, and memoirs, comment on the, ‘relegation to the position of “Other”, within the white Zimbabwean community and enabling authors, ‘to be involved with the redefinition of post 2000 white identity’ (Charles, 2016:95)

John Robertson (2011), in his chapter titled, “A Macroeconomic Policy Framework for Economic Stabilization in Zimbabwe” from the book, *Zimbabwe: Picking Up the Pieces*, notes that when the farm invasions began in 2000 the government did not realize how crucial to the Zimbabwean economy the commercial farming sector had become, representing the primary generator of wealth. This oversight along with the dismissal of considering the wider social implications led to disastrous results for Zimbabwe and its people prompting Robertson to proclaim, ‘the land reform program was an unmitigated disaster’ (Ibid.:87-89). More recent analysis of Zimbabwe’s economic woes, such as those presented by Ian Scoones (2018) present a more complicated web of local and international happenings in order to account for Zimbabwe’s past economic troubles, while providing key areas of consideration often overlooked in analysis. Scoones (Ibid.) states that blaming Zimbabwe’s difficulties solely on the land reforms and the economic collapse is erroneous, as the following factors must also be taken into consideration:

massive financial mismanagement (especially in the mid-2000s), rampant corruption (continuing), ‘sanctions’ (aka restrictive measures), withdrawal of

international finance and credit lines, lack of business and investment confidence due to poorly articulated policy positions (notably around 'indigenisation'), the collapse of commodity prices (for mineral exports), drought/climate change/El Niño, the strength of the US dollar, and of course the major restructuring of a core sector through land reform, with knock-on effects in employment and upstream and downstream industries. Choosing one or other of these factors is clearly inadequate, and a more sophisticated analysis is needed.' (3661-3667/3767)

Scoones (Ibid.) adds that an additional oversight usually comes from the lack of consideration of the informal economy, as formal assessment of GDP more often takes precedence. The problem with approaching the economy through more formal forms of assessment is that they have missed that the informal economy at present makes up approximately 90% of the economy. Though he warns that glorifying the informal economy is also not the best idea as this money is untaxed, unregulated, and often based on limited returns and opportunities for accumulation, it should be considered as it is not all bad. Small-scale entrepreneurship generates livelihoods for many throughout Zimbabwe in agriculture and other industries and could be significant to the revitalization of the formal economy, an alternative to the attempt to replicate past economic models (Ibid.:3667-3673/3767). Matondi (2012) adds that in addition to all of the issues surrounding the successes and failures of the FTLRP one of key shortcoming of the program was that in a country with more women than men, where a majority of these women derived their livelihoods from agriculture, the majority of people did not benefit from the program. Matondi (Ibid.) continues, stating that despite reports from Mutopo (2011), Moyo et al. (2009) and Scoones et al. (2010) that women benefited to a great extent from the FTLRP, they failed to address the key challenges women faced in the struggle to access and control resources providing the facts that:

in Zimbabwe, the largest percentage of users of land are women, and therefore demographically they should be seen to be controlling and using that resource. Yet the control of land by men has been widened not just through access, but also through the importation of customary systems. (204)

Unfortunately, for all people of Zimbabwe, as the most active years of the FTLRP invasions were coming to an end Mugabe would turn his attention to punishing those in the city's high density townships for their lack of support of ZANU-PF and its policies. This attack on the urban poor is regarded as Operation Murambatsvina, translated as "Clean Out the Trash" or as it labeled by government officials, Operation Restore Order.

## Operation Murambatsvina

We were a solid crowd, determined in our protest against the government's ungracious destruction of illegal dwellings and unsanctioned structures. Some of the dwellings were proper houses complete with ablutions, and the occupants were suggesting that the government sanction their structures instead. Amidst heavy protest from the opposition that this operation, insolently named Operation Murambatsvina – "clean out the trash" – was really a cleaning out of opposition party strongholds.

Tshuma, 2012:59

Several international bodies recognize the right to 'adequate' housing including the UDHR, Article 25(1), CERD, Article 5(e) (iii), CRC, Article 27, CEDAW, Article 14 (2), among others (Leckie, 1995 quoted in Mutenheri, 2009:210). Zimbabwe ratified all of the aforementioned articles. The UN Global Shelter Strategy to the year 2000 (GSS) defines the right to adequate housing as, 'adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure... and basic facilities, all at a reasonable cost' (Ibid.:211). However, in May 2005, the Zimbabwean government embarked on an indiscriminate and controversial cleanup program to clear all shantytowns and unplanned backyard houses. In the process, 650,000 to 700,000 people were directly affected losing either their homes and/or businesses (Tibaijuka, 2005:33). Justification of the program was premised on the need to comply with city councils' by-laws and uprooting alleged rampant illegal activities taking place within these areas. The Western press claimed that the purpose

of the evictions was to punish the urban population for voting against ZANU-PF in the March elections and in favor of the pro-Western Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Slaughter, 2005 cited in Mutenheri, 2009:210-211).

Elections held in 2000 found the opposition MDC obtaining a stronghold in urban centers as voters elected them to a majority of the council seats and mayoral positions. In response to their defeat ZANU-PF attempted to regain control of urban areas by undermining the capacity of councils to deliver services, dependent upon the recentralization of power over local authorities, while developing a system of support through and beyond local state institutions. ZANU-PF's strategy created 'parallel' party hierarchies, which utilized party-aligned militia to control urban spaces and access to resources, contributing an additional layer to their plan was the privatization, creating opportunities for accumulation on the part of state officials and party/military businesses. Once viewed as some of the most capable local authorities in the region, by 2008 at the height of the economic crisis, urban services had collapsed and sewage flowed through the streets of Harare leading to a cholera outbreak in the high-density suburbs of the city (McGregor, 2013:783-784). It should be noted that this breakdown of services expanded outside of the capital Harare, as one of my long-term interlocutor's mother passed away in 2008 from a cholera outbreak in Kadoma, located 141km (88 miles) southwest of Harare.

Deborah Potts, in *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe & Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa*, states, 'In the 1980s, ordinary residents of Harare were probably the most economically and socially secure urban people in sub-Saharan Africa. By the mid-2000s, they were among the least secure' (Potts, 2011:1). Potts continues:

The towns throughout the country were increasingly politicized as the 2000s progressed (e.g., Kamete 2006), as indeed were rural areas. The ruling party lurched from economic crisis to economic crisis, resources dwindled, and competition for any resources available became increasingly fierce or even desperate. The strength of the urban vote for the main opposition party from 2000 on (Alexander 2000; Dorman 2005) also attracted strong antipathy

from the ruling party towards urban people (Kamete 2003). (211-212)

As sources of income began informalizing, shifting to the boundaries of the city, where informal traders were highly visible, the political tensions between the urban population in Harare and the government was growing. In the 1990s and early 2000s due to low income housing shortages the government showed some leniency to backyard shacks being constructed on legal housing stands. By the mid 2000s many areas were a constellation of overcrowded houses ranging from Chitungwiza in the south, Hatcliffe in the north, Kuwadzana in the west, and Tafara in the east (Potts, 2011:213). Within this conglomeration of houses, 'there were no neat micro-geographical divisions between them, either in terms of formal / informal work, housing tenure, birthplace, length of residence or potential links to rural areas, or political affiliation' (Ibid.:214). Just 48 days after the 2005 elections in which ZANU-PF had lost the majority of urban votes to the MDC, Sekesai Makwavarara, Chair of the government appointed Harare Commission announced that the City of Harare intended to embark on Operation Murambatsvina in order to:

Enforce by-laws to stop all forms of illegal activities. These violations of the by-laws in areas of vending, traffic control, illegal structures, touting/abuse of commuters by rank marshals, streetlife/prostitution, vandalism of property infrastructure, stock theft, illegal cultivation, among others have led to the deterioration of standards thus negatively affecting the image of the City. The attitude of the members of the public as well as some City officials has led to a point whereby Harare has lost its glow. We are determined to bring it back... It is not a once-off exercise but a sustained one that will see to the cleanup of Harare... Operation Murambatsvina is going to be a massive exercise in the CBD and the suburbs which will see to the demolition of illegal structures and removal of all activities at undesignated areas... (Ibid.:214)

Setting the stage for Operation Murambatsvina, Onai Moyo, the protagonist in the novel, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2008) describes the day before the mass demolitions and evictions started claiming:

The next Saturday started off like any other winter's day in Mbare. The sky was a clear blue, with not a single cloud in sight. The air was still and chilly, and continued to be so for most of the day. Later on in the afternoon, a few police cars went round announcing by public address system that people living in shacks had to pull down their homes by the following day. Informal traders and unregistered small-scale businesses were also required to dismantle their premises and close shop with immediate effect. The same applied to all market places.

The cars delivered their message while in motion. Only a handful of people heard the crackling bursts of transmission through to completion. Out of habit and characteristic apathy, even fewer bothered to listen. What was the point? (112)

Onai, continues describing the day Operation Murambatsvina commenced:

Homes collapsed spectacularly under the massive assault. Everything was flattened; only a pathetic layer of wreckage remained... Outside they heard angry voices, running feet, the sound of crashing mortar and now and then, the distant sound of sirens. The atmosphere was saturated with fear, anger, and uncertainty. While they had all yearned for change, this could not be further from what they'd anticipated. How could anything improve after this? (140-141).

It is estimated that the number of those affected by Operation Murambatsvina, which were left displaced or homeless was around 700,000. This number is compiled from official Government figures released on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 revealing:

a total of 92,460 housing structures that had been demolished directly affecting 133,534 households. At the same time, the structures of 32,538 small, micro and medium-size enterprises were demolished. Based on average household size derived from the 2002 census, and authoritative studies on

the informal economy, the population having lost their homes can be estimated at 569,685, and those having lost their primary source of livelihood at 97,614. ... While there is a degree of overlap between those who lost their homes and those who lost their businesses, the total figure of 650,000 to 700,000 people directly affected by the Operation is considered plausible. (Tibaijuka, 2005:32-33)

When the livelihood of those indirectly disturbed by Operation Murambatsvina is accounted for, either through loss of rental income, transport, supplier, part-time labor, etc. it is thought that the number of those affected could be over 2.1 million. (Ibid.:33).

In addition to the loss of shelter, income, and transport, *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2008) sheds light on an additional unsettling sentiment of pre-independence nostalgia among some of those struggling to survive in Mbare pre-Operation Murambatsvina stating:

Nowadays, just a single book cost three hundred thousand dollars, and at the rate prices were rising, it would be double that in four months' time.

She summoned up nostalgic memories of days when schools had provided all the textbooks required by their pupils; a time when a school fees' invoice meant nominal charges for people in difficult circumstances like her, and a time when the words 'social welfare' had held a meaning of sorts. It all seemed so long ago, almost as if it was just an illusion her fretful mind was conjuring up to ease the ugliness of reality. (33)

James Ferguson, in *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, also comments on this imagined return to a better past stating, 'with their own nostalgic reminiscences of colonial days or passionate appeals for salvation from Africa's problems via some imagined "return" of whites who might "help us to become like you" ' (cf. Piot 1999; 43-44; Worby 1992) (Ferguson, 2006:156). The summoning of "nostalgic memories" for the past brought about due to the political and economic difficulties in contemporary Zimbabwe led to me hearing several sentiments in December of 2017 and early 2018 in Harare and Kadoma such as, "That's the thing with you white people you are always thinking ahead", "You white people really try to understand situations", "In Rhodesia it was cheaper and you could send your

kids to school and still have a little spending money,” and “that’s the difference between white people and black people, you white people always do what you say you are going to do.” The aforementioned sentiments, as precarious as they are were expressed openly among a couple of my interlocutors along with multiple Zimbabweans living in South Africa and Zimbabwe during my research period with some claiming these thoughts date back to as early as the late 1990s.

### **“The Lost Decade” & Robert Mugabe’s Struggle to Retain Control**

“...things got a bit hard and my mum had to leave her teaching job, you know, when things got hard in Zim, and so she did cross border trading sometime, you know.” Noma shrugged.

“How did you feel when your mother had to leave her job?”

She blinked at the doctor. “It was hard.”

“It was hard?”

“What is cross-border trading?”

“You know, you cross the border to South Africa or Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, and you order stuff, mostly foodstuffs that are in short supply back home, sometimes petrol, and then you come and sell the stuff back home. Sometimes we went together, I mean, it was rough, sleeping in the bus and everything with a dozen other people, it was okay, but...”

“Sometimes you would go with her?”

“My mother can be fragile. Had to be strong for her, you know?”

“You had to be strong for your mother. I see. So, who was strong for you?”

“Sorry, Doctor?”

“Who was your friend? Who did you speak to?”

“It was hard for everybody, you know. And you know Zimbabweans are the most resilient people in the world. You just had to be strong, you know, the queues for food and fuel and everything . . .”

This job, as mindless as it was, she could not afford to lose. Too many would scramble to snatch it away from her if she lost her grip on it. She couldn't. She had to be grateful. A job was a job. The time for careers and passions was gone. Hunger pangs displaced ambition.

Lloyd Sachikonye, in *Zimbabwe's Lost Decade: Politics, Development and Society*, labels the decade of 2000 to 2010 as “the lost decade” (Sachikonye, 2011:xv), defined by Mugabe's loss of support, political corruption and violence, the institution of the Fast Track Land Reforms (FTLR), a crackdown on the independent media, Operation Murambatsvina (2005), a complete economic collapse, and the mass migration of Zimbabweans. Mugabe's fleeting popularity was exposed in a February 2000 referendum, which rejected a proposed constitutional amendment that would have furthered Mugabe's already extraordinary powers. The referendum loss is widely seen as the impetus for the seizure of white-owned land, a violent crackdown on the main opposition party led by Morgan Tsvangirai and his political party the MDC, and the silencing of independent media (Feinstein, 2007:117). Land and sovereignty have been used to define the Zimbabwe collective national identity and have formed the basis of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist rhetoric of Zanu-PF. Those who have not rallied behind this definition of national identity have been labeled in polite terms as “the others” and in more crude terms, “sell-outs” (Chiumbu, 2004:29) On the heels of his referendum defeat, April of 2000 would be a busy month for politics in Zimbabwe. On the 13<sup>th</sup> the Zimbabwean newspaper, *The Financial Gazette*, claimed that Mugabe referred to MDC opposition party leader Morgan Tsvangirai as a “puppet of the British.” This association on the part of Mugabe, associating Tsvangirai with the former colonial power was just the beginning of what would become Mugabe's denunciation through the media and in public speeches of the West, Britain, foreigners, whites, the opposition, and the independent press. Through this rhetoric Mugabe intended to win public favor for what he defined as the ideal Zimbabwean. The use of the word *colonial* was ascribed to anyone who

disagreed with the policies of ZANU-PF and in the lead up to the 2000 parliamentary elections all state owned media outlets depicted the opposition MDC party as, ‘a front for white Rhodesian, British colonial, and other Western imperial interests plotting to overthrow the ZANU-PF government’ (Thompson, 2013:17). Francis Nyamnjoh (2010) points out the dangers of identity based rhetoric stating:

Belonging and identity based on the logic of exclusion are informed by the erroneous assumption that there is such a thing as the ultimate insider, found through a process of selective elimination and ever-diminishing circles of inclusion ... Qualifying to be considered “authentic”, “autochthonous”, “indigenous”, or “bona fide” is a function of the way race, geography, culture, class, gender and generation define and prescribe, include and exclude. (58-59)

With the build up to the 2000 presidential elections ZANU-PF benefited from the state-run media’s demonizing of the opposition MDC party while depicting the ruling party in a valiant light. Adding to the MDC’s obstacles was ZANU-PF’s addition of thousands of deceased citizens, those ineligible to vote, and the names of citizens being used in several constituencies to sway the numbers in ZANU-PF’s favor. The restriction of foreign election monitors to a meager 350 and hindering access to local monitors was another tactic used to the advantage of the ruling party (Essof, 2013:689-712/2505). Despite Mugabe’s re-election in 2002 it has been well-reported that the military had already assumed management of national affairs as heads of the military, prisons, and the intelligence agency became the primary decision makers (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008:48), as part of what has been labeled as the “creep coup” since 2000 (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:149).

With the onset of land invasions, which targeted mainly white Zimbabweans, April of 2000 saw former South African President Thabo Mbeki and other Southern African leaders converge on Victoria Falls to meet with Mugabe. Confident that the delegation had brokered a solution to the farm invasions which would see war veterans of the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle withdraw from the farms they had occupied, Mbeki and the delegation left only to see Mugabe publicly back out of the deal days later. Four months later Mbeki met with Mugabe again and in a televised broadcast announced that the war veterans would

be recalled only to have Mugabe announce a short time later that land occupation would be stepped up. Mbeki's quiet diplomacy was expected by some to bring an end to Mugabe's reign of terror, instead it intensified his efforts leading to a complete economic meltdown that resulted in the fleeing of estimated millions of Zimbabweans, mostly into South Africa (Feinstein, 2007:117-118).

Despite ZANU-PF's attempts to silence information flows within the country, the accessibility of relatively independent media was available to urban classes through the *The Financial Gazette*, *The Zimbabwe Independent*, *The Standard*, and online news sources such as *ZimOnline*, *Zimbabwe Times*, and *newZimbabwe.com* (Moore, 2011:68-69). Common throughout the 2000s was the arrest and acts of intimidation against journalists. Greatly affecting journalistic practices in the country was the introduction of several pieces of legislation such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) and the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), both of which were initiated in 2002 (Thompson, 2013:173). The agency of average Zimbabweans seeking out alternatives to state discourse was highlighted in an article titled, "We Need to Keep Telling Zimbabwe's Stories" for the *Zimbabwean* in March of 2001 by editor, Wilf Mbanga. Mbanga states in the article:

Zimbabweans today are 'desperate for information,' seeking it out whenever they can find it, 'watching satellite television and reading whatever independent news they can get hold of,' ... the majority of Zimbabweans now own cell phones, and communication via text message has become an important way to stay abreast of local, national, and even international news. Zimbabweans are also engaged in writing letters to the editors of national and international newspapers, publishing and reading underground newspapers, producing and listening to clandestine radio programs beamed from other countries, blogging, connecting on Facebook (the most frequently accessed site in the country), and simply having conversations. (Mbanga, 2001 quoted in Thompson, 2013: 23)

Despite Zimbabweans' 'desperation for information' journalists and editors were cautious when reporting on issues that may attract persecution from the government, as several serious incidents were well known. In addition to intimidation, journalist Nqobile Nyathi

was arrested and prosecuted under the POSA for insulting the President in a cartoon run in the *Daily News* in 2003, the same year in which the paper was shut down. In 2007, Edward Chikombo, a part-time camera operator for ZBC was found murdered after allegedly smuggling footage of MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai's injuries inflicted by the police (Thompson, 2013:173).

## Presidential Elections 2008: The First Signs of an Impending Regime Change

I thought I was going to die at the age of 18 in 2008 during the election times. I did not tell my mom in South Africa how bad it was here. When I would speak to her on the phone I would tell her that everything was fine, but I am not going to lie, I was scared. We were always running and hiding from the 'green bombers', the ZANU-PF youth. They would come around to all the houses to get people to attend rallies. I used to wear Mugabe regalia just to try not to get beaten or look tough when I was at a bar or just walking on the road.

Conversation with Dexter J, June 2015, Harare, Zimbabwe

We had propaganda T-shirts for both the ruling party and the opposition. Whenever there was a rally in town, we would wear the appropriate T-shirt and go toyi-toying with the crowds. One day we would be ruling party supporters, scrambling for food... On another day, we were opposition youth, fisting the ruling party scoundrels...

Tshuma, 2012:58

Marred by violence the initial 2008 Presidential elections in March revealed that the ruling party was not undefeatable. The initial election saw the opposition MDC party candidate Morgan Tsvangirai receiving 48% of the popular vote, compared to 43% by Robert Mugabe (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:113). This short-lived victory initially led to optimism throughout the

country and the international community, reflected by Panashe Chigumadzi's (2017) novel, *Sweet Medicine*, as the main character recalls overhearing a conversation between foreign journalists in a restaurant:

I think this election will be a breakthrough. I can't go into the specifics but there are encouraging signs. The cracks are beginning to show." ... The two were addressing a taller colleague who was jotting down parts of the conversation on a dog-eared notepad. ...The archetypical Brit, born and bred... Romance held in the stubborn remnants of Rhodesia memorialized in a good number of British street names (Rotten Row included) that had managed to dodge the indignity of new native names while the natives themselves remained "extremely friendly and cheerful, which was remarkable under the circumstances", "always joking", "very hardworking, more so than the blacks in South Africa and Zambia I've encountered" and, like the noble savages so deigned by the British, "so well educated." (71)

This feeling of optimism was short lived as Mugabe began a vicious crackdown throughout the country as Peter Godwin (2010) states:

With no foreign journalists allowed here, most of the opposition leadership having fled, and NGOs hamstrung by restrictions, there is a vacuum in which Mugabe can conduct his campaign of violence. It's a vacuum that the diplomatic community now tries to fill. (135)

With Mugabe's support from his Chinese allies, dating back to the 1960s, strengthened in the early 2000s as part of the government's "Look East" Policy, Mugabe was able to persuade them to block a UN Vote which sought to interfere in 2008 elections (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:115-116). The Zimbabwean Human Rights NGO reported that from January to September 2008 there were, '107 politically inspired murders, 118 kidnappings, 703 cases of torture, 6 rapes, and 1815 assaults at the hands of the ZANU-PF and its militia' (Moore, 2011:57). This campaign of terror was part of Operation Mavhotera Papi, or 'How did you vote?' This time period is now referred to as 'the Fear'. Grace Mugabe, wife of Robert

Mugabe, stated publicly during ‘the Fear’ regarding the runoff election to be held in June, ‘We’re giving the people of Zimbabwe another chance to mend their ways, to vote properly...this is their last chance’ (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:113-114). Due to the violence instructed by ZANU-PF and despite winning the initial election, opposition party leader Morgan Tsvangirai withdrew from the runoff election in hopes of ending political violence.

It should be noted that this election truly could have seen the country take a dramatic turn as credible reports state that upon his initial loss in the March 2008 Presidential election Robert Mugabe informed security chiefs that he intended to step down. Several heads of military and directors of prisons vetoed Mugabe’s decision and effectively seized control of the country, insisting that Mugabe remain in office. Claims suggest that Mugabe’s initial request to cede power was rejected as, ‘Mugabe’s security chiefs were more vulnerable to prosecution than the President himself, as they had carried out the atrocities and could not deploy the defense Mugabe often uses during intimate conversations that he did not know what was being done in his name’ (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:148). In June of 2008, the initial Presidential election winner MDC head, Tsvangirai claimed publically, ‘the country [had] witnessed a de facto coup d’ etat and is now effectively run by a military junta’ (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008:449-50). Nearly a decade later many of the top military and prison officials would be involved in the coerced resignation of Mugabe and the insertion of long-time political ally Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Upon his withdrawal from the June 2008 runoff election and amid international pressure on July 21, 2008 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Mugabe and Tsvangirai and on September 15, the Global Political Agreement (GPA) paved the way for Constitutional Amendment No. 19 to be added to Zimbabwe’s oft-changed constitution. The GPA was intended to pave the way for a shared government and media freedom (Moore, 2011:57). Unfortunately, by mid-October 2009, just eight months into the Government of National Unity (GNU), and a year after the signing of the GPA, the MDC withdrew from participation in the government citing that only four of thirty-four agreed upon items from the GPA had been entirely fulfilled. The most pressing issues included:

failure to appoint provincial governors and the irregular appointment of the

central bank governor and attorney general;

failure to review ministerial positions at the GPA despite pledges to do so by the SADC, the broker and guarantor of the GPA;

lack of progress on the democratization of the media, the constitutional process, land audit, and rule of law;

extensive militarization of the countryside through military deployment and reemergence of bases of violence similar to those following the March 29, 2008 elections;

imposition of sixteen thousand ZANU-PF youths on the government payroll;

selective application of the rule of law, resulting in seven MDC members of parliament (MPs) being convicted on shadowy charges while others remained on remand; and

the public media's—especially the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) and *The Herald*—treatment of the MDC, with claims that its government ministers were acting in the interests of Western powers (Ibid.:58).

By the end of March 2010, some progress was being made as the Zimbabwean Media Commission (ZMC) announced that it would be issuing licenses to independent newspapers, fulfilling one of the many promises of the Government of National Unity (GNU). By July street vendors were selling a variety of newspapers, though the GNU continued to be criticized for its lack of commitment to mutual governance (Ibid.:55). With the economic meltdown of the Zimbabwean economy since 2000 and the relatively stable GNU from 2009-2013, Mugabe took up and won yet another Presidential campaign in 2013 as the country slipped back toward disorder, prompting speculation as to how Mugabe was holding on to power (Onslow & Martin, 2018:139), winning a landslide victory with 61% of the popular vote and more than two-thirds of the parliamentary seats (Gallagher, 2015:28). Prior to the elections opposition parties argued that the increasingly corrupt and repressive

government, which was nearly unseated in 2008 would finally be removed from office. Their thought was based on the premise that despite Mugabe's massive rallies, regalia, and posters, that Zimbabweans would, 'show Mugabe the red card', once they were in the voting booths. (Ibid.:27-28). Miles Tendai, in his account of the 2013 Presidential Election argues that two factors are paramount to understating the significant victory of ZANU-PF at the polls, Robert Mugabe's authority over the military and ZANU-PF's shock from their losses in 2008, in which Tendai additionally claims Mugabe took the 2008 losses as a 'personal humiliation' and victory for the West (Alexander & McGregor, 2013:761). ZANU-PF began regrouping immediately after the 2008 elections, with the knowledge that it would need electoral legitimacy in the region and that in order to achieve this it would need to shun overt political violence. Mugabe invoked the liberation struggle, emphasized indigenization and land reform, and exalted the need for a peaceful campaign, which was, 'lavishly funded, complete with hats, shirts, vehicles, entertainments, food, social media and high-tech sound systems' (Ibid.:761-762). Additional explanations have been given for ZANU-PF's surprising and overwhelming comeback victory in the 2013 elections. The first explanation is electoral fraud. The opposition claims that the ruling party bullied and cheated its way to victory. Several changes to the constitution that were approved early in the year were not instituted in time for the elections including reforms to the security sector, media, and electoral commission. It has also been proposed that due to the violence and intimidation the country witnessed during the 2008 election, many citizens feared casting their ballot for their preferred candidate. Lastly, vote rigging and election fraud as MDC supporters faced obstructions in their stronghold areas, reports of busloads of voters being carried to voting station, and unregistered voters allowed to cast their vote for ZANU-PF. Adrienne LeBas (2014), quoted in Julia Gallagher (2015), suggests that the Government of National Unity (GNU), caused the MDC to lose its antithetical stance towards ZANU-PF, sacrificing the camaraderie of its foothold on supporters. Gallagher also mentions that the MDC lost support as several of its MPs seemed to have lost touch with the constituents and were lured into acquiring material benefits for themselves, a sentiment echoed to me during my multiple fieldwork trips to Zimbabwe by former and current MDC supporters. (Gallagher, 2015:28-29). The Solidarity Peace Trust (SPT), which is considered to have gathered the most detailed analysis of voting patterns, states that though the information is inconclusive certain patterns are clear, correlating with the aforementioned explanations. One additional area of

concern regarding the elections and inconsistencies is voiced through the analysis of voter turnout. SPT found that the turnout for MDC supporters was stable from 2000 to 2013, in contrast to those for ZANU-PF. It was found that votes for ZANU-PF dropped significantly in the 2008 vote before increasing by approximately one million votes in the 2013 election, a jump that is difficult to decipher. The STP claims, 'as all elections have been mired in controversy since 2000, analyzing the figures may reveal more about how ZANU-PF manipulates apparent support than anything else'. (Alexander & McGregor, 2013:760-761)

## Robert Mugabe's Downfall

By seizing power on 30 March 2008, the civilian-military junta effectively blocked democracy in Zimbabwe.

Bratton & Masunungure, 2008:53

In addition to the rumors that the military effectively took over Zimbabwe in 2000 it is also noted that intermittent pressure had been placed upon Mugabe to step down from office up until his coerced removal in November of 2017. In neighboring South Africa ousted ANC member Julius Malema stated that he looked to ZANU-PF for inspiration when he formed his controversial EFF Party (Economic Freedom Fighters) in 2013, but even he eventually condemned Mugabe claiming him to be an "opportunist" who waited until his power had dwindled to implement land reforms for black Zimbabweans. By 2016 Malema joined the growing call for Mugabe to step down in addition to the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans' Association who claimed to be supporting opposition groups including the one started by Pastor Evan Mawarire, #ThisFlag (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:137-138).

Many claim that Robert Mugabe's second wife Grace is to blame for his ultimate downfall, Geoffrey Nyarota's 2018 book about Mugabe's removal from office plays upon these rumors with its title, *The Graceless Fall of Robert Mugabe*. While Grace spent the 1990s outside of the political spotlight, by 2013 this had changed radically and by early 2016 factionalism

within ZANU-PF led to fears that the country was heading towards civil war. In 2014 Grace Mugabe appointed herself to be the head of the ZANU-PF's Women's League, using this platform to launch a series of attacks against vice-president at the time, Joice Mujuru, including accusing her of attempting to poison her husband and of practicing witchcraft, a serious accusation in Shona culture. Grace moved quickly to dispel potential problems within the party and by April of 2015, Joice Mujuru was dismissed and expelled from ZANU-PF, leading her to form her own political party, Zimbabwe People First (ZPF). Upon the dismissal of Mujuru, Emmerson Mnangagwa was appointed vice-president, but all was not well within ZANU-PF as by 2016 there were street brawls between rival ZANU-PF factions (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:151-155). The two factions were Grace Mugabe's supporters who were referred to as Generation 40 or G40, while supporters of Emmerson Mnangagwa were called Lacoste. Grace's faction G40 referred to the younger generation that supported Grace and Mnangagwa's faction, Lacoste referenced the clothing label Lacoste as their logo is of a green crocodile, referencing Mnangagwa's nickname, "The Crocodile" (Nyarota, 2018:135). At ZANU-PF's elective congress held on December of 2016, it was confirmed that Robert Mugabe would stand as the party's electoral candidate for the 2018 elections which would see the aging president finish his ninth term at the age of ninety-nine if re-elected. Grace, in what was one of her most shocking speeches given to the people of Zimbabwe to date, addressing the concerns over her husband's advanced age stated that even from his grave at Heroes' Acre he would serve as president (Ibid.:85).

The tension between rival ZANU-PF factions reached a boiling point in August of 2017 when vice-president Mnangagwa had to be airlifted to South Africa after falling ill due to what has been widely rumored as his being poisoned by ice cream from Grace Mugabe's dairy. Grace defended herself from the accusations on state television, but the damage had already been done as social media exploded with memes and videos circulating widely throughout Zimbabwe and the diaspora including the popular song with the lyrics, "Don't eat the ice cream". In an interview with Ray Ndlovu in 2018, Mnangagwa did not directly implicate Grace Mugabe but stated:

The poisoning could only have been done by those who do not want or didn't want me. I don't think it was from somebody who liked me or a group

of person who liked me. I think it was from colleagues who were worried about my being alive and where I was in terms of our politics. (181)

By November of 2017 it seemed as though political infighting in Zimbabwe was spiraling out of control as Grace was booed at a rally in Bulawayo for declaring that Mnangagwa was the “root cause of factionalism”, leading President Mugabe to denounce Mnangagwa for displaying ‘traits of disloyalty’ followed by dismissing him as vice-president along with fifteen other ZANU-PF members who were aligned with him (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:158-161). Immediately after Mnangagwa’s dismissal as vice-president the military activated a ‘Code Red’ alert, its highest level of preparedness. A coup to remove President Mugabe began to be rolled out. ‘Operation Restore Legacy’ was initiated and it seemed at first that Mugabe would go quietly as ZBC, the state-controlled television station was surrounded, as was the presidential residence (Ibid.:163), Grace would later proclaim, “We didn’t know exactly what was happening”, suggesting an admission that the Mugabe family was unaware of the possibility that the military would take action against them. Ndlovu adds that Grace’s admission either confirms the precision of ‘Operation Restore Legacy’ or reveals a false sense of security that Mugabe and his inner circle had as even after seeing a video clip on her phone of General Chiwenga’s announcement, Grace is quoted as saying, “Someone had sent me that information on my phone. I replied, I don’t think it’s true that Chiwenga made this statement” (Ndlovu, 2018:118).

November 19, 2017 saw Robert Mugabe removed as both the party leader and presidential candidate for the 2018 elections by ZANU-PF. Grace Mugabe and her G40 supporters within ZANU-PF were also thrown out of the party as Emmerson Mnangagwa was reinstated as the vice-president and announced as the party’s presidential candidate for 2018 (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:163-164). On the same day Robert Mugabe addressed the nation surrounded by military leaders, in what many thought would be Mugabe’s public resignation, instead Mugabe fumbled through a lengthy speech in which all he accomplished was a confirmation that he was well aware of the political issues that had been drawn to his attention. After two days of growing impatience on behalf of the military and people of Zimbabwe, impeachment proceedings were initiated in parliament. Mnangagwa publically issued a call for Mugabe to resign “or be humiliated” and on November 21, 2017 the

Speaker of Parliament read Mugabe's resignation as Mugabe was denied access to radio and television to read his own resignation (Ibid.:164-167). The build up to Mugabe's removal was an exciting and somewhat tense time for Zimbabweans at home and abroad, with several people relaying to me, "we just want change", "the old man has to go", "it is enough, he has brought the country down" or similar sentiments.

## **Emmerson "The Crocodile" Mnangagwa: A New Leader with a Controversial Past**

We are so happy Roger! Happy! Happy! Today is our independence. We are so happy, I can't believe it! We are so happy Roger!

WhatsApp message received at 6:01pm on November 21, 2017

Along with his party and military colleagues, Mugabe has established an institutionalized system of authority with clear rules, structures, and incentives. Because this authoritarian regime is underpinned by extensive vested interests, it is likely to outlast the political career of any particular dictator. ... Any regime transition will be conditioned by this reality. The most likely outcome is political continuity, in which Mugabe either refuses to step down or hands over the helm of the party-state to a security-minded ZANU-PF loyalist.

Bratton & Masunungure, 2008:42

Michael Bratton and Eldred Masunungure point out that, 'ZANU-PF never fully transformed itself from an armed liberation movement into a democratic political party, and it has revealed its true temperament during times of political crisis' (Bratton & Masunungure, 2008:42). Emmerson Mnangagwa is often credited with becoming Zimbabwe's next president upon the forced removal of Robert Mugabe on November 21<sup>st</sup> 2017, but Mnangagwa, in Ndlovu (2018) states of the events:

The first thing was that ZANU-PF, the party, the Central Committee on 19

November last year reinstated me as vice-president of ZANU-PF. They expelled the cabal which had surrounded the former president, Mugabe; they were expelled. But they did not expel former president Mugabe as the president of ZANU-PF, so I was reinstated as his vice-president. (183)

Beginning their friendship during the War of Liberation while in detention together at Wha Wha Prison (Nyarota, 2018:13), long-time ally and former Vice-President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa seems to epitomize Bratton and Masunungure's (2008) prediction that the next leader of Zimbabwe would be a ZANU-PF loyalist.

Mnangagwa, a Liberation War vet, widely considered to be the executor of the Gukurahundi Massacres (20,000+- murdered), and overseer of the CIO (Central Intelligence Organization) in the 1980s has a long and controversial history. Mnangagwa was known to point out to his visitors the old CIO members who had personally tortured him when the RF (Rhodesian Front) held power as many of them were retained after independence. Africa Watch, Amnesty International, the CCJP Confidential Report on Torture (1987), and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights all noted that the very men who had been responsible for inhuman and degrading torture in the 1970s used exactly the same methods to torture civilians in the 1980s (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, 1997:38). In 1987 Mnangagwa was accused of hiring men to push Godfrey Majonga, a former ZBC television personality, out of a Harare Avenue apartment window in retribution for being involved with one of Mnangagwa's mistresses. (Moore, 2011:60) In more recent years, a U.N. report published in 2002, stated that Mnangagwa was personally involved in a ring of diamond dealers, who 'turned Harare into a significant illicit diamond-trading centre', claiming that at least \$5 billion of assets from the state mining sector was transferred to private companies (Onslow & Plaut, 2018:167-168).

### **Mnangagwa's 1<sup>st</sup> year in the spotlight**

In his initial speech upon being reinstated as vice-president, Emmerson Mnangagwa commenting on the long running issues surrounding land expropriation and compensation emphasized the, 'government's commitment to pay compensation in line with the

Constitution' (Scoones, 2018:3193/3767). However, many in Zimbabwe, especially the minority Ndebele, were disappointed that Mnangagwa did not speak about his role or the government's role in the Gukurahundi Massacres (1983-1986), as Mnangagwa has been viewed by many as being one of the main officials who carried out the attacks in his position as head of the CIO. Despite this omission just a few days later the media, along with several of my interlocutors, were astounded by Mnangagwa actions as he visited long-time ZANU-PF rival and leader of the MDC Morgan Tsvangirai at his home, just one month before he succumbed to colon cancer on February 14, 2018. Those in the media were further surprised by the 'new' government's actions when the 2015 documentary *The Democrats* by Camilla Nielsson, which chronicles the 2013 Constitution-making process in Zimbabwe, had its ban in the country lifted after being found 'unfit for local consumption' in 2016 (Screen Africa, 2018).

On March 20, 2018, four months after Mugabe relinquished power, Emmerson Mnangagwa announced that the next presidential election would be held in July of 2018. While on the campaign trail in Bulawayo, just moments after delivering a speech, a hand grenade was tossed next to the stage as Mnangagwa descended the stairs, injuring several senior ZANU-PF representatives and resulting in the death of two people. After the incident Mnangagwa was quoted as saying 'it is not my time,' continuing, 'Those who are trying [to kill me] are likely to go before me' (Ndlovu, 2018:188-189).

On July 28, 2018, the last day of campaigning according to the rules of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), which state that no campaigning is to take place within 24 hours of the presidential election, Afrobarometer proclaimed MDC leader Nelson Chamisa and Mnangagwa neck and neck in the run-up to the election. On July 30, 2018 elections were held across Zimbabwe with fifty-five registered political parties participating (Ibid.:188). Voter turnout was reported to have been around 75%, with MDC candidate Nelson Chamisa claiming, 'I know that we are winning, we have already won this election' and vice-president Mnangagwa reportedly commenting that he was happy that the voting process was peaceful (Ibid.:192). The results of the parliamentary elections revealed that ZANU-PF had won a two-thirds majority, but a delay in the release of the presidential outcome prompted MDC supporters to take to the streets on August 1, 2018. Police and military were dispersed

and in the ensuing violence six people were killed. When the results were read on August 3, 2018, Mnangagwa was announced as the winner with 50.8% to Chamisa's 44.3%. Despite the rejection of the election results on behalf of the MDC, Mnangagwa just a few blocks away from the enraged MDC party leaders stated, 'Our democratic process for the first time was open to the world like never before. The campaign was hard-fought and at times competitive, as it should be' (Ibid.:195-196).

Despite Mnangagwa's reputation, I found upon traveling to Zimbabwe in mid-December of 2017 for my final research and filming phase that the general atmosphere was more tranquil than on my previous visits with an overall feeling of hope in the air regarding the future of the country. August 26, 2018, in front of a packed National Sports Stadium, Mnangagwa's inauguration ceremony took place with several African heads of state in attendance. Prior to his speech Mnangagwa read a letter from Robert Mugabe in which he wished a 'Hearty congratulations'. As he was sworn in Mnangagwa stated, 'What unites us, is far greater than what divides us' (Ibid.:195-198).

A majority of the material contained within this thesis and accompanying films was collected during the reign of former President Robert Mugabe in which I had to be extremely cautious while filming unless explicitly given approval by locals and I avoided discussions revolving around political affairs in the country. As previously mentioned though I could generally, film and discuss the government and economic woes in a more relaxed environment during the early post-Mugabe era, the economic and political challenges faced by the country are as of 2019 are mostly unchanged. The four chapters that follow each specifically discuss films produced throughout my research focused on the lives of Zimbabwean migrants living in Cape Town, South Africa. The four films vary in methodological approach, filmic format, source of visual materials, and theory, serving to present multiple dimensions of the lives of Zimbabwean migrants, which have been molded by the desperate economic and often violent political conditions that have languished the country.

### Chapter 3

## Resisting the Presentation of the Sit-Down Interview: Split-Screen Representation in *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015)

#### “The Small Suitcase”

The flight had to be swift and smooth, every second was crucial

The journey sudden and urgent!

A small suitcase had to suffice.

A small suitcase with all that mattered.

A small suitcase to hold my belongings to a country of safety

A small suitcase defined me.

Other travellers wheel expensive suitcases full of

fripperies. Mine a small suitcase and yet holding all of me

My small suitcase light as a feather; and yet held all

of me!

I trusted the contents of my small suitcase to sustain me.

The small suitcase was all I had; the small suitcase

contained all that really mattered.

All that mattered was in the small suitcase.

What’s with the small suitcase you ask?

The small suitcase you see is all of me, I try to

explain. All that I really need for now is inside.

A pair of black shoes a must for every woman.

Two decent reasonable long skirts in case I need to

dress up.

Two packets of sanitary towels to preserve ‘that

time of the month’.

One coat to provide warmth.

A pair of jeans to cover my weary legs.

Photographs of my nearest and dearest, to force a smile on dark, lonely days.

The Bible, to find comfort when in distress, to keep wide open next to me in the dead of the night \*

The small suitcase contained all of me.

The small handheld suitcase and yet priceless.

\*A tradition passed on to me by my grandmother when I first left home to teach in the rural areas believed to be plagued with evil spirits

### Behind the Inspiration

When the urgent need to survive is all that matters, possessions cease to matter. This depicts a journey to safety once undertaken.

Jele-Ncube, 2015: Location 263-280/403

## **Introduction**

*These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), is a split-screen film focused on the personal objects and associated memories of three Zimbabwean migrant women residing in Cape Town, South Africa. Originally submitted for my MA in Visual & Media Anthropology at Freie Universität Berlin, this following chapter will discuss my methodological approach, initial findings, reflections, and feedback and questions raised regarding this research in the three and a half years since its completion. Relying primarily on my interlocutors’ personal objects and memories to communicate current and historical issues being faced politically and economically in South Africa and Zimbabwe is a self-acknowledged area of concern for some anthropologists due to what could be argued as a lack of contextualization. I found

that this approach to the presentation of an abstract form of contextualization offered me a more personal, honest, and creative explanation of the challenges facing Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town. Additionally, I acknowledge another potential concern, the focus being solely upon the experiences of women; I could have easily expanded my research to officially include men in this project, but ultimately I decided that in keeping with the female perspective of all my previous film projects, confining this research to the experiences of women would allow for a more carefully defined study of material culture among an under researched demographic, though the husbands, sons, friends, and other male relatives and their experiences and contributions to the project are represented throughout in the periphery of *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) and this chapter. The aural presentation of *These Objects, Those Memories* is comprised of formal and informal interviews in which the conversations focused on personal objects brought or sent from Zimbabwe, objects sent back or intended to go back to Zimbabwe, objects that I brought back from two trips to Zimbabwe in December 2014 and June-July 2015 (presented as interludes), casual conversations, and audio from television and radio broadcasts that took place during filming in South Africa and Zimbabwe from November 2014-August 2015.

Hypothesizing that an exploration of memories and material culture would reveal an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991) among the female Zimbabwean migrant community in Cape Town, was developed as I engaged in multi-disciplinary research including memory studies, material culture studies, visual anthropology, experimental ethnography, and anthropology. Sarah Pink’s focus on sensory experiences within the home was a methodology that was greatly beneficial to my research as I attempted to better understand the daily lived lives of Zimbabwean women in Cape Town, drawing attention to the ways in which, ‘informants engaged with the material and sensory elements of their homes... the visual (‘when you look’), olfactory (‘to smell fresh’), tactile (‘I feel’), and emotional (‘satisfaction’)’ (Pink, 2006:55-56). Through the aforementioned sensory approach I sought to gain a better understanding of, ‘human and material relationships, sensations, identities, emotions, memories, creativity, and activity associated with this domestic space and its material and other agencies’ (Ibid.:68). Of note in this context is a scene from, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), in which multiple sensory and material engagements are represented as Media Tembo, employed at the time of filming as a domestic worker by my

family clears a dining room table, cleans the floor, hangs laundry, and performs several other domestic duties while a Roman Catholic hymn performed in her first language, Shona, plays from a CD while she states through voice over:

My father, sent it to me, he did write a message like, 'Pray...pray like before you listen to this music and I always love you.' He knows that I like usually want to listen to listen to like Catholic songs when I'm working or when I am just like relaxing.

This statement is part of the daily narrative of life comparable to what Pink, quoting Jo Tacchi found amongst housewives and their use of radio in the home, which 'contributes greatly to the creation of domestic environments' – it 'creates a textured "soundscape" in the home within which people move around and live their daily lives' (Tacchi, 1998:26 quoted in Pink, 2006:62). Additionally, Pink (2006) notes of her work on the sensory elements of the home:

The use of sound to create particular atmospheres of home that are expressive of both mood and self-identity and are consciously used to create moods and inspire particular activities was common amongst my informants. ...Maureen's interactions with the sensory aspects of her home were activities or processes in which different sensory elements were perceived to varying degrees at different points. ...when she cleaned her home she played music and often listened to her Celtic Reflections CD. As she explained, "it is Irish, I mean I'm not Irish, this is Irish music...I think it's just soothing, you know, and I can work better to music as well. (55-56)

As previously mentioned, Media Tembo was employed within my home at the time of filming the scene in *These Objects, Those Memoires* (2015) where she listens to the CD sent by her father. As we had an employer / employee / interlocutor relationship which is complex and can be viewed as ethically questionable as Margaret Mead states, "The more powerless the subject is, per se, the more the question of ethics – and power – is raised" (Pryluck, 2005:201). While I definitely agree with Mead's analysis, especially given that Media is not only an economic migrant from a country which receives a significant amount of reproach

from the general South African public, I ensured that informed consent was obtained (see Ethical Consideration for an additional discussion on informed consent) and I attempted to the best of my abilities to adhere to the guidelines expressed by Calvin Pryluck (2005), in “Ultimately We Are All Outsiders: The Ethics of Documentary Filmmaking” as he states:

Extending the general ideas around consent, there are specific propositions and practices that are particularly germane to actuality filming. A basic postulate in social science research is that subjects should not be humiliated by the experience: they should not leave the experiment with lowered self-esteem and social respect. The ethical sense of this postulate is violated with regularity in actuality filming, sometimes consciously, sometimes innocently.  
(202)

Additionally, Media and I, both more than aware of the complex relationship that we developed, often joked about how she knew more about my daily life than my family back in America. We also discussed frequently how much unrecognized power domestic workers like her actually have in their positions as they know all details of their employers’ personal lives, schedules, and movements rendering their employers susceptible to exploitation if one wanted to take advantage of their power.

Gaining access and the trust of the demographic of women I was interested in researching was an understandably slow process. Upon Media’s commitment to the project my continued search for additional women led to my second long-term interlocutor, Masie Chachona, a teacher’s assistant at the time of our meeting and a group of approximately 4-8 of her friends. Prior to leaving for Zimbabwe in December of 2014 I spent several weeks with Masie and her friends during their weekly Sunday gathering organized by Masie and taking place in her small rented room. Upon my return from Zimbabwe in January 2015 I was instantaneously granted a greater degree of trust among the group due to Masie’s stories about my time in Zimbabwe. My new found status upgrade was accompanied by frequent questions concerning my visit, as the women seemed to enjoy and genuinely be impressed by the fact that I would consume the local beer (Scuds and Chibuku Supa), ate their food (Sadza, Rape, Kovo), was actively learning Shona words and phrases, and stayed in the homes of two different women’s families (Masie in Harare and Media in Kadoma) as

opposed to hotels. The later aspect of my trip was the most conversation educing of all as the women stated, “White people don’t go to Zimbabwe and stay with black people. White people only go to Zimbabwe to see Victoria Falls.” Additionally, they were particularly humored by stories of my mishaps in Zimbabwe including not knowing when and how to take a bath (I went three days at one point without taking a bath because I thought there was a water shortage due to failure on behalf of my hosts in Kadoma to continue ushering me into the bathroom as they did the first couple of days upon waking in the morning), how even despite a couple weeks of eating with my hands I was still quite clumsy in my technique (though I was praised and mocked in my attempts in Zimbabwe), and even just the thought of imagining me walking the streets with everyone staring at what they deemed most people must have though was the lost *murungu* (white person). I could sense that through learning of my trip to Zimbabwe both through the stories Masie told them and Facebook posts they felt more comfortable around me as they began keeping me up to date on the current issues faced by fellow Zimbabweans in South Africa, introducing me to visiting relatives, sharing stories about the children many of them had left behind, local personal gossip (not only regarding Zimbabweans, but also the local Sea Point community at large in which we all reside), and allowing me to witness multiple financial transactions between the women in the form of a casual yet strictly enforced monthly savings club (*mukando*). The monthly savings club was comprised of six of the women; each contributed R3, 000 (+/- \$300 as of 2015) per month to the group with a different person per month being given the R18, 000 (+/- \$1,800) ensuring that each woman would receive this amount twice a year to send back to Zimbabwe to assist in the construction of houses, which were intended either to be residences for the women upon their return and / or to rent to locals in order to generate income, pay school fees for their children, and provide money for numerous additional expenses. The *mukando* sought if only minimally to ease the financial restraints for the women within their strictly enforced code of conduct and distribution of resources.

The knowledge I gained from my time spent with this group of women contributed greatly to my understanding of the daily lived lives of Zimbabwean migrant women in Cape Town and was of great assistance in focusing my approach on the material culture aspect of my research with other interlocutors. Unfortunately, after six months these meetings ended rather abruptly due to the forced removal of Masie and her good friend Renny from the

small block of converted flats in which they resided (they were the last two residents to be removed). The small rooms they occupied, originally storage rooms for the adjacent multi-level block of flats in the upmarket suburb of Sea Point were being renovated in order to let them to visiting European students studying in Cape Town. Following their removal and subsequent ending to the weekly Sunday meetings my relationship with the group slowly deteriorated as a majority of the women moved to other parts of the city for new jobs and places of residence. I should note that three years later one of the women from this group worked for my family for approximately six months before relocating to Johannesburg. The relationship I initially developed with Masie amongst her group of friends developed rather rapidly after the dissolution of the Sunday meetings at her place as we were able to spend more one on one time together along with her younger sister Primrose, leading to my second visit to Zimbabwe and Masie's home in June – July of 2015.

### **Visual Data Collection & Assembly: *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015)**

Despite remaining the dominant form of ethnographic filmmaking, an observational approach to the visual data collection of *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), was not necessarily my desired approach nor practical as originally all three of the interlocutors who appear in the film requested their identities to remain concealed and access to two of the three women's places of employment was denied. As previously mentioned, Media Tembo, one of the three interlocutors featured in the film, was employed within my home as a domestic worker throughout the research and filming stages of *These Objects, Those Memories*, from 2014 - 2015. The request for concealment was not a concern on my behalf as there are a multitude of methods in which to collect visual data that do not rely upon revealing the faces of interlocutors, though even concealment can raise concerns. Some filmmakers, when concealing migrants' identity, use techniques that play into the construction of stereotypes within the public discourse (Bischoff, 2010:54) such as blurring the migrant's face or dramatically leaving the migrant in the dark; problematic as this is conventionally used for the portrayal of criminals, thus immediately associating migrants with the world of crime (Berg and Schwenken, 2010:111-116). Related to issues of representation, Hein De Hass

notes speaking of African migrants to Europe, a comparison relatable to the general representation of Zimbabweans in South Africa, that despite the fact that many of these people are, ‘relatively well-educated and of reasonably well-off backgrounds’ they are often portrayed as driven by starvation, poverty, and tribal warfare (De Hass, 2008:1308). In South Africa migrants are often labeled in the media with captions such as ‘aliens’, ‘invaders’, or ‘foreigners’, thus contributing to the negative view of certain members of South African society, leading to what Francesca Falk (2010) in describing the power of representation states:

What is perceived as familiar or unfamiliar, as being part of the community or not, is very often the result of mental and material images: Communities are imagined and thus constituted among others by certain kinds of visualizations. (83)

Jonathan Crush and Daniel Tevera note the stereotype of Zimbabweans in South Africa is, “unlike Nigerians and Somalis, Zimbabweans are not associated with any one ‘national characteristic.’ Rather, all of the negative stereotypes that used to be applied to ‘aliens’ and ‘foreigners’ in general are now routinely applied to Zimbabweans” (Crush & Tevera, 2010:364). Again, the media in South Africa has not helped to alleviate the plight of Zimbabweans with headlines for *The Daily Sun*, a tabloid selling approximately half a million copies daily reading, ‘It’s war on aliens – 20 bust for attacks’, and ‘War against aliens: Thousands forced to flee Ale’ during the first week of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks that raged across South Africa (Harber, 2008:161-162). Adding to this vocabulary of ‘othering’ is the daily newspapers and television news which provide the needless revelation of the nation of origin by anyone committing a criminal act in the country that originates from outside of South Africa.

As I considered ways of appropriately representing my interlocutors, Anna Grimshaw’s (2001) critique of the documentaries of Grierson and his ‘top-down perspective of the world’ came to mind as she points out that the flaw with Grierson’s (and others that follow in his footsteps) ‘realistic’ form of representation is due to:

The particular styles of camera work, editing, the use of sound, narration and

narrative are never expressive of the material itself: they are always located outside, functioning as a sort of glue which fixes the different parts in their particular place and in relation to one another. ... The films appear to be about people and yet we encounter types; they appear to contain movement but in fact are static; they are located within the modern world and yet deny both history and politics. (63)

Influenced by the amount of consideration put into the films and writings of anthropologist Alyssa Grossman (2014), and her approach to her experimental ethnographic film on objects and memories in post-communist Romania, *Memory Objects, Memory Dialogues* (2011), made in collaboration with artist Selena Kimball, Grossman states:

I needed to find a way to appropriately treat this material through film. I did not wish to use the medium to merely present my collection of objects and relay their histories, but rather to evoke the sensory, affective aspects of recollection. I wanted to emphasize memory's generative, constantly evolving qualities, and question the use of documentary images as an easy means of calling up a static past through mechanical processes of information retrieval. (135-136)

One of the ways Grossman (2014) produced her film was through the utilization of split-screen presentation, a technique I also eventually found appropriate in post-production for *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) in order to show pieces of the women's lives in South Africa and Zimbabwe. This form of representation allowed for the highlighting of their frequent visits without making it well-defined in which country the footage on the screen originated, symbolizing how these women often defined themselves as stuck in between countries, for some blurring the boundaries of home. Additionally, the utilization of split-screen offers what Jim Bizzocchi proclaims is a, 'a visualized version of increased narrative bandwidth. This style of presentation puts more pressure on the viewer to actively work in order to keep up with the story' (Bizzocchi, 2009:16-17). After careful consideration of the approaches I could employ for the filming and audio collection of what would become, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), I decided to collect some observational footage in South Africa and Zimbabwe within my interlocutors' homes, filming Media Tembo within my home as

she worked, conducting structured and unstructured interviews, and lastly filming the personal items that multiple women brought to Cape Town when they first left Zimbabwe.

Two interludes are placed within the *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), which bring my voice and presence into the film as I ask each of the three interlocutors featured in the film to tell me what they think about the objects I have brought back from my trips to Zimbabwe. I used this technique in my research and this film in order to supply viewers with additional context related to the reasons these women had to leave Zimbabwe without asking directly political questions, as per their request. A continuation of *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) titled, *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter expands upon these conversations related to my 'souvenirs' by including the questions the women had for me related to my items, my reasons for wanting to acquire them, and our political discussions about the objects that were excluded from *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) as Robert Mugabe was still in office and the women feared reprisal for their comments.

The decision not to show the objects as they are being discussed in *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), but only in the opening sequence was a decision I came to after spending a couple of months with a majority of the objects in my home. I knew that in post-production I wanted to rely on the objects and their associated memories to relay a majority of the contextual information in the film concerning historic and current issues being faced politically and economically in South Africa and Zimbabwe which led me to the utilization of a more fractured narrative, constructed outside of the more traditional or Hollywood inspired three-act structure. Struggling to find a way to appropriately treat the women's personal items in the film, led to several failed experimentations with filming and photographing the items in different locations and with various cameras and formats. Through living with my interlocutors' personal objects, which I kept stored in my bedroom next to my desk I developed a sensory relationship as I often recalled the stories associated with them as I gently handled them and gained an olfactory awareness of the objects as they are comprised of various metals, fabrics, and plastics. Pink, quoting Judith Okely, states:

Because the senses are 'mediated, interpreted, and conceptualized', we cannot claim to have had precisely the same sensory experience as others, but we

should also use our sensory experience to empathetically and ‘creatively construct correspondences between ourselves.’ (Okely, 1994:47 quoted in Pink, 2006:60)

Due to the relationship I developed with the items I came to the decision that I would only place them at the beginning of the film prompting viewers to activate their own memories during the viewing in order to recall the objects. This felt like the most appropriate way to treat the items, avoiding a ‘gaze’ upon them as they were being discussed similar to the avoidance of the ‘gaze’ I wanted to avoid through the circumvention of the ‘sit down’ interview with my interlocutors, shifting the focus instead to common objects within their homes.

During the post-production of *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), my primary consideration regarding the presentation of my research was through the arrangement of a split screen film, but as I reflected and worked through the edit in its early stages I realized that I would have to give more weight to the many issues of visual representation associated with my interlocutors, their objects and related stories in the film. Therefore, I decided to expand and include several additional visual techniques. The first addition was leaving the screen black during certain moments of the film in order to:

suggest the limitations of understanding or remembering through visual images alone. ...auratic objects can never be reduced to narratives, and they can never satisfy our wish to recover a memory in its entirety. (Grossman, 2014:141)

Additionally, the uses of a black screen in the story of the first woman, Tanaka, was to show the gaps in information I had as she was the interlocutor that I spent the least amount of time with. Secondly, I experimented with the placement of text within the screen and only after several failed experiments with location, size, and font did I opt to utilize the conventional placement and form of subtitles within the lower middle portion of the screen. As with all elements of film even the subtitles were a carefully thought out addition as David MacDougall in *Transcultural Cinema* notes that subtitles can have the, ‘effect of “doubling” the spoken words, much as one instrument in an orchestra doubles another of a different

timbre. This tends to make the words more pithy and prophetic', the reason I subtitled the entire film though it is in English (MacDougall, 1998:174). The drawback to this notes, MacDougall, is that, 'subtitled dialogue tends to make us conceive of films more in terms of what they *say* than in what they show', but again I chose to subtitle in order to "double" the women's words in order to ensure that their voices and stories were heard (Ibid.:175). Lastly, was the addition of reflexive techniques in the film, in an attempt to prompt viewers to recognize my status as someone from outside this particular group. Examples of reflexivity are highlighted in *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) through the filming within my home where I show a picture of myself and my family together followed by Media Tembo in my house performing multiple domestic duties, and Masie discussing the cooking utensils I brought back from Zimbabwe as she jokingly states, "I don't have this. I should take it from you". Related to reflexivity in the films is the order in which I present the women's stories moving from the woman I knew the least in the first story and ending up within my home for parts of Media's story. As I incorporated several unconventional techniques in my post-production it was important to keep in mind what Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev (2012) wrote regarding the use of unconventional techniques, paraphrasing the film critic Rudolf Arnheim who states:

in order for film to be more than a naïve simulacrum of reality, it must interrupt and challenge our conventional visual logic - but only partially, for 'no statement can [ultimately] be understood unless the relation between its elements form an organized whole' (Arnheim 1957:170). Successful evocation rests not with 'the pleasures of chaos' (Arnheim 1971: 30-33) but with the filmmaker's success in counterbalancing disruption with a general compositional order, hence enhancing the viewer's perception or reality.  
(286)

In addition to the stories told by my informants regarding their objects and associated memories the construction of the audio in *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) is layered with multiple audio tracks sourced from filming in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. These additional sensorial layers of texture serve two purposes in the film independent of the women's personal stories. The first intention is to highlight each of the individual women's spatial proximity to either their child or children through either silence or multi-layered

tracks of audio encompassing the voices of children and adults in conversation. The second intention serves as a quasi-pop culture reference for South Africa and Zimbabwe consisting of audio recorded in the background during filming and brought to the forefront of the audio edit with content ranging from English dubbed Telenovelas and India Soap Operas to American blockbuster films / popular music to South African Xhosa and Zulu language films. Furthermore the only definitive audio time stamp in the film comes from the audio of a news broadcast which discusses the economic crisis faced by Greece in 2015 (not placed in the film coincidentally as Greece is one of four countries currently in default to the IMF, with Zimbabwe serving as the second most recent country defaulting in 2001). The detailed focus on the auditory aspect of the film highlights MacDougall's (2006) thoughts on the potential effects and affects the combination of image and video has as he states:

Sound and image together can generate powerful synesthetic responses, creating a heightened sense of space, volume, and texture. What we see and hear taps into our prior experience of the world and stimulates the imaginative capacity that most of us possess to fill in the gaps left by the cursory acts of perception. Paradoxically, this is true to such an extent that a sound heard off-screen – a distant voice, or the cry of a bird - is often more evocative of a place and its spaces than if we were to see what caused the sound. (42)

One of the final statements in *These Object, Those Memories* (2015), made by Media Tembo, serves a double function as it is added in a symbolic way to represent my belief in the difficulty of one film to represent the plethora of information and viewpoints related to the topic of migration as she states:

It's like...I wanted to say like, maybe the way you ask me questions today and the way you ask me like tomorrow maybe the way I will answer today and the way I will answer like, the previous day it will be something like different. It's also like, the way I will be feeling or the way I will be thinking that day... You see like today it was like... even me I feel like I was a little bit emotional. So, you see that's some of the things now we are thinking like... especially about our kids.

Lastly, related to the idea of incompleteness, the closing split-screen shot of the film is of an empty previously unseen bedroom. After a couple of seconds the film credits appear in the bottom right corner of the screen signaling the end of the film, while implying that this is an ongoing situation and that there are more stories to be told.

## Initial Findings, Insights, Feedback, & Questions Raised

When possessions are seen as part of the individual or family identity, they may allow immigrants to “transport” part of their former identities to a new place.

Mehta & Belk, 1991:399

My analysis of my findings corresponds with a considerable amount of the literature available regarding material culture and migration, but at the same time as many of the women involved in this research frequently traveled back to their country of origin and were able to leave objects of varying levels of importance with family members it provides interesting insight regarding the material culture of people who remain in close proximity to their homeland. Upon spending more time discussing their plight in detail which eventually led to talks regarding their personal items I came to a better understanding of how and why migrants take certain objects over others similar to those found by Annika Phillip and Elsie Ho (2010) as they state:

Prior to leaving their country of origin, migrants have to decide which objects to take with them and which to leave behind. These decisions are often influenced by many factors, such as the conditions of departure, financial means, the intended duration of their stay in the new country, as well as attachment to certain objects that are imbued with special meaning. In the process of migrating to and settling in a new place of residence, objects brought from the previous place of residence can play an important role in the active (re) creation of a home and can transform ‘spaces’, such as houses, into ‘places’ of home. (82)

My discussions with my interlocutors revolved around what personal items they brought with them of personal significance, what significant personal items they left behind, and what they would eventually take back upon their return to Zimbabwe. I was additionally interested to know if the objects they brought with them would generally fall under the label of 'biographical objects' (Violette Morin, 1969), explained by anthropologist Janet Hoskins, as objects used as part of a narrative process of self definition and what objects would be characterized as 'protocol objects' or in contrast to 'biographical objects', objects not used as part of the narrative process of self definition (Hoskins, 2006:78). I found that a majority of the personal object that my interlocutors brought or had sent to them were 'biographical objects', the lobola (Shona *roora* or "bride price") bowl from a wedding, a child's blanket, a watch given by a deceased husband, etc.... but all of these items also had practical purposes and were used almost daily. Regarding the relationship to the acquisition of objects in Cape Town all of the women who participated stated that they have not attained and do not expect to attain anything of sentimental or 'biographical' value in South Africa to take back to Zimbabwe as they were only interested in commercial goods (primarily appliances and clothing) available either exclusively in South Africa or cheaper than back in Zimbabwe. While a part of me believes these women due to what is often expressed as the trauma and feelings of otherness that has come with living in Cape Town, I can't help but wonder based on some of the 'biographical objects' spoken about throughout this research (stove, couches, tables, watches, skirt, etc.) whether some of the items currently characterized as 'protocol objects' or items without sentimental value to them now will not attain some sort of 'biographical object' status in the future upon their return to Zimbabwe as they reflect back on their time in Cape Town.

The experience of spending time with these women in Cape Town and Zimbabwe led to a continuously evolving shift in my views not only of their situation as long-term migrants, but the way I viewed the impact of material culture in their lives, specifically when hearing the stories of the personal items they brought with them and how in some cases they would remind them of why they are in South Africa separated from their families, struggling to carve out a better future and how looking at or touching these items would give them the strength they needed to carry on. These shifts in my views are confirmed by Daniel Miller's (1998), writings on the importance of spending time with informants in order to get to the

heart of what ‘matters’ as he states:

We have to realize how easy it is to be wrong about what matters...[T]he issue of “mattering” is, however, by no means a simple or straightforward criterion. It is certainly not reducible to an open question to an informant “does this matter?” and being led by the answer”. (11)

Providing me with the opportunity to better understand the objects that ‘mattered’ in their lives and how the degree of ‘mattering’ could change over time, a topic that is briefly addressed in the accompanying film, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), generally seems to have been somewhat overlooked in research on material culture. Two specific examples of this shift in the degree of ‘mattering’ come from Media and Tanaka. In the first example, Media states of a bowl and bottle she keeps in South Africa to remind her of her three year old daughter, “I think if I move back to Zimbabwe the bowl and the bottle it will have the importance but not as like the blanket (her sons)...it was just something that I wanted to leave behind so I can remember my daughter with.” In the second example Tanaka discusses her initial embarrassment by a waistband (fanny pack) her mother handcrafted from an old maternity dress and forced her to wear when she first migrated to South Africa, which has now become an object of great sentimental value. This waistband acquired so much biographical value that when Tanaka temporarily returned to Zimbabwe in 2010 for six months to escape the threat of xenophobic violence in South Africa she decided to leave the waistband behind with her mother out of fear of misplacing it upon her return to South Africa. Tanaka’s example, bearing in mind that the object (waistband) was not something that Tanaka would have initially brought without the insistence of her mother, reinforces anthropologist Fiona Parrot’s observation that sometimes objects intended to bring comfort can lead to a disjuncture, drawing attention to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and strangeness, but in this case this embarrassing and out of fashion item, an object that made her feel peculiar eventually led to a humorous and heartfelt memory of a mother’s love for her daughter (Parrot, 2012:46). The items brought by these women to South Africa represent above everything else their connections to their families and their homeland, whether they are moments connected to memories of happiness, loss, or even initial embarrassment singling out an individual and their foreignness. The connection to objects discussed throughout my research shares attributes interconnected to the research by Raj Mehta and

Russell Belk among Indian immigrants to the United States as they observed, 'When possessions are seen as part of the individual or family identity, they may allow immigrants to "transport" part of their former identities to a new place' (Mehta & Belk, 1991:399). I found relevance in both Parrot's (2012) and Mehta and Belk's findings (1991) among the Zimbabwean women I worked with regarding their personal possessions. Mehta and Belk state, 'The comfort of carrying some familiar possessions from home keeps us from the total identity alienation we are otherwise likely to feel in unfamiliar surroundings with no material anchors for our previously established identities' (Mehta & Belk, 1991:400) and the research findings of Parrot (2012) in London noted that personal objects intended to comfort may in actuality lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and strangeness. When conversations regarding material culture are closely examined, universal themes may be experienced and shared that fall outside of the context of migration as Miller states of the emotional connections to objects, 'Objects store and possess, take in and breathe out the emotions with which they have been associated' (Miller, 2008:38).

In conclusion, the time spent with the women during my research led me to achieve a greater appreciation of the power objects possess in their influence over our daily lives, affecting our overall view of the world, home, identity, sense of belonging, and feelings of connectedness to our family and friends. I was fascinated as I realized that a couple of objects could communicate an abundance of information about a person and their life history, but also how in the case of Masie, the stories of her objects were so tied to her deceased husband that they seamlessly blended with stories of her past related to their life together. At the onset of my research on material culture and associated memories and at times during the research I struggled to find meaning, focus, and make sense of the information I was collecting despite being able to find meaning in the research and writings of others relating to material culture. Over time the stories I was told and deep introspection related to my own personal objects I brought with me when I voluntarily left my country of origin made me realize that relationships with material culture are complex and subject to change over time. By slowly developing my relationships with my interlocutors and gaining a general understanding of their culture and relationships to material culture, this written and accompanying visual representation, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) led me to discover common themes of love, loss, and joyous moments from the past through an

unconventional focus on migration in the form of an examination of material culture. In order to continue my research related to material culture I found that presenting, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) at multiple film festivals and academic conferences both in South Africa and internationally raised interesting new questions which I continued to explore and present through a follow-up film, *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), which will be discussed in the following chapter. Additionally, with multiple years of working together and through the viewing of my completed films including *Migrant Dilemma* (2017), which is not discussed in this dissertation, my interlocutors felt comfortable that I would be responsible in my dissemination of more politically charged conversations and allowed me to incorporate them into *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018).

## Chapter 4

### Utilizing Found Home Footage in the Representation of Zimbabwean Migrants in *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018)

...rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher, we should set about understanding them.

Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007:16

Found footage films based on montage of disparate and incongruous images are more likely to challenge the media's power to make ideologically loaded images seem like unmediated representations of reality.

William Wees, 1993:48

Found footage filmmaking... is an aesthetic of ruins. Its intertextuality is always also an allegory of history, a montage of memory traces, by which the filmmaker engages with the past through recall, retrieval, and recycling. The complex relation to the real that unfolds in found-footage filmmaking lies somewhere between documentary and fictional modes of representation, opening up a very different means of representing culture. Found footage is a technique that produces "the ethnographic" as a discourse of representation. It denies the transparency of culture.

Russell, 1999:239

### Introduction: Methodology & Image Theory

*Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), a follow-up / continuation of *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), was produced mainly from my MA research interviews, field notes, early PhD reflections, and found 8mm and Super 8mm home movies from South Africa and colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The aforementioned components were additionally combined with audio field recordings (2014-2017) and discussions between my interlocutors and myself in

which they discussed their memories and personal thoughts about the souvenirs I acquired during my research trips to Zimbabwe and questioned me about my motives for obtaining these items. These conversations served not only to level the playing field, if only in a minimal way, but provided me with information about their personal stories related to the objects I acquired, providing some historical context for Zimbabwe over the last 37 years within the film. Combining the various audio recordings with found home movie footage from colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and apartheid era South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s into a found footage film, forms an abstract, multi-dimensional, and multi-sensorial engagement with colonial history in Southern Africa while simultaneously engaging with contemporary issues in the region including migration and the long-standing rule of dictators such as Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe whose policies carried out by the ruling ZANU-PF political party have spearheaded mass migration from the country across socio-economic divides. It should be noted that as expressed by Didier Fassin, that, “to assert these historical determinations does not reduce these women to a condition of victimhood” or “deny them a, “being-in-the-future”, I am simply trying to make it known that these women bear the traces of Zimbabwe’s difficult contemporary situation (Fassin, 2014:45-46).

Kevin Anderson, points out that anthropology should consider experimental and performative filmmaking, suggesting that the adoption of these forms can present, ‘new ways to speak of / with people, and evoke dimensions of culture and human experience’ (Anderson, 2003:32). Anderson continues, stating that through the experimentation with different forms of representation, avoiding realism, based on provocation rather than description, anthropological films will be able to, ‘not only speak to anthropological studies, but across disciplines – and more immediately, beyond classifications’ (Ibid.:32). Providing additional contextualization to the form of presentation utilized in, *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), a summary of my intentions are succinctly summarized by Caterina Pasqualino and Arnd Schneider (2014) in *Experimental Film and Anthropology* as they state of form:

Formal choices in experimental film are never just aesthetical choices, a kind of “*l’art pour l’art*” attitude which would set it apart from politically committed narrative film (and a charge sometimes brought against experimental film-makers). Form is not only understood as content, but also

is used to express strong political content—while at the same time challenging the viewer’s perceptual training and viewing assumptions. One might by comparison recall the observations of Jacques Rancière on early modern design, where he refutes the idea that there is “autonomous” art on the one hand and “heteronomous” art on the other, rather the two functions are simultaneous. (17)

Jaimie Baron, in *The Archive Affect: Found footage and the audiovisual experience of history*, addressing the ethical entanglements of using private documents for public use, a term she refers to as ‘archival voyeurism’, defends the use of such documents stating, ‘this particular form of ethical transgression is sometimes necessary to a responsible writing of history’ (Baron, 2014:12). Baron continues, adding that home mode documents help to constitute new forms of history, counterhistories, and microhistories that can have meaning for a wide audience base, but again we must recognize that this comes from a voyeuristic desire to see what we are not meant to see. Though the use of home movies for the construction of new text always comes with a certain degree of violence towards the subjects in the films, this violence can be justified through the serving of a larger cause to provide history from below, offering a more complex and detailed understanding of the past outside of ‘official’ archives (Ibid.:107). Lastly, no discussion of home movie appropriation would be complete without addressing a sense of nostalgia as Svetlana Boym (2011), presents her concepts of ‘restorative’ nostalgia and ‘reflective’ nostalgia. The former, ‘stresses *nostos* and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home...it knows two main plots - the return to origins and the conspiracy’, the later, ‘thrives in *algie*, the longing self, and delays the homecoming-wistfully, ironically, desperately. ...explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones’ (Ibid.:186-194/9460). In, *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), it could be argued that the film touches upon both the ‘restorative’ and the ‘reflexive’ as the film touches upon, ‘national memory that is based on a single plot of national identity, and social memory, which consists of collective frameworks that mark but do not define the individual memory’ (Ibid.:191/9460).

Catherine Russell (2018) uses the word *archiveology* as it applies to filmic practice to refer to the image archive as language, adding its connotation of the word archaeology links film fragments resurrected from the archives to cultural history. With the term *archiveology* having

previously been linked to the work of Derrida and Foucault and their work with understanding the archive as social practice, Derrida's 'archive fever', Russell points out, 'is manifest in the way that archival film practices work against the archive itself by fragmenting, destroying, and ruining the narrativity of the source material' and Foucault's influence which taught us to not take the archive as knowledge itself, but instead provides the conditions for knowledge (Ibid.:12). Walter Benjamin viewed the archive as a construction site adding that the archive is about memory and forgetting with the advent of the camera essentially shifting the function of human memory, turning it into an archive (Ibid.:13). Benjamin claimed that archival images, 'severed from all earlier associations, reside as treasures in the sober rooms of our later insights' and that memory is only a 'medium' insofar as it is experienced, this reawakening of experience through the moving image is precisely what images are able to evoke (Ibid.:13-14). Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes (2010) speaking of historical ethnographic images state:

the transit of an image between the private and public (and vice versa) has the potential to rework the meanings which attach to it. Yet more than this, it may do so in ways which obscure, even erase, the prior "social biography" of that image (defined in terms of the relations of its production, any exchange relations through which it has previously passed, and other collections in which it had been previously placed, and so on). In this way, images in transit may even be thought of as what Bruno Latour has called "circulating referents" (1999), mobile signs which through multiple acts of "translation"—in this case across the realms of public and private—become subject to multiple erasures. (340)

The definition of a found footage film within the rich history of experimental cinema is predicated on its aspiration to investigate the material and technical components of the borrowed image. Additionally, found footage films present underlying historical and cultural implications and aesthetic and technical approaches to the image, which alter the image's qualities or place it in a new chain of meanings (Kim, 2016:145-146). Catherine Russell (1999) points out that collage filmmaking, which incorporates 'found' footage and original footage has been prevalent since the 1950s. Russell explains the relevance here:

If one of the conventions of ethnographic film is the experiential encounter of the filmmaker and the filmed, found footage thoroughly mediates the encounter. Already filmed, already screened, decontextualized and recontextualized, found footage bears the trace of a complex social constellation of production, consumption, and disposal. ...found-footage filmmaking produces an ethnographic discourse of radical memory. (18)

This multi-dimensional form of cultural representation can be fashioned to serve as a, 'critique of cultural representation, suggesting how ethnographic discourse is produced as a counterhistory of mass media' (Ibid.:18). Jaimie Baron (2014) employs the idea of the 'archive effect' described as:

a reformulation of "the archive document" as an *experience of reception* rather than an indication of official sanction or storage location. ...repositioning of the archival from the authority of place to the authority of experience, I argue that archival documents exist as "archival" only insofar as the viewer of a given film perceives certain documents within that film as coming from another, previous – and primary – context of use or intended use. (7)

She continues highlighting the use of archives in contemporary filmmaking stating:

Indeed, what may be most important about the archive effect and the effect to which it may give rise is its opening of an "other" space. ... A fleeting experience of the otherness of the past generated through the encounter with the appropriated metonymic fragment may also open us up to the potential otherness of the future, the recognition that the context in which we live and to which we (at least to some degree) subscribe is transient and that it, too, shall pass. (134)

Baron (Ibid.) further divides the presentation of archival images in contemporary films into two forms of disparity, 'temporal' and 'intentional'. As defined by Baron the first form of disparity, 'temporal disparity', 'the perception by the viewer of an appropriation film of a "then" and "now" generated within a single text' this is highlighted by, 'the break between past and present...brought about by visible (and perhaps audible) change apparent to the

viewer' (Ibid.:18). Baron adds:

with the passage of time our extra textual knowledge of and about the world changes, thereby altering our experience of and relationship to the appropriation film. Thus, there are always at least three temporalities at work in appropriation films: the “then” of the archival footage, the “now” of the production of the appropriation film, and the “now” of watching the appropriation film. (22)

To clarify, Baron uses the example of viewing *Nanook of the North* (1922) ‘now’ as not being a form of temporal disparity as it is:

a function of the relationship between *different elements* of the *same* text, between a document placed within a new *textual* context, and not the relationship between a text and the extra textual context in which it is shown. (18-22)

The second form of disparity, ‘intentional disparity’, is characterized by:

...footage taken from one context of use and placed in another may carry with it a trace of earlier intended uses. This footage generates the dominant sense of coming not from some other time but from a different intent... a disparity based on our perception of a previous intention ascribed to and (seemingly) inscribed within the archival document. (23)

Found images point not only to a previous production context of use and reception, but additionally, the way temporal disparity or intentional disparity is experienced is based in part by out extra textual knowledge of the images (Ibid.:24). In “*Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)*” (2018), the use of found home vacation movies throughout Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) resonates in a macro context if the viewer has extra textual knowledge that the War of Liberation (1964-1979) was taking place during some, if not all of the footage and on a micro level the two scenes of crocodile farms reference the emergence of Zimbabwe’s second president since independence in 1980, former vice-president and liberation fighter, Emmerson Mnangagwa, nicknamed ‘The Crocodile.’ Melissa Banta and Curtis Hinsley in,

*From Site to Sight: Anthropology, Photography, and the Power of Imagery*, state regarding the changing nature of visual documents, ‘With the passage of time we find meanings that transcend the intentions with which an image was originally created’ (Banta & Hinsley, 1986:25). Catherine Russell (2018), in *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices*, employs the use of the term *archiveology*, originally coined by Joel Katz in 1991, ‘to refer to the ways that filmmakers were making the archive useful and engaging with it on its own terms’ continuing on the value of such work states it can be an exploration of, ‘the potential of audiovisual fragments to construct new ways of accessing and framing histories that might otherwise have been forgotten and neglected—and to make these histories relevant to contemporary concerns’ (Russell, 2018:11-12).

As an additional layer of consideration the found footage I used in *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) follows an unidentified white woman from South African as she travels to several locations throughout colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), serving as an abstract embodiment of myself as I traversed several of the same locations throughout my research in Zimbabwe several decades later. This consideration, which some may incorrectly consider auto-ethnographic, is more accurately defined as a reflexive technique. To clarify the differences in these techniques the following explanations from Rebecca Savage (2012) and Annette Markham (2012) are presented. Savage (2012) states, auto-ethnography is a:

product of a consciously investigative process in which the filmmaker has set out, through the making of the film and within the film itself, to investigate her or his place in the world, questioning the relationship between memory and lived identity and interrogating the role of audiovisual media in mediating that dynamic. (63-64)

Annette Markham (2012) notes the difference between reflexivity and auto-ethnography stating:

Confessional tales include, if not focus on, the researcher’s craft and influence in the course of the study. The analytical and interpretive decisions are made transparent in this type of narrative, which in the best renderings allows the reader to gain a rich perspective on the phenomenon as well as the

position of the researcher. Often this type of inquiry is mislabeled ‘auto ethnography’ because both include attention on the self as researcher. However, one can include the self in the rendering without the self being the center of attention or the sole object of analysis. (344)

Despite the differences and sometimes confusion that comes with these multiple approaches what is fundamental regardless of the degree of inclusion is the idea that an individual ethnographer should not question whether or not they should appear in the work, but rather how covertly or overtly (Mngomezulu, 2016:8-9).

The presentation of found footage and the intention to call attention to its colonial production date and highlight my post-colonial considerations as I am a white male originating from North America. Peter Forgács, in referring to his film, *The Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle* (1997) offers an additional perspective on my inclusion of found footage stating, ‘Historical hindsight produces a double consciousness for the viewer... We know what will happen to these people, but at the moment portrayed in their amateur films, they clearly have no idea what is in store’ (Baron, 2014:86). This tragic historical hindsight plays out in *The Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle* (1997) as viewers watch footage of a Dutch Jewish family in the 1930s play knowing the fate of the family with the arrival of the Nazis (Ibid.:86). Though it could be argued that the historical significance in *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* is not as tragic, major events with widespread implications occurred nonetheless, including Zimbabwean Independence in 1980, approximately 25% of Zimbabweans, many of whom are from the same ethnic group as Robert Mugabe, migrating from the country, and the much publicized farm invasions in the early 2000s. With new meanings and histories arising from the archive or ‘ruins of the past’, Walter Benjamin’s theory of the allegorical image takes on a new understanding where it speaks to the living, though many works including the aforementioned, *The Maelstrom: A Family Chronicle* (1997) take on melancholic sensibilities (Russell, 2018:14). This work, ‘provides astonishing insights into the “everyday” of families living in totalitarian regimes’ allowing for as Jan Verwoert states, ‘an emergence of multiple histories that had been previously made invisible by dominant historical narratives’ (Verwoert, 2007 cited in Russell, 2018:14). Cultural theorist Ben Highmore, however points out that we should take caution as ‘everyday life’ is a ‘vague and problematic phrase’ and that it can be used in various ways considering that ‘everyday life’ is not

necessarily synonymous with resistance to ideology (Highmore, 2002:1 cited in Baron, 2014:98-99). Highmore notes that on the other hand it can be viewed as:

those practices and lives that have been traditionally left out of historical accounts, swept aside by the onslaught of events instigated by elites. It becomes shorthand for voices from “below”: women, children, migrants and so on. (Ibid.:98)

The subtle and abstract inclusion of found footage of a white South African and her companions of unknown origins traveling through the country moderately addresses one of the critiques by Francis Nyamnjoh in *Blinded by Sight: Divining the Future of Anthropology in Africa*, in which he points out a gap in research on white Africans and the, ‘failure on the part of both white anthropologists to study horizontally and black, colored and Indian/Asian anthropologists to study up’ (Nyamnjoh, 2012a:72-73). Lastly, it should be noted that the interviews which make up the audio in Part II, *Souvenir (Dialogues)* were recorded between 2014 - 2015 while Mugabe was still in power and was deemed unsafe to release through film festivals and public screenings in Southern Africa until after Mugabe’s removal from office on November 21, 2017. This caution is justified as Thompson (2013) speaking of the films produced within Zimbabwe notes:

Most of the films produced since 2001 are relatively apolitical, avoiding topics that might be perceived as openly criticizing the state, although some (like *The Legend of the Sky Kingdom* and *Kare Kare Zvako*) could be read as allegorical critiques of Mugabe. (172)

Thompson adds that a few filmmakers have explicitly addressed the ongoing crisis in Zimbabwe excluding Saki Mafundikwa and his 2009 documentary *Shungu: The Resilience of a People*. (2009) and Simon Bright and Michael Auret’s film, *Robert Mugabe...What Happened?* (2011), which addressed the political violence during the 2008 elections. These filmmakers have varying first-hand experience of the consequences of producing films critical of the state as Mafundikwa’s film is considered contraband in Zimbabwe and public screenings within the country could lead to his arrest; Bright was arrested in 2004, prior to the production of his film for allegedly helping a BBC crew film within Zimbabwe. Despite the

risk, these filmmakers and others have defied the government through their films in an attempt to achieve similar goals that I share in the production of my films as they, 'are important means of letting audiences outside of Zimbabwe - including Zimbabweans now living in the diaspora - learn about what is going on there from local perspectives' (Ibid.:173).

*Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) takes on an essay-like feel in the first part of the film, *Research*, more specifically falling within a subgenre of the essay film, the 'editorial' essay. Editorial essays reflect events of the, 'past or present, history, and memory through the collection and rearrangement of existing materials related to them. ...and either create new meanings out of their new juxtapositions or investigate their surface and underside' (Kim, 2015:24). Hal Foster offers the term, 'archival impulse' to describe works that rework past information from the present's perspective and Ji-hoon Kim states, that based upon Foster's term found footage filmmaking and editorial essay films could be slotted into this category as they, 'consider the information and trace of past images not as they are, but as "found yet constructed" ' (Foster, 2004:5 cited in Kim, 2015:24-25). A key component for the essay film, prevalent in *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) is displayed through the approaching of my research with an 'inquisitive attitude' (Rascaroli, 2008:33), engaging, 'an experiential world encountered and acquired through the discourse of thinking out loud' (Corrigan, 2011:15) through audio field notes recorded on my iPhone and the reading and recording of field notes in my home. Reflecting upon my research, footage, field notes, and the manner in which I presented them makes the first half of the film feel similar to a written essay as it aims 'to preserve something of the process of thinking' (Rascaroli, 2008:26). As previously mentioned, visually *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) is comprised of found home movies which is yet another characteristic of essay films, their openness to experimentation through a multitude of images, sounds, and / or texts to assist in the development of the film's argument. Based upon the criteria which define the essay film, it is of little surprise that they are characterized by an authorial voice in order to approach, 'the subject matter not in order to present a factual report (the field of traditional documentary), but to offer an in-depth, personal and thought-provoking reflection' (Ibid.:35). The way in which the first half of *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) is presented through a, 'searching, subjective, and inconclusive mode of thinking out loud invests an ethnographic film with an expressive layer

of epistemological doubt' while it, 'collapses the oppositions that have been used to distinguish, delineate, praise, and criticize "textual" and "audiovisual" anthropologies' (Van de Port, 2018:143). The second part of *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), *Souvenir (Dialogues)* will be discussed in the following section as the film shifts from the editorial essay form in terms of the dialogue to discussions with my interlocutors about the souvenirs I brought back from my fieldwork in order to bring into the film ideas concerning material culture, memories, and the economic and political landscape that led to the mass exodus of Zimbabweans.

The 'complex interplay of picture and sound' (Taylor, 1996:72) in *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) place the words and images in tension with one another as my voice and the voices of my interlocutors are almost always working against the images that are seen on the screen, working in opposition to Roland Barthes' ideas of words anchoring the meaning of an image, rendering my images to multiple interpretations as it fails to help the viewer 'choose the correct level of perception' (Barthes, 1977:38-41 cited in Carta, 2015:7). These gaps in the relationship between the image and the audio draw attention to the conflict between them, but at the same time Baron notes that this discord can on some levels make history feel more 'present' than that of a 'realistic' soundtrack explaining, 'A shudder of historical awareness emerges from the slippage between the image and the soundtrack, and we experience the archive effect – and affect – produced in the temporal gap between visual and aural tracks' (Baron, 2014:123). Images can be used at the same time to show an object and represent an idea, this 'polysemous' (Barthes, 1977:39 cited in Carta, 2015:8) nature of images and the difficulties of 'separating the actual from the ideal are related to the "particularly powerful and troubling role of the image in cinematic narrative" as an image presents literal aspects and carries symbolic and connotative meanings' (Mermin, 1997:41 cited in Carta 2015:9). One of the few instances in *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) in which the image on the screen works directly with the dialogue or they seems to be synchronous is when Masie is discussing a Zimbabwean DVD I purchased stating:

But I think this guy I know him. It's very like, very funny to watch because it's done in my language and you know like the people acting and it like makes you laugh and it makes you like think of home and you kind of missing out on the other stuff, like... because I don't have this.

This scene creates a different kind of underlying tension as the image, a black man dressed in ‘traditional’ African clothing and looking into the camera dances and sticks out his tongue at a tourist village in colonial Rhodesia. This footage is meant to make viewers consider how in a different context this footage could be misused and can be viewed as symbolic of colonialism in the way he dances and stares into the camera. When this footage is followed by what appears to be another man at the same village who cuts his eyes back and forth into the camera in what could be described as an uninterested or displeased look, this scene takes on many connotations. Those with knowledge of social practices within an African context may also pick up that his look could simply be a respect issue as among several groups in Southern Africa it is considered disrespectful to look into another’s eyes.

### Unpacking the Multiple Layers of *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018)

“From mother to son 1”

This is a black day  
for you, son,  
the day you wish  
you could bury  
your head in the sand.  
I watched you  
when you thought  
I wasn’t looking,  
Hiding the ruling party’s regalia  
-the black and white bandana  
and the green t-shirt  
with the Zimbabwe ruins  
motif.  
Son, the oversized  
Black militia boots  
Are under your single bed

-blood stained.  
maybe they will come  
for you  
at night  
or during the day  
for everyone to see,  
because they remember  
the torture  
of their loved ones  
-the endless chant  
of your slogans  
-the chickens  
you took from them  
and the young girls  
at the base  
whose breast you fondled.

“From mother to son 2”

They picked you up  
that night in June  
as the neighbors  
watched from the windows  
across the street.  
I groped in the dark,  
to get that flaming red jersey  
that would keep you warm  
whenever they took you  
that cold night,  
before the elections,  
when I knew  
I was seeing you  
for the last time.

Kwabato, 2010:26-27

*Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) opens with a couple seconds of Super 8mm film leader before text appears on the screen contextualizing the current situation in Zimbabwe, the source of the footage, and audio for the film in order to assist viewers in their acclimation to the world presented in the film. While I want viewers to have to think about all the layers while viewing the film and even realize that it takes more than one viewing to process the information, I found that as I am positioning this film within the broad sub-discipline of visual anthropology I wanted to ensure that viewers were able to grasp the main themes of the film. The opening visuals are multiple shots of one of the seven wonders of nature, Table Mountain and the harbor of Cape Town below, which bustles in its shadow. This shot is accompanied aurally by my voice reading off a list of mainly Shona pleasantries I needed to memorize before traveling to Zimbabwe for the first time. The footage of Table Mountain and the accompanying audio locates me as a researcher / filmmaker in the early stages of the process and sets the stage for the film.

The next key moment for situating the viewer comes as text appears on the screen reading, Part I *Research*. This title card is followed by the first shot of the unknown woman viewers will travel with in the field as she looks out over the Kariba Dam Wall before cutting to a shot that zooms in on a sign that reads 'Welcome to Rhodesia'. I consider this sign to be the first of several minor 'film shocks' (Willerslev & Suhr, 2014) as the footage confirms it is not contemporary footage, but was filmed in colonial times, thus visually supporting the opening text. After this short scene we follow the woman as she walks through the countryside and displays a Rhodesian bag of souvenirs before walking into a large tent in a campground. The aural component of the scene also finds me getting situated in the field as I discuss being nervous about being allowed to go for a walk on my own for the first time and my lack of sleep over the first five days in the field.

Three minutes into this eighteen-minute film the focus shifts towards putting together the different pieces from my research. Visually the film is set at Inyangombe Falls, Inyangombe Camp Site, and Inyangombe Swimming Pools showing shots of the scenery and multiple white families enjoying the amenities offered at these locations. This footage is juxtaposed with my voice stating the following taken directly from the transcripts:

[00:03:07.15] Uh, this morning I was standing in the kitchen while breakfast was being made, [00:03:12.03]

[00:03:12.10] uh, and the woman I was staying with [00:03:15.02]

[00:03:15.07] started making fun of her daughter about how she couldn't cook. [00:03:19.03]

[00:03:19.14] Uh, and they were having a laugh about this, [00:03:22.22]

[00:03:23.24] but then the daughter turned to the mother and said, [00:03:26.05]

[00:03:26.09] "Well, I can't cook because you were not here to teach me how to cook [00:03:30.08]

[00:03:30.13] when I was a kid." [00:03:32.04]

[00:03:33.08] The woman laughed, but I know from previous conversations [00:03:37.08]

[00:03:37.15] that she's, uh, always been very upset about the fact that she had to leave her kids [00:03:43.06]

[00:03:43.11] when they were all very young, [00:03:45.12]

[00:03:45.16] uh, to go to Cape Town to make money. [00:03:48.12]

Aware of the importance of not completely excluding the men who serve important roles in the lives of my interlocutors, the next sequence in the film tells a story about hanging out with the men from the neighborhood I stayed in during my time in Kadoma, Zimbabwe. In December of 2014 while drinking and grilling (*gochi gochi*) meat I witnessed multiple people stealing glances at me as I was the only *murungu* (white man) around, but I had become accustomed to the stares. The following day I was told that these were not the usual stares I

receive as people were whispering and wondering if I was football superstar David Beckham (Beckham's former club Manchester United is incredibly popular in Zimbabwe). The visuals that accompany this audio are of a group of people on a boat out on a lake; at the point where I mention the rumors that the men relayed to me from our previous day of hanging out the footage of the boat begins to play backwards as if to recall the day. When in Kadoma, especially on my first visit there in December of 2014, the men in the neighborhood kept me away from Media, the woman who worked for my family in Cape Town for a large portion of this trip in their attempts to make me feel welcome in the community. While the time with the men was enjoyable I initially felt a sense of frustration at not being able to observe and speak with Media as I had originally planned, but I quickly realized how much I could learn about women's roles and responsibilities in Zimbabwean society in general from my time with the men from the neighborhood as they included husbands, brothers, fathers, and uncles of many of the women.

Following a couple of sequences in which I reiterate my lack of sleep and reveal how even the most comprehensive researcher misses out on subtle moments the last sequence in Part I signals the political shift that is to feature heavily in Part II of the film, *Souvenir (Dialogues)*. The visuals are from a crocodile farm as I communicate a story about conflict in the field as I was told by Dexter, the son of Masie, of the violent nature of the 2008 Presidential Elections and how wearing ZANU-PF party regalia was one strategy for at least attempting to stay safe. He showed me a beret with Robert Mugabe's signature stitched into the front and when I found myself several days later in an airport gift shop waiting to board my flight back to Cape Town I spotted several shelves of regalia with Mugabe's signature stitched into them including a replica of the beret Dexter had shown me. Upon several moments of deliberation I decided to buy one of the berets, but after purchasing it I thought of the stories I had been told and wondered if part of the money for this item would end up in the hands of Mugabe, leaving me to feel unbearably guilty for the purchase.

Part II, *Souvenir (Dialogues)* opens with audio of a train representing the journey back to Cape Town followed by light laughter from Masie as she asks about where I obtained an old

25,000,000,000 bond note from Zimbabwe. There are two reasons behind Part II starting with a discussion based around currency. The first reason is because all of the women who participated in my research came to Cape Town for economic reasons and have lived through the multiple changes in the currency going from Zimbabwean dollars to Zimbabwean bond notes to the acceptance of multiple currencies, with the U.S. dollar being the most highly sought and possessing the highest black market exchange rate. The second reason to have the voices of the women discuss currency is to subtly link the film to its predecessor, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) as pieces of the audio were also used in that film. This sequence of the film leads to a discussion of the new bond notes that were introduced in 2014, in which Masie relays details about how she is not living in Zimbabwe and therefore has to have her kids explain the value of the currency every time she goes back to visit them.

Following from the discussions around currency is the aforementioned scene in which the Zimbabwean DVDs I bought in Zimbabwe are discussed, with footage from a tourist cultural village in Rhodesia. The second woman to comment on the DVDs, Media, knew at the time of the interview that I bought the DVDs while hanging out with her husband in Kadoma and asks a question I was somewhat caught off guard by and nervously respond as follows:

[00:10:29.02] You just buy them... [00:10:30.13]

[00:10:31.01] ah... [00:10:31.18]

[00:10:32.02] you don't understand Shona that much...[00:10:34.01]

[00:10:34.14] Is it like, you just saw someone like, selling then you

[00:10:37.17]

[00:10:38.03] just feel sorry and say [00:10:39.21] [00:10:39.22] I should  
maybe [00:10:41.12]

[00:10:41.13] give him something, then I can take this disc. [00:10:44.03]

[00:10:44.07]- Hmm, Why I bought them? - Yes. [00:10:45.16]

[00:10:45.19] I... I... I did buy them because I was curious, uh... [00:10:49.17]

[00:10:49.20] you know... your... your brother-in-law [00:10:51.10]

[00:10:51.11] I asked, you know, because the guys who were selling them were dressed in costumes, [00:10:56.00]

[00:10:56.06] so I didn't know what they were doing at first. [00:10:58.02]

[00:10:58.07] You know, they were dressed funny. One was dressed like a general, but had a big fake rear. [00:11:03.20]

[00:11:03.24] Uh, so I didn't know what they were doing [00:11:05.23]

[00:11:06.02] and then he told me that they were filmmakers [00:11:08.17]

[00:11:08.19] and that they make local productions. [00:11:11.06]

[00:11:11.13] So, I... I bought them because I was curious. I was like,

[00:11:14.02]

[00:11:14.07] what do the local films... What do they look like? [00:11:17.04]

This question and answer draws attention to multiple areas of interest and concern during research including the fact that the researcher is always being watched and evaluated just as much as he / she is watching and evaluating his / her interlocutors. When this particular interview was over I remember deliberating if and how long Media may have been thinking that I possibly only bought the DVDs because I 'felt sorry' for the people within her community, another moment that had a profound effect on me and my feelings concerning my research.

After several seconds of scenery from a boat tour on Lake Kariba in order to allow viewers time to contemplate the previous dialogue, laughter is heard between Media and myself as we discuss several cooking utensils I bought in her hometown of Kadoma as gifts. This conversation is markedly different in tone from the previous one as she states how she realized I really had an interest in Zimbabwean food and culture after I bought these utensils for my mother, mother-in-law, and myself. The accompanying video for this dialogue shows the unknown traveler engaging with three women who appear to be selling fruit. The next couple of shots are of the traveler picking mushrooms followed by multiple close-ups of the mushrooms. Media ends her dialogue stating that she is glad that I am passing on knowledge about Zimbabwe because I can dispel some common misconceptions about Zimbabweans including the gossip about how they can't cook as Media states:

[00:12:20.12] Because people they think like, the way they heard about Zimbabweans, we can't even cook. [00:12:25.04]

[00:12:25.06] We can't even like, eat something that...[00:12:27.16]

[00:12:27.23] that is nice. [00:12:28.21]

[00:12:28.23] They were thinking like, [00:12:30.11]

[00:12:30.16] sometimes they will think that... these people they think like, we live like animals [00:12:35.09]

[00:12:35.14] while we are there back in Zimbabwe. [00:12:38.07]

Newspapers I brought back from trips to Zimbabwe are discussed next within the context of a lack of press freedom in Zimbabwe as opposed to how in South Africa, "If the president does something wrong you can just state it, even on television". This discussion with two different interlocutors about the government operated newspaper, *The Herald* and the independent *Daily News* are visually accompanied by the juxtaposition of shots that are just as conflicting as the daily information that is published in the two aforementioned newspapers. The first several shots of this sequence are of the Rhodes Matopos National Park, the burial place of colonialist Cecil John Rhodes, which include shots of his tombstone overlooking the Matopos Mountains. The next scene is of the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, the

namesake of the Republic of Zimbabwe and capital of the Kingdom of Zimbabwe in the late Iron Age. During colonial times this landmark was a contested site as officials refused to acknowledge the expansive construction, which was carried out by black Africans. As the unknown tourist ascends a small hill within the ruins one of my interlocutors' states, "Yeah, you remind me about my country with the newspapers."

The next to final scene in the film is the second time a crocodile farm is presented, Kariba Crocodile Farm. The opening medium shot is of a simple sign that states the prices which has been altered at the top with an additional sign that reads, 'Service Men In Uniform 10¢'. This small additional sign is significant not only because as previously mentioned former liberation fighter and long-time Mugabe ally, Emmerson 'The Crocodile' Mnangagwa had just recently taken over the presidency at the time of this film's completion, but additionally because the conversation that accompanies the visuals pertains to political regalia, some of which was military inspired and frequently worn by the youth Mugabe trained to spread terror during election times. My interlocutor describes how the berets, bandanas, and overalls with regalia were designed to catch the attention of the youth and the her tone shifts quickly as she talks of remembering people with this regalia on, "...they were so cruel. I don't like them", thus ending the scene on a somber note as the unidentified travelers stare into a crocodile pit, slightly isolated from the rest of the group in the frame before cutting to a lone crocodile partially shaded under a tree.

The final sequence of *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) takes place in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, a tourist destination and place where a common joke is that the people in Victoria Falls do not care about what's going on in the neighboring country of Zimbabwe. This joke refers to the fact that despite being located in Zimbabwe it is almost as if you don't have to deal with the harsh realities affecting most Zimbabweans as the roads are paved, the electricity stays on, and basic services such as trash collection are still functioning. The first piece of dialogue is again of Media questioning me regarding my souvenir choices as she states:

[00:15:16.09] (laughing) Wow! [00:15:18.11]

[00:15:18.20] When you said to Darryl, "I want this thing?"

[00:15:21.15] [00:15:21.18] We first asked ourselves, "For what?"  
[00:15:24.20]

[00:15:25.08] Because you see Darryl was just playing with it. [00:15:27.16]

[00:15:27.17] It was like, something that we will never use or it will...  
[00:15:31.01]

[00:15:31.05] something that is useless to us. [00:15:32.25]

[00:15:33.04] So, [00:15:34.15]

[00:15:34.17] is it like, the face [00:15:36.11]

[00:15:36.14] or what really makes you like, say you want this thing?  
[00:15:41.01]

[00:15:42.16] - I don't really want to...I don't really...I don't know,  
[00:15:45.05]

[00:15:45.09] - I'm not sure really what to say because I don't really want to  
talk about him (Robert Mugabe), [00:15:48.22]

[00:15:49.01] - but I think there is just so much built up around him  
[00:15:52.01]

[00:15:52.05] - that there is this thing that when you see his images on  
stuff...to me it's... [00:15:56.24]

[00:15:57.09] - It's always like, shocking. [00:15:59.13]

The concluding shot of the film is the unidentified traveler walking towards the camera after several shots of the majestic Victoria Falls and mouths to the camera what looks like the word 'end' as we hear Masie ask, "Was that ok or can we start again?" to which I reply, "Yeah, yeah it's fine." As the screen goes black title cards appear listing some of the atrocities carried out by the Mugabe regime including the Gukurahundi Massacres, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, and Operation Murambatsvina. The final title card reads,

‘November 21, 2017 6:31PM’ with audio from one of my anonymous interlocutors claiming Zimbabwe’s independence upon the reading of longstanding president Robert Mugabe’s resignation.

## The Production of Anthropological Knowledge / Review

One of the main interests for the production of, *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) is due to my continued engagement with memory and material culture within the context of Zimbabwean migrants. Upon completion of my 2015 film, *These Objects, Those Memories* it became clear to me that an elaboration of the material culture that affected my interlocutors, independent of their personal items would be crucial to understanding the context to their current predicament through a consideration of the regalia that Robert Mugabe flooded the country with over the 37 years of his leadership. After Mugabe’s initial defeat and subsequent violent crackdown in the build up to the runoff election in 2008, which found his political rival Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC withdrawing his candidacy in order to cease the widespread violence, ZANU-PF knew they would have to adjust their strategy for the following Presidential election to be held in 2013. This shift in strategy due to increased international monitoring and international backlash became the focus on winning votes through promising and providing material items such as t-shirts, hand torches (flashlights), and basic food necessities. Julia Gallagher’s (2015) article, “The Battle for Zimbabwe in 2013: From polarization to ambivalence” provides detailed insight into the strategies of the ruling party and its effectiveness in implementing these strategies stating:

The giving of gifts was important on several levels...recognition...the value of things even as small as a cap, a t-shirt or a kilo of maize, to people who are very poor, is significant. Thus, ZANU-PF’s gifts during the election campaign had both material and symbolic meaning. (39)

Gallagher found this to be especially effective in Matabeleland amongst a population that felt overlooked by the ruling ZANU-PF party and regularly voted for opposition parties (Ibid.:38). Some of the comments from voters regarding ZANU-PF’s strategy, recorded by Gallagher (Ibid.) after the 2013 election read as follows:

During election time it was a free-for-all. Politicians gave out rice and promised [people] areas to build their houses. The appeal of ZANU(PF) was direct and immediate.

They bring food during campaign time. You can't get from the MDC and so people thought, I'm missing a lot supporting the MDC so I will move to that party.

ZANU(PF) was giving everyone caps, t-shirts, Zambias and bandanas, and the opposition was giving to party members. I was angry that I didn't get any- thing. The MDC didn't give to all the people, they didn't recognize all the people.

ZANU(PF) went with pots, caps, food. People said, we were given these things so we will support. Last time the MDC did the same and this time they did not. (38-39)

Obert Hodzi's article, "The Youth Factor in Zimbabwe's 2013 Harmonised Elections", corroborates Gallagher's insights related to material culture and the election results of 2013 stating in his conclusion, 'youth participation in the 2013 elections was dominated by individual interests driven by the need to gain from material and financial goods distributed by political parties during the electoral period' (Hodzi, 2014:66). Due to the onslaught of regalia that has been distributed in Zimbabwe over the years (I have a personal interest in political regalia) I found it easy to collect and be given numerous items that led to my discussion with my interlocutors back in Cape Town regarding regalia, which inspired and formed the core of the second half of *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018).

In conclusion, within the frame of *archiweology*, referring to films made without cameras, *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) seeks to engage with material culture and memories in a creative and unconventional way or as Catherine Russell speaking of Walter Benjamin's storyteller states they deal with, 'short-lived reminiscences,' glimpses and fragments of the past, and they deal with 'many diffuse occurrences' (Russell, 2018:22). Through the combination of interviews, field notes, and found home movies I am seeking to provide not only a contribution to memory and material culture studies, but an expansion of the

possibilities of ethnographic film in contemporary research in which it was necessary for me to engage with theories ranging from those in experimental ethnography, visual anthropology, and film / media studies in order to achieve and present my findings.

## Chapter 5

### Contemporary Super 8mm Film and Asynchronous Sound in

#### *Scenes from a Transient Home (2019)*

“The Painting”

Show me that painting

again

of happy children

playing.

Kabwato, 2010:20

### Introduction: Super 8mm Filmmaking & Asynchronous Audio

Siegfried Kracauer, mindful of the potential of cinema to, ‘capture and present the minor, the overlooked, the excess, and the unarchived within dominant historical discourse’ notes that as early as the 1930s film could be utilized to inscribe an alternative history (Sniadecki, 2014:34). James Clifford also looking to the past recalls that Paris in the 1920s and 1930s found anthropologists and avant-garde artists engaged in profound interactions, a form of ‘Surrealist ethnography’, through the representation of shattered experiences of reality, represented creatively through juxtaposition and fragmentation of forms of cultural representation challenging customary systems and hierarchies (Köhn, 2016:12-13). Jennifer Heuson and Kevin Allen continue borrowing from Jacques Rancière, speaking of their expectations of their asynchronous Super 8mm films to challenge, ‘the distribution of the sensible’, accentuating the ear-eye relation and how this might produce more or less dynamic understandings of space and time (Heuson & Allen, 2014:114). Heuson and Allen (Ibid.), specifically discussing their film on migration and immigration in the United States,

*Immokalee, My Home* (2009) state of working with Super 8mm in relation to their theoretical concerns:

[our] theorization is concerned both with how tools and techniques borrowed from experimental film-making might alter ethnographic encounters, including fieldwork and its representation, and with how these encounters might offer a “critical phenomenological” account of the relationship between knowledge, sensation, and representation. (114)

Continuing their discussion of *Immokalee, My Home* (2009) they state of imperfect nature of Super 8mm that it:

liberates the project from the didactically objective tone typical to activist documentaries. ...the film takes audiences on a personal, subjective, experiential journey; it is a trip, not a tale. (Small Gauge Films, 2018)

Heuson and Allen present events in their film that counter mass media coverage of stories of migration and immigration by showing workers, ‘celebrate a birthday, ride a carousel, pick tomatoes, and remember a mother making tortillas in a Guatemalan village’ (Ibid.).

In 2015 when I first began to purchase 8mm and Super 8mm home movies from antique and vintage stores in Cape Town I quickly realized that despite the fact that a majority of the footage was from Southern Africa in the 1950s - 1970s, images of the majority black population were largely missing. As I continued to re-watch and reflect upon this concern it became more obvious that when black Africans did appear it was in short clips in which they often either stepped into the frame or a pan would catch them unbeknownst, resulting in the camera operator proceeding to quickly end the shot. Using these revelations and the thoughts of Kracauer as a frame of reference I have utilized Super 8mm filmmaking in my research among Zimbabwean migrant women to fill in this gap in the material representation on Super 8mm film as a way to, ‘develop an alternative, non-official history... left out of official discourse and state historiography’ (Sniadecki, 2014:34). Though I can never go back in time and correct this omission from the record, filling in the gap of Super 8mm representations of black Zimbabweans in contemporary society seeks to diverge from the mass media’s objectifying representations of migrants, opting instead to show the

complexities of the migrant experience through the filming of ‘home movie’ moments of Zimbabwean women. Through the utilization of Super 8mm and asynchronous sound my representational strategies seek to, ‘destabilize their spectators’ corporeal, spatial and temporal orientation’ (Köhn, 2016:15), which inevitably will produce some nostalgic feelings due to the look of the format and the manner in which I often filmed, attempting to mimic the handheld, often shaky, and sometimes out of focus feel of home movies or, as Sobchack (1999) borrowing a term from Meunier (1969), labels them, ‘film souvenirs’, though this is not my primary intention. My use of analogue media is more in line with what Caterina Pasqualino and Arnd Schneider describe as, ‘a deliberate working through, and resisting (against the *grain*) of a dominant and hegemonic digital culture’ (Pasqualino & Schneider, 2014:18). In addition to my form of filling in gaps in audio-visual history I am more interested in filming on Super 8mm due to its materiality as opposed to digital filmmaking as, ‘products of analogue media...provides a material proof or evidence of that passed time’ (Ibid.:13). Additionally using equipment such as a Super 8mm camera and a small handheld Zoom audio recorder forced me to think differently about some of the reoccurring themes in my work such as time, space, the sensorial, and the manner in which I would film images and record audio (Huerson & Allen 2014:123). Though I had the idea to film in Super 8mm in Zimbabwe for this particular film I wanted to remain open to the events that took place as J.P. Sniadecki (2014), inspired by John Dewey (1934) and David MacDougall (1998) states:

allowing the aesthetic and sensorial dimensions of the lived experience of informants/film-subjects to directly shape the fieldwork/filmmaking process, upholds the everyday as revelatory, and sees meaning and knowledge production as open-ended, wide-ranging, and experiential. (27)

This open-ended focus on the everyday offers the possibilities to open up rather than close meanings, relaying ‘the aesthetics of ambiguity’ (Dai Vaugh (1999) quoted in Sniadecki, 2014:29) and avoiding the focus on one subjectivity, embarking on a cinema of *intersubjectivity*, seeking to reveal the, ‘affective dimensions *between* human subjects that entails both compassion and conflict’ (Jackson 1998:6 quoted in Sniadecki, 2014:33). Colette Piault states that there is a need to show things happening instead of using words to convince spectators that they happened in a certain way, an issue he claims has arisen due to the ease of recording sync sound (Piault, 1988:283). Piault continues claiming that instead of making

films on a subject or issue by actually showing the things that should be shown, many filmmakers have come to rely on asking people to talk about the issue in front of the camera thus making film more about the speech of people involved in an issue (Ibid.:283). In *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019) I sought to film as life happened through the medium of asynchronous Super 8mm filmmaking, while additionally inserting a section in the film, which takes place in Victoria Falls (Mosi-oa-Tunya) in which the audio was gathered through video-elicitation as I traveled alone. Approaching the film in this manner it is my hope to present a film, which can best be described as Gilberto Perez speaking of the cinema of Jean-Luc Godard states, ‘gives the impression not of the complete but of the ongoing, a world in process of taking place’. (Gilberto Perez, 1998:337 cited in O’Pray, 2003:72)

Magalie McDuffie (2016) quoting Mike Eaton’s writings related to Jean Rouch’s vision of the future of filmmaking notes:

Rouch was convinced that one day film would be a “one-man system” (Eaton, 1979:40), whereby a filmmaker could work on his own in the field for extended periods of time. He saw this as the ideal to be achieved, intimating that film crews were too complex, too expensive, intrusive, and constituted an “obstacle to participant cinema” (Eaton 1979:55). (7)

Not only has this idea been achieved, even in the use of vintage analogue equipment, but due to the nature of my research and the need to be able to film or put away a camera at any moment being alone in the field was ideal. In using vintage analogue equipment in the filming of *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019) I also found what Martino Nicoletti describes as analogue’s relationship to the ‘time’ dimension to be of interest, as analogue counters the ‘quickness’ and ‘instantaneity’ of digital video production (Nicoletti, 2014:167-168). The slowness of analogue found me mailing the film to the United States for processing and return to South Africa, which usually took upwards of three months. In that time I could contemplate the footage, engaging my memories of what was on the film, which was never 100% accurate, similar to the recalling of memories by my interlocutors. Filming with multiple film stocks (Kodak 50D, Kodak 200T, expired Kodachrome, and expired black & white film) that were donated, found, or purchased new by me, including color and black and white film seeks to engage the audience by drawing attention to the materiality of the

medium and giving the film a sometimes dream-like quality.

Audio was recorded for the moments appearing on the screen mostly just before or after the shot on the screen, but on occasion at unrelated times. As Hueson and Allen (2014) state of their Super 8mm films:

through the use of such asynchronous tools, ethnographers, subjects, sites, and audiences will engage in sensory relations ‘made strange’ through form and uncertainty. ... We attempt to produce documents that evoke ‘being here’ but that also explicitly signal that a film (or other type of recording) is an artifact, not a *re*-presentation, of experience. In other words, our films attempt to asynchronously document our everyday (ambiguous and ambivalent) experience of presence, while reminding that ‘presence’ is itself a production (Gumbrecht, 2004). (116-117)

Similar to Heuson and Allen I employed a number of filmic strategies in post-production to construct ‘artifactual reminders’ throughout the film including blown shots, false starts, screen artefacts from the head and tail of shots, and additionally I used an electronic synthesizer to create a unique accompanying sound for each time a head or tail shot of leader appeared on the screen as a transition (Ibid.:116-117). Film, generally utilized to present synchronicity, fails to acknowledge and engage with the fissures and misunderstandings of daily life, filmmaker Nathaniel Dorsky explains:

Life is full of gaps. We try to make the whole thing seem continuous and solid, but it’s actually more intermittent than we often want to admit. In a sense, for a film to be true, it has to trust this intermittence ... If a film fills in too much, it violates our experience. (Ibid.:120)

Utilizing amateur vintage media may be viewed by some as limiting, as one can never be sure of the final results, but as Martino Nicoletti claims to the contrary the ‘limits and “mistakes” ’ can highlight the uniqueness and communicative power. (Nicoletti, 2014:167).

## Video Elicitation

I first considered the value of using video-elicitation as a methodology following a suggestion from Dr. Fiona Ross, originally from Zimbabwe and current Head of the Anthropology Department at the University of Cape Town. Upon viewing, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), at the weekly Anthropology Seminar Series 2016 at the University of Cape Town, Dr. Ross stated that when she saw the souvenir t-shirt I brought back from Zimbabwe it took her back home stating, “I had a t-shirt similar to this as a child and seeing the shirt on screen brought back so many memories of my childhood”. In *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), Tanaka Chauke, during a semi-structured interview provided the following response to the same t-shirt, “I used to see white people wearing these t-shirts... it reminds me of when Zimbabwe was a tourist country that everyone wanted to visit before Zimbabwe falls down with the sanctions and everything.” These similar yet distinct responses, situated within a (memory) constructivist approach reveal how an individual’s influences, personal ideas and expectations, shaped by their personal pasts, thoughts, feelings, and experiences reveal a great deal of information regarding the varying subjective responses of participants when exposed to the same stimuli (Foster, 2009:13). Furthermore, I relate these experiences to what Vivian Sobchack (1999) in “Towards a Phenomenology of Non-fiction Film Experience”, describes as a viewer’s reaction based upon their familiarity with the subject matter on the screen (Sobchack cited in Savage, 2012:108). Sobchack explains how when we watch home movie footage (in this case a familiar item in a film) our memories of past events and people are summoned into our minds; events located elsewhere in time and space (Ibid.:108-109). Laura Marks (2000), in *The Skin of Film* states that cinema can bring forth memories that are stored or unknown, referencing Gilles Deleuze (1989), who elaborates:

cinema cannot give us a body, but it can give us “the genesis of an ‘unknown body,’ which we have in the back of our heads, like the unthought in thought” (1989:201), he suggests that cinema may indeed be capable of bringing us to our senses. Given the nature of memory, the audiovisual image necessarily evokes other sense memories, perhaps even memories that belong to that ‘unknown body’. (147)

Upon considering the feedback I received from Dr. Ross and similar sentiments I heard from other Zimbabweans who had seen the film I realized the importance video-elicitation could perform in my research. My use of ‘photo-elicitation’ (Collier and Collier, 1986) or in this case video-elicitation was useful for gathering sizeable amounts of knowledge in a short amount of time as several interlocutors had limited time to offer me. Sarah Pink (2009), quoting Rouch (2000 [1973]:440), discussing the use of what he labeled the ‘feedback’ process in his films states:

By studying this film [*Horendi*, about possession dances in Niger] on a small moviescope viewer with my informants, I was able to gather more information in two weeks than I could get in three months of direct observation and interview. (16)

Secondly, watching the video I made for video-elicitation purposes, which ended up not being *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), but instead a film I edited together from found and contemporary Super 8mm footage of Zimbabwe and colonial Rhodesia was a great way to ‘break the ice’ with new participants as we could sit and discuss the film, my research, and participants could ask questions of me as the viewings took place within my home. Similar to Jean Rouch I recorded my interlocutors’ voices as they commented on the images on the screen, occasionally asking them questions, providing descriptions of the scenes, and / or giving them personal information related to the contemporary footage I filmed. This approach was invaluable to my research as I gained key insights related to the recent history of Zimbabwe along with many personal stories and memories related to migration and life back ‘home’ in Zimbabwe. The inclusion of audio recordings collected during video-elicitation sessions in *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019), mainly utilized in the sequences that take place in Victoria Falls provide what Colette Piault referring to the use of asynchronous audio in the ethnofictions of Jean Rouch as, ‘enriching the image and the action much more than synchronous sound could ever do. This technique introduces a gap between the image and the word’ (Piault, 2007:39). Masie Chachona, one of my long-term interlocutors also participated in a video-elicitation viewing provided interesting audio, some of which is included in *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019) as she was the only interlocutor who saw and commented on footage of their own family which was included in the video, what Piault (2007) terms a ‘split-doubling’. Piault (Ibid.) explains the multiple benefits of this form of

representational strategy:

What is most significant is that this sort of effect on the viewer has nothing to do with the voice-over technique, used in such an unreflectingly liberal and banal manner today. Rather than *split* the word and the image, which is the effect of the voice-over, Rouch's early work exposes two simultaneous processes that are in tense juxtaposition. This process might be called a *split-doubling* of the personality of the actor-protagonist. On the one hand, there is a *re-enforcement* of the performed action, which is filmed and reconstituted precisely at the moment it receives words and commentary—a sort of *doubling* of the actor protagonist. On the other hand, there is a *splitting* of that persona. Rouch's *mise en scène* makes us aware of being privileged observers of that actor-protagonist's commentary on his actions. (39-40)

As a viewer becomes aware of his / her position as a 'privileged observer' the realization of a bodily presence is confirmed, or as David MacDougall states of bodily presence and film, it's, 'designed to generate a continuous interplay of stimulus and bodily response between screen and spectator', this interplay between screen and spectator is also useful in describing my interlocutors' relationship to the film shown in video-elicitation as they would often respond with sentiments such as, "I feel..." or "It makes me think about..." (MacDougall, 2006:20). Laura Marks, in Chapter 3 of *The Skin of Film* (2011), *The Memory of Touch* adds to an understanding of the sensory engagements of film, summarizing Henri Bergson (1988 [1911]), as he describes an image as not only visual but multisensory, comprising all the information that one's senses perceive about an object (Marks, 2000:146). Marks (Ibid.) provides a personal example of the multisensory effects of film at work stating:

...when I am watching Shani Mootoo's *Her Sweetness Lingers* (1994), close-ups of magnolia flowers reminds me of how they feel and how they smell, and the buzzing of insects reminds me of the heat of summer. For me the tape calls up associations with gardens I have known in my ancestral Alabama, associations that are probably somewhat different from the artist's and other viewers' associations with them. ...an audiovisual image evokes bodily associations, so that when I hear crickets and see a magnolia I remember the

prickle of sweat on my skin, and (nanoseconds later) the words for the smell of a magnolia – *pungent, sap-like, always about to rot (!)* – emerge from the emotional associations I formed with magnolias when I did smell them. (147-148)

Lastly, Susan Levine (2011), quoting Stadler (2003:88), adds to the connection between film and the sensorial stating:

Film engages us physically as well as intellectually in acts of perception, attention, imagining, perspective taking; in the experience of empathy and imagination, in resistance or responses to others that are felt bodily. (74)

In addition to the multisensory affects the individual screenings brought forth from my interlocutors as they consistently commented on how beautiful the country is and how they miss it, interesting political and historical insights were also provided. Some of these insights were consistent among my interlocutors as none of them recognizing the flag of colonial Rhodesia, discussions related to a statue of David Livingstone who “found” Victoria Falls or as one interlocutors questioned of the plaque placed at the site, “How could he find it when there was 100,000 people living there?”, discussions related to the renaming of Zimbabwe’s major cities upon independence, and how the country has been ruined by the current government.

### **Analysis & Additional Context: *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019)**

I found a freshness in structures that supported narrative elements without fully giving themselves over to the conventions of story-telling

Interview with Pacho Velez in MacDonald, 2015:412

...going home is always on their minds, even or perhaps especially because return seems so impossible

Orner & Holmes, 2010:813/10122

*Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019) opens with multiple scenic shots of Cape Town followed by footage of my family and myself with our newborn son in our home. The film is bookended with shots from the one-year birthday party for him, framing the time-span in which the visual material on the screen takes place, but not the audio as it spans approximately four years. The opening and closing shots of my family are employed to draw attention to the fact that while I travel and spend time with multiple interlocutors as they visit their families back in Zimbabwe I am aware that while I am missing small amounts of time with my family in the process of this research and filming it is inconsequential when compared to their plight.

The next sequence shows different rainy shots around the beachfront areas of Cape Town before ending up at the airport and on a plane with Masie Chachona as she heads to Zimbabwe to see her family. The audio at the beginning of this scene was recorded in July of 2015 and features Masie's son and oldest child, Dexter, explaining to people that we encounter in the outskirts of Harare the purpose of my visit and research in Zimbabwe.

[00:00:30.17] - Do you know this guy? - Yes [00:00:33.16]

[00:00:36.14] - He stays in Cape Town. He is the one doing the research. -  
Alright [00:00:40.22]

[00:00:46.15] Ok, so the Zimbabweans will be asked why they went to South  
Africa? [00:00:50.01]

[00:00:51.16] We will try to show that it doesn't mean that there is nothing in  
Zimbabwe. [00:00:57.11]

Dexter's explanation is followed by shots of Masie arriving in Harare where she is greeted by her family with audio that discusses how she only sees her kids twice a year for a couple of weeks at a time, but that she is lucky to be able to travel and see her family twice a year as opposed to many who spend years without visiting due to financial limitation.

After the title card for the film we enter Masie's current home in Zimbabwe. The audio for

this scene comes across as slightly humorous in terms of the tone of the discussion as Masie is cutting a birthday cake given to her by her children, but upon the consideration that Masie has been living in South Africa apart from her children for thirteen years it takes on a multifaceted overtone.

[00:01:41.19] I am not 50 Roger. I don't know why she thinks I'm 50.

[00:01:44.18]

[00:01:44.22] - How old are you? - 48 [00:01:47.08]

[00:01:47.12] - Why did she put 50 on there? - I don't know. [00:01:50.08]

[00:01:50.12] - Are you serious? - Serious. [00:01:52.12]

I think it should be noted that I never received a proper explanation, or maybe it is better to state a serious answer, regarding Masie's thoughts on this incident, though I enquired several times. I found that several of my interlocutors did not know the exact age of those older than them and this could be common as any time I enquired about the age of an elder person the date was almost always an approximate one. Similarly related it is not uncommon in Zimbabwe for children to not know their parents' full names, as other members of society never refer them to them in this manner. Women are referred to as *Mai* (mother of) followed by the name of their youngest child or only child and men are referred to as *Baba* (father of) followed by the name of the youngest or only child. Following the birthday cake age mishap the audio shifts to Masie and her son Dexter joking with the rest of the family about how Masie brings the clothes and socks of dead people in Cape Town to Zimbabwe and gives these items as gifts to her children.

After a couple of conversations related to Masie dating again as she has been widowed for approximately 20 years the film takes a dramatic turn as on December 24<sup>th</sup> 2017 the 'temporary' house where she lives was flooded. This 'temporary' house sits just a couple of meters away from the 'big house' she is in the process of having constructed. Due to the heavy downpour of rain the small river located approximately six or seven meters from Masie's temporary house overflowed and came into the kitchen, toilet, living room, and one of the bedrooms of the house. I was told that the river was diverted onto her property in order to protect one of the neighbor's houses from such incidents leading Masie's feelings toward the neighbor to be described in Shona as, *'Kurimirana kumuganbu* (To plough on each

other's edge of the field) English definition: 'Not to be in good books with one's neighbor(s)' (Chikuhwa, 2007:5). Following the flooding a couple of shots of the aftermath inside and outside the house are shown accompanied by a short conversation between Masie and myself.

[00:04:16.07] Don't worry, if you come here in 2019 we will be in the big house [00:04:22.11]

[00:04:22.13] The flooding... flooding one. [00:04:25.07]

[00:04:26.12] - Did you take pictures? - Um, huh. [00:04:28.11]

[00:04:28.15] - When it was flooding? - Yes. [00:04:30.01]

[00:04:30.03] Really? [00:04:30.22]

What I consider to be one of the more important scenes in the film follows from the sequence of the flooding as we see Masie and her extended family celebrating Christmas together. We see them taking photos, dancing, drinking, and posing for photos with one another. Moments such as this are ones that are severely neglected from inclusion in films about migration that I feel was important to show in this film, a family celebrating life and simply being together for the holidays, fully taking advantage of their limited time together.

The next sequence of the film takes place in Victoria Falls (Mosi-oa-Tunya) in July of 2017. This sequence marks a couple of shifts in the film as none of my interlocutors was there with me during this short research trip and a sizeable amount of the audio for this sequence of the film comes from my video-elicitation session. Victoria Falls shares a border with Zambia and a majority of my interlocutors can trace back ancestry on one or both sides of their families to neighboring countries such as Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique, therefore the first piece of audio in this sequence comes from Masie as she tell me the origins of her surname. This audio was collected in early 2018 from one of several driving lessons I gave her in Cape Town in which I filmed intermittently and always had an audio recorder running to capture our conversations.

[00:05:54.03] ...but you know, like my surname, Chachona... [00:05:57.06]

[00:05:57.11] it's like, you can't go back to your place of origin. [00:06:01.18]

[00:06:01.23] - Really? - Yeah. [00:06:03.06]

[00:06:03.10] because my grandfather, my father's father, was from Mozambique. [00:06:08.10]

The next scene continues the discussion on identity, but shifts to a conversation about Chinese people as Masie has had several nieces and nephews study in China and there has been a surge in Chinese investment and workers throughout Africa. The opening of this scene shows me eating breakfast at a picnic table in Victoria Falls (Mosi-oa-Tunya) as a small dog looks on, accompanied by a casual conversation between Masie, her oldest daughter, Dionne, and Masie's sister, Primrose.

[00:06:20.06] - Is it real that the Chinese eat dogs? - Yes. [00:06:23.07]

[00:06:23.08] Was it Tino or Della that said it tastes like beef? [00:06:26.13]

[00:06:26.16] - The frogs taste like chicken. - Did they really eat it? I will never eat it. [00:06:31.01]

[00:06:31.05] I will never eat the dog meat. [00:06:35.17]

[00:06:35.20] Even if they said there was no more beef meat in the world and there is only dog meat left I will never eat it. [00:06:41.02]

Following from this conversation are several shots of Victoria Falls (Mosi-oa-Tunya) along with a conversation related to the falls which include a brief verbal exchange between an anonymous interlocutor and myself regarding the statue of the 'founder' of the falls of David Livingstone and his 'discovery' of a location that had over 100,000 inhabitants. While at the falls I crossed over into Zambia for a day and show footage on the Victoria Falls Bridge including a plaque commemorating its status as an 'International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark' that excludes the local name of the falls, Mosi-oa-Tunya. While on the border a woman is seen carrying a large bag on her head as my interlocutor Tanaka states:

[00:08:11.05] And you know like that woman you are seeing there, she looks like a border trader. A cross border... [00:08:18.09]

As I am looking at the lives of Zimbabwean migrant women the aforementioned footage and audio on the border is worthy of taking a moment to elaborate on as the role of cross-border traders in contemporary Zimbabwean society has shifted as many were men prior to Zimbabwe's economic downfall over the last three decades. When women started to work

more in the trade it was 'highly gendered' and women were seen to be, 'challenging the traditional female role of subservience to men' (Muzvidziwa, 2001:74-75).

Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988) in her novel, *Nervous Conditions* highlights the subservient role of women in a harrowing reflection by the protagonist Tambu:

and I feeling bad for her and thinking how dreadfully familiar that scene had been, with Babamukuru condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt victimized at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and I grew maize. The victimization, I saw, was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn't depend on any of the things I had thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it. And that was the problem. ...But what I didn't like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness. (117-118)

The media in Zimbabwe has constantly projected negative information of women cross-border traders since the early 1980s (Cheater 1998; Cheater and Gaidzanwa 1996 cited in Muzvidziwa, 2001:68). Some reports including those by Zimbabwe's government owned newspaper, *The Herald*, printed numerous stories of women border traders abducting people with possible intent to commit ritual murders. Additional papers ran stories of traders using zombies to crochet doilies, as being inhumane and grotesque money-grabbers, prostitutes, and selling human body parts. Some politicians in the country even went as far as blaming women cross-border traders for the national problems in Zimbabwe, labeling them, 'unpatriotic economic saboteurs' (Cheater, 1998 quoted in Muzvidziwa, 2001:68).

Attempts by the Zimbabwean state to control cross-border trade seem to go against the realities of globalization. Cross-border women traders developed their own strategies to solve their day-to-day problems. They resorted to interpersonal networking based on kin, friendship, neighborhood ties, and associations. They drew on local knowledge, organization and values to deal with their new working environment. As Achille Mbembe states:

The postcolonial subject mobilizes not just a single identity; but several fluid identities, which, by their very nature, must be constantly revised in order to achieve maximum instrumentality and efficacy, as and when required. (Mbembe 1992:5 quoted in Muzvidziwa, 2001:67)

Victor Muzvidziwa concludes that these ordinary women, locals at one level yet cosmopolitan on another, developed a cosmopolitan sense of self which 'led to new relations which defined ethnic and class divides' finding these women confirming Mbembe's (1992) thoughts on postcolonial identity, 'adopting multiple identities as survival strategies' (Ibid.:73).

The next city featured in the film is Kadoma, located an hour and a half southwest of the capital Harare. Arriving in Kadoma viewers see the 'Welcome to adoma' sign, the K in Kadoma is missing. Heading into town to we see the bustling streets and colonial architecture such as that of The Grande Hotel, which is now home to numerous small shops with countless black market currency exchangers hanging out in front of the hotel. Kadoma is a city that was built around mining and to this day it still employs a significant number of people, some legally and a significant number participating in the exceedingly dangerous illegal gold mining industry. As this was my second time in Kadoma I was deemed okay to take to a rural area where the majority of the people still live in circular huts and was able to view men mining just meters away from the homes. My time filming at the mines was short lived though as one of the miners, misunderstanding a joke made by one of my hosts, prompted the group of men I was with to usher me away abruptly. The audio does not portray this unnerving moment as I was not there long enough to capture much audio, but instead is of me asking a worker about the length of time he has been mining.

After a few quick shots of the of the home I stayed in during my time in Kadoma the film cuts to a cemetery in midday during the unveiling of a tombstone for the father-in-law of Media, which is the final requirement of the family when a relative passes away. The audio from this scene is comprised of one of the songs sung during the ceremony and audio of Media's daughter mimicking the exaggerated prayer style of the Pentecostal church as Media and her sister-in-law laugh in the background.

After the tombstone unveiling the film goes back to the home I stayed in and though it is not explicitly revealed that it is a New Year's Eve celebration, it is clear that a party is taking place. Again the intention is to show a side of the life of migrants that is usually excluded from visual forms of representation. The audio for this scene is a mixture of my long-time interlocutor and former employee Media's husband yelling into a p.a. system throughout the party and one of several moments in the film where I am interacting with people. In this particular instance I am speaking with several children as we try to establish the rules and boundaries for a game of hide and seek, which I put off participating in earlier in the film.

The final scene in Kadoma takes place in a small mining community outside of Kadoma where I went with Media to visit relatives from her mother's side of the family that she has not seen in over 15 years. This side of the family originates from Malawi and on the way there Media's husband told me to pay attention to their Shona and note how different it sounds from his Shona. This is another moment of note as one of Robert Mugabe's primary reasons for the justification of many of his policies, which used notions of whose opinion or vote would count in Zimbabwe and whose did not, is based primarily on factors related to skin color, homeland of origin, and cultural affiliation. Francis Nyamnjoh adds a key insight into this troubled logic pointing out that. 'the majority (90 percent) of so-called nation-states are fragmented – multinational and culturally heterogeneous' (Nyamnjoh, 2006:9). This attempt at division is a quite conflicting one as in many ways it continues the legacy of colonial rule which sought to divide the people of Zimbabwe and fails to recognize that in the not so distant past Zimbabwe was synonymous with migrant workers coming from different countries for employment. Amanda Hammar, JoAnn McGregor, and Loren Landau, (2010) state:

Southern African towns were shaped through the administrative manipulation of race, class and gender divides, and repeated episodes of eviction. Influx controls combined with a dependence on large- scale inter-territorial labor migrancy delayed domestic processes of urbanization throughout the region. Thus, Harare was a 'Malawian' city until the 1950s.  
(270)

The ending of *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019) is set back in Cape Town within my home as my family and some friends celebrate the first birthday of my son. As mentioned in the opening of this section, this scene bookmarks the film while drawing attention to the fact that when fieldwork is over I return home to my family. It is also my hope that viewers will pick up on my American accent throughout the film and realize that though it is voluntary I am also living in a transient home.

Through the presentation of ethnographic films with fractured narratives and asynchronous audio new ways to evoke and explore ethnographic realities of migrants can be revealed through momentary elaborate scenes. A final thought from Heuson and Allen (2104) frames my intentions for *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019):

Our approach to these questions involves re-thinking the relation between ear and eye in ethnographic practice in the hope that new relations between the two senses will provoke and promote new engagements between anthropologists and their fields, tools, and collaborators. (127)

As noted the films of Jean Rouch, particularly his ethno-fictions such as *Jaguar* (1967) and *Moi, Un Noir* (1958) explored the many possibilities for asynchronous sound and their revelation of multiple dimensions of migrants' daily lived lives, a tradition that has been carried on and elaborated by a handful of contemporary filmmakers working at the crossroads of experimental film and anthropology. With the continued availability of small gauge vintage film equipment and film stocks anthropologists are more than capable of further investigating the promise of fractured narratives and asynchronous filmmaking in contemporary research.

## Chapter 6

### Constructing Visual Knowledge: Longitudinal Fieldwork and Internet Research in “*Zimbabwe, My Home*” (2019)

The prominent visibility migrants receive in the media as stereotypes effectively renders them invisible as individuals

Köhn, 2016:30

No condition is permanent in this universe, not even the unity of being. Only the permanence of change in unconditional

Nyamnjoh, 2017:1999

#### Introduction

For the Shona people of Zimbabwe personhood emphasizes social relationships; to be human is to maintain relationships through acts such as caring for family members or by paying bridewealth (*roora*) (Bourdillon, 1987; Mutambirwa, 1989; & Engelke, 1999 in Morreira, 2016:128-129). The Shona believe life is like a heavy load and one should take the group approach to this challenge as it cannot be easily carried alone (Gombe, 1995:15-22 quoted in Chimuka, 2001:34). The Shona have been characterized as having one primary purpose in life, ‘to love’ in order to make the world a better place to exist. Though the word love has an abundance of interpretations in this context *Agape* (ἀγάπη), the Greek interpretation is used as *agape* generally refers to a ‘“pure ideal type of love rather than the physical attraction suggested by eros” (Edwards, 1990), which is passionate love with sensual desire and longing’ (Mawere, 2010:279). *Agape*, the, ‘unconditional affection to do and promote goodness for others, even to strangers’ is believed to be in the heart of everyone, therefore anyone that wills to love can do so (Ibid.:280). In *Shona Customs* (1970), it is stated that children are taught from a very early age to share all that he /she has with brothers, sisters, and cousins, so much so that it is claimed that the habit of sharing becomes so ingrained that a child will find it difficult to eat without first sharing some of their food (Mhondoro, 1970:78). One of many examples of sharing among Shona people happened

during the first day of my first trip to Zimbabwe where I found myself in a kombi (small taxi bus) traveling from Harare to Kadoma. The woman seated next to me noticed that I was ogling mealies (grilled corn) being sold on the side of the road, but having just arrived in the country I was too overwhelmed to navigate the purchase of a roadside snack. As the bus roared away I felt a very gentle tap on my right shoulder; as I turned the woman seated next to me extended her hand offering me half of her mealie. As I thanked her she replied, “You cannot eat more than half if you are not used to it because it will upset your stomach”. I thanked her and offered to pay for the mealie; she grinned and shook her head no and turned her eyes back to the front of the bus. This kind moment from a stranger was one of my first experiences in Zimbabwe and it has come to define the way I view Shona people in general, as she exuded the Shona concept of *Unhu/Hunhu*; ‘decency, dignity, good manners, and character’ (Morreira, 2016:130).

The Shona idioms, ‘*Kuwanda kwakanaka, kwakarambwa nemuroyi* (the more we are the better, only a witch is against being many)’ and ‘*Munhu munhu* (a person is a person, viz. no one should look down upon others)’ personify their beliefs (Mawere, 2010:270). This idea of, ‘the more we are the better’ is exemplified in my research, specifically as it applies to Masie and her dreams of building a “big house” in Zimbabwe for her children, her sister, and her sister’s daughter to all live in together. Throughout my research several interlocutors cited multiple reasons for wanting a home back in Zimbabwe including being able to supply a house for their children and grandchildren, having a place to go to once the “old man is gone” (referring to President Robert Mugabe), having a home to return to upon retirement, and in a couple of cases to generate additional income through the rental of their newly constructed properties. The construction of houses in one’s homeland that may or may not ever be occupied by the builder is not unique to Zimbabweans as Dimitris Dalakoglou (2009) found that among Albanian migrants in Greece, ‘their first priorities, after accumulating some cash from their work abroad, was to build or refurbish their homes in Albania’, elaborating:

Why should Albanian migrants build houses in Albania when they do not live, or even expect to live, there? It is, I argue, because these houses combine multiple, diverse and contradictory elements—which are present in

their migratory everydayness—in one single tangible material entity that makes sense to them and makes all this dynamic, multi-sited and multi-cultural everydayness a logical system of reference for the individuals involved. (60-61)

This phenomenon is presented in numerous films, focused on multiple countries around the globe including *900,000 Frames Between Us* (2011) and *The Sixth Section* (2003), both of which focus on Mexican migrants in the United States, and additionally *Nannies* (2010), which highlights the lives of Brazilian nannies, to cite a few. Francis Nyamnjoh (2005a) explains this occurrence in the African context stating:

The home village in Africa has retained its appeal both for those who have been disappointed by the town, and for those who have found success in town. It seems that no one wants to stay in town permanently; even corpses are subject to competing claims for burial by kin in different rural localities (Geschiere and Gugler 1998; Nyamongo 1999). ...The city and the 'world out there' are perceived as hunting grounds; the home village is a place to return to at the end of the day. Investing in one's home village is generally seen as the best insurance policy and a sign of ultimate success, for it guarantees survival even when one has lost everything in the city and abroad, and secures and makes manifest a realization of success through satisfying obligations and fulfilling requests. (37)

In addition to considering the application of *Agape* (love) in Shona life, Daniel Miller's (2010) book *Stuff*, which I came across several years ago while conducting research for my MA in Visual And Media Anthropology research, also focused on Zimbabwean women and has guided my thoughts as it relates to *agape*:

looking at the literature on migration and Diaspora, and realizing that perhaps what academia had neglected was the one thing that mattered most to the migrants, the core relationships that were sundered by becoming a migrant. ...exemplified by mothers separated from children. People tend to care rather more about the people they love than the definition of who

exactly they are. Yet relatively few studies focus explicitly upon this dimension of migration as against fashionable topics such as identity. (125)

Miller's observation is at the heart of my longitudinal research and films on Zimbabwean migrant women residing in Cape Town. The film that will be discussed in the following chapter, *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) focuses on one woman's return visits to Zimbabwe to visit her children and oversee the building of her 'big house', intercut with videos found on YouTube that reveal some of the political and economic moments that have led to Zimbabwe's mass migration and casual, often overlooked, everyday moments of daily life in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. These moments of filling in absences are influenced theoretically by Wilma Kiener's (2008) article on montage editing "The Absent and the Cut", with the work of Francis Nyamnjoh (2017) and Arthur Nhemachena (2017) providing an often overlooked but fundamental African perspective on ideas related to incompleteness and presence and absence, which I apply to thoughts related to migration and separation. As opposed to a majority of research and films on migration that focus on the destination of migrants, I have chosen instead to focus predominantly on a mother's short-term visits to Zimbabwe to see her children and family.

## Theory

Anyone who is familiar with exile has gained many insights into life but has discovered that it holds even more questions. Among the answers there is the realization, which at first seems trivial, that there is no return, because the re-entrance into a place is never also a recovery of lost time.

—Jean Améry, "How Much Home Does a Person Need?"

Orner & Holmes, 2010:788/10122)

*Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), shows how Masie Chachona traveled multiple times between South Africa and Zimbabwe or what could be argued as between home and home. Angela Torresan (2011), in her journal article, "Round Trip: Filming a Return Home", discusses the conceptual framework of her film *Round Trip* both visually and theoretically. Speaking of the

film's protagonist Eugenia, a Brazilian immigrant living in Portugal, who travels to Brazil for the first time in five years, she states:

*Round Trip* explores a crucial moment in the process of building what Basch et al. (1994) have called a personal transnational social field, in which the experience of the home and host countries as divided by national boundaries begins to give way to the realization that both places form an 'unbounded terrain' of personal social networks. (Glick Schiller 2006:6 quoted in Torresan, 2011:125)

Torresan continues her discussion of home stating:

the trope of a sense of home that can be conjured up in movement holds very little weight against the objects, places, and relationships that we see as constituting the reality of Eugenia's life in both cities. She was located not in movement but in multiple places, and the first trip helped her develop what Constable (2004) has described, in the case of Filipina immigrants who constantly travel between the Philippines and Hong Kong, as 'a plural vision that allows— perhaps requires—[immigrants] to create a new place in both.'  
(124)

The performance that is sometimes induced during the filming of ethnographic research films, such as attempting to convey the proper image of oneself which would be culturally acceptable, is considered by many to be paramount in many of the films of Jean Rouch. For Rouch, as opposed to viewing this behavior as a false dramatization of real life, the camera provoked performances that in combination with the relationship between the interlocutor and the filmmaker evoked knowledge unique to film. The camera is believed to transcend the role of a recording device and become an instrument utilized for the investigation and discovery of ethnographic realities (Ibid.:120). While filming Masie on her visits to her children in Zimbabwe I found that what she often said regarding how her children should behave and listen and what she allowed to transpire were often at odds, particularly when I was filming. Though her children were generally respectful in moments that I was filming, Masie would demand their respect and I could literally feel her embarrassment when they

talked back or did not listen to her while filming. I did notice that through the years her controlling of scenes diminished as, I assume, she became more comfortable with the presence of the camera and I know that she became more comfortable with me as she shifted from an attempt to control her children while filming, to questioning and directing me. Torresan (Ibid.) explains this phenomenon stating:

Cameras are catalysts for performances, and performances work as a genre of self-representation and self-theorization that can shed crucial light on our understanding of how people perceive their role in the social space they share with others. (126)

The potential that a film such as *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) and *Round Trip* possess is summed up by Torresan as she claims this sort of film can help ‘excavate ethnography’ (Ibid.:126). The stories created build on theoretical concerns and the analytical concerns come into play during the editing of the film allowing a focus on transmigration and homemaking (Ibid.:126).

Elaborating on the use of images necessitates a discussion of their double potential as an index and icon, defined by Jacques Rancière (2007:11), as the ‘two potentialities of the image: the image as raw, material presence and the image as discourse encoding a history’ (Ibid.:126). The material presence of an image, an imprinting of a copy of the original object, despite not being a completely faithful one as it is produced by mechanical operation, is described by Laura Marks, drawing from Walter Benjamin as having, ‘an “aura” that comes from the physical contact they have had with something that was there before the camera’, or as stated by Gilberto Perez, ‘a charge of reality derived by the camera from its involvement with actual things’ (Marks, 2000:22, Perez, 1998 cited in Torresan, 2011:126). The auratic quality of the images turns them into ethnographic data with the potential to affect audiences both cognitively and experientially (MacDougall 1992), while images, also icons full of historical and cultural connections locate them as, ‘factual yet allusive and suggestive of relationships that unfold beyond their aural substance’ (Torresan, 2011:126). Torresan (Ibid.) continues observing:

what places films in a privileged position to create anthropological

knowledge is the process of editing a dramatic narrative and creating new connections with images that hold the aura of a previous reality, whose presence and impact can never be reproduced by words in a text. (126)

In addition to several of the similarities my methodological approach shares with Torresan, I also believe that my film works theoretically based upon:

indexical ethnographic details that...tell and show a story about a personal rite of passage that alludes to a wider migratory experience of transnational connections...connotes, rather than denotes, anthropological theory. (127)

### Shifting Methodologies

It was not that she did not have a dream of her perfect future but it never came closer. Whilst fulfilling her endless obligation to others, there was little opportunity for her to voice her desires, and eventually she grew used to this way of life and no longer resisted. Her dreams she realized were just that – her dreams.

Brickhill, Pat, 2008:179/2569

In *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), I have chosen to communicate the experiences of one individual, Masline “Masie” Chachona, though an additional interlocutor, Media Tembo, was also documented for four years. I found that the time I spent with Masie and the footage I collected of her in Cape Town and on three trips to her home in Zimbabwe offered a more in-depth look at the life of a long-term migrant. Additionally, as Masie left her children in Zimbabwe over twelve years ago, their ages allowed me to hang out with them and hear their stories of separation from their mother and about life in Zimbabwe. The time spent with Masie has led me to define my research as a phenomenological approach drawing from Robert Desjarlais and C. Jason Throop (2011) who outline this approach stating:

think of lived experience, illness and healing, suffering, violence, morality, bodiliness, sensory perception, communicative practices, mind and

consciousness, creativity and aesthetic efforts, and subjectivity and intersubjectivity, among other themes and topics. More generally, they have helped anthropologists to reconfigure what it means to be human, to have a body, to suffer and to heal, and to live among others. (88)

Köhn, discussing an issue with some anthropological accounts states they, ‘often purport to understand the people studied better than they do themselves, claiming to reveal truths that are unconscious to them’, often located outside of their interlocutors’ daily lived lives (Köhn, 2016:57). Köhn proclaims phenomenological anthropologists argue ‘against such a cultural privileging of Western thought over other intellectual traditions’ as phenomenology, out of justness seeks the other’s perspective, looking at aspects commonly overlooked (Ibid.:57).

The study of migration from a phenomenological approach can help to counter mass media representations of migrants’ lives, alternatively showing:

where life is lived, meanings are made, will is exercised, reflection takes place, consciousness finds expression, determination take effect, and habits are formed and broken. Any theory of culture, *habitus* or lifeworld must include some account of those moments in social life when the customary, given, habitual, and normal is disrupted, flouted, suspended and negated. At such moments, crisis transforms the world from an apparently fixed and finished set of rules into a repertoire of responsibilities. To borrow Marx’s vivid image, the frozen circumstances are forced to dance by us singing to them their own melody. (Jackson, 1996:22 cited in Köhn, 2016:58)

Additionally, my methodological approach found me spending time with not only Masie, but several additional women in Cape Town and Zimbabwe in an attempt to gain some insight into their daily lived experiences. In this time I gathered data through hanging out, formal and informal interviews, personal observations, casual conversations on the street, and observation in the women’s homes, and in the case of Media Tembo, her work environment as she was employed as a domestic worker in my home for a couple of years during research.

Through the presentation of *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) as what has been labeled an

‘ethnobiography’, as it portrays an individual from a society in historical and psychological depth, I feel as though I am able to paint a picture of Zimbabwean migration which presents a different view to that of the mainstream media, and through the inclusion of YouTube videos adds to the expanding repertoire of ethnographic filmmaking conventions. David MacDougall categorizes ethnobiography as having a double subjectivity, ‘depicting culture ...through an insider’s perspective, it is framed by an outsider’s concerns’ (1998:114). In the case of this research I wanted to document Masie’s construction of her “big house” and the family dynamics between a long-term migrant mother and her children, which she has been separated from. Again this approach conjures Desjalais, as he describes his research in an interview with Karen Frenkel (n.d.) stating:

The main conceptual framework I have in mind when I am doing research is to see how peoples’ lives are put together, and to understand how they experience their lives and the worlds they live in. The fancy word for that in phenomenology is the ‘lifeworld’. What is the lifeworld of a person or a group of people I’m trying to understand? (Question1)

Though at first they may seem to be in conflict, my methodological approach employed a predominantly observational approach to the collection of footage related to Masie and her family and in post-production I engaged with the ideas put forth by Wilma Kiener in her article, “The Absent and the Cut”, investigating one of her key questions, ‘how can cuts, these joints between two images, “speak” about our world, or vice versa’ (Kiener, 2008:394). Emmanuel Levinas (1969) referenced in Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev proposes that the key to opposing the camera’s objectifying reduction is through visual manipulations; this reminds viewers of the constructed nature of film (Suhr & Willerslev, 2012:283). Suhr and Willerslev continue regarding editing, stating, ‘visual manipulations should ...be balanced with the realistic techniques of subject observation’, a consideration I upheld during the post-production of *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) (Ibid.:292-294). My ‘manipulations’ in *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), consist of asking questions of and being asked questions by my interlocutors; the addition of YouTube videos that span Zimbabwe’s pre-independence to 2018 which are presented non-linearly; and by the utilization of ‘haptic visibility’ (Marks, 2000:xi) through the employment of high-definition (HD) digital video and multiple color

and black and white Super 8mm film stocks. The observational footage I recorded is not what would be described as traditional observational footage or 'fly on the wall' as, previously mentioned, I did engage with the people I was filming, sometimes through asking questions and at others answering questions asked of me. Regarding observational or 'fly on the wall' footage Silvio Carta, notes:

The idea of the camera as a kind of objective recording device derives from an outmoded positivism. It assumes that the camera can function like the instruments used in the natural sciences – i.e. the microscope or the telescope. This interpretive framework derives from a concern with scientific knowledge and, more generally, with methodological injunctions about authenticity, anonymity and truthfulness. It 'reflects an epistemology that maintains that reality is empirically observable and can be represented with some objectivity and accuracy'. (Prins 2010: 283; Loizos 1993: 9 cited in Carta, 2015:3)

Carta, adding one more thought on observational filmmaking, states that it involves unexpected discoveries based upon chance and improvisation as filming more often than not involves little to no pre-planning (Ibid.:4). Adding to the contemporary realizations regarding an observational form of collecting footage, despite the often minimal pre-planning, Paul Hockings, points out the, 'cameraman is selective in regard to time, focus, angle and framing of each shot' (Hockings, 2003:515).

As I live in the same suburb as several of my interlocutors and got to know several of them quite well on a personal level I often worried about being seen as unprofessional, similar to the concerns Nosipho Mngomezulu (2016) relayed in her article, "Whose Voice is it Anyway? Representation, Narrative and Online Ethnography". This was particularly worrying to me on my last trip to Zimbabwe in December 2017 – January 2018 as Masie's son Dexter took me out several times to drink with his friends, an activity that Masie would not allow on previous visits out of fear for my safety. Mngomezulu (Ibid.) summarizes the dynamics of her complicated relationships otherwise known as 'the filming relation' (Larcher & Oxley, 2015:2) stating:

I was not simply studying their lives, I was in their lives, and they were in mine. The distance and intimacy created by titles such as researcher, friend, official, and foreigner meant that insider and outsider status were constantly being shifted. (16)

She continues, claiming that the idea of insider and outsider is a problem for researchers, as even amongst so-called 'insiders' devices of inclusion and exclusion can be deployed (Ibid.:17). One example of a form of exclusion among insiders that stands out in my mind occurred in Kadoma in January of 2018. It was early in the morning and I was drinking 'shake shake' (nickname for a Zimbabwean produced alcohol) with the local men on a corner and several of them started making fun of others regarding their command of the English language, skin color (too dark), among other physical characteristics.

## Observation

I have chosen to combine multiple methodologies through the application of observational filming and Kiener's (2008) ideas related to montage as a way of filling in absences from my observational footage in the making of *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), acknowledging the ever changing, expanding, and collapsing forms of documentary production, which have been recognized though not fully embraced by ethnographic filmmakers for decades. David MacDougall in the 1994 postscript to *Beyond Observational Cinema*, recognized and corrected his earlier presumptions related to different modes of documentary production (Nichols, 2010 [2001]) stating, 'the borderline between observational and participatory cinema, which I was then at pains to define, now appears more blurred,' this points to MacDougall's realization that his commentary on these approaches in the past failed to consider, 'the larger stylistic change which was then reshaping ethnographic filmmaking' (MacDougall, 1995:128). MacDougall continues, pointing out that though some observational filmmakers may have desired to film, 'as if the camera were not there', he maintains that surely no one truly believed that the films they were making were, 'complete, unmediated documents, nor did many of them, I think ever hold that observational film could be ideologically transparent' (Ibid.:129). With practical as well as ethical implications, the idea of obtaining permission to film someone or a group of people and then providing no further explanations throughout

the process due to fear of influencing their behavior locates a filmmaker as someone who, ‘withholds the very openness that he asks from his subjects in order to film them’ (Ibid.:124). Notwithstanding the potential practical and ethical considerations, there are moments when an observational style of filmmaking can be of use. On the other hand participatory cinema seeks to film events in the situation(s) that exists due to a representative from one culture encountering another culture, thus providing a record of the interactions, which took place as a result of these meetings (Ibid.:125).

Through the application of observational filming in *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), the film aspires to accomplish what Anna Grimshaw describes as cinema’s potential to ‘open up a space between the concrete details of lived experience and broader historical and political abstractions’ (Grimshaw, 2001:255). Additionally, it is my hope that I have successfully employed Elizabeth Cowie’s notion that observational filming is not to be understood as a ‘mere recording of actuality as spectacle or beauty; instead, the documentary is presented as an epistemological discourse that requires that we not only *see* but are also brought to *know*’ (Cowie, 2007:95 quoted in Olivieri, 2016:147). Domitilla Olivieri states that being brought to know is made possible through the ‘affective texture’ which may ‘elicit empathy in the viewer’ (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009b:114 quoted in Olivieri, 2016:147). Offering a reduction of reality through the production of ‘truth’ in its methods filming observationally can be described as the product of collaboration, recreating what Jean Rouch labeled the, ‘irreplaceable quality of real contact between the person filming and those being filmed’ (Jean Rouch, 2003 [1975]:88 quoted in Carta, 2015:2-3). Viewers of a film fill in the ‘unmediated space of the film with their own understanding and judgments, as it often happens in everyday life’ (Ibid.:5) and as Dai Vaugh notes, there is ‘no sharp demarcation between misunderstandings of documentary and the misunderstandings of life’ (1999:78), leading to what MacDougall (1998:77-78; 2006:220) drawing from Bertrand Russell (1912:46-59) defines as, “knowledge by acquaintance” (Ibid.:5-6). Lastly, Silvio Carta defines ethnographic filmmaking practices as, not only an engagement with the dialectics of an encounter between cultures, but also a deep focus on the empirical. This means that observational films can be ethnographic because of their commitment to experience (Ibid.:9).

## Montage

In a critique of some forms of observational filmmaking it is mentioned that refusing to make oneself accessible to those filmed can be equated to the ‘colonial roots of anthropology’ and that ‘The shadow of that attitude falls across observational film, giving it a distinctively Western parochialism’ (MacDougall, 1995:124). As previously mentioned by MacDougall, contemporary filmmakers have for the most part abandoned the idea of refusing to be accessible during filming and have incorporated bearing witness to the ‘event’ of the film. By allowing those filmed access to the footage a filmmaker, ‘makes possible the corrections, additions, and illuminations that only their response to the material can elicit’ (Ibid.:125). Not only did I allow access to myself and my footage throughout the filming process, I found that providing my interlocutors access to my footage was key to gaining a better understanding of their worldview, their situation in Cape Town, and what they wanted to be shown and excluded from the film. This form of openness among my interlocutors seeks to minimize a Eurocentric bias described as one which, ‘separates forms from their performers, converts those forms into influences, brings those influences into the center, leaves the living sources on the margin, and pats itself on the back for being so cosmopolitan’ (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (n.d.) quoted in Shohat and Stam, 2014:3). In one instance during a post-production session in which I was having Shona translated to English by Media Tembo, she stated:

Maybe we should not put all this talk about witchcraft in the film because people will think that this is the only thing that they believe in and people may not pay attention to other issues that are going on.

We discussed her concerns within the context of the entire film and agreed that by leaving the scene in the film despite the viewers’ potential misunderstandings, something we cannot control, the scene’s effectiveness was due to the power of the extended sequences as described by Carta (2015):

Extended observational sequences, like thick literature, foreground what are usually background materials and, it must be added, present events in their

complexity and multidimensionality. They open an arena of ethnographic description that conveys a wealth of information and nuances about slices of life intimately recorded. (10)

It should be noted that the scene in question was not a scene featuring Media, but one in which Masie and her sister Primrose were included, but Masie was aware that Media helped me to translate footage.

Wilma Kiener in her article “The Absent and the Cut” proposes the question, ‘Are there alternative cinematic poetics that are capable of understanding and conveying the experience of living in worlds of (dis)location and of (a)synchronism?’ (Kiener, 2008:393). Kiener suggests that the answer to this question lies in post-production through editing, more specifically through montage, as ‘Montage cuts and reorganizes connections in time and space’ (Ibid.:393). Kiener additionally poses the question, ‘how can cuts, these joins between two images, “speak” about our world, or vice versa?’ offering the trance scene in *Les Maîtres fous* (1954) by Jean Rouch as the answer to her question as she describes one particular scene as follows:

archive material of a British colonial military parade is juxtaposed with participants in a trance ritual embodying British colonial figures. ...*Les Maîtres Fous* is an early example of what I would like to call, for a start, an “ethnographic cinema of montage,” since it is a very successful attempt at filming cultural geographies; in the trance sequence, editing solves the problem of showing what—while being absent—is a necessary part of the whole. The images of the military parade, inserted in what started off as a conventional documentary scene, come as a complete surprise. ...this montage sequence: film footage of what was absent at the moment of the actual shooting was included later, in the editing room. (Ibid.:394-395)

Additionally it is noted that working with montage can add an, ‘additional reality, thus expanding and enhancing the actual observational scene’ (Ibid.:395). As film is a language capable of stating:

“both...and,” “neither...nor”: North and South, here and there, to left and right, inside and outside, subjective and objective. ...when expression is not solely a matter of the images, the cut becomes an expressive tool in its own right. (Ibid.:397-398)

As a majority of *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) takes place in Zimbabwe, the country Masie left behind over 12 years ago, the insertion of YouTube videos to fill in the absent helps to expand and enhance our understanding of Masie’s situation. Editing information into the film this way not only performs a supplementary function, but it changes what comes before and after the cut, ‘When the “absent” is speaking about the present and vice versa, when the presence of one scene is the absence of the next, the spiral of montage is set into motion’ continuing, ‘Each absence is peculiar, and it is up to the cut to define the character of the absence’ (Ibid.:395-396).

Steffen Köhn (2016), voices a concern with Kiener’s (2008) notions claiming:

her dismissal of the techniques of observational filmmaking, such as long takes and extended sequences, might consequently deprive us of a cinematic methodology that is suitable for the investigation of the (often subtle) transformations that occur in place. (99)

Personally, I find that Kiener’s (2008) description of observational cinema as a form of an ‘audiovisual vacuum cleaner’ and her admission that there is no clear definition or properties that define a ‘long-take’ subtract somewhat from her condemnation of the application of an observational approach, but at the same time these omissions partially assist in my justification for combining her form of montage with an observational approach. In Kiener’s film, *Ixok-Woman* (1990), I find that though she has utilized montage effectively throughout there is a scene in the film in which a group of women wash their clothes together at a concrete assembly point that I think could be defined as an observational, or to use Kiener’s term “vacuum cleaner” scene. Lastly, Kiener (Ibid.) claims:

What the camera is to Observational Cinema, the editing room and ultimately the screen is to an ethnographic cinema of montage. It is there that connections in time and space are reorganized. On the screen it is possible to understand the invisible by taking things apart and reassembling them in a new way'. (407)

I attempted in the production of *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), to examine and provide a space for both the 'long-take' of observational cinema along with allowing the material to disrupt and fill in for absences through montage. As per my earlier mentioned discussion with Media about the inclusion or exclusion of a scene, the audience will ultimately be the ones to decide on the effectiveness or failure of the combination of these two cinematic approaches.

## Discussion of Film – Research Findings

Every voyage can be said to involve a re-sitting of boundaries. The travelling self is here both the self that moves physically from one place to another, following 'public routes and beaten tracks' within a mapped movement; and, the self that embarks on an undetermined journey practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between here, and there, and elsewhere

Trinh, 2011:27 cited in Olivieri, 2016:135

*Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) opens with a few seconds of green leader from Super 8mm film stock before the colonial Rhodesian insignia appears on the screen accompanied by the controversial National Anthem of the Rhodesian UDI government, "Rise, O Voices of Rhodesia". As the anthem continues to play, a short montage of home movies from Rhodesia, War of Liberation footage, and a military band showing both black and white soldiers, plays before cutting to a youthful Robert Mugabe delivering a speech filmed shortly after independence where he states, "Our majority rule could easily turn into inhuman rule if we oppressed, persecuted, or harassed those who do not look or think like the majority of us." This foreshadowing of the events to come, specifically the Fast Track Land Reform

Programme (FTLRP), unleashed primarily against white Zimbabwean farmers, though it just as greatly affected black Zimbabweans through their loss of jobs and homes, is followed by a slightly older Mugabe stating, “Our present state of mind is that you are now our enemies.” This opening montage is meant to set the stage for what will continue throughout the film, videos drawn from YouTube which present key moments that contributed to the political, economic, and social decline of Zimbabwe during Robert Mugabe’s 37 year reign. Additional videos downloaded from YouTube provide viewers with scenes of commonplace happenings in Zimbabwe that are frequently absent from mass media and conventional documentary representations of the country providing what Jaimie Baron describes as the opportunity to, ‘look into a million little windows and see a fragment of life inside each one’ (Baron, 2014:147). After the opening sequence, title cards provide context for Zimbabwe under Mugabe’s leadership and introductory information about the protagonist, Masline “Masie” Chachona’s arrival in Cape Town in 2005 and the three young children she had to leave behind in Zimbabwe. As the title cards fade from the screen the viewer sees assorted shots of Cape Town, South Africa, the current place of residence of my long-term interlocutor, Masie. These shots are followed by shots of Masie along with her sister Primrose as they dismantle furniture in the small room Masie was forced to vacate due to renovations, which are occurring in order to rent the room at a higher rate to foreign students. While they are dismantling the furniture they discuss requests from Masie’s children back home for new school bags.

[Masie] How many times must I buy these (school) bags for these kids?

[Masie] Did she have a (school) bag? [Primrose] Who?

[Masie] Ruva

[Primrose] A school bag? [Masie] Yes.

[Primrose] Ah, I don’t know.

[Primrose] Didn’t you go with a bag that time when we bought (school) bags?

[Primrose] That’s what I am asking. Didn’t you bring her a bag in December?

[Masie] So, is it broken already? [Primrose] I don’t know.

[Primrose] Oh! It’s because she knows her mother is in South Africa.

This scene closely resembles what Peter Orner and Annie Holmes (2010) in *Hope Deferred: Narratives of Zimbabwean Lives* were told during an interview with Nokuthula, a domestic worker and former hairdresser in Cape Town who stated:

When I call, my son asks me, Mom, can you please buy me clothes? Some of his friends, their mothers are also here in South Africa, so he also likes asking for the same things they get from their parents: Can you please buy me such and such a thing? Every time, I make sure I buy it for him, so that he doesn't feel that he is a lonely child without a mother. (3056/10122)

The aforementioned scene of taking apart furniture and the conversation along with it took place in early 2015 and the expulsion of people from affordable rental spaces throughout the city is an ongoing area of concern. In the journal article "Migration challenges among Zimbabwean refugees before, during and post arrival in South Africa", Erhabor Idemudia, John Williams, and Gail Wyatt (2013) highlight through multiple interviews the problem of housing for migrants, with one interviewee stating:

The other problem we face right now in South Africa is accommodation...the treatment we are facing with the people we are staying with, belittling us... I don't know how to explain it. I don't know how they look at us...We pay 10 rands per day where we stay...well that's the way they charge you. And you don't use their water. You fetch your own water. And if you don't have [10 rands] you go and sleep outside, and you don't feel safe...You find Zimbabweans sleeping outside there by big bite. (22)

In the opening seven minutes of the film viewers learn about Masie's reasons for coming to Cape Town, the children she left behind, and her plans for her future, which are very much contingent upon the continued extensions of her work permit as she packs suitcases in preparation to travel to Zimbabwe for a visit with her children and family. Intercut with these moments are YouTube clips which show homes being burnt to the ground during the FTLRP, people walking through a high density suburb in Harare, and lastly, after Masie

boards a bus for Zimbabwe, several shots along the South Africa / Zimbabwe border. These last shots at the border show both the official border points and unofficial points where people cross in and out of the countries. Reece Jones (2016) offers a critical perspective on states restrictions on border movements emphasizing:

Restrictions on movement at borders are part of a long-term conflict between states and people who move, a conflict that goes back to the earliest states and human settlements. While the regulation of movement takes different forms through various historical periods, the underlying desire to protect privileges accrued through the control of resources and opportunities remains the same. ...The growing importance of citizenship and the development of new documents to identify the population coincided with changes in the perception of foreigners that resulted in increasingly strict monitoring of movements at borders (Salter, 2006). As states began to offer more services, such as health care, welfare, and housing, to their populations in the early twentieth century, there was concern that noncitizens could take advantage. (1088-1320/3759)

Jones concludes, referencing Simon Dalby, who states that movements restricted by states protect privilege and contain labor based upon an individual's place of birth: the global border regime (Dalby, 1998 in Jones, 2016:1355/3759).

The next several minutes of the film focus on Masie's arrival in Zimbabwe and through one static scene of the kitchen we are introduced to Masie's three children and young niece, the daughter of her sister, Primrose. This scene reveals some basic features of her individual relationships with each of her children that will become more apparent throughout the film. Her oldest son, Dexter, while generally respectful of Masie does verbally and physically display attributes to the contrary in this scene. Masie's oldest daughter, Dionne, obedient and humble in the scene was also generally very respectful of her mother at almost all times as over the course of all my visits as I found her constantly lending a helping hand by cooking, cleaning or doing a variety of additional domestic chores. Ruva, Masie's youngest daughter, who Masie left in Zimbabwe at the age of two, sometimes comes off as distant though one must consider her age of 10 – 14 years old throughout the filming process. Many children in

their pre-teen and early-teen years display these traits. This informal introduction to Masie or what she should technically be referred to in Shona culture as Mai Ruva translating to “mother of Ruva”, her children and niece, is intercut with a video of children in the high-density suburb of Epworth where Masie grew up as a child. After the kitchen scene the next approximately 20 minutes of the film focuses predominantly on daily life around the house interacting with her children, Mai Twins (mother of twins), and a friend of the family who lives in the house and working as the family’s domestic worker. Viewers are provided with glimpses of casual moments between family members such as watching television, discussing and visiting the pre-school that Masie established in Epworth, and seeing to the construction of her home. These domestic scenes are edited together with videos of police brutality, a women’s prison choir, police in riot gear marching in front of the local grocery store, white farmers being evicted from their farms, President Robert Mugabe famously falling down stairs as he exits an aircraft, a flash mob at a Harare mall, delivery trucks traveling from South Africa to Zimbabwe, scenes from Operation Murambatsvina, and President Robert Mugabe’s wife Grace speaking at a campaign rally.

I should reiterate at this point in traveling to film Masie that I have already completed two films about Zimbabwean migrant women, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) in which Masie was one of the three main protagonists, and a micro short documentary, *Migrant Dilemma* (2017). Masie attended the world premiere of *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) in Cape Town and has become quite used to my presence with and without a camera. This will become apparent as this film progresses over the years as she talks to me often while filming, asks to see footage, and even playfully tells me not to film at certain events (only once seriously forbidding me to film as a prophet came to the home to pray with her). After the aforementioned YouTube video in which Grace Mugabe addresses a crowd at a rally a title card appears on the screen reading “Two and a half years later.” Masie is shown sitting on an airplane and texting before arriving at Robert Mugabe International Airport to be greeted by her son Dexter and sister Primrose, who as of 2017 moved back to Zimbabwe from Cape Town. The following shot is from the car approaching a monument that stretches over the road outside the airport that reads “Zimbabwe 1980 Independence.” The dialogue over the aforementioned shots from Masie is as follows:

[Masie] We only like, see our kids...I see them for some weeks and then I come back. I go again in December. I'm lucky because the other nannies can't do that.

So, they only see their kids like, once. Some they don't even manage to go and see their kids because when you are working here the people at home need money like, every month. So, most of them yeah, they...they don't manage to go. They come here sometimes they spend three, four years without going back home.

This sequence is followed by an exterior shot of Masie's house in Zimbabwe (a new addition in the form of a concrete chicken coup is now in front of the house). We then move to the interior of Masie's home where she is cutting a birthday cake that reads, "Mom at 50". In the audio for this scene Masie first addresses me before her sister Primrose joins in the conversation:

[Masie] I am not 50 Roger. I don't know why she thinks I'm 50.

[Primrose] How old are you?

[Masie] Forty-eight.

[Roger] Why did she put 50 on there? [Masie] I don't know.

[Primrose] Are you serious? [Masie] Serious.

When this event occurred I thought they were joking about Masie's age and only later learned that the age on the cake was actually incorrect. I talked to Masie about this moment the next day and she told to me that she was also not sure why the age of fifty was on the cake. I asked, "Was it a joke?" and she replied, "No". I never received clarification about this event but it seems as though no one actually knew her exact age, which could point to the fact that keeping up with age is not as important to them as it is among some westerners or another explanation could be that due to her absence in her children's lives they genuinely did not know how old their mother was, but these are only speculations. The aforementioned scene is also included in my film *Scenes from A Transient Home* (2019) that is

visually comprised of Super 8mm footage of Masie in Cape Town, South Africa and in Harare, Zimbabwe while visiting her family.

After the birthday scene we are back outside with Masie and her sister Primrose as they remove weeds from the base of the “big house” they are building. This scene not only shows the progress they have made on the home as footage from the first half of the film revealed that there was nothing but multiple piles of bricks and rocks stacks around the grounds. While they are removing weeds from the house viewers will see that the stand that the foundation is built upon has quite a bit of water around it and the flora they are removing resemble swamp reeds of grass. On this morning Masie (off camera) revealed one of her primary concerns for me as a filmmaker which was to document the building of the house so that, “people will see that she is not just wasting her time in Cape Town” additionally asking me to film the stand from various angles. Her last request was for me to come back and film when the house is finished so that I can add it to another film for viewers to see.

From this point, we return to documenting interactions between the various family members around the home. Grace (Gigi), preparing to return to boarding school has her hair extensions removed; Primrose and Grace (Gigi) hang borrowed freshly washed hair weaves on the outside line; Masie sews name tags into the back of Ruva and Grace’s school uniforms while discussing the completion of Dionne’s university paper she types on across the room; all meant to highlight the normalcy of everyday life that is often overlooked in films about migration. I was told countless times in various ways by different interlocutors sentiments similar to, “People don’t seem to understand that we have lives too. We want to relax. We want to play with our kids. We want to enjoy our time just like everyone else.” Following from this we see Dionne and Ruva sitting together in the darkness of their room looking at their phones and tablets as the rain falls outside before cutting to the evening as they sit with Masie in the living room, each immersed in their individual activities. Masie flips through old photo albums, while Ruva looks through her phone and Dionne continues to work on a paper for university. As Masie flips through a photo album pointing at a photo the accompanying humorous conversation is as follows:

[Masie] Ruva, who was writing here?

[Ruva] Hmm? [Masie] Is it you?  
[Masie] Hmm?  
[Ruva] It's not me. [Masie] So, who wrote 'meat'?  
[Masie] The 'meat' you wrote is like meat for meat.  
[Masie] Who wrote it? [Ruva] Can I see?  
[Masie] Sure, 'meat'.  
[Ruva] Isn't it 'me at'?  
[Masie] Hmm, but you wrote it like one word.  
[Masie] ...but it's one word, so you see it like 'meat'.  
[Dionne laughs in the background]

The following day starts with Masie and Primrose continuing to prepare Ruva and Grace for their return to boarding school, sewing tags onto clothing and labeling multiple additional items such as cups, clothes pegs, and house slippers with a permanent marker. In the scene they discuss seeing prophets about their ailments and the corruption of Robert and Grace Mugabe. The discussion about seeing prophets is particularly of importance as just prior to returning to Zimbabwe with Masie in December of 2017 I had only recently become aware of how often she consulted prophets to combat worries around the use of witchcraft (*vannu bata bata* – touch, touch) against her as she frequently talked to me only of the role of Christianity in her life, though the two are not necessarily separate in her view. In a short story titled “Delivery” in *Women Writing Zimbabwe*, Anne Holmes (2008) writes of a belief in Christianity and the use of traditional healers as follows:

Even though she was a devotee of Jesus and attended mass on Sunday and a prayer meeting on Thursday evenings, Praxie also consulted a n'anga when anyone in her family was ill. One of the last times I'd seen her, she brought her infant grandchild to visit, a moonfaced baby boy, and I glimpsed red strings tied round his wrist and tummy to protect him from spirits. 'Of course, Percy!' said Praxie – ever prickly – when I asked if they were from the healer. 'I do everything I must do for my babies.' She held him over her shoulder, his jiggly baby head safe against her neck. (705/2569)

A couple of moments later we return to scenes of Masie interacting with her children. Dionne gently fixes Masie's hair outside as she sits on the ledge of the house before going back into the house where Ruva applies make-up to Masie. These two mother and daughter scenes of tenderness are accompanied by conversations about what to do for Christmas and Masie telling me about how she never wore make-up when Dexter's dad was alive because he did not like it.

As the land issue in Zimbabwe is one of its most contested historical and contemporary issues prevalent in the media today, after the scenes in the home I cut to a 1991 interview with a young homeless white man on the streets of Harare who is more than honest about the reasons behind homelessness in the white community in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s. Following from this interview we cut back to Masie's plot of land as several shots survey the foundation and beginning of the walls of the home under construction, which were only about five bricks in height.

The final substantial section of the film set within Zimbabwe, lasting about 20 minutes is the flooding of Masie's home on Christmas Eve and the subsequent clean up, both of which are intercut with YouTube videos displaying some of the wealth in Zimbabwe. In the first YouTube clip we are shown some of Robert Mugabe's extravagant homes followed by a video titled *The Rich Kids of Zimbabwe*, which profiles Robert Mugabe's sons, Robert Mugabe Jr. and Chatunga Mugabe. The scenes of heavy rainfall, which eventually lead to the flooding of Masie's house display the resilience of Masie and her family and offer a harsh realization by Masie and Primrose that the location of the "big house" is potentially worse than they originally thought as they state:

[Ruva] Are you seeing this river?

[Masie] Ah, see how it is that side. [Dionne] Today we are going to mop.

[Primrose] We can't live here. [Masie] Ah, no.

[Masie] Even if we are going to build the (new house)... [Primrose] Are you seeing it?

[Masie] with these floods are we going to live? [Primrose] How are we going to stay here?

The sequence of the house flooding was exceptionally difficult to edit as I had around three hours of footage starting from the first drops of rain to the moment the house was deemed clean enough to stop working. During the flooding I alternated between actively filming and placing the camera on top of a refrigerator or a bed in order to help out, though they insisted that there was nothing for me to do. The way Masie and her family sprang into action when the flooding began was truly incredible to see as ‘all hands were on deck’ to try and seal windows, remove the floodwaters from the house, and mop up the floors once the rain subsided. Towards the end of the cleanup Masie’s son Dexter arrived (to take me to his house for the evening, which I refused) and was shocked at the water level stating, “My house is not even water. Chitungwitza it didn’t even rain that much.” Shortly after his arrival Dexter informed us that three white commercial farmers in Zimbabwe received their land back earlier that day stating, “The employees there they were so happy,” continuing, “The video is so great.” This is the moment in this sequence that *The Rich Kids of Zimbabwe* starts to play, contrasting working class struggles with the lavish lifestyle of Zimbabwe’s elite.

The final short sequence that takes place in Zimbabwe prior to Masie’s return to Cape Town is of her celebrating Christmas with her family and doing final shopping in town with her oldest daughter Dionne as they continue to prepare for Ruva and Grace’s return to boarding school. Although her time in Zimbabwe with her family concludes without any form of climatic speech or words of wisdom, the video shows a large rock in her sister’s yard which has been painted with the words, “God is Good”, followed by a wide shot of Masie and her family waving goodbye to the camera.

As the film concludes upon Masie’s return to Cape Town we discuss the potential future for her family and politics in Zimbabwe and South Africa, including the death of the main ZANU-PF opposition party leader Morgan Tsvangirai and the resignation of South Africa’s president Jacob Zuma, while giving Masie driving lessons at the Cape Town Stadium. Intercut with these moments are videos of Tsvangirai’s public funeral, the streets of Harare in 1983, and student protests against Robert and Grace Mugabe at the University of Zimbabwe where Masie’s daughter Dionne is a couple months short of graduating. The film ends with an extended shot out the front window of the car as Masie practices driving

around the Cape Town Stadium, recapping the story of her arrival in Cape Town in 2005, how she hopes to get other permit extensions to stay in South Africa long enough to put her youngest daughter, Ruva, through school, and how the completion of her house in Zimbabwe would make her, “feel free to go back.” In these closing minutes I believe that the relationship that has built up over the years between Masie and myself is also humorously summarized as Masie breaks several traffic rules and I waste no time jokingly reprimanding her. In the final line of the film as we playfully argue over the traffic laws she has broken I say, “I am afraid I am going to have to fail you for today.” This line while presented in a comical manner can alternatively serve as a philosophical reference to my belief after several years of immersion among Zimbabweans in Cape Town that due to the ongoing political and economic difficulties faced by Zimbabwe many of them will not get their wish to return to a prosperous land anytime in the near future.

### **Anthropological Knowledge – Leaving Home to Visit Home**

Although scientists now estimate that there are at least 10 senses, and perhaps as many as 33, Western philosophy and social theory conventionally select to focus on only five senses, understood to be separate from each other, with sight prized most of all, followed by hearing.

Howes 2009, 22–25 quoted in Culhane, 2017:1433/4163

When considering the contested notion of home in relation to migration, no single definition has taken preference due to a multitude of ethnographic arrangements. ‘Home’ has often been described as a symbolic belonging to an ancestral homeland (Lomsky-Feder & Rapport 2003; Safran 1991; Tsuda 2003, 2009) and frequently ascribed to a myth of return, which constructs home based upon the ideology of a bound and established community often situated in the past (Torresan, 2011:125). Thus the return home becomes impossible despite the intended length of return, as home no longer exists (Chambers 1994; Habib 1996; Jansen 1998; Warner 1994 cited in Torresan, 2011:125). Svetlana Boym (2001), adding an additional insight, suggests:

Perhaps what is most missed during historical cataclysms and exile is not the past and the homeland exactly, but rather this potential space of cultural experience that one has shared with one's friends and compatriots that is based neither on nation nor religion but on elective affinities. (1252/9460)

Additionally, Boym quotes Arjun Appadurai as he suggests that due to:

globalization, mass immigration and the development of electronic media, one has to redefine the notion of "locale." It is no longer a specific place where one belongs but rather a social context that one could export into diaspora.' (Appadurai, 1996 cited in Boym, 2011:5312/9460)

Lastly, Boym (Ibid.) states her dissatisfaction with Appadurai's suggestion stating:

I do not know of any nostalgia for a homepage; rather, the object of nostalgia is precisely the nonvirtual low-tech world. In this case, locale is not merely a context but also a remembered sensation and the material debris of past life. (5312/9460)

I find that maybe what Boym misses here could be the result of her seeking an all-encompassing definition of 'home' or 'locale'. In January of 2018 near the end of my one month stay in Zimbabwe Masie went to visit her rural area after dropping off her youngest daughter and niece at boarding school, stating to me upon her return, "The air is better out there, there is so much space. [Showing me pictures on her cell phone] Look at this. It is so nice. I love to go out there and just relax." This was the first time in over four years of knowing her that her rural area was brought up as a place to return to or as a place containing nostalgic feelings for her, but just because she did not frequently discuss her rural area does not mean that she does not consider it home. Nyamnjoh brings up yet another thought related to 'home' as he discusses the pressure many Africans face to send remittance, causing me to ponder if at least some of the discussion from African migrants regarding a longing for home or return to home is not partially due to being consumed with sometimes "impossible demands" (Nyamnjoh, 2005b:4).

The discussion presented so far has been one centered on a certain form of absence from place or home, but what I find is generally missing from these conversations, particularly related to Africa, with the exception of multiple writings by Francis Nyamnjoh (2001, 2012, 2017) is a conversation based around African notions of incompleteness and conviviality and presence and absence such as those described by Artwell Nhemachena in *Relationality and Resilience in a Not So Relational World? : Knowledge, Chivanhu and (De-)Coloniality in 21st Century Conflict-Torn Zimbabwe*, Chapter 5 “Sensing Presence? Health, Illness, and Resilience”, where he speaks of ‘things that are not physically available are not necessarily absent’ (Nhemachena, 2017:267). If we apply these notions to migration and the absences of mothers from children for extended periods of time or even the absences and presences when they go home to visit, maybe we can begin to understand at a more complete and complex level the ways in which mothers separated from their children cope. I am not suggesting that there is no emotional or physical pain in the conventionally accepted rationale involved in being separated from one’s children as I have witnessed many tears and heard many heartfelt stories from my interlocutors over the years, but I am suggesting that maybe the idea of absences and presences in the African context has been overlooked by many researchers as emotional and / or physical pain can be caused by something or someone that is not deemed present. A reasonably simple example of this could be the pain felt in the chest, specifically a tightness or strain felt near the heart when thinking about separation from or the loss of a loved one. Nhemachena (2017) presents his concept of ‘sensing presences’, developed during his fieldwork that he describes as ‘gripped in interparty, interpersonal and witchcraft related violence’ while in Zimbabwe in 2011 as follows:

What I call sensing presences is an invitation to share such border spaces, the generative moments they offer to rethink what it means to inhabit/not to inhabit the border spaces marked by the presence of things ordinarily understood as opposites. I want to argue that the kind of everyday life about which I write involved inhabiting such border spaces, between things, in which sensing them was an important part of resilience. And this involved intermingling with the world in various ways, some of which entailed reversing the conventional order of senses. ...While conventional modes of sensing tend to be privileged in formal epistemologies, senses and sensing are

for other scholars understood differently. For Serres (2008), they allow the body to mingle with the world. ...If, as Serres observes, with reference to debates by philosophers such as Democritus, Aristotle and Socrates, the number of senses has not always been settled at the conventional five, it is unclear why humanity is often assumed invariably to have or stress this particular number of senses. As underscored by telepathy, clairvoyance, extrasensory perception and out of body experiences, some people are gifted with extra senses.' (245)

As Nhemachena (Ibid.) was working within the context of a crisis he states it is important to consider how diverse ways of sensing play out in daily life struggles for resilience. Though Nhemachena is relating his concepts to his experiences and resilience in a politically violent space the ideas are relevant for presences and absences between migrants and their children as it is also a form of everyday resilience.

Nyamnjoh (2017) states:

popular ideas of what constitutes reality in Africa are rich with ontologies of incompleteness and conviviality that could enrich our conceptualization and practice of anthropology in Africa. (198)

Nyamnjoh (Ibid.) recommends that intellectuals turn to popular narratives that are comprehensive depictions of the African endogenous universe. He offers *The Palm-Wine Drunkard* from Nigerian writer Amos Tutuola (1952) as a prime example stating:

reality is more than meets the eye and the world an experience of life beyond sensory perceptions. In Tutuola's universe, being and becoming materialize through the consciousness that gives it meaning. Consciousness can inhabit any container – human and non-human, animate and inanimate, visible and invisible – regardless of the state of completeness or incompleteness of the container in question. Both reality and the universe are imbued with endless possibilities of being and becoming, thanks to the multiplicity of consciousness available to inhabit them. Things, words, deeds and beings are always incomplete, not because of absences but because of their possibilities.

(198-199)

Nyamnjoh (2017) continues, stating of reality:

The real is not only what is observable or what makes cognitive sense; it is also the invisible, the emotional, the sentimental, the intuitive and the inexplicable (Nyamnjoh, 2001). ...they suggest a world larger than its material realities, where matter is not as fixed as assumed in dualistic rationality. Instead, they focus on what is possible and not just on what exists made apparent by human sensory perception. (201)

Miguel Hernández-Navarro (2011) discussing the representation of migrants related to the standardization of time explains:

Each society and each subject within a society possesses a specific experience of time—temporality composed both by the rhythm of events and by the way in which the subject experiences them. However, the Western hegemonic temporal regime has tended towards the suppression of the plurality of time. Such plurality is intrinsic to human nature, but, since the beginning of technological modernity, it has gradually been displaced by the rhythms of commodity production. The modern individual then turned into the “subject” of a single time imposed by the prevailing forces. ... The time discourse of Western contemporaneity talks constantly about the appearance of a “single time,” a chronological imperialism (192-193)

As a foundation for this concept has been established, I want to shift focus here to the realization of the importance concepts related to witchcraft, dreams, and prophets had in the influencing of Masie’s daily life that I observed while spending time with her in Zimbabwe in December 2017 - January 2018 during my third trip to stay with her family in Zimbabwe. In order to unpack these ideas further Nhemachena’s (2017) understanding of ... (hau)ontology, partly derived from Derrida (1993; 1994) is essential as he states:

(Hau)ontology makes it possible to understand life in terms of becomings and unbecomings, in terms of the various visitations and presences, and

manifesting that feature as part of everyday life particularly in a context of crisis. It allows one to situate in the borders of the real/unreal, certain/uncertain, life/death, illness/wellness. By so doing, it allows one to dwell in the spaces where things are not necessarily settled in spite of the often effortful struggles to settle them. (251)

Nhemachena (Ibid.) continues discussion (hau)ontology stating:

It makes it possible to rethink how the presences and absences of things are sensed without necessarily privileging what can be readily conventionally represented as present/absent. In this way it highlights the debatability of senses as conventionally understood yet it also underscores the temporality of sensing as sensing that which has temporal presence within the reach of one's senses. (262)

Providing several examples of the application of (hau)ontology through dreams, divinations, and prophecies, Nhemachena (Ibid.) offers an encounter with a vendor named Nod in 2011 and quotes her story as follows:

I was assisted by some prophets this year. Last week a prophetess I did not even know visited me because she had had dreams about me. I was not feeling well when she visited me. The prophetess assisted me with *munamoto* (prayer) which I was advised to use for bathing for nine days, now I am feeling ok. *Paive nechinbu chaivepo chakandiruma pamusana pachirema, kurwadza nekuzvimba*. (There was a thing that was biting me at the back which back was also feeling heavy, painful and swollen). At my shop I was no longer having customers. Now I am receiving customers. Some people burnt their *mushonga* (herbs) in a drain by my shop just before I started feeling ill. They first wrapped the *mushonga* with papers and then set it alight producing bad smoke that also made me cough. The prophetess sprayed holy water from the three perennial rivers namely Mupfure, Nyaguwi and Mazoe. She prayed for the water from the three perennial rivers and then advised me to bath using it. I only gave her money for bus fare to go to the rivers to collect the water, she

helped me and so on the ninth day which was yesterday I started feeling well again. She also informed me that had I seen the thing which had bitten me I was going to die immediately. (263)

He concludes Nod's case stating that, 'she may be understood to have had presence in the dreams of the prophetess even though she was actually not present at the prophetess's house' (Ibid.:266-267). *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) provides an example from my research in Zimbabwe in which I observed a similar story and remedy to the one relayed by Nod. On the morning of December 25, 2017 while cleaning and clearing the yard from the previous day's heavy flooding I filmed Primrose, Masie's sister and Ruva, Masie's youngest daughter, explaining to Primrose's daughter Grace (Gigi) what was required of her related to bathing with stones that Primrose received from a prophet.

[Grace] What is this prayer request for?

[Primrose] I told you that you should bathe with it for three days. Then when you are done bathing with it you say these words, "Daddy I want you to recognize me like you do the rest of your children. I want you to pay my school fees, I want you to do everything I ask you to do for me." Then when you are done you should go and throw these stones at the shop where many people gathered.

[Ruva] You just go like this, then you can drop the stones.

[Ruva] You just drop them. [Grace] To drop them at any shop? Even at OK is it fine?

[Grace] Is it fine at OK? [Primrose] Yes, you should try to drop them around OK Market because that's where many people gather.

In another example witnessed and included in *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) Masie and Primrose discuss multiple dreams, ailments, and visiting prophets while labeling Ruva and Grace's (Gigi) personal belongings as they prepare them for their return to boarding school.

[Masie] I need to go to the prophet because for two days now I have been

dreaming about your dad.

[Primrose] Dionne's dad? [Masie] Yes.

[Primrose] There is something that is happening.

[Masie] You know what, even me I think there is something happening with my hand.

We will be thinking that it is just my hand that is sore, but there is something that is happening.

[Primrose] Even me my legs, they did tell me when I went there that the way your legs are sore someone did something.

[Masie] So now I want to go to those who can bite it out. [Primrose] My legs and back.

[Masie] Maybe they can bite me and take it out. [Primrose] They may remove it.

[Masie] That's why I want to go. [Primrose] But me they said I should stop going to other prophets.

[Masie] Who?

[Primrose] The ones with the red garments. [Masie] Who said so?

[Primrose] The prophet.

[Masie] What did they say?

[Primrose] Maybe they will be trying something for me (making my life difficult).

In a separate case Nhemachena (Ibid.) relays the story of a woman named Mari, whom he met one morning as she collected water. Upon noticing that she seemed distressed he engaged in conversation with her and she relayed a dream she had the previous night in

which people appeared at her homestead hunting for her. She stated:

I ran away and hid. One of the people chasing me then asked me ‘so this is where you are hiding?’ The man who asked me was peeping through the window to get a glimpse of me. I pinched him and then beat him as well as the others who were with him. They wanted to catch me and my daughter. After I beat them there came many creatures that looked like dolls that could walk. I beat them but they produced air which was smelly. I beat them using my church garment. They were resisting. (264)

This experience shows how she first experienced this at the level of her dreams and then translated it into her waking life as Nhemachena states, ‘This dream shows some of the kinds of things villagers like Mari considered as engendering some illnesses’ (Ibid.:264). Multiple times during my visit to Zimbabwe in December 2017 - January 2018 I was told stories related to dreams, prophecies, or suspected witchcraft (*vanu bata bata* – touch touch). The following examples pulled directly from notes hurriedly typed into my phone shows how over the course of ten days I was told multiple stories.

**Dec. 17, 2017**

Masie told me she had a headache during the night and was teasing me that the witches had come to her because she brought a white man to her house. She then told me she does not really believe in that but that she prayed during the night at midnight, 3:00am because the witches visit you when you are sleeping. (I am not sure how much of this she actually believes)

**Dec. 20 2017**

Masie’s sisters talking about touch touch. How family will not want you to move up. Son (Tino) went to China to study and had a dream about aunts and uncles embracing him...when he came back to Zim for a visit he did not go back to China. It was because the relatives did not wish him well. “It is complicated in our culture, black people do not want you to do well. If my son does well relatives think he will only take care of me and not help them.” (Tawanda told a similar story about going to Namibia for boxing)

**Dec. 26, 2017**

When I left Masie's sister's house we picked up a man who turned out to be a priest at Masie's church. Masie wrapped her head in a white cloth and had a white cloth around her waist. The preacher also wrapped himself in a white cloth and they prayed for about 15 minutes. He stood while she kneeled at his side. Dionne, Ruva, and Alvin were texting and chatting in the same room as this was happening. Primrose was cooking food as she was not allowed to pray because she is menstruating.

**Dec. 27 2017**

I asked Masie why the preacher was at the house the previous night. She replied, "I called him because I had a very bad dream. I dreamt that a larger black snake was chasing me. I ran into the house but Primrose and I could still see the snake in the river next to the house. Maybe someone is bata bataing me because I have brought a murungu to my house. They are jealous because they think I have a lot of money because you are here" (I am still not sure how much the bata bata murungu joke she is serious about).

In my handwritten version of the visit by the preacher I added, "This was the first time Masie told me that I could not film an event". Though I did not type or write the following, later on December 27, 2017 as we again discussed the previous day's events Masie told me that she prays three times during the night as per her pastor's instructions, at 9:00pm, 12:00am, and 3:00am. She stated that, "If I don't wake up to pray I feel like something bad is going to happen" continuing, "I pray for my kids and stuff because you know like I am in South Africa and I am not with my kids so I need to pray".

Nhemachena (Ibid.), states that one issue that can be gathered from dreams and experiences is the ways in which things that were not physically present were sometimes considered to have presence even in their absence. He continues claiming that it is often assumed:

things that are not physically available are not necessarily absent as is often

assumed in epistemologies that would dismiss as inconsistent suggestions that a thing can be absent but nevertheless present and vice versa. If things are understood in terms of becomings in which they can be absent but present, that is in terms of their goings and comings, it arguably becomes easier to understand why among the villagers being absent is not necessarily an opposite of being present. During the fieldwork, I was asked by some of the villagers, “*Asi murikuchikoro?*” (Are you at school?), even though I was clearly with them in the villages and therefore not at any school. What this means is that it is possible for one to be present but absent and to be at different places at the same time. It implies that we can be present where we are absent and therefore that presence is not necessarily measured on the basis of being fixed to a place but rather in terms of comings and goings that make it possible to have presence in many places at the same time. (267)

This postulates a theory of presence in which there is not essentially pure presence or pure absence providing for things to have different ways of processing presences and absences. Nhemachena’s example of the utilization of river water when it is used as *munamoto* (prayer) can be implied as registering its presence as prayer, not simply water. Nhemachena noting the difficulties in grasping these theories adds:

The challenge in such a context where things vacillate is to shift focus from analyzing things merely in terms of the mind to the various ways in which they come to be sensed as they come and go. ...It is a challenge to understand other things including dreams not merely as objects to be analyzed and interpreted but as modes by which presence of other entities is actively registered in a world where being physically present in a particular space is not necessarily an imperative. (267-268)

Lastly, Nhemachena remarks:

The point here is to underline the fact that what often matters in everyday life is not always to see the things that are deemed to have presence: it is often to sense the things in a broader way.’ (276-277)

Thus when applying the concepts highlighted by Nyamnjoh (2017) and Nhemachena (2017) it becomes possible to understand how presences and absences, specifically from loved ones, can be emotionally and physically sustainable on some levels, though as previously mentioned on other levels the emotional and physical pain can be felt bodily. One example of a presence in spite of a physical absence was included in the first film I made about Zimbabwean migrant women in South Africa, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015). In one of the first interviews I conducted with Masie in early 2015 she states the following of a photo brought from Zimbabwe to South Africa of her late father:

00:09:44        2000 and...like 2004

00:09:48        that's when my daddy passed and then I came here in 2005.

00:09:54        So, when I was coming here I

00:09:57        I had to take a picture of my dad.

00:10:00        You know like in our culture you just

00:10:03        feel like if someone dies their spirit will be

00:10:08        like you...like wherever you go.

00:10:11        So, I decided to take that picture so I can

00:10:14        like have it and every

00:10:16        night when I was sleeping I was like...like

00:10:19        if I look at the picture I would say to my dad,

00:10:22        "You know what I'm here in South Africa, I don't even know  
anyone"

00:10:27        and then I would...I would...I would feel my heart is like

00:10:32        is...my daddy was like

00:10:34        looking after me.

Ideas related to incompleteness and conviviality and presence and absence are ones which could and in the case of academics such as Nyamnjoh and Nhemachena could form the basis of entire studies which would be beneficial to anthropology, specifically the decolonization of anthropology on the African continent. My awareness of these concepts was manifested over multiple years of engagement with Zimbabweans and in hindsight was present even in the earliest conversations though it took years, ideas that I now apply to my research and films related to Zimbabwean migrant women.

## Review

This chapter focused upon my film *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019) which I have presented as a culmination of my research and filmmaking, attempting through multiple anthropological and filmic theories to present a film that engages with notions of incompleteness and presence and absences. The ideas of incompleteness and presences and absence are visualized through Kiener's (2008) idea of montage as a way of filling in absences. These ideas come together in the film and in the writing in an attempt to counter mass media representations of migration and to explore ideas that are often overlooked in research in my attempt to contribute, 'to the quest for a decolonized anthropology decentered from Western dominance' (Nyamnjoh, 2017:197). It is my hope that through my combination of filmic methodologies and heavy reliance on concepts from the African continent's filmmakers and anthropologists will make a more concerted effort to explore the lesser known, but equally formidable methodological and theoretical choices available.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

Ethnographic representations of Africa are often blindly crafted and served as delicacies without rigorous, systematic dialogue with the Africans in question. Adequate provision is also not made for competing perspectives and epistemologies within and beyond our discipline, over and above the token interviews and conversations we undertake in the field.

Nyamnjoh, 2012a:67

Every ethnographic film, to some extent, expresses the filmmaker's desire to celebrate a certain growth of understanding emerging from spontaneous encounters and the contemplation of the continual presence of the world.

Hockings et al., 2014:454

### Introduction

My principle goal for this research was to present multiple unconventional filmic glimpses into the contemporary daily lived lives of Zimbabwean migrant women through long-term field research, an in-depth historical analysis, and the utilization of multiple filmic methodologies. Each individual film I have presented situated at the crossroads of experimental film and anthropology seeks to provide visual anthropologists with examples of work that looks beyond that which is clearly visible and expand filmmaking to include alternative filmic approaches and forms, the utilization of unofficial archives such as found footage and YouTube videos, and asynchronous audio-video practices. The four films presented are intended to be self-standing audio-visual accounts of the time my interlocutors and I spent together in Cape Town, South Africa and multiple cities throughout Zimbabwe. Though I have observed and documented what may be considered a somewhat common aspect related to migration, daily lived life, it is my intention to create filmic experiences

which present multiple aspects omitted from mass media representations and thereby move into a more philosophical, analytical, and creative form of filmmaking. I have drawn on methodologies from experimental filmmaking, experimental ethnography, visual anthropology, and film / media studies in order to present my films in various forms of representation including digital split-screen presentation, 8mm and Super 8mm found home movies, contemporary Super 8mm asynchronous sound filmmaking, and 'haptic' (Marks, 2000:xi) visuality in the form of mixing high definition (HD) digital footage, Super 8mm, and various format of videos from YouTube videos to present ideas related to visualizing absences. This approach has allowed me to provide a sensory engagement with film through focusing on multiple dimensions of these women's lives including their personal objects in an attempt to understand how they create and are created by their experiences. I move away from mass media representational forms of migration, particularly television news that seeks to offer viewers what Donna Haraway, in another framework, labels the 'conquering gaze from nowhere,' a gaze that claims 'the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation.' (Haraway, 1991 quoted in Shohat & Stam, 2002:138).

Anthropology, though currently positioned in what David Howes call a 'sensual turn' due to the expanding interests in the senses and the increased attention to the 'artistic and experimental nature of ethnographic practice' has of yet been unable to fully disrupt the 'sedimented styles' of anthropology, though many believe it would benefit the discipline to shift its attention to diverse 'representational practices, including such things as field recording tools and techniques as well as modes of publishing' (Heuson & Allen, 2014:127). Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (1999) notes:

No single form of filmmaker/film-subject interaction has a monopoly on ethnographic truth... and does it matter whether the very special mood this creates results from a participatory camera or a camera which is completely ignored, provided it works? (21-22)

As Hockings et al. add, 'The very lack of a systematized method is one of the strengths of visual anthropology. Through film our personal responses resonate with the experience of others' (Hockings et al., 2014:453). Though I am far from opposed to the observational mode of filmmaking, specifically the way it is often remarkably employed by the Harvard

Sensory Ethnography Lab, I believe that if ethnographic filmmaking is going to make any kind of impression, not just in academia, but to broader viewing audiences, filmmaking in general, and other disciplines, that it will have to think beyond observational filmmaking.

## Chapter 2 - 6 Summary

Building a foundation for this dissertation with a detailed look at the contemporary history of Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, provides a look at the economic and political policies, media practices, and general treatment of women in a society that has fallen from once being labeled ‘the breadbasket of Africa’ to a country which has seen 25 percent of its population flee the country in order to provide vital remunerations for those left behind. The first film produced from my research, *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015), is presented in a split-screen format in order to show multiple temporalities and locations simultaneously as the viewer’s ‘attention constantly shifts between images lived in present time and voices sending us back to stories of the past’ (Boudreault-Fournier, 2017:2105/4163). This form of representation is meant to serve a function similar to that utilized by Alyssa Grossman as she states of her film, *Lumina Amintirri (In the Light of Memory)* (2010):

By experimenting with various techniques of montage, I sought to re-create an experience for my spectators that would be analogous to remembrance work. I wanted my film to critically examine memory by evoking how it operates and feels, rather than by explaining or depicting memories themselves.’ (Grossman 2013:201 quoted by Boudreault-Fournier, 2017:2105-2111/4163)

Following from *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) is *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), a direct continuation of the aforementioned film as the focus of research; my souvenirs from Zimbabwe discussed as interludes in *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) provides the catalyst for our conversations related to migration, material culture, and memories. These discussions were highly reflexive as my relationships, which were established in the field, were highlighted and the discussions related to the mainly political regalia I brought back add

crucial information regarding events that led to the continuing exodus of Zimbabweans. Utilizing found home movies in the visualization of *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018), calls attention to Richard Chalfen's (1987) ethnographic study, *Snapshot Versions of Life*, which revealed many findings regarding American families and their use of personal snapshots and home movies. Of importance here in reference to my film is the main characterization of home movies as 'patterned eliminations', displaying only positive significant moments for preservation, comprised of camping trips, family visits, and excursions to popular tourist destinations, which in *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) includes Victoria Falls and Lake Kariba during the racist regime of Ian Smith in Rhodesia (Chalfen 1987 quoted in Baron, 2014:83). These images provide an additional level of consideration when considering the 'historical hindsight', which 'produces a double consciousness' as viewers know the fate of Smith's racist regime and the steady economic and political decline of independent Zimbabwe, which has affected all Zimbabweans irrespective of color, ancestry, and cultural group affiliations (Baron, 2014:86). Lastly, the found footage in the film is used as an abstract way to highlight my role and responsibilities as a white North American male researching in Africa, similar to Raquel Shefer's 2009 film *Avo (Muidumbe)*, which combines Shefer's family's colonial history in Mozambique with the larger history of Portuguese colonization just before the beginnings of the Mozambican War of Independence and the 'ways in which descendants of colonizers must still come to grips with the colonial legacy on a personal as well as political level' (Ibid.:86-88). Visually shifting to contemporary Super 8mm footage, I filmed in Cape Town and throughout Zimbabwe, *Scenes from a Transient Home* (2019) which features asynchronous audio, leading to a reorganizing of the, 'sedimented assumptions about the relationship between eye and ear' (Heuson & Allen, 2014:123). My contemporary Super 8mm footage presents fractured moments in the lives of Zimbabwean migrants when they travel back home to Zimbabwe for visits with their families. Due to the monopolizing of digital cameras the Super 8mm footage I filmed had to be mailed to the United States for processing and scanning before being sent back to South Africa, thus placing a large temporal gap between the actual filming, viewing, and editing of the footage. Adding to this temporal gap was the fact that the footage was filmed over the course of one year in four separate locations, resulting in three separate deliveries to the U.S. countering contemporary 'point-and-shoot' media and thus altering the ways in which I thought about time, space, and the senses (Ibid.:123). Lastly, *Zimbabwe, My Home* (2019), a feature length

film, serving as the culmination of my research featuring footage from December 2014 – May 2018 focuses on the life of one of my interlocutors, Masie Chachona as she visits her family in Zimbabwe looking at family dynamics and material culture through what becomes an additional protagonist in the film, her “big house” which is under construction in Zimbabwe. This film features mostly digital footage supplemented with contemporary Super 8mm and is combined with videos appropriated from YouTube utilizing Kiener’s vision of montage in order to reveal how, ‘the missing parts of a certain reality are joined together in order to create the whole picture of the story and the character’ (Kiener, 2008:399). The ‘missing part’ in regards to Masie are events such as the Gukurahundi Massacres, Operation Murambatsvina, and the Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP), just to name a few, which culminated in the migration of millions of Zimbabweans since independence in 1980.

### **Engaging with African Perspectives / Limitations of Research**

In addition to my filmic contributions, my reading and writing found me heavily engaged with African scholars and writers, undertaken throughout the research process in an attempt to contribute to the decolonization of anthropology through multiple African perspectives. Through my referencing of African literature in multiple forms such as fictions, poems, and autobiographies, an additional dimension was added to my anthropological research, heavily encouraged and influenced by Francis Nyamnjoh’s (2013), article, “Fiction and Reality of Mobility in Africa” and “Intimate Strangers Connecting Fiction and Ethnography” (2012b) where he states:

What do we gain in connecting ethnography and fiction? Deeper social science for one thing. The lived lives of those who are not of the dominant race, place, culture, class, place or age are often swept to the side lines of scholarship – and given voice in alternative spaces, such as music and literature... For sociologists and anthropologists, dipping into fiction can bring voice to silenced spaces and help science bridge rather than reinforce socially constructed difference. Poverty stricken, flat and linear scientific explanations can become more multidimensional, more reflective of the

complicities, contradictions, and compromises of everyday life. Relating the results of ethnographic research in the form of fiction can make the work – in which society at large has certainly invested in various forms – available to readers beyond scholarly circles. (68-69)

The importance of an engagement with African scholars and literature is further endorsed as Amina Mama in her journal article, “Is It Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom” reveals a major shortcoming in academia indicating that Africa produces, ‘less than 0.5 percent of the world’s scientific publications’ (Zezeza 2003) continuing, ‘and nearly all of the social science production – come from just three nations (Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa)’ (Mama, 2007:4). Adding to these issues surrounding a lack of knowledge production is the disconcerting insight that most of the knowledge produced about Africa is generated in the West, dominated by the United States (Ibid.:4). Adebayo Olukoshi and Francis Nyamnjoh (2011) add regarding the fair, ethical, and Euro-centric realities of research in Africa that:

genuine compassionate intersubjectivity involves seeing local realities primarily from the perspective and in terms of the communities or networks concerned. And yet there remains a paradox, since researchers subsequently represent their insights largely in the academic traditions of persuasion derived from Eurocentric modernity. As the late Archie Mafeje observed, a core question for the anthropologist is how much his or her report does remain a form of Western-centric scrutiny of cultural codes unwillingly obnubilating local society’s proper genius. There is the constant risk of exoticising, if not othering, the locals: this is a risk derived at least in part from the Western scholarly tradition of the book and of objectifying distancing that, as Mafeje suggests, exclude a multivalued logic in favour of reductionist subject-object dualities. (8-9)

Though I engaged as sincerely as I could with African scholars and writers I can still claim that this could be seen as one of the perceived weaknesses in my research as I originate from a different continent and socio-economic background than my interlocutors despite residing in South Africa for a decade. In order to offset this concern I was attentive to what René

Devisch (2011) notes of anthropological research as he states:

Anthropological research is carried out in proximity, and sometimes face-to-face in a shared borderzone with a host community or network. It entails a profound respect for diverse ways of life, a capacity for compassionate listening and selfcritical empathy, discrete participation in village life, and a propensity for collective and respectful dialogue in the language and manner of the host group. This constitutes, I believe, the golden road along which the anthropologist can investigate a group and its lifeworld from within. Anthropologists heed the plurality of words and listen to both common and dissident voices and messages. They listen to the collective hopes of their hosts, or gradually sense the traumatic memories that are blocked in their bodies and imaginary or incorporated in their bodily hexis. Whoever works wholeheartedly and for some years in host groups becomes kneaded by their practices, in a fever that gives one a taste for the hosts' audacity and ingenuity, but also summons solidarity with the hardships and wounds inflicted by life. In this sharing, anthropologists thereby go so far as to turn their attention to gestural expressions and body language: they seek to share to some degree and grasp the hopes and fears, the worries and sadness, the enthusiasm and anxiety, the blanks and shadow zones in groups and persons. (97-98)

Though Nyamnjoh (2012c) points out multiple issues with the way in which research is often carried out in the African context in articles such as, “ ‘Potted Plants in Greenhouses’: A Critical Reflection on the Resilience of Colonial Education in Africa”, he argues for a different kind of engagement in “Blinded by Sight: Divining the Future of Anthropology in Africa” (2012a), emphasizing the benefit of co-production and collaboration despite the shortcomings of some anthropological research. Additionally, collaboration can be seen to offset some of Wim M.J. van Binsbergen's (2011) concerns as he states:

every anthropologist will find herself in a field of tension between local inspirations and commitments, on the one hand, and globalizing expectations of method and professional discipline, on the other. (120)

The above-mentioned considerations are additionally reflected through this work as I focused heavily on multiple methodologies instead of knowledge production per se. This focus on methodology resulted in multiple films, which present fractured narratives of a highly reflexive nature drawn from multiple sources and presented in multiple forms. Through the screening of *These Objects, Those Memories* (2015) and *Research / Souvenir (Dialogues)* (2018) prior to the submission of this dissertation, both within academic circles and to audiences outside of academia, I have been able to receive feedback which for the most part affirms my unconventional approaches to diverse crowds locally and internationally which has stimulated numerous conversations related to methodology, ethics, and other dimensions of ethnographic filmmaking.

## Future Research

Due to the recent changes in leadership in Zimbabwe I believe it would be useful to continue researching migration in the Zimbabwean context as the new president Emmerson Mnangagwa took control of power just 14 months ago and as of January 2019 life is not improving for Zimbabweans in general as was hoped, with the price of many basic foods increasing and the reemergence of fuel queues sprouting up across the country in recent months. When considering memories there were multiple circumstances that were relayed to me that could warrant further research, especially related to ideas of longing for a homeland that never existed. In 2017 while buying books about Zimbabwe in Cape Town the owner told me that he sells books to a man who takes them to Zimbabwe to resell and that the most popular books at the moment being purchased by black Zimbabweans are those about former Rhodesian leader Ian Smith. On December 17, 2017 approximately one month after Mnangagwa seized control of Zimbabwe I found myself in Zimbabwe in the midst of a discussion related to the land issues, colonialism, pan-Africanism, and development, which prompted the owner of the house, a Shona woman to state, “It was better for most people in the Rhodesian days. People went to school, had jobs, and a little money.” Her daughter, in her mid-20s added, “Black people want to be equal to white people, but that is not how it works, some will be but most won’t. We did a good job when we only worked in the fields. That is what we are best at.” An additional attendee at the party asked me, “Do you know

our money was equal or worth more than the pound back in the day? Now look what we (implying black Zimbabweans) have done.” Additionally, I wrote on January 7, 2018 in my field notes of a conversation with a Shona man in his late 40s – early 50s:

Michael (alias used here) gave the impression that he did not have a problem with the way Zimbabwe was under colonial rule (several people on this trip gave this impression). “A lot of people don’t know that Ian Smith would stop his car in town and greet people on the street...all people. He did not have a motorcade like these African rulers have and he was probably the one who needed it the most due to the political climate at the time. Remember they blew up that petrol station in town? ...History is told slightly incorrect here because ZANU and ZAPU did not defeat the Rhodesians even though they had more weapons than they did. The Rhodesians were using self made weapons and they had sanctions against them that prevented them from getting proper weapons.

These sentiments of a time when things were better, even if they were under the racist regime of Ian Smith seem to be commonplace as relayed below by Shimmer Chinodya (2002) in her short story, *Queues* as she points out:

Once upon a time, in the days of Sisi Elizabeth, a loaf of bread cost twelve cent and you could buy a kilogram of meat for a dollar. Twice upon a moon, your father sent you, by registered mail, two dollars of pocket money to last half a term. Thrice upon a star, you ate chicken and chips for twenty-five cents, and with Sidney at the end of the term you patrolled the train at night, munching five-penny mints and Choice Assorted Biscuits. Four times upon a sun, your father sent three siblings to boarding school on a milkman’s pay. Five times upon a galaxy, you had rice and chicken for Christmas. Six times upon the universe, you were poor, but you survived. (95)

With renewed expectations of the government in the post-Mugabe era the sentiments and nostalgic longings for the past take on new meaning and deserve to be explored, as this is a potentially dangerous ideology moving forward. Not only is there a longing for the Rhodesian days, but after just one year of being removed from office several Zimbabweans

have already told me that, “it was better under Mugabe” and “Mnangagwa does not know what he is doing.” Nyamnjoh (2005b) claims this to be a:

certain nostalgia for a real or mythical golden age prior to the unequal encounters with cultural others that have reduced people to playing second fiddle even in matters of utmost concern to themselves and their communities. (1)

In addition to these nostalgic longings for the past, concern surrounding the African continent’s relationship with China, viewed by some as the ‘new colonizers’ has added another dimension to trepidations related to past and future realities. A book of poetry released in late 2017 by Ralph Dinko titled, *Mugabe: Telling the modern African Story through poetry*, speaks to the legacy of Mugabe and concerns for the future of Africa stating in the Author’s Note and Introduction:

Africa has always been the beginning, the past, the present and the future. Africa will always be the future. From the days of old when we had invaders, now we have investors and tomorrow, we shall have ‘investing tourists’. They’ll keep coming. They will come with different reasons, overtly as friends beaming with smiles and handshakes but they’re covertly in for business as usual. ...Thankfully, there is a light. Great leaders such as Nkrumah, Gadhafi, and Mugabe have shown that Africa can be great again. Africa must unite. ...Mugabe is a rebellious mix of words. It is a rebel story in essence. Non-conforming with the norm. Mugabe is a tribute to greatness, to the African ancestor. It is an introduction to national culture and a departure from popular culture. Mugabe is the love for Africa and its authentic people. (15-31/478)

Just a few weeks prior to writing this conclusion, I was relieved to see one of the deductions related to migration in the Zimbabwean context that I have harbored in the back of my mind, but found too pessimistic to voice, was proven wrong by at least one family as one of my long-term interlocutors Media Tembo and her husband Robert, despite the current difficulties still faced throughout Zimbabwe, moved back to their hometown Kadoma in

early December of 2018. Many Zimbabweans I told about this event relayed to me that this is a bad time for a move as Zimbabwe is going down again like it did in 2008. On December 27, 2018 I drove Masie Chachona to the bus station in Cape Town, as she was leaving for a two-week visit to Zimbabwe in order to be with her children. When we arrived at the bus station with her copious amounts of luggage I enquired as to what was in the large paint bucket to which she replied “a tuck shop” (tuck shop - a small general store). I opened the bucket to have a look and saw approximately 20 bars of soap on top, which blocked the view of the other contents. Next I asked about the two refrigerated zippered grocery bags and she told me they were filled with cooking oil adding, “Everything is so expensive in Zim again”. On the other side of the coin Masie stated that because prices have also risen so much in Cape Town that she is starting to feel that it is pointless to remain here as there is no getting ahead financially as she had hoped for over twelve years ago when she originally came to Cape Town. Masie’s statement echoed Media’s reason for leaving just a few weeks earlier. Additionally, Masie stated that she just wants to work in Cape Town for three more years, until her youngest daughter Ruva finishes school, and then she will return home even if she has nothing because she is “exhausted”. As many Zimbabweans I interact with are starting to view South Africa as more and more similar to Zimbabwe due to water shortages, load shedding (electricity black outs), and the rising prices of basic necessities the frequency of hearing comments concerning a return to Zimbabwe in the near future are increasing. The catch with this sentiment is that for every long-term Zimbabwean migrant I know in South Africa that is preparing for a return to Zimbabwe in the near future I meet a Zimbabwean newly arrived and still hoping to prosper.

## Review

Amanda Hammar, JoAnn McGregor, and Loren Landau, (2010) note related to the ongoing Zimbabwean crisis that there has been no shortage of documentation of the events within the country by media and human rights agencies. My concern during my research has been on experimental forms of visual representation and the multiple forms of literary representations of contemporary Zimbabwe, which ‘provide a greater intimacy with the questions and experiences generated by the crisis’, specifically related to the lives of women that I think could have a greater impact on society (Ibid.:280). My focus upon Zimbabwean

women was based partially on my personal background as I was raised predominantly by women, but also due to minor gaps in research on less spoken of daily event in women's lives. Molly Manyonganise states of women in Shona culture that in time of trouble or astonishment, '*Mbaine*' ('My mother') is uttered by men and women, citing Michael Mazuru and Oliver Nyambi who explain:

In times of discomfort, children, young and grown, seek solace and comfort in the arms of their mothers and even when they cry, they call out to their mothers, which vindicates the belief that a mother is supreme. This is embodied in the following proverbs: *Baba muredzi mwana kuchema anodaidza mai* (A father is just a nurse when a child cries it calls out to the mother: *Mai musuva usingasebwi mumuto* (A mother is like a morsel which needs no dipping into gravy). (Mazuru & Nyambi, 2012:599 cited in Manyonganise, 2015:5)

In addition to my attempt to bring more attention to the role women occupy generally in society and in their struggles and successes as long-term migrants, similar to Néstor Canclini (2011) in his study of Mexican migrants to the United States, I can confirm in regards to Zimbabwean migration to South Africa, more than monetary remittances were being sent as Canclini states:

migrants send not only money, but information; they exchange experiences in both directions and establish “transnational communities” that are in constant communication (Besserer and Kearney 2006). The idea of “cultural remittances” enters the discussion: migrants send not only money from the United States to Mexico, but also musical and video equipment, televisions, electrical appliances, and fashionable clothes; conversely, food, taped music, and videos of parties and family ceremonies are sent to California, Texas, Chicago, and New York from Mexico. As Lourdes Arizpe notes, “assets of prestige and signs of success” emblematic of the height of modernity are conveyed from the United States to Mexico, whereas objects and messages, representing traditional affections, solidarity, and reaffirmation of the community are sent from Mexico to the north (Arizpe 2006). Through this exchange, bicultural practices are formed that bring about the coexistence

and, to an extent, hybridization of diverse aesthetics.’ (25)

This dissertation has provided a historical framing for the events greatly affecting the mass migration of Zimbabweans, shared their experiences, and helped to give a voice to the many women who have sacrificed their dreams, been absent when the death of loved ones occurred, and in many cases sacrificed seeing their children grow up in order to send remittances in order to assure their families’ daily survival all while holding onto hopes that one day Zimbabwe will thrive again.

Lastly, Angela Torresan (2011) summarizes the experiences that I attempt to display through my engagement with multiple methodologies, the theoretical considerations of my filmic work, and questions related to its general effectiveness, stating of her film on migration from Brazil to Portugal, *Round Trip* (1999):

Cameras are catalysts for performances, and performances work as a genre of self-representation and self-theorization that can shed crucial light on our understanding of how people perceive their role in the social space they share with others. But can we also create and put forth anthropological theory through film? Can it actually help us beyond its methodological potential and as a means of presenting our findings? Is *Round Trip* a successful example of such connections? As I write this, I can foresee some of my students opening their eyes in hopeful expectation for an answer that will help them figure out once and for all how to integrate filmmaking in their PhD proposals. The good news is that I do believe that we can integrate our theories with film. I cannot, however, provide an infallible method of achieving that connection, for I also believe that the power of filmmaking practice in anthropology lies in its malleability in adapting to different specific theoretical concerns. ...there is no single and definite role for films in anthropology. What films can certainly do is help us excavate ethnography, just as a return trip may help immigrants excavate their memories of home and place them together with the objects they find along the trip to tell a new story about themselves and about others. How the story that we create with films evokes or builds on our specific theoretical concerns will be contingent on the intention of

each particular project and then on the intentions of those who watch the final cut. (126)

As I sign of recognition and gratitude I offer the below poem to all of the Zimbabwean women and their families for offering me their time, hospitality, and for sharing their knowledge that has assisted me in becoming a more understanding and compassionate global citizen; *maita basa* (thank you).

“Woman”

When I am weak, then I realise how strong I am

When I cry then I realise I am really strong.

My tears don't spell weakness, they mean strength

A strong woman cries

My silence does not mean victim, but spells survivor

You boast you have broken me yet you have made me stronger

The soul you once raptured is not the strongest

The soul you once fractured is now mended

I am a woman; a strong woman

I pity you for you will never know my strength

Many a mile the journey to recovery takes

Rest assured the journey will be complete

For I am a woman; a very strong woman

Steep mountains I will have to climb

Many rivers I might have to cross

Rest assured the journey will be complete

I am a woman; a strong woman

Behind the inspiration

I make no apologies for all the strong women; some misjudged and others greatly misunderstood. Don't just be a woman, be a strong one. It's not about your physicality but your ability.

Jele-Ncube, 2015:170-179

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