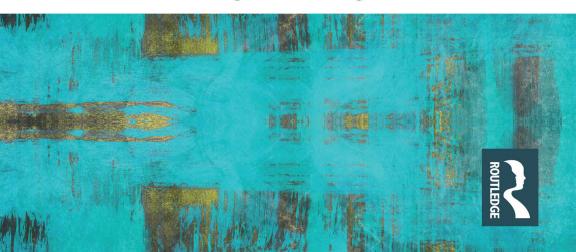# MOBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWEAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

CROSSING BORDERS, TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES

Magdalena Pfalzgraf

Routledge

Mobility in Contemporary Zimbabwean Literature in English

This monograph explores the concept of mobility in Zimbabwean works of fiction published in English between the introduction of the controversial Fast Track Land Reform Programme and the end of the Mugabe era.

Since 2000, Zimbabwe has experienced unprecedented levels of transnational out-migration in response to the political conflicts and economic downturn often referred to as the Zimbabwe Crisis. This, in turn, has led to an increased outpouring of literary texts about migration, both in locally produced texts and in works by authors based in the diaspora. Situating Zimbabwe's recent literary developments in a wider context of Southern African writing and history, this book focuses on texts that portray movement within Zimbabwe's cities, between village and city, to South Africa, and overseas. The author examines important developments and trends in recent Zimbabwean literature, investigating the link between state authoritarianism and control of mobility, and literature's potential to intervene into dominant political discourses. The book includes in-depth analyses of ten recent works of fiction published in the post-2000 era and develops mobility as a key category of literary analysis of Zimbabwe's contemporary literatures.

Setting out a rich dialogue between literary criticism and mobility studies, this book will be of interest to researchers of African literature, Southern Africa, migration, and mobility.

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Magdalena Pfalzgraf

Für Lucia Malter

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A note on spelling

Terms from indigenous Zimbabwean languages such as Shona and IsiNdebele are not italicized or otherwise highlighted, unless they are emphasized in the primary text.

1 Introduction

In their essay "Afropolis: From Johannesburg", Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe examine the semiotics of skin color in Johannesburg through billboard advertisements, art, and the cityscape. The point of departure for their analysis is their regular Saturday drive across the city to buy fish: "Since we're on the road so much, we have time to look around, to see what's going on" (2007, p. 281). The image transported through the window of their moving car is that of a global metropolis in constant flux. Movement is ubiquitous, and the city is shaped by fast traffic, restless pedestrians, and an elusive identity shifting between a local urbanism and "an original form, if not of African cosmopolitanism, then of worldliness" (ibid., p. 282), which is expressed in an abundance of signs and messages:

> It is an environment studded with texts. Road signs, billboards, newsprint, magazine covers. A stream of global and local city signs, of Johannesburg representation. A city of surfaces, shining, shifting, superficial, sensational, singular. Alive, on the move, and at times as ugly as sin.
>
> (ibid., p. 282)

This is a far cry from conventional public discourse on sub-Saharan Africa, which, except perhaps for the 'Africa is rising' narrative of the early 2000s and the related enthusiasm for global capitalism's 'next investment frontier', remains infused with the tropes of standstill and despondency. Far from being closed off or contained, however, the African continent is a site of intense mobility, shifting structures, and various other processes characteristic of the global age, and these dynamics are evident in different forms of cultural production issuing from the continent as well as from the diaspora.

Perspectives on African modernities which counter the familiar Afropessimism but also Afrocentrism's nativist, anti-global essentialism are not new, but they have become more influential in recent years. Commentators have made an emphatic case for the "bright continent" (Olopade) and embraced the idea of an Afropolitan generation (Selasi 2013a); more nuanced voices have considered a new ethics of being through which "the fluid definition

of 'African' in the twenty-first century" (Eze 2014, p. 326) could be imagined as "constituted by relation rather than opposition" (ibid., p. 326).

But I am not opening with Nutall and Mbembe's text in order to self-identify as an enlightened European eager to shed the "ignorance and hubris [which] has long governed Western impressions of what was seen as an impenetrable unknown" (Olopade 2014, p. 3) or to make a case for Afropolitan interventions. There are two aspects in their text which are even more relevant as points of departure for this study's engagement with Zimbabwe's literary mobility dynamics in the twenty-first century. The first concerns an ambivalence related to movement, which does not go unnoticed despite their overall positive portrayal of Johannesburg. Underneath the dazzling surfaces – "shining, shifting, superficial, sensational" (Nuttall and Mbembe 2007, p. 282) – there is unease or at least uncertainty as to where all this is leading and an awareness that today's dynamism is partly rooted in a history of oppression:

> During apartheid, the right of black people to live in the city was constantly threatened. They were to work in the city but not to live in it. This explains perhaps the force and power of attempts to conquer the right to be urban in the present. To occupy the center of the city, its subjective core, to produce forms of city style at such velocity. To draw on a culture of indifference and restlessness that nourishes self-stylization.
>
> (ibid., p. 282)

In the primary texts analyzed here, we will come across numerous instances where being 'on the move' does not mean moving on, where movement is not necessarily mobilizing, and where city dynamism is not always indicative of development. This contradictory dynamic is a central concern of this study. It expresses itself in the coexistence of movement and motionlessness and the experience of a "frantic stasis" (Jones 2010, p. 289): of being stuck in a state of perpetual movement which is often represented not as movement forward but as a struggle to stay put. As we will see, the protagonists move between different spaces within the nation and beyond – in the city, between Zimbabwe's rural and urban spaces, across the borders of nation. Most characters who move share a desire for escape from the numerous grievances bedeviling Zimbabwe in particular since 2000, including political violence under Mugabe's dictatorship and the breakdown of the economy, but some who "seem to be captured in a frenzy of activity may simply be exerting a great deal of effort to stay in place" (Simone 2011, p. 2).

The second aspect concerns Nuttall and Mbembe's reference to text and, by extension, to stories as important terrains on which the entanglement of local and global modernities becomes apparent but which also engage the frictions between local regimes and desires for worldliness. The parochialism of the Mugabeist narrative of the Third Chimurenga (the dominant state ideology which the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) implemented in 2000 to justify its hegemony and authoritarianism) has

created the fiction of a self-contained Zimbabwean nation carved up into smaller terrains. As the literary characters move, they find themselves confronted with boundaries and barriers which originate in the Rhodesian settler state and became reappropriated under Mugabe's reign. The state fiction of the Third Chimurenga itself is also surprisingly mobile: it can travel with the characters into exile to colonize the topographies of northern cities such as Edinburgh and London. In this respect, Zimbabwean literature offers a very specific perspective on transnational movement. Zimbabwean writers often imagine characters who move to distant places, but the contours of the spatial and temporal configurations defined in the Third Chimurenga state fiction are rarely far away.

1.1   The "age of the wandering Zimbabwean"

Since the turn of the new millennium, African writing in English has become increasingly concerned with the experience of migration, tracing its impact across the continent and on a global scale. The past two decades have seen the publication of a remarkable number of works which center on the experiences of African migrants in Europe or North America, in many cases relating the return of migrant characters as well. Among these are internationally successful and critically acclaimed works such as M.G. Vassanji's *Amriika* (1999), Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001), Benjamin Kwakye's *The Other Crucifix* (2010), Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013b), Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* (2013), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2014), to name just a few examples. Migrations occurring within Africa, transnational as well as domestic, are no less important, but they have not received the same attention as these portrayals of transcontinental migration. Migrant characters are also found in texts the plots of which never extend beyond the boundaries of a single place: the absent father working abroad, the sibling sent to Britain in a joint family effort (studying or perhaps working there illegally as a *BBC*)[1] and known to the reader through family memories, the bashful returnee, the 'housemaid' remitting assets to her rural home, the middle-class family forced to relocate from the suburbs to poorer quarters of town. Hence, the migrant occupies a central position in contemporary African literature and reflects many of the currents of mobility on the continent and in the diaspora.

   Contemporary Zimbabwean fiction presents an extremely interesting case for the study of literary engagements with migration and other forms of movement. Migration has always been an theme in Zimbabwean literatures, noticable in early stories about rural-urban migration such as Alfred Mbaba's "Rhodesia Road" (1951). Transnational movement has an equally long history in Zimbabwean writing and has been strongly associated with crisis; Chidora defines exile as a leitmotif in Zimbabwean literature which developed in the 1970s and endures today (2017, pp. 23–32). Since 2000, movement has been an ever more central literary concern. Over the course of the last two

decades, migration has become one of the most prominent and most frequently depicted themes in Zimbabwean writing in English, both in locally produced texts and in works by authors based in the diaspora. This development needs to be seen in the context of the mass out-migrations of Zimbabwean citizens in response to the political crimes and economic free fall which characterized the post-2000 period and which have come to be referred to, collectively, as the 'Zimbabwe Crisis'.[2] Kizito Muchemwa makes the following observation:

> Exilic writing is assuming increasing importance in and outside Zimbabwe because of the contemporary demographic and political landscape in the country. In Zimbabwe's recent history there are no records, with the exception of the Liberation War period of the 1970s, of massive movements of people in direct response to state policies. The new millennium has been harbinger to the age of the wandering Zimbabwean scattered to all corners of the world with great concentrations in South Africa, the United Kingdom and North America.
>
> (2010, p. 135)

Since 2000, Zimbabwe has experienced unprecedented levels of transnational out-migration, as large numbers of citizens have left to seek livelihoods in other countries in Africa and overseas (Chiumbu and Musemwa 2012, p. xiv). The size of the Zimbabwean diaspora today is uncertain, and numbers vary greatly, "from the barely plausible to the totally outlandish" (Crush and Tevera 2010, p. 3). A frequently cited estimate holds that three million Zimbabweans (about a quarter of the total population) have left the country since 2000;[3] others claim that there are three million Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa alone, a figure which Crush and Tevera trace back to Thabo Mbeki and which is most probably exaggerated (2010, p. 3). Estimates regarding the number of Zimbabweans abroad hence need to be treated with care. They are often used for populist agendas, to paint an image of foreign 'threat' (Crush and Tevera refer in particular to xenophobic discourses in South African mainstream media), and besides, several factors render the scope of transnational migration difficult to determine: the Zimbabwean government does not keep reliable statistics of departures, and South Africa (the main receiving country) records legal entries but also does not keep statistics of departures; furthermore, many Zimbabweans leave through informal channels, and regional migrants often migrate back and forth (Crush and Tevera 2010, pp. 4–5; Hammar, McGregor, and Landau 2010, p. 263). In addition to a steep rise in transnational migration, other patterns of movement have intensified in response to the changed national and economic landscape and have also been depicted in imaginative literature. Among them are informal cross-border and roadside trade,[4] intra-urban movement, and a transformed rural-urban dynamic, because many Zimbabweans have given up urban lives to resettle in the rural areas in the course of the land seizures and resettlement process under the banner of

the Fast Track Land Reform Programme or have been forcibly displaced from the city by campaigns of anti-urban violence such as Operation Murambatsvina (2005), a government-initiated action which, in particular, targeted the impoverished urban working classes in the so-called townships and led to large-scale homelessness and displacement.

Given the country's political and economic development in the post-2000 period, it is not surprising that Zimbabwean mobility is predominantly understood in terms of large-scale out-migration. As will become clear, the multifaceted aspects of the Zimbabwe Crisis feature prominently in Zimbabwean fiction, as does the portrayal of transnational migration as one of its major consequences. However, there is a need to broaden perspectives and think of Zimbabwean migration and other forms of mobility beyond 'exodus' and escape. While it is true that the movements portrayed in the texts selected for this study all relate in different ways to the post-2000 crisis, assuming that people leave their home country to get away from crisis and to seek the proverbial greener pastures abroad is too narrow and glosses over important dimensions of mobility in contemporary Zimbabwean writing. As Chidora puts it, in the case of Zimbabwean writing dealing with movement in post-2000 contexts, a binary distinction between the disabling space of a state in crisis and the presumably enabling space of exile is necessarily limiting because "moving out of, and into, crisis are discrepant movements happening simultaneously in the same space and in one text so that those who move, and those who do not move, are afflicted by the turmoil of existing out of place" (2017, p. iii). In the primary literature, we will come across representations of movement which require us to abandon the received grammar of postcolonialist approaches, which often read migration through the prism of home and exile, Western center and postcolonial margin, oppression and victimhood. I therefore use mobility as a concept which is broader and more inclusive than migration. It includes hidden or less obvious dimensions of migration and other forms of physical movement as well as experiences of mobility which are not necessarily connected to physical movement across geographical space. In this respect, I take important impulses from AbdouMaliq Simone, who has repeatedly stressed the need to go beyond the linearity and mechanism indicated by the 'classic' push-pull model and understand movement as a complex social process:

> Africa is a space of intensified movement, of movement in a very broad sense that encompasses migration, displacement and accelerated social mobility. But this movement is not totally subsumed by these categories; rather it has been appropriated as a multifaceted strategy of urban survival – accumulation but also control. ... Movement is also a process without foreseeable end. When rural populations come to the city they are deemed migrants, but an ongoing career of sometimes incessant shifts in places of residence and work within the city can be viewed analytically as separate from migration.
>
> (2004, p. 118)

Simone's observations, stemming from the social sciences, are of value for a discussion of mobility in literary studies and aid understanding the less obvious dimensions of mobility and so unravel the seemingly contradictory concurrence of movement and standstill we often encounter in the literary texts chosen for this study.

1.2 "A state of mind, not a country": Mobility and a streamlined ideology

According to Ranka Primorac, Zimbabwe's literature in the post–2000 period intensely engages in exploring the nation's troubled 'consciousness'. Referencing Brian Chikwava's novel *Harare North*, where Zimbabwe is referred to as "a state of mind" (2009, p. 183), she writes:

> One way to describe key Zimbabwe-related works of prose fiction that have appeared in the last half-decade is to say that they all probe the shifting terrain of Zimbabwe's national 'state of mind' since the beginning of the new millennium.
>
> (2010, p. 247)

A central argument of the present study is that the proliferation in literary depictions of internal and transnational movement needs to be seen in this context.

Zimbabwean writing in the post–2000 period emerges from a field of tension which is characterized, on the one hand, by the dynamics of an intensified global mobility and the attendant opening of conceptions of national and cultural identity and on the other, by a nationalist aesthetics which has gained momentum through a reformulated version of the state-sanctioned narrative of the nation which was instigated in 2000 together with the Fast Track Land Reform Programme: the ideology of the Third Chimurenga. As local and national borders are crossed in and through literature, a narrowly drawn definition of what it means to be Zimbabwean has gained influence. In tandem with the unfolding of the Zimbabwe Crisis, the symbolic borders of the nation have been reinforced, and who is within and who is outside is to a great extent a question of state power. This is also tightly connected to the restructuring of the spaces *within* the nation, which includes the valorization of rural space, a deprecation of the urban, and the drawing of boundaries which define what kinds of movements are possible or acceptable (according to official representations) and what spaces are considered desirable. The Chimurenga discourse also carves the nation up along ethnic and racial lines. In order to analyze literary depictions of Zimbabwean mobilities, it is therefore important to look at the material conditions of the economic and political crises in the post–2000 period. But we also need to develop an understanding of how the political and the aesthetic are strongly intertwined in post–2000 Zimbabwe, where public space became dominated by a reformulated version

of the founding myth of the Chimurenga in terms of a nativist, cultural nation-alist narrative designed to ensure the power of the ruling party, ZANU-PF.

The idea that narrative and narration play an essential role in welding strang-ers together into an imagined community of the nation, in particular as devel-oped in the work of Benedict Anderson (1983) and Homi Bhabha (1990), has become widely accepted, if not something of a truism, in postcolonial studies. This study is not so much interested in the question of how national imagin-aries are developed and disseminated in writing. Instead, the main focus is on how Zimbabwe's ruling party, ZANU-PF, under Robert Mugabe has installed a radically Afrocentrist ideology and a streamlined historiography in order to maintain its grip on power and has, in this process, displaced or declared invalid all other stories and versions of Zimbabwe. According to Flora Veit-Wild, "the manipulation of language has been a central element in the uphold-ing and abuse of power in post-2000 Zimbabwe" (2006, p. 196). The late writer Chenjerai Hove goes even further when he speaks of a corruption of language and of the social imagination (2002, p. 11). As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, this also involves the corruption of space and mastery over movement. The stabilization of ZANU-PF's hegemony by way of a monologic ideological narrative involves the restructuring of the nation whereby symbolic and spatially manifest boundaries are enforced and spaces are given new meaning.

The ways in which a state-sanctioned 'master fiction' and nationalist retellings of history have been used as instruments of state power since the ruling party, ZANU-PF, came into government in 1980 have been widely examined by scho-lars, including Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Muchemwa, Ranger, Muponde, and Primorac. Primorac's work is particularly important because she has laid bare the generic and narrative properties of the Third Chimurenga and explored the ways in which imaginative literature has critically responded to and at times subverted this dis-course not only through content and subject matter but also by way of structure and form. Of specific relevance are her insights into the spatio-temporal config-urations of the Third Chimurenga master fiction and its colonial precursors. Pri-morac argues that the Rhodesian settler state depended to a large extent on the rule over space and landscape and on the imposition of a specific model of space-time which she defines as the Rhodesian chronotope. She further argues that this colonial chronotope persists in the spatio-temporal configuration of the Third Chimurenga ideology. I argue that the literary texts discussed in this study critically engage the spatial orders imposed by the Mugabe regime even if they do not enter any overt political discourse or express oppositional standpoints. Instead, what is found is a careful interrogation of different spaces within the nation and an engagement with the rules that allow or contain movement.

1.3   Four selected dynamics of mobility

This study is structured around mobility in four geographically defined con-texts which will be discussed in nine novels and one short story collection:

intra-urban movement, rural–urban movement, transnational migration within Africa, and transcontinental migration. These different mobility dynamics are reflected in the structure and organization of the primary material. Chapters 2 and 3 provide a critical background to the literary analyses. Chapter 2 concentrates on the socio-historical background to the Zimbabwe Crisis and the crisis-related migrations in the post-2000 period and discusses links to older histories of migration and authoritarianism in the region. In Chapter 3, the discussion turns to the conceptual framework for the literary analyses and focuses on the narrative of the Third Chimurenga, its understanding of time and space, and the 'frantic stasis' motif. Chapter 4 explores representations of Zimbabwean city spaces in relation to different forms of crisis and restlessness in three novels: Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*, NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, and Shimmer Chinodya's *Chairman of Fools*. Chapter 5 is centered on portrayals of movement between urban and rural space in Zimbabwe. Here, the political event of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme is central, in particular in Hoba's short story cycle and in Graham Lang's novel *Place of Birth*. Both texts engage with the experience of the land invasions and the seizure of (mainly white-owned) commercial farms, which began in 2000. In Shimmer Chinodya's latest novel, *Strife*, rural-urban migration is primarily connected to questions of class mobility; the primary settings include villages in the former colonial 'reserves' and the exclusionary colonial cities. Whereas the first two analysis chapters are primarily focussed on domestic movement, the second part of this study turns to representations of transnational and transcontinental migration. As in other African writing, the routes taken by Zimbabwean protagonists traveling abroad are diverse, but two destinations are clearly privileged: South Africa and the United Kingdom. Chapter 6 focuses on two texts which portray migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa: in Christopher Mlalazi's debut novel, *The Border Jumper*, first published under the title *Many Rivers* (2009), an impoverished young man from Bulawayo moves to Johannesburg; in Ian Holding's *Of Beasts & Beings*, a teacher from Harare prepares to depart for South Africa, where he will take on a new post at a boarding school. Chapter 7 discusses two texts portraying migration from Zimbabwe to the United Kingdom. Brian Chikwava's protagonist seeks asylumn in London, also known as 'Harare North' because of its large Zimbabwean community. Tendai Huchu's second novel, *The Maestro, the Magistrate and the Mathematician*, follows three Zimbabwean men into exile in Edinburgh. While the organization of my primary texts according to four different dynamics of mobility serves as a heuristic, I am not, of course, suggesting that these four dynamics exist in separation from each other. As the analyses will show, specific dynamics of mobility continue through different spatial dimensions. In the texts discussed in Chapter 4, for instance, intra-urban movement within the Zimbabwean city is represented as closely entangled with transnational movement. In the case of literary representations of transnational movement, in turn, hopes for distance and escape are at times confounded when the

characters realize that "the northern city has immense potential to be a southern city" (Chidora 2017, p. 160).

As a consequence of the global dispersal of Zimbabwean citizens, a great deal of Zimbabwean literature is produced by authors based abroad. The diasporic literary community is large and scattered across the globe: Chikwava and Huchu live in Britain, Bulawayo lives in the US and Lang in Australia, Mlalazi is based in Mexico. My corpus includes texts by authors who live and work in Zimbabwe and by authors who live (and publish) abroad and reflects the diversity of Zimbabwe's writing scene in other ways as well. Next to 'big names' such as NoViolet Bulawayo and Brian Chikwava (their work has been enthusiastically received by a global readership as well as by scholars, and they have been bestowed numerous literary accolades) we find texts by authors who are not as widely read or are little known outside of their local Zimbabwean context. Among them are Valerie Tagwira and Lawrence Hoba, who both live in Harare and for whom writing is not their main career. Tagwira is a specialist obstetrician and gynecologist and a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, Hoba graduated in tourism from the University of Zimbabwe and works for a company in the sustainable energy sector. Their work has been published locally with Weaver Press (Harare), one of the few remaining independent quality presses in Zimbabwe. Ian Holding is a pen name of an author (who, like Chikwava, Bulawayo, Hoba, and Tagwira, belongs to the so-called 'born free' generation) based in Harare. Until recently, he was the headmaster of a boys' grammar school. His work has received acclaim and has been published abroad, but in his social circle and even at his school, few people know of his second occupation. Shimmer Chinodya is also based in Harare. An immensely prolific writer who is also active in the arts and culture scene, he can be seen as one of the 'doyen' Zimbabwean writers who began writing as black Rhodesians and came of age during the anti-colonial movement and the liberation war era in the 1960s and 1970s (in the discussions, I will repeatedly refer to seminal texts by other influential authors of this generation, including Charles Mungoshi, Stanley Nyamfukudza, Musaemura Zimunya, and Dambudzo Marechera).

With only two texts – Graham Lang's *Place of Birth* and Ian Holding's *Of Beasts & Beings* – white authors represent a relatively small margin in relation to the entire corpus. This is not to suggest, however, that there is not much writing by white Zimbabweans. The opposite is the case: white writers have contributed greatly to Zimbabwe's written literary traditions, and, in particular since 2000, there has been a remarkable output of writing by white Zimbabweans, especially in the autobiographic genre. It must therefore be stressed from the outset that the texts forming the corpus of this study were selected for the ways in which they contribute to and enrich our understanding of mobility in Zimbabwean writing and not on the basis of the author's skin color. The fact that white authors are a minority in my corpus in no way reflects that they hold a marginal position in the canon of contemporary Zimbabwean literature. This need for clarification is telling, however, as it

points to the rather contentious terrain of nationalism, disenfranchisement of white citizenship rights, and the legacy of settler colonialism on which the reception and classification of white Zimbabwean literature often finds itself situated. As Tagwirei has noted, a politics of canon formation steeped in a nativist nationalism marginalizes and even excludes white voices:

> Unlike literature written by blacks in Zimbabwe, literature by whites does not enjoy a central position in the country's literary and cultural systems. Such literature is deemed to belong to a subset of narratives that fail to satisfy the demands of 'patriotic history'. Consequently, white writing in Zimbabwe exists in the margins, an alternative, sub-cultural literary form.
>
> (2014, p. 21)

But even outside of this ideology, the prevailing perspective tends to categorize Zimbabwe's literatures along the lines of race and ethnicity and locates writing by white authors outside the core of Zimbabwean literature, despite the fact that a number of studies have moved beyond a fragmented approach to Zimbabwean literature.[5] As has been variously noted, studies on Zimbabwean literature often compartmentalize white authors into a category of their own or omit them altogether and thus unwittingly reproduce a "racially monologic approach to Zimbabwean literature" (ibid., p. 22). A further problem arises when a mainstream critical whiteness studies perspective shaped in a European and US-American tradition is uncritically transferred to the contemporary Zimbabwean context. In such approaches, whiteness is primarily conceived of in terms of privilege, dominance, and the "hegemonic normalization" of whiteness (Tagwirei 2014, p. 152).

  These approaches provide insights into the link among race, power, and oppression which are vitally important in the Zimbabwean context, given the country's colonial legacy and the land ownership inequality enduring in the post-independence period (themes of major concern for both novels mentioned prior). However, they cannot account for the specifics of contemporary Zimbabwean discourses and experiences relating to race, a context where the legacy of settler colonialism and racist oppression, minority status, and political marginalization in the post-2000s creates a unique and very contradictory situation. As Tagwirei writes: "whiteness in this regional context is a shared African/colonial and postcolonial experience, but it is one that cannot unproblematically be equated with dominant global tropes of whiteness" (ibid., p. 153).[6] In light of such a polarized discourse, it is tempting to omit the qualifier 'white' altogether when talking about the authors mentioned prior – drawing attention to the 'whiteness' of the authors and their characters might insinuate that they are regarded differently from the other texts or are positioned outside of the core of Zimbabwean literature. Both Holding and Lang, however, foreground whiteness as a theme and portray contexts where racial issues are at the core of various forms of movement (and of stuckness). In this respect,

Tagwirei's work is particularly helpful in shaping a perspective. He argues that depictions of physical movement have played a central role in writing by white authors from different periods and that "movement is a constitutive trope through which one's race-bound identity is understood as unstable and fluid" (Tagwirei 2014, p. 171). As will be explained in more detail in Chapter 5, instead of reading white Zimbabwean texts through difference and otherness, placing the main focus instead on the ways they employ and respond to the theme of mobility allows me to align them with the other texts in my corpus without losing track of the specific conditions of Zimbabwean whiteness today or the legacy of the colonial past with which both Graham Lang's and Ian Holding's protagonists grapple.

Selecting the literary texts for this book has been encouraging. There is a great wealth of writing and no dearth of material offering fascinating and unexpected perspectives on mobility, which I would like to briefly illustrate by drawing attention to a few out of the many texts which are not part of the primary corpus of my book but might be of interest for a differently accentuated study of movement in recent Zimbabwean writing. These examples also illustrate the diversity of the publishing channels through which Zimbabwean writing finds an outlet: they include novels published with big publishing houses, locally published texts, texts circulated via self-publishing (which is an increasingly popular mode of publishing in Zimbabwe), as well as novels which somehow have escaped the attention of literary scholars. One example is *Highway Queen* (2010), a successful novel by the Harare-based author Virginia Phiri which tells the story of a middle-class family which becomes impoverished after the father is made redundant and has to move to an informal settlement. Subsequently, their survival depends on the mother, who engages in cross-border trade and prostitution. This novel, circulated via a self-publishing outlet and very popular in Zimbabwe, features a range of different dynamics of mobility: intra-urban displacement, circular migration, roadside trade, and urban-to-rural migration (the family eventually relocates to the village). Irene Sabatini's novel *The Boy Next Door* (2009), which won the Orange Award for New Fiction (2010), is a complex love story and a road novel whose heroes journey across Zimbabwe and across the borders of nations in order to escape the burdens of war memories, religious fanaticism, racism, and the cruelty of the Mugabe regime. Sabatini also explores the emergence of an ambitious black urban middle class in late colonial society and in early independent Zimbabwe. Generally, the entanglement of class and urban space appears to be an important concern to many Zimbabwean authors: before writing *The Maestro, the Magistrate and the Mathematician*, Tendai Huchu published *The Hairdresser of Harare* (2013, first published 2010), a humorous novel centered on an ambitious young hair salon owner who lives in a privileged part of town together with a well-off friend who has connections to the ruling class. Through its two main characters, the novel explores questions of gender and homosexuality. Petina Gappah's first novel, *The Book of Memory* (2015), raises interesting questions in relation to intra-urban movement, social mobility,

and race. In this story, a child with albinism is adopted from her impoverished township household by a wealthy white man from an affluent part of Harare. As a young woman, the protagonist falls out of her social circle when she is a accused of having murdered her adoptive father. Bryony Rheam's *This Septem-ber Sun* (2009) is a coming-of-age story in which the land reform, race, and migration play a role. Novuyo Rosa Tshuma's eagerly anticipated novel *House of Stone* (2018) moves in a different direction: into the country's past, by retelling histories of colonial Rhodesia and genocide in the first decade of independence, and into its future, by mobilizing repressed unofficial versions of history and adding them to the 'house' of the nation Zimbabwe. Besides the large number of novels which have been published by Zimbabweans in the country and abroad, the short story genre is extremely popular in Zimba-bwe, and Zimbabwean short story writers are particularly prolific, causing the critic Mushakavanhu to ask: "Is Zimbabwe a Short Story Country?"(2013).[7]

Last, it needs to be mentioned that, of course, not all Zimbabwean writing, whether published in the country or abroad, is in English. There is a long and stable tradition of writing in indigenous languages, in particular in the major lan-guages Shona and isiNdebele, beginning in the 1950s in the form of short stories and folk tales published in literary magazines, followed by the first novels. Today, there is an active and lively writing scene in Shona and in Ndebele. These works do not constitute a separate canon from the Anglophone one. Influential authors like the late Charles Mungoshi, Ignatius Mabasa, and Memory Chirere have written and published in both English and Shona. In the Anglophone texts selected for this corpus, these indigeneous languages also play a role: most authors employ some form of code switching and often add an English transla-tion in a glossary or in footnotes, which Veit-Wild describes as a "reader-friendly version of the diglossic language situation" (2009, p. 693) which allows the writer to "add some local flavor to the otherwise English text" while ensuring that "the non-Shona reader will not feel excluded" (2009, p. 694). Zimbabwe's multilingual realities are also reflected in the terminology relating to traditional belief systems, traditional practices, and ideology.

Notes

1 *BBC* stands for *British Bottom Cleaner* and is a demeaning joke about Zimbabweans working in the British care industry. McGregor explains that when the labor gap in the British care sector became increasingly filled with migrants, 'joining the BBC' became almost synonymous for migration from Zimbabwe to Britain (2007, p. 802). See also Mbiba (2012).
2 In alignment with the relevant literature (including analyses by Raftopoulos 2009; Hammar, McGregor and Landau 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012), Zimbabwe Crisis is used here as a generic term which encapsulates the complex and diverse aspects of the country's rapid economic meltdown and the intensification of the state's violent author-itarianism in the post-2000 period, without implicating that the crisis (or crises) should be viewed in singular terms or can be related back to an isolated cause or origin. The social and cultural conditions of the post-2000 period will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

3 This much-circulated figure most probably goes back to a study by Christopher Chet-sanga (2003). While this study serves to highlight the extraordinary scope of the Zimbabwean 'exodus', this figure should not be cited carelessly today, as it seems unlikely that the number of Zimbabweans abroad has not changed since 2003.

4 Informal cross-border trade is a survival strategy, especially in urban households, which is mainly carried out by women to earn money in South Africa, which they then use to purchase goods for resale back in Zimbabwe. But female Zimbabwean cross-border traders have also been going to Mozambique, Zambia and even as far afield as Tanzania (Crush and Tevera 2010, p. 4).

5 Primorac (2006) offers a comprehensive discussion of Zimbabwe's novelistic traditions which cuts across language and race. See also Muponde and Primorac (2005), Muchemwa and Muponde (2007), Chidora (2017) for discussions of texts by authors from diverse backgrounds.

6 In his review of recent studies of Zimbabwean whiteness, Pilossof has criticized that they often treat white Zimbabweans as a monolithic group, without acknowledging the diverse origins and backgrounds of those considered white: "'White' is continually referred to as the overarching cultural and personal identity trait, and no attempt is made to complicate and disaggregate this categorization" (2014, p. 140). Such perspectives, he points out, risk confining many of the issues they study to white groups and often obscure many of the shared experiences which cut across race (ibid., p. 140). Some examples of critical whiteness studies also take a perspective which infinitely freezes white Africans in a European context – quite literally so, as American ethnographer David McDermott Hughes's description of white Zimbabweans as "children of the glaciers" (2010, p. 13) illustrates. Formulations such as these reveal a perspective which sees white Zimbabweans as 'alien' to the country and whiteness as something which stands in the way of belonging, "a condition that needs redress, and 'whites' have to escape it in order to dissociate themselves from their corrupt past and become citizens of modern Africa (Pilossof 2014, p. 139). Indeed, some social scientists interested in whiteness in Southern Africa have shown a distrust of white Zimbabweans which makes it difficult to approach the very people they seek to understand. Hughes has admitted to such a view:

> In the 1980s and 1990s, we foreign, white academics and development workers took care to distinguish ourselves from white Zimbabweans. White Africans – regardless of their actual views – represented the old, colonial regime. Euro-Americans, by contrast, deplaned at Harare International Airport as committed nationalists and often, as in my case, as veterans of anti-apartheid student politics in the global North. As we performed this identity, we shunned our local, light-skinned counterparts. In the late 1980s, when I arrived, their company was not always pleasant in any case.
>
> (2010, p. xvi)

7 The short story has a long tradition as an important medium through which Zimbabwean writers articulated political and social concerns: "The canonical trendsetters of Zimbabwean literature escaped the throttling grip, noose and net of the Rhodesia Literature Bureau via the short story" (Mushakavanhu 2013, p. 130). In this respect, the short story anthologies published by Weaver Press (Harare) and Amabooks (Bulawayo) are particularly worth mentioning. Schulze-Engler (2012) discusses subversions of the Chimurenga myth in Weaver Press's anthologies *Writing Still*, *Writing Now*, *Laughing Now*. Also noteworthy are the initiatives by the Zimbabwean writers and publishers Emmanuel Sigauke and Ivor Hartmann who have promoted African short story writing from Zimbabwe and beyond in their literary online magazine *StoryTime* (2007–2012) and by founding the short story anthology series *African Roar* (2010–2014).

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