

DESPERATE MOBILITIES: LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF MIGRATION,  
DISPLACEMENT AND DIASPORA IN *AN ELEGY FOR EASTERLY* BY PETINA  
GAPPAH AND *WE NEED NEW NAMES* BY NOVIOLET BULAWAYO

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**ABSTRACT**

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**DEDICATION**

This thesis is a dedication to my children, Tinotenda and Taropafadzwa, my wife Moleen, my parents and all my siblings. I love you all!!!

### **DECLARATION**

I, Tinotenda Mabwe, hereby declare that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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Date

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## CHAPTER 1

Desperate mobilities: Literary representations of migration, displacement and diaspora in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Orientation of the proposed study

The aim of this proposed study is to explore critically how literature presents migration, displacement and diaspora in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo. This study will critically analyse the causes, manifestation and effects of migration, displacement and diaspora as reflected in the selected novels. It will also analyse how different sections of the society are depicted as victims of forced migration.

Since the late 1990s, Zimbabwe has faced a myriad of economic and political challenges that pushed the country to almost total collapse. Resultantly, literature has been penned to try to provide answers to the Zimbabwean crisis. The rough experiences and the coping strategies of the Zimbabwean people, both economically and politically have been under the spotlight from various authors and scholars (Manase, 2014; Mlambo, 2014; Toivanen, 2015).

There have been various debates centred on the land issue, patriotism, nationalism, human rights issues, the upholding of the constitution, imperialism and their role in perpetuating the Zimbabwean crisis. All these debates have been helpful in dissecting the Zimbabwean crisis to a great extent. However, justice has not been done to the resilience and experiences of the diaspora section of the Zimbabwean community. In times of crisis, displacement is normally heightened as people move both internally and externally. It is the same with Zimbabwe, as people have been displaced permanently and found themselves across indefinite spans of time and space and, thereby they have to restructure their social relations due to the increased inward and outward migration.

In accounting for the accelerated mobility, Mlambo (2014) explores the literary representation of migration, survival and how the ordinary people negotiate times of crisis through seeking alternative spaces, as represented in selected short stories set in crisis-hit Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Mlambo (2014) says that the stories from Zimbabwe centre on out-migration, that is, how people have moved to settle outside the country.

A critical examination of the Zimbabwean context as presented in both literary and non-literary texts demonstrates that urban and rural areas have suffered the same fate of being reconstructed through accelerated mobility and displacement (Gappah, (2009); Bulawayo, (2013); Mlambo, (2014); Chiumbu and Museyamwa, (2012)).

Several factors have played a part in this mobility and displacement, chief among them being the economic hardships that urbanites have endured over time. Massive unemployment and *Operation Murambatsvina* (clean up campaign) initiated by the government created a situation where people moved back and forth between rural areas and towns as they tried to weigh options available to them. This migratory phenomenon is interesting to this study in that it gives a picture of how Zimbabweans in the diaspora have managed to cope with the crisis away from home.

The most noticeable demonstration of the crisis in Zimbabwe was a flourishing outward movement from the country where a large number of people moved to Europe, the United States, Australia, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and many other parts of the world. This resulted in fractured families, cultures and identities and saw the emergence of new identities in the diaspora. This brought out new challenges and new survival strategies in the hosting countries which the immigrants call home. It is against this background that the study shall focus on the experiences of the Zimbabwean diaspora community as enunciated in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

A plethora of fiction has been written about the Zimbabwean crisis that started around the year 2000. However, not a lot has been said about desperate mobilities in the postcolonial era with specific reference to Zimbabwe. Desperate mobilities refer to a situation where people move to different areas as a result of their situation becoming unbearable. It is against this background of a lack of studies on desperate mobilities that the research shall focus on the dimension of desperate mobilities, using experiences of the diaspora brought out in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo.

The research shall focus on how Zimbabwean immigrants have settled in foreign countries which they now call home. The challenges faced by the immigrants start at the home front where many Zimbabweans, especially those living in the cities, encountered a lot of hardships. Life is difficult, complex and traumatic for many, as the -fiction presents. The time when most of the citizenry decided to leave the country is the setting of both the novel and the anthology of short stories. This is the same time that Zimbabwe faced a myriad of economic challenges due to its political crisis. The country was unable to deliver adequate public services and the currency plunged to record lows due to the high inflation rate. People were earning millions of dollars, but they could not buy basic necessities. These challenges forced people to migrate and move to other countries in search of greener pastures.

Given the challenges that come with migration, the study shall also focus on how the migrants have adjusted in terms of culture and identity and how some of them have completely failed to make it in the diaspora upon realising it is not utopia after all. This is shown by the situation that Darling in *We Need New Names* by Bulawayo encounters as she stays in the USA; she becomes an illegal immigrant after she has overstayed her visitor's visa. To some, migration

has come out as a paradox which can be viewed as both a blessing and a curse as illustrated in Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* and in *We Need New Names* by Bulawayo.

In Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, the novelist looks at the desperate mobility theme and brings to the fore the processes that produce discomfort to a highly mobile African citizenry in a postcolonial period. In Gappah's *An Elegy of Easterly*, the author depicts the nature of political and economic immigrants in the global world as they escape from the debilitating effects of a crisis bedevilling their motherland. Gappah defines how the migrants find themselves in the global sphere which is defined by varied economic trajectories and reveals the conflicting positions in which they find themselves as they acquire varying identities. The issue of desperate mobilities, therefore, creates a gap in most Zimbabwean literature and it is still a virgin area for study.

Furthermore, Mlambo (2014) has not dwelt on the hopelessness and the desperateness of the situation in which the migrants found themselves and this shall be brought out by this research. This proposed study will go further to explore how the dreams, lives and hopes of those that have migrated into the diaspora have been shaped by different circumstances that they find themselves.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

This study seeks to:

- assess how the Zimbabwean community's families, cultures and identities are fractured and how new identities emerged in the selected fiction.
- explore how the reader-response can be applied in the fictional anthologies and literary works and allow readers to visualise migration, displacement and life in the diaspora;
- analyse how the fictional short stories present the common man's desperate mobilities into the diaspora in times of crisis.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

The study will contribute to the critical understanding of the conditions that prevailed in Zimbabwe after the year 2000 when people migrated to different countries in search of greener pastures as the situation at home became unbearable. The study also has the potential to add to the little information already available on modern day post-colonial studies, thereby becoming an important reference guide to students, politicians, the general public and academia that have a bias towards Zimbabwean literature. This will add to their understanding of the desperate mobilities employed by the Zimbabwean community in the diaspora.

#### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

The study is limited to works of fiction written in English by Zimbabwean authors, and this has been done as a way of managing the research process. This is not a representative study of the whole country but this study allows for deeper understanding and analysis of the desperate mobilities. The study is limited to *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo.

#### **1.6 Literature review and theoretical framework**

This section gives a review of the literature that is related to the topic under study, “Desperate mobilities: the literary representations of migration, displacement and diaspora in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo”. The aim of this section is to bring out what is already known or what has already been said by other critics as far as the topic is concerned. This section also shows the importance of short story anthologies and the novel in articulating human experiences. Also this section tries to bridge the gap in knowledge that exists and the knowledge that shall come out of this research. The section will also present the theoretical framework which will be used to analyse the proposed research.

### 1.7 A review of related literature

Moyana (2010) argues that the migration of Zimbabweans into the diaspora provides a new dimension where young and old decide to leave their country to seek economic empowerment elsewhere. She further states that this phenomenon of going “hunting in foreign lands” falls into the category of the second phase of the liberation struggle, namely, the need for economic empowerment which liberates one from the clutches of poverty. However, the gap exists in the fact that Moyana (2010) does not highlight the desperateness of the situation as far as moving from one country to the other is concerned.

Raftopolous (2008) argues that from the late 1990s, Zimbabwe entered a period that has come to be known as the crisis of the millennium. This upheaval consists of a combination of political, social and economic decline. The crisis reduced Zimbabwe to a confined space. Subsequently, Zimbabweans made an effort to move out of this space to enabling spaces, that is, the diaspora. So in essence, the Zimbabwean diaspora is a result of forced migration and the diaspora itself, to the sojourners, appears as a location of hope and opportunities. However, this phenomenon results in what the present study terms “desperate mobilities”. And this is an understudied area; it shall be explored in the proposed research.

Furthermore, Mangena and Mupondi (2011) argue that Zimbabwean immigrants in the diaspora grapple with identity issues. Some illegal immigrants work towards becoming part of their host nations through illegal ways. On the other hand, some insist on respecting those values that make them a people, such as family ties. At the same time, some Zimbabwean immigrants in the United Kingdom and elsewhere are not necessarily enjoying the perceived ‘greenness of the new pasture’ of those countries .

In addition to that, Manase (2014) says that Gappah’s *An Elegy for Easterly* maps the link between the motherland and the host countries, especially the way in which characters that leave the country construct their aspirations, perceptions and identities. Those in the diaspora

can only imagine the crisis at home, juxtaposing it with the Western metropolitan defined by capitalism, loss of identity and displacement. This is the reason why, in his assessment of Nigerian “exile literature”, Nwagbara (2010) argues that migrants from Africa suffer from anxiety and displacement in American cities due to the fact that there is “the paradox and discontents inherent in global capitalism” (p.157). Manase (2014) also says that Gappah’s work depicts the nature of the economic migrants as they try to escape from a local crisis. They enter into the abyss of migrant life defined by “global economic trajectories” and they find themselves stuck with various identities which they try to fit into. This is important to the study of the desperate mobilities in that it brings out the desperate situation that the migrants face in the diaspora.

From a non-literary perspective, Tevera, Crush and Chikanda (2010) illustrate that the transfer of funds and goods made a change in the people’s lives in Zimbabwe during the post 2000 economic hardships. However, these handouts can be regarded as filled with negative connotations leading to the tragedy of anticipation from the recipients. A case in point is when those in the diaspora fail to return to the motherland for a number of years and some fail to make it for funerals often because they would have overstayed on their visitor’s visa and thus become illegal immigrants. However, to those at home this does not matter as they have expectations bordering on the perception that the ones who left have been successful in the diaspora.

The displacement as people move to the diaspora finds its way into the space of family relations of some Zimbabweans back in Zimbabwe. Somehow, petty jealousies crop up within the society. Moyo, Gonye and Mdlongwa (2012) indicate that these tensions are the result of the paradox of migration at a social level.

Mlambo (2014) further says that the stories by Gappah and Bulawayo show a literary representation of survival and coping strategies during times of socio-political and economic

crisis. Mlambo (2014) further argues that fiction, particularly the short story, manages to capture the various innovative and resilient ways used by the people inhabiting the cities during tempestuous and trying times, and how they manage to live with hope and positivity. However, in contrast to Mlambo's focus, this study will explore how, on the other hand, migration results in fractured families and broken identities. This study however shall bring to the fore the desperate mobilities that people undertook as a result of economic challenges in their country of origin.

Similarly, Toivanen (2015) says that Bulawayo's characters' mixed world citizenry is defined by uneasiness that reveals itself not only through their own prejudice but also through the context in which they can be defined as desperate. Toivanen (2015) further argues that the desperate mobility theme manifests itself in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* in very distinct ways. She says that the theme manifests itself in the failures of postcolonial governments to address the promises that they have made at Independence so that these translate into tangible results with benefit the citizens. As a result the citizens become desperate to escape from their countries of origin.

Effectively it means that the social, political and economic problems plaguing the independent states in Africa form the abject quintessence that is seen in Bulawayo and Gappah's stories are people's reactions to failure of political order. The people become desperate and this desperation, leaves footprints on the citizenry and hence they fail to disentangle themselves from their mother countries even if they leave the geographical sphere of that country completely. As a result, they carry around with them the badge of the failed state where they come from, as people associate them with their mother countries.

Muganiwa (2013) further points out that the novel's title; *We Need New Names* by No Violet Bulawayo resonates well with the migrants' situation as they try to acquire new names that will enable them to fit into their new society. Acquiring new identities becomes very sad and

perpetuates the theme of desperation as they trade culture and identity for economic stability as a sign of desperateness.

The research shall address issues on how the Zimbabwean people faced difficult and trying times and how they managed to be strong against all adversities. The major gap left by other scholars lies in the lack of sufficient studies tracing the Zimbabwean situation and how it became so desperate, leading to a forced migration of sorts of a large number of Zimbabweans. This shall be brought out through the characters in the texts under study.

### **1.8 Theoretical framework**

This research will use the reader-response theory whose main proponent is Stanley Fish (1960). The theory posits that readers have their own way of interpreting a text which might be totally different from the author's intention when the text was written and the theory helps in explaining the text's significance and aesthetic value. Fish (1960) states that the reader-response is a school of literary theory that focuses on the reader and his or her experience of a literary work. This is opposed to focusing attention primarily on the author or the content and form of the work. The reader in this case is the researcher and the focus is on how he is going to interpret the literary works under study.

Fish (1960) argues that readers are active participants who create a work of literature in the process of reading it. He postulates that the meaning of a text exists somewhere between the words on the page and the reader's mind. The biggest contribution of the reader-response theory is to call attention to the importance of the reader in the making of literary meaning. Fish (1960) urges readers to ask questions like how one feels when reading a certain poem or a passage from a novel, and the reasons behind those feelings, among other questions. Only when such questions are asked can one truly begin to understand literature. The theory will thus be applied in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo to explain the significance of the texts in the context of the topic of this research.

## **1.9 Methodology**

### **1.10 Research design**

This study will employ qualitative research methods where fiction in the form of short stories and novel set in both Zimbabwe and the diaspora shall be examined. Qualitative research will be used in this study as the research is concerned with gathering and analysing information available in print form. In the case of this research, *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo will be used to analyse the fractured families, cultures and identities, and the emergence of new identities by the Zimbabwean community in the diaspora. Journals, critical literary works and research papers will also be read in order to gain more insight into the subject of desperate mobilities.

### **1.11 Population and Sample**

The population of this study shall be all the books written by Petina Gappah and NoViolet Bulawayo. The study will be confined to the anthology of short stories entitled *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and the novel *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo. The sampling method that will be used is purposive sampling. Palys (2008) says that purposive sampling refers to a situation where groups, participants or a phenomenon to be researched are selected according to a preselected criterion which is appropriate to a particular research. In this case it is the literary representations of migration, displacement and diaspora as a theme which has informed the researcher in selecting the sample.

### **1.12 Procedure**

This study will be a desktop literary study where data will be collected through a critical reading and analysis of the short stories. The researcher will first complete an in-depth reading of the novel and the short story anthologies while taking down notes and analysing the texts, especially through character analysis and narrative exploration. This will be done to determine which characters were affected and/or involved in desperate mobilities. The researcher will

note the reasons why the identified characters got entangled in this phenomenon, how they reacted and the consequences they faced. The data shall be collected through a critical analysis of the two texts, applying the specified theory of literature which is the reader-response theory. The major theory for analysing the data will be the reader-response. The findings will be categorised into themes and subthemes and presented in narrative form with textual evidence being provided and compared to the available literature on the subject.

### **1.13 Data analysis**

Bhattacharjee (2012) describes qualitative analysis as the analysis of data which are “heavily dependent on the researcher’s analytic and integrative skills and personal knowledge of the social context where the data are collected.” Bhattacharjee (2012) further posits that in qualitative analysis, instead of making explanations or predictions, the researcher must put emphasis on making sense in order to have a full understanding of the experiences being described in what they are analysing, explaining or predicting, in this case, in the study of the desperate mobilities using the texts under review.

The elements of desperate mobilities in the novel and the anthology will be critically analysed using a desktop content analysis method. The major causes of the desperate mobilities will be analysed critically as presented in the selected literary works.

### **1.14 Research ethics**

The data collected in this research will be solely used for academic purposes and not for personal gain. The research will be based on works of fiction whose characters and places are fictional although one can relate with some places in the texts. The researcher will avoid bias and strive for an objective analysis of the fiction.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides insight into the knowledge of literature that has been produced about the topic under research. It may be established, though, that there is a vast amount of work done on the topic under study, there is a gap that exists in literature that might have been overlooked

in the previous studies. This chapter shall look at literature previously written on the topic of desperate mobilities in the anthology of short stories and a novel under study.

The chapter explores the literary representations of migration, survival and how Zimbabweans negotiate times of crisis through escaping to other countries as enunciated in the selected short stories and novel. Its ultimate aim is to bring out what is already known or what has already been said by other critics as far as the topic is concerned. This section also shows the importance of the short story anthologies and tries to bridge the gap in knowledge that exists and the knowledge that shall come out of this research.

## **1.2 Not at Home in the World: Abject Mobilities**

Bhugra & Becker (2005) defines migration as the process of moving from one country crossing geographical and political boundaries into another country. The major focus of their definition is hinged upon individuals who relocate from their permanent countries, regions or place of residence to settle. There is variation in the duration of stay in these new settlements, so people either settle permanently or semi-permanently in the host countries.

Bhugra & Becker (2005) further postulates that migrants may move en masse or singly for economic or political reasons. Furthermore, in period of crisis, what is also of significance is the fact that spatial and physical dislocation in the form of internal and external migration as people facing difficult situations move away from their places of residence to seek new livelihoods and other forms of survival.

To add to Bhugra & Becker (2005), migration can also be described as the trend of displacement and movement made by individuals with the hope of finding more personal convenience or better their material or social conditions. In other words, this is the movement of people from an impoverished country to another which is envisaged as a land of better opportunities economically, socially and politically.

Pourjafari and Vahidpour (2014) reveal that migration has come to play an increasingly significant role in relation to such basic social foundations as politics, economics, geography and culture. As a result this movement and human restlessness has a remarkable effect on literature as well. The appearance of a new kind of writing according to Pourjafari and Vahidpour (2014), called literature of migration is the manifestation of this impact as is evidenced in the anthology of short stories and the novel under study.

Pourjafari and Vahidpour (2014) postulate that the term migrant literature implies that the subject matter is about migration and the culture and tradition of the host nation. The issue of identity loss and the encroaching of new identities in the diaspora also take centre stage in this type of literature. Pourjafari and Vahidpour (2014) further indicate that although the description of the migration experience and the difficulties of adaptation play a primary role in this literature, migrant literature can be very diverse, either thematically or structurally.

The main aim of literature of migration is to illustrate various narratives of the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of the migrant's lives in their alien conditions of the host societies.

Pasura (2008) illustrates migration as an ongoing phenomenon caused by a number of factors and it has been there since time immemorial. In the case of Zimbabwe, Pasura (2008) comes up with at least five overlapping phases of international migration from the 1960s to the present.

Pasura (2008) indicates that the first phase relates to the migration of black political exiles within the context of the war of liberation and labour recruitments to South Africa's gold mines. The second phase comprises the flight of white Zimbabweans prior to, and post independence in 1980. The third of migration in Zimbabwe was precipitated by the post-independence conflict commonly known as *Gukurahundi* in Matabeleland which made people to move out of the country to seek refuge and safety in neighbouring countries.

As the economy started to shrink in the 1990s, skilled personnel also started to move out of the country in search of better opportunities abroad. This constitutes the fourth phase of migration that the country has gone through. Pasura (2008) synthesises that the fifth phase describes a considerable movement of the population after the formation of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change in 1999 and the launch of the Land Reform Programme. The main reason that made people move out of the country was because of the country's political violence and rapid economic decline which saw people losing their jobs and also inflation rates going to unprecedented levels. It is within this context of high political tension and deepening economic crisis that led to the large-scale arrival of Zimbabwean asylum seekers, refugees, labour migrants and students in Britain, Namibia, South Africa, the United States and various other countries in the world.

According to Pasura (2008) there are no precise figures for the number of Zimbabweans in Britain; estimates suggest that there are more than 200,000 Zimbabweans residing there.

### **1.3 An Elixir to the claustrophobia of home?**

Moyo, Gonye and Mdlongwa (2012) indicate that in Zimbabwean society, the strength and character of the individual under trying times is generally tested in the individual's maintenance of family ties, relations and responsibilities. The characters in the anthology and the selected novel go through these trying times trying to create a balance between these societal expectations and the demands of a disrespectful social and economic reality. Through ostensible encapsulation alone, the chosen texts acknowledge that the experiences painted therein reflect some apparently exported Zimbabwean group memory.

Moyo et al (2012) asserts that what is of paramount importance is how nations and countries can deal with real and imagined causes of diasporanism. Moyo et al (2012) further postulates that what is of importance is whether writers see migration as the solution to problems in the home country or whether they view it as sheer resignation of the responsibility to deal firmly

and squarely with a national problem by those who leave. Above all, the selected fiction should help establish whether, from the Zimbabwean experience and point of view, the Diaspora can be viewed as an elixir to the claustrophobia of home or not.

Most if not all of the characters in the anthology and the novel demonstrate one characteristic of the diaspora experience which is the negotiation and renegotiation of identity, history and experience. This is something that the diaspora character has to contend with throughout his or her existence as he or she creates a new identity, experience, relatives and all that in the name of survival.

Moyana (2010) concurs with other critics that the migration of Zimbabweans into the diaspora provides a new dimension where young and old decide to leave their country to seek economic empowerment elsewhere. She further says that this phenomenon of going “hunting in foreign lands” falls into the category of the second phase of the liberation struggle, namely, the need for economic empowerment which liberates one from the clutches of poverty.

Raftopolous (2008) deduces that from the late 1990s, Zimbabwe entered a period that has come to be known as the crisis of the millennium. This upheaval consists of a combination of political, social and economic decline. The crisis reduced Zimbabwe to a confined space where subsequently, Zimbabweans made an effort to move out of this space to enabling spaces, that is, the diaspora. So in essence, the Zimbabwean diaspora is a result of forced migration and the diaspora itself, to the sojourners appear as a location of hope and opportunities.

Mangena & Mupondi (2011) proposes that Zimbabwean immigrants in the Diaspora grapple with identity issues. Some illegal immigrants work towards becoming part of their host nations through illegal means. On the other hand, some insist on respecting those values that make them a people, such as family ties. At the same time some Zimbabwean individual immigrants are not necessarily enjoying the perceived ‘greenness’ of the United Kingdom.

Manase (2014) recognises that Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* maps the link between the mother and the host countries, especially the way in which characters that leave the country construct their aspirations, perceptions and identities. Those in the diaspora can only imagine the crisis at home juxtaposing it with the Western metropolitan defined by capitalism, loss of identity and displacement. This is the reason why in his assessment of Nigerian "exile literature", Nwagbara (2010) argues that migrants from Africa suffer from anxiety and displacement in American cities due to the fact that there is "the paradox and discontents inherent in global capitalism" (p.157). Manase (2014) restates that Gappah's work depicts the nature of the economic migrants as they try to escape from a local crisis. They enter into the abyss of migrant life defined by "global economic trajectories" and they found themselves stuck with various identities which they try to fit into.

According to Nwagbara (2010), migration and diaspora are results of a multitude of social, political, and economic circumstances which, in turn, result in social, economic, and cultural marginalization. This is what is revealed in the anthology and the novel under study as we see the fictional characters move from one country to the next in search of greener pastures but at the end of the day they go through a lot of change.

#### **1.4 Cultural Hybridity in the diaspora**

Ang (2003) concedes the fact that hybridity has become an issue in the contemporary world as lines of distinction have become blurry. Furthermore Ang (2003) argues that "hybridity foregrounds complicated entanglement rather than identity, togetherness-in-difference rather than separateness and virtual apartheid. This is also a concept that prevents the absorption of all differences into a hegemonic plane of sameness and homogeneity" (p.2). Therefore hybridity can thus be explained as not implying a harmonious coming together of people that

are different but only makes them aware of the difficulties that can be encountered when living with such differences.

Ucham (2015) infers that people who live in different countries or continents away from their of origin tend to adopt a new culture and then it becomes very difficult to strike a balance between the original culture and the adopted one. Their loyalty to their original culture becomes questionable and hence end up completely adopting the culture of their host nation and they suffer from identity loss and identity crisis.

Prabhu (2007) holds the assertion that hybridity is concerned with the current state of diasporan communities who find themselves far away from home and in adopted communities. The major concern here is how the diasporan communities develop themselves without necessarily losing their identity whilst preserving differences. The diasporans initially want to connect with their countries of origin and also with other diasporans they meet in their sojourns. Ucham (2015) argues that this creates a hybrid culture on the diasporans at the end as there are ethnic mixes. Raj (2014) describes the phenomenon of cultural hybridity as “a cultural transactive creating a temporal interactive sequential between the colonizer and the colonized bestowing a conciliation inestimably concussive beyond the managed identity of the dominant”. Simply put this means that as people move to new countries there are transcultural forms that arise from cross-cultural exchange. This touches on basic human circles which can be social, political, linguistic, and religious among others. However it should be noted that hybridity is not necessarily peaceful in nature, it can be contentious and disruptive to those affected by it.

According to Nwagbara (2010), the theory of cultural hybridity is the creation of new transcultural forms which has become widely employed in contemporary academic discourse though it's still disputed in scientific, philosophical, and sociological disciplines.

The characters in the anthology of short stories by Gappah and the novel by Bulawayo have tremendous evidence of cultural hybridity. This is a result of desperate mobilities that the

characters find themselves going through as they try to fit into the new countries they have gone to settle in.

### **1.5 The prism of post colonialism and economic migrancy**

Manase (2014) reiterates that the literary representations in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Gappah represents a series of connections between migration and the post-2000 crisis in Zimbabwe from the prism of post colonialism and economic migrancy.

Tevera, Crush and Chikanda (2010) illustrate that the transfer of funds and goods made a change in the people's lives back at home during the post 2000 economic hardships. However, these handouts can be regarded as filled with negative connotations leading to the tragedy of anticipation from those at home. A case in point is when those in the diaspora fail to come home for a number of years and some fail to make it for funerals. The reason is because they would have overstayed their visitor's visas and subsequently become illegal immigrants. However to those at home this doesn't matter as they have a lot of expectations bordering on the perception that those abroad have made it through in the diaspora.

The displacement as people move to the diaspora finds its way into the space of family relations of some Zimbabweans back home. Somehow, petty jealousies crop up within the society. Moyo, Gonye and Mdlongwa (2012) indicate that these tensions are the result of the paradox of migration at a social level.

Mlambo (2014) assesses that the stories by Gappah and Bulawayo show a literary representation of survival and coping strategies during times of socio-political and economic crisis as presented in selected contemporary Zimbabwean fiction in English. He further says that fiction, particularly the short story, manages to capture the various innovative and resilient ways used by the people inhabiting the city during tempestuous and trying times, and how they manage to live with hope and positivity.

Williams (2009) appraises that the title story is, literally, an elegy for the Easterly shanty town, razed by Robert Mugabe's thugs. However the book is an elegy in a broader sense as the optimism and hope of 1980, beautifully evoked in "Aunt Juliana's Indian" turns out to be a farce as the country suffers a serious economic meltdown. Williams (2009) further says that Juliana swallows independence with "gasping thirst", seizing on the opportunities for education unavailable when Zimbabwe was Rhodesia, under white rule. After independence she embodies high hopes of becoming a secretary as this was her dream job.

Williams (2009) formulates that in Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly*, she plays with point of view to suggest that none of her characters is simply good or evil – not even Mugabe himself who is responsible for most of the suffering that people go through. In "*At the Sound of the Last Post*", he presides over the funeral of a man who succumbed to "a long illness", a synonym for Aids. The narrator is the disenchanted widow, offering a lens through which to mock the hypocrisy of what she is seeing around her. At the same time the disenchanted narrator feels sorry for Mugabe as "the very old man that he is. Unexpected pity wells up inside me."

The men here may be human, but few behave well towards women. "*The Maid from Lalapanzi*" is a woman who spent the war in guerrilla camps, providing domestic services and sex: "That is what we were told to do." But her hope of happiness is shattered when the man she loves, who has made her pregnant, refuses to marry someone who is "not a maiden". With nowhere to turn, she kills herself.

Gappah's language is clean and crisp, with a musical quality that frequently draws on her first language, Shona. *An Elegy for Easterly* is a powerful debut from a fresh voice, with themes – from disappointment and betrayal to promise and love – that will resonate with readers everywhere.

Toivanen (2015) infers that Bulawayo's characters' mixed world citizenry is defined by uneasiness that reveals itself not only through their own prejudice but also through the context

in which they can be defined as desperate. Toivanen (2015) further argues that the desperate mobility theme manifests itself in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* in two very distinct ways. She further evaluates that the first way in which it manifests itself is shown in the failures of postcolonial governments to address the promises that they made at independence so that they translate into tangibles with benefit to the citizens.

Muganiwa (2013) demonstrates that in *We Need New Names*, the author captures the experiences of an American migrant, Darling, who left the country after experiencing economic meltdown brought about by misgovernance of the ruling elite. She says that the book is in a way a criticising moving to the diaspora as an answer to the political, social and economic challenges bedevilling one's country. However, Darling refers constantly to her abject pain of missing home with the full knowledge that she will not go back as she has become an illegal immigrant.

Muganiwa (2013) further points out that the novels' title resonates well with the migrants' situation as they try to acquire new names that will enable them to fit into their new society. This becomes very sad and perpetuates the theme of desperation as they trade culture and identity for economic stability.

Muwati, Gambahaya and Chabata (2013) validate the gender dynamics in the Zimbabwean crisis where they say women became the fathers of the family after their husbands had been emasculated by retrenchments and could no longer do anything to support their families. Furthermore, they argue that women refused to be trodden down by the marauding political and economic crisis in the country and they had therefore to assume new identities and become warriors in fending for their families.

### **1.6 Giving voice to the subaltern**

Toivanen (2015) discusses that *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo centres on the narrative viewpoint of the protagonist Darling, first as a child and later as a teenager. The

child/teenager's narrative voice is reflected in the language which is funny, naive, and simple to follow and understand. Toivanen (2015) critiques that besides the chapters narrated by the protagonist; there are also interlude-like chapters, narrated by an extradiegetic narrator in a distinctly lyrical voice. These interludes provide a wider social perspective to the chapters narrated by Darling. The events of the first half of *We Need New Names* take place in an unnamed Southern African country whose condition evokes Zimbabwe's crisis with its economic, social and political upheaval that includes the rise of patriotic discourses.

The first half of the novel sets the ground for Bulawayo's treatment of the abject mobility theme. The abjection being referred to is an element of the failed postcolonial nation-state imposed on its national subjects. As the novel progresses, the geopolitical context of the story shifts, as we witness the main protagonist Darling migrating to the United States of America. The abject mobility theme is therefore articulated from the clandestine migrant perspective.

Fitzpatrick (2015) illustrates that NoViolet Bulawayo's writing in *We Need New Names* gives privilege to the voice of Darling, a black-female child from Zimbabwe and draws the reader into her world and story that is not told through conventional Western discourses of the media or history. Bulawayo renames historical events in the country and the immigrant experience in order to reclaim a narrative that is often overlooked because of race, nationality, gender, and age.

Fitzpatrick (2015) draws conclusions that the names used within the novel are used to challenge the linear narratives of immigration that reproduce the false ideology of easy upward mobility. As can be seen in the stories all is not rosy as people envisage it to be. The names are also used to the disregard of diasporic realities in order to reclaim the historical and social narrative of the Zimbabwean immigrant in a postcolonial novel.

According to Fitzpatrick (2015), the names that Bulawayo chooses for Darling to reclaim her own history and experiences are a combination of metaphorical, indirect, and through a collective voice of “we” and “they” that speaks to the immigrant perspective as a whole.

The anthology of short stories in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah gives a distinct view of the Rhodesia of Ian Smith and the Zimbabwe of Robert Mugabe. The stories reflect a country in turmoil plagued by hyperinflation, corrupt politicians and propaganda-filled newspapers, but these are tales about people, not politics. The stories are sad, angry and funny, focusing on sharply drawn characters and inundated with love for Zimbabwe and frustration at its failings. Cleaver (2010) reviews that the first story, *At the Sound of the Last Post*, told from the point of view of a disillusioned wife at the funeral of her politician husband, is rather a cold opening. The eponymous second story, dealing with one woman’s desperate need for a baby and the illicit pregnancy of the local madwoman, is perhaps one of the least subtle in the collection. But after this the stories rapidly become deeply moving, full of emotional truth that leaves one breathless.

Cleaver (2010) simulates that the stunning endings of stories such as *Something Nice From London*, in which a family await the arrival of the body of their youngest son from England, and *My Aunt Juliana’s Indian*, about a the relationship between an Indian shopkeeper and his Zimbabwean employee during the struggle for independence in 1980, stick in the memory. These are stories with twists, but they are twists of feeling, of despair, of fate, rather than of plot.

Gappah’s prose is sparse and economical, pared down to almost the barest observational essentials. But the thoughts and dialogue of the characters are a lyrical hybrid of Zimbabwean Shona and English, making the words on the page dance with life.

### **1.1 Exploring continuities and discontinuities in fiction**

Murray (2011) examines Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) from a standpoint of the continuities and discontinuities in Zimbabwean fiction. He argues that a great deal has remained the same in Zimbabwe or even gone worse after the Independence struggle. Murray (2011) appraises that regardless of the fact that all Zimbabwean women experience oppression and violence in the same way, it is their response to it in different ways that is fundamental. In Gappah (2009), we are shown how women have shown resistance to victimisation in innumerable ways. She shows the different facets of the multiplicity of women's experiences and the complexity of the coping mechanisms involved. Murray (2011) further attests that in Gappah (2009) we are exposed to the extent and depth of women's suffering and the tenacity of women's will to survive. Gappah's assertion on combining articulations of suffering with hope is signalled in the epigraph with which she opens her collection. The epigraph is entitled *Optimism* and opens with the line that says 'more and more I have come to admire resilience'. Murray (2011) demonstrates that in the period after Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, women believed that their position had changed and believed that they are at par with their male counterparts. The problem that Gappah (2009) highlights is that the contributions that women have done seem to have been erased from the country's history and therefore have never really attained the Independence hence the complexity of their suffering.

Murray (2011) explains that Gappah (2009) points to women's various contributions to the struggle in the short story *At the Sound of the Last Post* when a character notes that some; *'of us girls were trained to fight, but the younger ones like me, and some who could not do the exercises, cooked for the guerrillas and washed their clothes and we sang and we kept them company at night'*.

It is these reflections that show how the amnesia in the public sphere has extended to the private sphere of Esther's relationship with her husband. They worked side by side to secure Zimbabwe's independence as she 'helped him to write furious letters of righteous indignation

condemning the white-settler regime' (9). She 'exalted to hear him say, "I want a wife who shares in my dreams; an equal, not a subordinate"' (9). However with the advent of independence, all these promises appear to have been forgotten after as Esther found that she was regarded as the 'lowest form of womanhood, womanhood without womanliness' because she was a 'barren woman, a woman without issue, unproductive, a fruitless husk'.

Murray (2011) argues that through her thoughts, the reader learns of the extent to which women have suffered at the hands of these 'heroes'. In addition to Esther's suffering, it 'is known that one of the heroes we buried recently was not the fine upstanding family man of the presidential speech but a concupiscent septuagenarian who died from a Viagra-induced heart attack while inside an underage girl'.

Murray (2011) further argues that in the opening epigraph of *An Elegy for Easterly*, the author qualifies the type of resilience she has come to admire. She says that it is not 'the simple resistance of a pillow, whose foam returns over and over to the same shape, but the sinuous tenacity of a tree: finding the light newly blocked on one side, it turns in another'. This is the same resilience that the women in the anthology have to endure wherever they go and cope with the dire situation in the diaspora and at home.

## **2.8 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.8.1 Reader-Response Theory**

The reader-response theory has been rated as a distinct critical movement since the early 1970s. Its advocates include Kenneth Burke, Wayne Booth, Stanley Fish, Louise Rosenblatt, and Walker Gibson. These thinkers might have disagreements here and there about certain aspects of the theory, but they agree that reader response criticism should pay attention to the areas of psychology, history, and sociology. By so doing, the art of reading becomes an interdisciplinary activity.

At the same time what these theorists posit weaken notions of "expert readers," for reader response criticism adheres to the principle that everyday readers can produce different interpretations that make sense for them. Reader response criticism develops open ended problem solving strategies, or what is known as heuristics in literature. Its main intention is to assist readers with the work of interpretation of any text that they confront.

### **2.8.2 Main arguments of the reader-response theory**

The reader-response theory hinges on different premises and its arguments lie in the fact that every text affects readers in unique and subjective ways such that the same text becomes open to different forms of interpretation. The theory also postulates that readers participate in determining the meaning of literary works which might be different from the meaning that the writer was trying to put across during writing.

Furthermore, the theory reveals that anything that contributes to the development of a reader influences his/her interpretation of a reading selection. Together with an individual's social class, racial background, ethnicity, gender, nationality, age, physical condition, employment, vocational interests, and so on, make a profound impact on how that person sees and understands the world.

However, readers are expected to support their interpretations with sound references and inferences, combining their understanding of the text with their knowledge of the world.

This research used the reader-response theory whose main proponent is Stanley Fish (1960). The theory maintains that the interpretive activities of readers, rather than the author's intention or the text's structure, explain a text's significance and aesthetic value. Fish (1960) validates that what the reader interprets about a particular text is not necessarily what the author was putting across. Biographical accounts of how a writer responds to his or her critics brought about this kind of criticism. That is, since a writer may respond to commentary provided by friends, reviewers, or critics, biographers assumed that the study of these responses helps to

explain how and why the style, ideas, aims, or forms of the writer evolved. Fish (1960) underlines the fact that the historical accounts of literary reception limit or renounce artistic norms and examine the reader's social or institutional context, in what he terms the "interpretive community."

Fish (1960) goes on to say that the irreducible effects of language move readers to produce interpretations, and that, as a normative force, the author teaches or fashions the reader. Furthermore; in *Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics* (1970), it is argued that reading is a sequential process in which the reader constructs interpretations and repudiates them in favor of new ones. In the same book, it is argued, however, that even though what readers read first may be the opposite of what they read afterwards, that contradiction does not overthrow their first or their subsequent readings. Fish (1970) deduces that if the readers of a particular text are competent enough, then such inconsistency in interpreting texts is only there to show that they are experiencing a certain kind of text, not that they are misconstruing its true structure or its author's intention.

Fish (1960) advocates readers to ask questions like how one feels when reading a certain poem or a passage from a novel, and the reasons behind those feelings, among other questions. Only when such questions are asked can one truly begin to understand literature. The theory will thus be applied in *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo to explain the significance of the texts in the context of the topic of this research.

The researcher has used the reader-response theory to interpret the issues that are brought about in the short story anthology and the novel under review. At each and every time the researcher read the short stories or the novel, one is left with different interpretations depending with the time or occasion one reads them. Since the researcher is also part of the diasporans, the texts take different often depending on their own life experiences.

Fish claims that what determines an interpretation's validity is not the identity of the reader or the norms of aesthetic theory but the ideals and methods of the reader's "interpretive community,".

In later work, Fish (1960) abandoned the assumption that competent readers discover one "deep structure" or normative intention of a text. This was largely because he failed to come up with a plausible assumption as to why some readers interpret a text in one way and others interpret it another. Admittedly, Fish says that theorists may examine the rhetorical figures of a text, the unifying intention of its author, how gender dynamics are played in the text, or its critiques of ideology.

### **2.8.3 Meaning in the Reader**

Fish posits that meaning of a text inheres not in the text but in the reader, or rather the reading community. He argues that during the reading procedure, the readers activities are at the centre of attention where they are regarded not as leading to meaning but as having meaning. His main argument is centred on the belief that there is no stable basis for what is called the truth or rather the truth is not a straitjacket but has many variables to it. For Fish therefore there is no correct interpretation that will always hold true as meaning does not exist outside the reader but exists within the reader.

### **2.8.4 Authorial Intent**

Authorial intent is the meaning or interpretation of a fictional work that the author had in mind when he or she was creating it. Frequently in the various Transformers fictions, the author's intent ends up being unclear or even contradicted by the finished work. In his theory Fish dismisses the idea of the authors intention in writing a text is not of paramount importance. According to the reader-response theory, what is important is how the reader interprets the text.

### **2.8.5 Interpretive Communities/ The implied reader**

According to Chandler and Munday (2011), interpretive communities or the implied reader is a term introduced by Fish to refer to both writers and readers of particular genres of texts (but which can be used more widely to refer to those who share any code). Other critics have also used the term textual community to refer to epistemological communities with shared texts, interpretations, and beliefs. On the other hand constructivists argue that interpretive communities are involved in the construction and maintenance of reality within the ontological domain which defines their concerns. The conventions within the codes employed by such communities become naturalized amongst its members. It should be borne in mind that as individual as human beings are, they belong to different and several interpretive communities. Fish argues that readers are not only passive receptionists of already existing truths but are actively involved in a meaning-making process when they read texts. According to Iser (1978) the implied reader is a textual construct that; embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect – predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has its roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct in no way to be identified with any real reader. (p. 34)

The rationale underlying Iser's implied reader is that texts must embody certain conditions that facilitate their actualisation by readers. At least one of these conditions is that texts consist of structures that invite readers to respond. The implied reader is one of these structures, inviting readers to play particular roles when reading texts. Iser (1978) distinguishes between two interconnected aspects when reflecting on the role of the reader, which are 'the reader's role as a textual structure' and 'the reader's role as a structured act'. The main argument that he puts across is that texts are constructions of worlds as perceived by their authors and offer hints and pointers to the world views underlying authors' stories and/or arguments.

The world that is constructed by a particular text could be unfamiliar to readers and therefore at the end the readers have to be placed in a position which enables them to actualise the view that the text is giving to them. However, this new position cannot be present in the text itself, as it is the vantage point for visualizing the world represented and so cannot be part of that world.

Iser (1978) further points out that the new position, or new standpoint, is put forward by different perspectives in texts from which readers can gain access to the new worlds of authors which are represented through narrators, characters, plot and the implied reader.

The benefit of reading a text from a vantage point of different perspectives allows readers to be empowered and gradually move towards an understanding which bears deeper meaning than just reading a text from a single perspective. This kind of reading has the possibility to engage readers in a critical dialogue with what they are reading, because they do not read texts without having their own repertoire of texts, world views and values.

Iser (1978) states that standpoint and convergence of perspectives are not presented in or by the text, he simply means that they emerge during the reading process, during which the reader has to occupy different vantage points that are geared to a pre structured activity and fit into the diverse perspectives into an evolving pattern. This therefore opens up the possibility that reader's preconceptions and world views could be challenged by the different perspectives they experience during the reading process.

The second aspect that Iser raises is the reader's role as a structured act during the reading process. He argues that when using the reader-response theory, the gradual convergence of the different perspectives offered by texts and their meaning are not linguistically formulated, but have to be imagined, and it is in and through this process of imagining that 'the textual structure of his [the reader's] role begins to affect the reader'.

By 'affect' Iser refers to a process during which the reader forms some mental images when reading the text from the different angles that the text offers. The reader starts to idealise what the text is putting across. This 'affect' means that readers are therefore actively engaged in the reading process and can relate and make meaning of what they are reading.

### **2.8.6 The Value of a Reader-Response Approach**

The reader-response theory allows students more leeway to interpret what they read in various ways and therefore encourages varied responses as they see texts from different perspectives. According to Tucker (2000) the reader-response theory focuses on what texts do to—or in—the mind of the reader, rather than regarding a text as something with properties exclusively its own. In other words the text is not seen as an object but the main concern is about what the text does to the readers mind. Furthermore, Tucker (2000) proposes that this approach enables readers to experience relevance in the reading task, involves them in an active and not passive manner in their encounter with the literature. It also allows the validation of the readers as critical readers who are in a position to determine meaning in texts and provides the readers with the chance to express their opinions freely. This also allows the readers to be validated as critical readers who are capable of determining meaning in texts and provides them with an opportunity to express their opinions freely.

Tucker (2000) further goes to say that the most valuable didactic application of reader-response criticism is that it creates a link between real-life experience and the work helping the reader to connect and then builds on that connection. More so readers need to be actively involved in active encounters with literature. As soon as the comfort of the relevance of a particular literature is achieved then readers are in a position to appreciate literature. Iser (1978) agrees that this allows the reader and the writer to transact with each other therefore the readers actively engage in reading, extracting meaning that is released through their pragmatic involvement in the process.

Tucker (2008) goes on to say that the reader-response approach is that the readers of a text are validated as critical readers who are capable of determining meaning in texts. Therefore it means the reader is fundamental in this approach.

### **2.8.7 Conclusion**

This chapter served to give a literature review on what has been said by other critics with regards to desperate mobilities. The chapter touched on aspects of migration and coping mechanisms as Zimbabweans went through different phases of challenges economically, socially and politically.

The chapter looked at the desperate measures that Zimbabweans employed in the diaspora and how some have lost their identity and underwent cultural hybridity. The chapter looked at the theoretical framework to be employed in the study. The theory to be used is the reader-response theory which resonates well with the anthology of the short stories and the novel placed under study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Rosnow and Rosenthal (2008) point out that research is a systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned. Rosnow and Rosenthal (2008) discuss the research process as cyclical and conclude that the cycle is never complete as research documents are always living documents. They argue that in exploring an area, one comes across additional problems that need resolving, and so the process must begin anew. Therefore research begets more research.

Rosnow and Rosenthal (2008) assess that the research begins with a problem that is it starts with an unanswered question in the mind of the researcher. Then research moves to defining the goal in terms of a clear statement of the problem. The next stage in the research process subdivides the problem into appropriate sub problems. The main thrust of the research is to

posit tentative solutions to the problem(s) through reasonable hypotheses. These hypotheses direct the researcher to appropriate data according to Rosnow and Rosenthal (2008).

The next stage that the research process goes through is to look for data as per the definition of the hypotheses and guided by the research problem. The data is then collected and organised. The final stage in the research process is when the research interprets the meaning of the data which leads to a resolution of the problem, thus supporting or not supporting the hypotheses and/or providing an answer to the question that began the research cycle. According to Rosnow and Rosenthal (2008) at this final stage, this is where one or new problems may emerge which then allows for further research at a later stage.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This study employed qualitative research methods where fiction in the form of short stories and novel set in both Zimbabwe and the diaspora were examined. Qualitative research was used in this study as the research is concerned with gathering and analysing information available in print form. In the case of this research, *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo were used to analyse the fractured families, cultures and identities, and the emergence of new identities by the Zimbabwean community in the diaspora. Journals, critical literary works and research papers were read in order to gain more insight into the subject of desperate mobilities.

### **3.3 Population and Sample**

Bless and Higson – Smith (1995, p. 85) explain population thus: “The entire set of objects and events or groups of people which is the object of research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics.”

The population of this study was all the books written by Petina Gappah and NoViolet Bulawayo. The study will be confined to the anthology of short stories entitled *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petina Gappah and the novel *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo.

### **3.4 Sample**

‘A sample is a proportion or subset of a larger group called a population...A good sample is a miniature version of the population of which it is a part – just like it, only smaller.’ (Fink, 2003: 1). The sampling method that was used is purposive sampling. Palys (2008) says that purposive sampling refers to a situation where groups, participants or a phenomenon to be researched are selected according to a preselected criterion which is appropriate to a particular research. Purposive sampling is selecting a sample on the basis of one’s own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of the research aims. The individual characteristics are selected to answer necessary questions about a certain matter or product under study. The researcher is then able to select participants based on internal knowledge of said characteristic. Purposeful sampling is useful if a researcher wants to study a small subset of a larger population in which many members of the subset are easily identified but the enumeration of all is nearly impossible. In the case of this research, the researcher is looking at the literary representations of migration, displacement and diaspora as a theme which has informed the researcher in selecting the sample.

### **3.5 Procedure**

This study was a desktop literary study where data was collected through a critical reading and analysis of the short stories. The researcher completed an in-depth reading of the novel and the short story anthologies while taking down notes and analysing the texts, especially through character analysis and narrative exploration. This was done to determine which characters were affected and/or involved in desperate mobilities. The researcher noted the reasons why the

identified characters got entangled in this phenomenon, how they reacted and the consequences they faced. The data was collected through a critical analysis of the two texts, applying the specified theory of literature which is the reader-response theory.

The major theory for analysing the data was the reader-response. The findings were categorised into themes and subthemes and presented in narrative form with textual evidence being provided and compared to the available literature on the subject.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Bhattacharjee (2012) describes qualitative analysis as the analysis of data which are “heavily dependent on the researcher’s analytic and integrative skills and personal knowledge of the social context where the data are collected.” Bhattacharjee (2012) further posits that in qualitative analysis, instead of making explanations or predictions, the researcher must put emphasis on making sense in order to have a full understanding of the experiences being described in what they are analysing, explaining or predicting, in this case, in the study of the desperate mobilities using the texts under review.

The elements of desperate mobilities in the novel and the anthology were critically analysed using a desktop content analysis method. The major causes of the desperate mobilities were analysed critically as presented in the selected literary works.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has elaborated on the research design of the study. The qualitative desk top comparative study was adopted in analysing the anthology of short stories and the novel which formed the sample of the study. The population of the study was all the works written by NoViolet Bulawayo from which the sample of *We Need New Names* was drawn and all the works authored by Petina Gappah from which a sample of *An Elegy for Easterly* was drawn. The procedure followed in the study is also elaborated; and data analysis was conducted by

using the reader-response. Ethical considerations of the study were observed by acknowledging all sources consulted and used in the study.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Desperate measures to fulfil diasporan dreams NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and Petina Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly***

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an analysis of desperate mobilities in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) and Petina Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009). The chapter starts with a general overview of both novels. The chapter will then move on to delve into the themes as they are articulated in the novel and the anthology of the short stories looking at each individual novel. Finally the conclusion will come up with morals drawn from the novel and the anthology of short stories.

#### **4.2 Summary of *We Need New Names***

*We Need New Names* (2013) tells the story of Darling and her friends Stina, Chipo, Godknows, Sbho and Bastard. Darling and her friends live in a shanty town called Paradise, which of course is ironical since the place they live in is never a paradise. It is completely the opposite of paradise but not that it is very bad though. There's mischief and adventure, games of Find bin Laden, stealing guavas, singing Lady Gaga at the tops of their voices. They dream of the paradises of America, Dubai, and Europe, where Madonna and Barack Obama and David Beckham live. The novel further captures the Diaspora experience of a young girl, Darling Nonkululeko Nkala, who after experiencing hardships in the Zimbabwean economic meltdown left the country to live in the USA. Therefore the novel can be viewed as a critique of moving to the Diaspora as a solution to challenges in one's country. Darling constantly refers to the pain of missing home but stuck in the knowledge that she can never return because she has become an illegal immigrant in America. Once she visits 'home' she will not be allowed to come back as her papers are not in order. What compounds the problem and the pain is how the whole situation is misunderstood by those that have remained at home where the assumption is that those in America are living pretty well. This pushes aunt Faustina and others to work double shifts so that they can send money home.

#### **4.3 Summary of An Elegy For Easterly**

*An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) is a spirited collection which brings out the resilience and inventiveness of ordinary people who struggle to live under Robert Mugabe's regime. The author takes the reader across the city of Harare, from the townships beset by power cuts to the manicured lawns of privilege and corruption, where wealthy husbands keep their first wives in the "big houses" while their unofficial second wives wait in the "small houses," hoping for a promotion.

Despite their circumstances, the characters in *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) are more than victims; they are all too human, with as much capacity to inflict pain as to endure it. The

characters in the stories are portrayed as people with larger issues that they struggle with. They are faced with the struggle of failed promises, unfulfilled dreams and the yearning for something to anchor them to life.

#### **4.4 Giving voice to the Subaltern**

*We Need New Names* (2013) by NoViolet Bulawayo brings to the fore the voice and life of a child who has seen the struggles in Zimbabwe and moved to America. This is not she has a choice, but she was forced by circumstances beyond her control. Darling is an easy going youthful character that is full of life. She manages to reclaim the immigrant narrative using names to aid her Darling is infectious, youthful, and she reclaims the immigrant narrative using names to aid her in finding a voice in a world where she is dominated because of her age, race, gender, and nationality.

The book follows the fictional journey of Darling from the fictitious city of Paradise in Zimbabwe to Destroyedmichygen, or Detroit, Michigan. Darling pronounces Detroit, Michigan as Destroyedmichygen because of the language barrier and also due to suggested irony by Bulawayo on Detroit's 2008 economic recession. The novel is split in two between Zimbabwe and America but the novel does not always operate in a linear fashion as Darling often refers back to historically significant periods of time through her memories.

Bulawayo uses names and gives voice to the subaltern as a way of challenging the oppressive American discourse of Othering. Othering is the act of a monumental entity placing people in a lesser position in the society based upon their race, gender, age and nationality. Othering is a term that can be used to define and discuss the concept of alienating and separating people from the "main stream" because they differ racially or economically, for example. Literary theorist, Edward Said, noted for his work on the discussion of Othering and the oppression committed by the West through the discourse of Orientalism explains in Waugh (2006): "an

absolute distinction being made between the dominant colonizing West and other peoples or ‘underground selves’ not only ‘Orientals’ as such, but also African.

At the same time, the names used within the novel are used to challenge the linear narratives of immigration. They are used to challenge the false notion of easy upward that reproduce the false ideology of easy upward mobility and hence disregarding the reality in the diaspora in order to reclaim the historical and social narrative of the Zimbabwean postcolonial novel.

#### **4.5 National crises, migration, identity engendered by an uprooting migrant status**

Bulawayo (2013) dramatises the issues of citizenship, migration and identity given the fact that they interrelate with the ongoing various crisis Zimbabwe. Bulawayo (2013) gives out the issues as viewed from a migrant’s perspective as she herself has settled in the United States of America. This comes to fulfilling Bhabha’s (1994) prediction that ‘*transnational histories of migrants, or political refugees – these border and frontier conditions – [would become] the terrains of world literature*’. The novel gives room for the contemplation on the effects of the political and economic crises in Zimbabwe particularly on how this has affected children. Both parents and children have been forced to negotiate precarious and dangerous citizenships at home and have to settle for eking out a living in unwelcoming foreign lands where it’s tough to live and adapt.

The novel takes the form of the main character’s bildungsroman whereby the first half of the narrative is set in an imaginary squalid settlement ironically named Paradise in Bulawayo, which is the country’s second largest city. Bulawayo (2013) gives the voice of the child narrator Darling, a 10 year-old girl who subsequently becomes a teenager negotiating a status of an illegal immigrant in the United States of America.

It should be noted that darling suffers at both ends of the spectrum. In Zimbabwe she suffers from an unwarranted desire to migrate to countries perceived as “country-countries” offering

better livelihood. Henceforth, once the subject leaves her place of origin and birth, the reader witnesses the intensification of the subject's feelings of dislocation and detachment from her mother country. Darling lacks citizenship, both metaphorically and plainly as she suffers both in Zimbabwe and in the USA due to economic, political and moral decay and her negotiation of her illegal migrant status. This also comes out as an attempt by the novelist to speak against the Western hegemonic but orthodox edifice of the Third World subjects and spaces.

Bulawayo (2013) paints a picture where her characters resent their country of origin because of the difficulties that they are facing and hence they are left with no option but to migrate. Ironically, they bemoan the situation in their host countries which is highly unfavourable and they develop a sense of estrangement and economic exploitation in the places that they call home. At the end of the day, Bulawayo (2013) gives a narrative that recognises the fact that migrancy or staying put in Africa have possibilities of opening up new and ultimately positive ways of being. She paints a picture that denotes the fact that her characters move out of Zimbabwe as a desperate measure and as a way of escapism from the economic and political collapse in the country.

The novel *We Need New Names* (2013) is aptly divided into different chapters that are intertwined. The first chapter entitled 'Hitting Budapest' is set in Paradise, a sarcastically named imaginary squatter and squalid settlement. This gives the reader a hint at most of the issues depicted in the rest of the novel which are poverty, hunger and abused children, AIDS and the superciliously knotty attitude of the West towards African problems and challenges.

The chapter, as is true of the whole novel, derives its appeal by relying on the common formulaic tropes about Zimbabwe in particular and Africa in general. The chapter gives the false impression that it is narrated by a 10-year-old girl, who together with her same-aged friends, live in abject poverty. The false impression emanates from the fact that the reader might be tempted to think that it is just a young girl who is narrating the story but it must be

borne in mind that it is the innocent voice that reveals the vices in the society in Paradise and in Zimbabwe in general. The wretched poverty forces the children to steal guavas from a neighbouring welloff neighbourhood called Budapest. Along the way, the protagonist and her friends witness shocking events as one of her 11 year old friends Chipu becomes a victim of sexual abuse as she is raped by her grandfather and made pregnant.

As the narrative proceeds, their dismal poverty becomes an object of inquisitive stare by European tourists and non-governmental organisations who offer them superficial help and demeaning sympathy to the children and the larger Paradise community. The protagonist and her friends are distressed and shell shocked by the effects of the AIDS pandemic which has ravaged their shanty town. The children witness a suicide case of a woman who hanged herself apparently because she had been suffering from AIDS. They are shocked at what they saw but in their feverish happiness they rob the corpse of its shoes for resale to raise money to buy a loaf of bread. This gives out the impression of how poverty and its associated problems make victim of the physical and psychological wellbeing of many African children:

We all turn around and follow Bastard back into the bush, the dizzying smell of Lobels bread all around us now, and then we are rushing, then we are running, then we are running and laughing and laughing and laughing. (Bulawayo, p 18).

Bulawayo (2013) makes an implicit suggestion that the desperate and the poor are victims of the country's larger political forces. Toivanen (2015) alludes to that when she makes an argument that *"the social, political and economic problems form the abject essence of the postcolonial nation-state. This abjection imprints the national subjects, who are metonymical parts of the nation"*. Therefore the novel describes the distressing experience that people go through as their houses are demolished for no reason forcing them to become shanty dwellers. They are reduced to nothing and hence had to move to Paradise where life is hard and adults had to resort to drinking an illicit brew so as to forget their problems. Astonishingly, those who

are sent to demolish people's homes get some obstinate gratification from causing suffering and inflicting pain. The child-narrator says: *'The men driving the bulldozers are laughing ... the bulldozers start bulldozing and bulldozing and we are screaming and screaming'* (p. 65). It is this suffering in Paradise that drives the child narrator and her friends to dream of going to "country-countries" as they feel nobody would want to stay in a "kaka of a country" as they are doing. Bulawayo (2013) basis this part of the story on actual events that took place in 2005 when the Zimbabwean Government ordered the destruction of what it called urban slums in an operation aptly named *Operation Murambatsvina*. This serves to show that the poor and the desperate are an easy target and hence are preyed upon not just by powerful government individuals but by the entire state machinery led by politicians who have the determination to cling on to power at any cost.

The first half of Bulawayo's narrative at a larger scale engages with postcolonial Africa's perceived status as a source of all kinds of atrocities and suffering. After Chipo is raped by her grandfather, she loses her power of speech and goes silent for a very long time. Suggestively, this shows how African problems begin at the core of social life such as the family unit where children are then abused.

The protagonist presents the sadomasochistic of the perpetrator of this sexual violence and the appalling silence of the spectators as being beyond human comprehension. This can be linked to Zimbabwe's general failure to be a haven of peace for its citizens as they feel violated from all angles that is from the home front up to the broader society. The narrative therefore suggests that Chipo's speechlessness after her brutal rape was a result of trauma which left her bereft of language to express what had happened to her. She only opens up when she witnesses a woman also being sexually abused by the rapacious and so called Prophet Revelation Bitchington Mborro. This is done in full view of the whole congregation including the woman's husband who also sits and watches and does nothing to stop the abuse. This is akin to the Zimbabwean

situation where people have been emasculated to such an extent that they have nothing to say but they just watch themselves drifting into the oblivion.

The prophet claims to be exorcizing the woman of a demon just as the politicians destroyed people's homes during *Operation Murambatsvina* convincing them that this was for their own good. She says:

He (Prophet Mborro) places his hands on her stomach, on her thighs, then he puts his hands on her thing and starts rubbing and praying hard for it, like there's something wrong with it. His face is alight, glowing. The pretty woman just looks like a rag now, the prettiness gone, her strength gone. (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 40)

The second half of Bulawayo's narrative shows the many negative migrant experiences in the novel brings out to the fore what Selasi (2005) calls 'Africans of the world' fashion the identities of Bulawayo's characters. Bulawayo's narrative makes clear the ineffaceable caption of one's country of birth in notions of self-definition even as the migrant status gestures towards its negation. This aspect is highlighted in chapters when the narrative voice changes to become that of an adult or what Toivanen (2015) calls 'an extradiegetic narrator'. In these intermediary chapters, the author gives information that gives the reader the chance to follow the plot of the narrative. The use of the omniscient or the all present narrator allows Bulawayo to sum up events that would have proved impossible for a child narrator to tackle.

Looking at Chapter 5 entitled 'How they Appeared', one realises that Bulawayo talks about the tormenting experience of how the shanty town of Paradise came to being and how it was found by a ragtag of individuals who had lost their homes during the *Operation Murambatsvina*.

To cement this argument, if one looks at Chapter 10 which is titled 'How They Left', one realises that it narrated in the third person narrative voice which laments the depopulation in the country as people move out seeking refuge in other countries. The people leave the country

against their will as they feel they have been put in a very compromising position. In an emotional dirge-like mode, the narrator cries out:

Look at them leaving in droves, the children of the land, just look at them leaving in droves. Those with nothing are crossing borders. Those with strength are crossing borders. Those with ambitions are crossing borders. Those with hopes are crossing borders. Those with loss are crossing borders. Those in pain are crossing borders ... They are leaving in droves. (Bulawayo, p. 145)

This presents the migration of Zimbabwean people as a process of unadulterated loss and catastrophe. These migrants are what Gikandi (2010) would call 'rejects of failed states'. Gikandi (2010) refers to them as 'rejects of failed states' as they suffer from an intense sense of un-belonging at home will also not be welcome in the countries that they seek refuge. This chapter serves as a link between the narrators' experiences of wretched paucity and witnessing of harrowing aggression in Zimbabwe and her consequent relocation to the United States of America. It is in the USA where her naive expectations are whacked as she discovers that she is in a strange landscape with unfriendly weather, difficult and terrible social space and her survival as an illegal immigrant becomes insurmountable.

It is in the same chapter that the author says that these Zimbabweans who are leaving the country in droves were 'leaving everything that makes them who and what they are, leaving because it is no longer possible to stay' (Bulawayo, 2013 p. 146). These sentiments overshadow any realistic chance of these immigrants to construct new and viable identities in countries where they seek refuge. For the immigrants, their sense of belonging is only possible in the country that is obliterating them due to its economic and political problems. Their migration is a kind of forced migration and it therefore disrupts their sense of being and resultantly they lose all their psychological and cultural support that makes them complete human beings.

In Chapter 16 titled 'How They Lived', the narrator abandons the child narrative as a way of capturing important issues that can only be given out through the third person narrative. The narrator in a way captures the migrants' failure to find acceptance and belonging in foreign lands by using collective pronouns as a way of foregrounding the general experiences of the underprivileged cosmopolitans:

And when they asked us where we were from, we exchanged glances and smiled with shyness of child brides. They said, Africa? We nodded yes. What part of Africa? We smiled. Is it that part where vultures wait for famished children to die? We smiled. Where life expectancy is thirty-five? Where people run about naked? We smiled. That part where they massacre each other? We smiled. (Bulawayo, 2013 p. 237).

This quotation helps to present the common experience and the common issues which migrants from economically and politically impoverished countries face when they are coerced to go to developing countries. Due to the fact that those in developing countries embody certain stereotypes about Africa, the migrants always invite unwanted and unwarranted pity and dehumanising curiosity from natives of developed countries.

Throughout the child narrative part, the children are compelled to get out of Paradise behind the elders backs so that they can raid Budapest for food. This is the same situation that desperate Zimbabweans of all ages face and they have to migrate in large numbers. As they tramp the streets of Budapest, the poverty of their shanty town cling on to them just as the stereotypes about Africa cling on to them in foreign lands. This is the reason why they are asked curious and sarcastic questions wherever these migrants go.

#### **4.6 Questions of belonging and identity construction**

Darling the protagonist and her friends have a naive understanding of migration and its consequences when it comes to issues to do with belonging and identity. The situation is designed in such a way that African countries seem to offer no secure future for its citizens and

hence the children feel that it is better to belong to more economically prosperous countries. They understood this issue of migration from a literal point of view but they do not look at the underlying issues involved.

This naivety is shown in the ‘country-game’ that Darling and her friends play. They ‘fight over the names because everybody wants to be in certain countries, like everybody wants to be the USA and Britain and Italy and Sweden and Germany’ (Bulawayo, p. 49). The countries that they leave out are described as ‘rags of countries’ and no self-respecting country-game child player ‘wants to be a terrible place of hunger and things falling apart’ (p. 49). The fact that the children fight to be developed countries serves to show their naivety in understanding of issues of belonging and migration. Later on when the author uses the omniscient narrator in the second half of the novel, these issues are dealt with at length from an adult perspective. Darling’s obsession with moving to America helps to dramatise the gullibility with which migration to developed nations is often imagined by the desperate rejects of failed nations.

In the first half of the novel, Darling’s envisaged migration to America is presented in romanticised ways and the narrative is consistently marked by slippages which perforate the childlike and idyllic scrutiny of America that the young-narrator holds. This can be compared to the more threatening and cunning realities of America for the migrants who manage to make it there.

The children in their innocence describe America as the ‘*big baboon of the world*’ (p.49). This is done naively but it is a reminder about the USA’s imperial capitalism which foments ceaseless wars and embodies racialised economic and social inequalities. These vices are well captured in the second half of the narrative when the narrator faces the reality of living in America.

#### **4.7 Consequences of migrancy**

Migrants like Darling who have come from least developed countries and find themselves in America by hook and crook are shown to be suffering from discontented expectations of several kinds. This is what Mbembe (2001) has termed ‘the economy of unsatisfied desires’. Most of the migrants made a sacrifice along the way to ensure that they raise the expensive airfares. Others got the travel documents by allowing themselves to be sexually subjugated by voraciously lascivious government officials. In Chapter 16, where the novel adopts the estranged third-person narrative point of view, the narrator says:

How hard it was to get to America... For visas and passports, we begged, despaired, lied, groveled, promised, charmed, bribed – anything to get us out of the country... Nozipho, like Primrose and Sichelokuhle and Maidei, slept with that fat black pig Banyile Khoza from the passport office. Girls flat on their backs, Banyile between their legs, America on their minds. (Bulawayo, p. 240)

Most of the power and punch in the novel is derived from showing the sacrifices that people made to get to America but these sacrifices do not equal the envisaged economic benefits and emotional fulfilments that they get after arriving in the country. The narrative portrays the protagonist and the other migrants as victims of any kind of desperation. It cements the fact that those who become victims be it of economic, social or political nature are always preyed upon by blatant predators both in countries of origin and in America where they seek refuge. As seen in the above passage, girls desperate for passage to America submit themselves to sexual exploitation and humiliation in order to get the required documentation hence they are used as sex objects as a means to an end.

Bulawayo (2013) proves that leaving for the affluent and developed countries does not necessarily bring relief for the African victims of economic and political mismanagement. The problem comes first in the form of becoming an illegal immigrant as soon as one reaches America. This means they are not in a position to work and neither are they in a position to

come back home in the event of something happening. Above all they are facing a serious offence that can lead them to be deported back to their impoverished African countries. The narrator captures this desperate economic situation of migrants appositely by saying: *'[W]hen at work they asked for our papers, we scurried like startled hens and flocked to unwanted jobs, where we meet the others, many others'* (p. 243).

Others like the protagonist's aunt who gets a job in the health sector, have to work overtime and have to do two jobs to supplement their earnings. Darling says that Aunt Fostalina has *'two jobs, one at the hospital and one at the nursing home'* (p. 189). She reckons that when aunt Fostalina comes back from work especially for her second job late in the evening *'her body [is] looking like a sack'* (p. 205). She manages to buy a house in Budapest, but the narrator concedes the fact that she does this at a great physical and moral cost. One can argue that the moral fabric of a society can easily get lost as the migrants try to make ends meet in the countries that they settle in. Aunt Fostalina has a live-in partner, Uncle Kojo, also an immigrant from Ghana; she has to complement her income by sleeping with Mr Eliot.

The migrant's apparent acts of desperation seem to emanate from two dimensions. The first dimension is that they want to fulfil the American dream. The second aspect comes from the fact that they want to satisfy the unending demands of those left back at home. This is because those left home have an assumption that their relatives in the diaspora have arrived in the Promised Land. This is the same situation that the protagonist is faced with. She has to juggle between school and a job so that she can offset her future excessive college fees that foreign students are heavily burdened with.

The man who is a live-in boyfriend to Aunt Fostalina, Uncle Kojo fails to secure papers in America despite the fact that *'he went to college and has been [in America] for thirty-two years and works and his son, TK, was born [in America]'* (p.258). Dumi, Aunt Fostalina's former boyfriend, marries an obese white American woman whom he clearly does not love just to get

the 'papers' (p.173) that will hopefully regularize his residency in America. This is the desperation that those that manage to live the country have to go through so that they can fulfil some their dreams.

#### **4.8 Moving Out of Confining Spaces: Metaphors of Existence in An Elegy of Easterly**

Petina Gappah herself dreams of a homecoming as she stays in Geneva away from home. Since the early 1990s, the Zimbabwe that was her home and the Zimbabwe that she had dreamed about has sunk corrigibly into a cesspit of corruption, despotism coupled with hyperinflation that runs into trillions. Resultantly, over three million have fled the country to fend for themselves and to fend for those left behind. They only carry memories of their homeland which they left behind as they escaped the cesspit.

These memories of a Zimbabwe and a home to the diasporians are what Gappah (2009) brings to her audience in *An Elegy for Easterly*. This is a verbal portrait of her motherland that is in turmoil and on the brink of collapse. The anthology traces its stories from the Rhodesian times during the colonial era up to present day Zimbabwe and the stories are filled with scrumptiously gloomy humorous undertones.

In a review on *An Elegy of Easterly*, Coetzee (2009) postulates that Gappah's stories range from scathing satire of Zimbabwe's ruling elite to earthy comedy to sensitive accounts of the sufferings of humble victims of the regime. In terms of language use, Gappah (2009) uses language that is clean and crisp in comparison to Bulawayo (2010) who uses symbolisms of filth to send her message through.

Gappah (2009) focuses her attention on disappointment and betrayal which led to the Zimbabwean citizenry embarking on what are called desperate mobilities. This finds most of the characters in foreign countries where life is not as rosy as they had anticipated before leaving but is better than in their homeland. Gappah (2009) further reveals the hypocrisy of

Zimbabwean society in the way it deals with its economic, social and political problems. The frequent humour in these stories makes them remarkable, even if their outcomes can be tragic. Most of the short stories in the anthology have the motif of death which haunts as many characters and this is just a microcosm of death that most of the Zimbabwean populace is engulfed with. Gappah (2009) writes about the difficulties of ordinary life in a very subtle way and this resonates well with the spectacular collapse that her country goes through.

In this anthology, Gappah (2009) brings the resilience and inventiveness of the people who struggle to live under the dictatorship of Robert Mugabe's regime. The short stories take the reader through the city of Harare, from the townships hard hit by persistent power cuts to the well kempt yards of dispensation and vice. This is where affluent husbands keep their first wives in the "big houses" while their unsanctioned second wives wait in the "small houses," hoping for a promotion.

Notwithstanding their harsh circumstances, the characters in *An Elegy for Easterly* are more than victims who are all too human who have the capacity to inflict pain as much as they endure it. Gappah (2009) brings characters that struggle with issues common to all people everywhere, issues such as failed promises, unfulfilled dreams, and the yearning for something to anchor them to life.

Gappah (2009) immerses the reader in the ambience and poignant hurly-burly of the collection. The first story, *At the Sound of the Last Post*, is told from the point of view of a disenchanted wife whose husband a politician has died. The story presents a rather cold opening to the anthology. The eponymous second story, which delves on woman's desperate bid to have a child and the illegitimate pregnancy of the local madwoman, is perhaps one of the least subtle in the collection. As the collection progresses, the stories rapidly become deeply moving and full of emotional truth that leaves the reader in awe.

Most of the stories in the anthology have dramatic endings. Stories such as *Something Nice From London*, in which a family await the arrival of the body of their youngest son from England, and *My Aunt Juliana's Indian*, about a the relationship between an Indian shopkeeper and his Zimbabwean employee during the struggle for independence in 1980, appeals to one's memory long after reading the story. These are stories with plots that have a twist to them; these are twists of feeling, of desolation and of providence.

The prose Gappah (2009) uses is scrubby and efficient and hence can be trimmed down to almost the barest observational rudiments. However the thoughts and conversations between the characters are filled with a lyrical amalgam of Zimbabwean Shona and English making the words vivid to the readers mind.

The anthology is a collection of stories revealing the downtrodden lives of ordinary Zimbabweans which the women in the stories are often trapped in positions of dependence. We have the story of the maid in a wealthy household, a rich woman who has a cheating and a student entrapped in a mental hospital. From these characters, there seems to be little chance of escaping from these confinements and this brings resilience out of the women.

The story *At the Sound of the Last Post* makes the reader understand the understated potent cry against corruption, empty promises, hard-hearted apathy, tribalism, sexism, and godless, mindless and brainless incompetence. Stories such as *The Mupandawama Dancing Champion* are humorous stories but still in the process bring out poignant issues that appeal to the human race. Other stories give heartbreak such as *The Cracked, Pink Lips of Rosie's Bridegroom*. The short story *The Negotiated Settlement* gives hope as injured marriages find a way of repairing themselves based on purely practical, earthbound terms.

In *Something Nice from London*, we are given characters that are faced with terrible futures and they scuffle to reinvent themselves. Two short stories *The Maid from Lalapanzi* and *Aunt Juliana's Indian* are stories about how people shape their lives in the midst of impossible

circumstances such as million-percent inflation, political mulishness, racial conflict and the ravaging HIV/AIDS cutting across the entire generations.

Gappah (2009) makes use of a horde of different languages buoyant in Zimbabwe and the social and arousing values associated with them. Gappah (2009) entwines her prose with words, phrases, and sentences, often untranslated in order to bring out a running metaphor for the successes and recurrent failures of coexistence.

#### **4.9 Escape from a nation under siege**

The short story *My Cousin Sister Rambanai* is a story about Rambanai the protagonist who has been in America for a long and hence has become an illegal immigrant. Death forces her to come back home to bury her father. Her brother who has also escaped the economic quagmire and the political turmoil in Zimbabwe is in the United Kingdom. Ironically he has also become an illegal immigrant there. When their father dies, he makes the conscious decision of not coming back home to bury him because he knows he will never be in a position to go back to the UK. He therefore sends the much needed and revered pounds in crisis-hit Zimbabwe.

Rambanai becomes an envy of many at the funeral but afterwards she cannot go back as she will not be allowed entry as she had overstayed her welcome trying to fend for herself and her family back in Zimbabwe. Even though her passport has been stamped that she had overstayed and will be automatically denied a visa, it is imperative to know that Rambanai does not give up. Resultantly, she sets on a fraudulent mission so that she can get herself out of the country and escape the misery around her. It is this desperateness to escape that makes her strive to find an escape route under any circumstances. She manages to overcome the challenges she faces and goes to an alternative destination, the United Kingdom, whilst the narrator (Rambanai's cousin) and her husband also follow suit.

She ends up conning Jimmy and his wife of money and disappeared into the thin air without any trace. Jimmy and his wife make a sacrifice so that Rambanai could get a new identity so

that she goes to the diaspora and then plan for them to follow suit. It said that; *“We sold some shares that Jimmy’s father had left him. We postponed buying a new fridge and a stove for our flat. These sacrifices caused some strain between Jimmy and me, and I had to make Rambanai promise to send us back money as soon as she sorted herself out”*, Gappah (2009; 227). This shows the importance of the extended family in the African context. It also shows how people have become so desperate to escape from the country as it was expected that if one goes out of the country then it becomes easier for all the others to follow.

Rambanai makes a promise that, *“I will send it within a month of arriving. You can trust me, you’ll see”*, Gappah (2009; 227). However as soon as she is sorted out and she goes to the United Kingdom, she only phones once and that was it. We are told that, *“I looked for her name on ZimUpdate and ZimUnite and other websites for homesick Zimbabweans abroad until I remembered that she had changed her name and looked for her in her new identity.....There would be no one looking for her because she was nowhere, she was nothing”*, Gappah (2009; 232). So Rambanai has virtually lost her moral upbringing by conning her family out of their hard earned cash. The couple falls for it because they realise that this might be their only opportunity to get out of the country and escape from the cesspit.

After trying to locate Rambanai and all efforts become in vain, the couple decides to find their own way out of the country, *“Two and a half years after, Jimmy and I decided to join the three million who had left the country. It was an economic decision, we explained to everyone who asked, it is an economic decision, we said to ourselves, but in our hearts, we knew that leaving our families was the only way to save our marriage. The time had come for our families to expect something, translucent ears, a bulging stomach, an aversion to strong scents, anything that could be evidence of a baby on the way”*, Gappah (2009; 233).

Mlambo (2013) argues that Rambanai is a typical example of the “been-to” persona whom African writer Ayi Kwei Armah writes about in his novel *Fragments* (1970). He argues that

since she has been to the diaspora, she has a lot to show off with - two suitcases crammed with clothes and an accent being at the top of the list, let alone a venerable status in the society.

Mlambo (2013) further argues that in order for Rambanai to survive, she chooses to join the diaspora community. Despite the challenges that she faces in the diaspora that is that of becoming an illegal immigrant she still soldiers on as an act of sheer desperation. She does not choose to go the traditional route that is to cross over to *egoli*, South Africa but chooses to go far afield in the United States. Gappah (2009; 218) says, *“America is a land of opportunity...There you can be anything you want, anything at all.”* This going further afield substantiates the fact that the Zimbabwean populace has become so desperate that they have to go away from the motherland to escape the socio-political troubles bedevilling their country.

To cement the fact that opportunities are abound in America, the narrator tells us that their housemaid literally worshipped Rambanai and could not get enough of her stories. *“America is the land of opportunity, Sisi Dessy,” Rambanai told her. There you can be anything you want, anything at all. Someone like you can be a housemaid today, and before you know it, you have your own TV show;* Gappah (2009; 218).

Furthermore, Mlambo (2013) says that for people who are in a crisis, opportunities become limited and hence as Booker T Washington puts it, some have to cast their bucket where they are. So for Rambanai she has to cast the bucket in a land far away from home as she searches for greener pastures.

The underlying issue in all this is the fact that the country is in a crisis situation and hence the citizenry has to respond to that crisis in any way they can. So whatever opportunity the world offers, it has to be grabbed with both hands. The situation has become so desperate such that even the downtrodden masses from the “ghetto” resembled by the hairdresser in Mbare also harbour the dream of escaping home. That is why Rambanai’s hairdresser pleads with her, *“I have a cousin-brother who is willing to do anything, please help him if you can”*, Gappah

(2009; 217) and Rambanai gave Manyara her number in America and said she would definitely see what she could do.

After she is denied entry into the USA, this marks the death of her American dream that is why the narrator says, *“It was only later that I understood that Rambanai had been in mourning not only for her father, but also for the death of her American dream”*, Gappah (2009;212). Given the political, economic and social conditions in Zimbabwe, Rambanai has to devise a manifold of strategies so that she can escape. The most important step that she has to take is to accept the fact that her dreams of going to America have been shattered because her passport has been endorsed as an illegal immigrant. After her father’s burial, she leaves a delusional life, she pretends that she is facing problems with connecting flights and goes even further to shop for her friends in America. This is how desperate the situation is for her. She knows she has to escape and hence has to fantasize about her going back and pretend to her relatives that she is preparing to go back to America.

For any crisis to be curtailed and conquered, be it on family, personal or at national level, one has to come up with practical solutions and one has to face reality. As a last resort, she decides to face the truth which liberates her allegorically and virtually. She says, *“America is a non-starter, she said cheerfully. They will never give me a visa now. I will go to London. At least we don’t need visas for England, being in the Commonwealth. In England, I can get an office job. I will continue my dancing. Or maybe acting, I have always wanted to be an actress. I will get a proper job, go to school at night. I will do something”*, Gappah (2009; 225).

Mlambo (2013) says that Gappah (2009) develops a character in Rambanai who is a unyielding and tough individual who has an iron-willed fortitude. She is a purpose driven individual who is a microcosm of a number of individual who left the country either as a form of protest or as a way to try and fend for themselves in faraway places. For most of the people represented by Rambanai, resigning oneself to fate is not an option at times like this. Gappah (2009) therefore

created an unyielding character to communicate the innumerable opportunities which await those determined to escape home and survive.

Rambanai is faced with the challenge that her passport has been endorsed and hence cannot enter USA again. Hers becomes a full circle and tries to explore all the alternatives that life has to offer so that she finds the most viable recess. Rambanai looks at life full circle and explores all the alternatives in search of the most viable recess. Her goal is to get back to the diaspora once again and therefore has to get a new passport by all means necessary. This is a nightmarish challenge she has to contend with and her resourcefulness in this regard is worth celebrating by the author as she shows will power in her quest to escape from the problems bedevilling her country. She therefore devises a way out of her problems and this is what she says, *“Exactly. I can’t go as me; they have records, you know. I need another passport in another name. That’s what lots of people do when they have been deported; they just get new passports”* Gappah (2009; 225). This is a celebration of hard-headed probity by the author. She chooses another name for herself, a name that she likes. This is a symbolic marker of self determination.

The economic meltdown bedevilling the country has hit hard on the citizenry and hence calls for inventiveness which results in leaving thereby escaping the fangs of poverty. Despite the national crisis that country is faced with, Gappah (2009) presents us with private or personal challenges which face Jimmy and his wife. They are married but it is taking long for them to have a child and they are attacked from all angles by relatives who see procreation as the hallmark of marriage. Their marriage is now on the rocks and the only way to save it is through escaping home and also escaping from the people around them and their mentality which they see as destructive. Therefore the crisis in this short story is presented as multi-fold and the means of surviving are equally multiple and hence the couple has to settle for the diaspora.

It is important to look at how Jimmy and his wife buy their way out of the country which is facing pronounced economic and political difficulties. They face surmountable challenges, the

same challenges that Rambanai faces. Theirs are compounded by the fact that Zimbabwe is now out of the commonwealth and hence stringent measures have been put in place and it is no longer easy to be granted a visa. The route to the United Kingdom is now curtailed, but for one who wants survival, there is always a way into the diaspora. Like Rambanai they have some challenges. This is how the narrator explains it, *“In the end, we got our visa the same way Rambanai had got her passport, we used the Harare way – someone knew someone in the British embassy with whom we exchanged envelopes stuffed with cash. I gave up teaching and Jimmy engineering to be in England, where the curse of the green passport condemned us to work in the unlit corners of England’s health care system, in care homes where we took out the frustrations of our existence by visiting little cruelties on geriatric patients”*, Gappah (2009; 234).

Eventually they manage to leave the country for the diaspora but it has not come easily. Their easiest route could have been through Rambanai whom they had assisted as part of an extended family with the hope of getting assistance later on. However since she has vanished into thin air in the United Kingdom, Jimmy and his wife have to find another avenue and it is the “the Harare way”. This figurative statement, like “greasing” shows that those in the urban areas have sleek ways of surviving. Amidst the turmoil in the country, those who cannot get out have to find means and ways of surviving. By saying that they had to use “the Harare way”, what becomes clear is that the urban character is by all means a survivor.

Mlambo (2013) further says that even Rambanai in the UK does not stay in one place. She has to explore all the cities hopping from Birmingham to Newcastle, to Leicester and London. This proves that if international borders cannot limit her then there is no reason for her to be limited by town boundaries. This she does as she knows the desperate situation back home and the fact that she has to survive under any circumstances.

#### **4.10 Death and the diaspora**

Death is used as a motif, which means a recurring event in Gappah (2009). Death comes metaphorically and it also comes literally. In the short story 'Something Nice From London' Gappah (2009) describes how the Chikwiwo family describe the difficult times they have to go through to ensure that the body of their son Peter is repatriated from London. The son dies a mysterious death which might also resemble a metaphorical death which might be the death of his hopes for a better life in the diaspora.

Manase (2014) assesses that the story is significant in that it depicts the relations between Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom. It reveals the hypothesis in the global transnational linkages and post colonial sojourns that became the norm in the period of the Zimbabwean crisis. The title of the story, "Something Nice from London," refers to the existence of this basic orientalist paradigm (Said, 1978). The orient under scrutiny here is the crisis hit Zimbabwe, heavily burdened with hyper-inflation, sporadic electricity supply and shortages of fuel and basic consumer goods.

This social, political and economic crisis has negatively affected people's everyday operations and has had an impact on normal day to day operations of the general populace. It becomes a crisis to handle such expenses as the provision of food during funerals. This is the predicament that the narrator's family faces as they wait for the repatriation of Peter's body.

Gappah (2009) uses irony in the short story and gives the notion that cities like London and other metropolitan cities are not really spaces of progress and economic prosperity. The major irony in the story is reflected in the title itself and the way the family receives the 'something nice from London'. There is nothing about receiving a parcel containing ashes for their son from London. Manase (2014) indicates that economic migrants such as Lisa, as noted too by Hall (2003, pp. 227-228), become the insignificant other of this relationship in the colonial discourse that defined the Europe/the West as standing for munificence, order, and wealth.

Manase (2014) further says that the former colonised, that is Zimbabwe in this case, stands as the helpless receiver in an impoverished sphere. This is an image that Gappah (2009) satirises in her stories and especially through Peter's failure to make it in the diaspora and through his subsequent death.

On top of that, the writer uses an ironic twist in "Something Nice From London", irony, in "Something Nice From London,". Instead of the Chikwiro family to improve after Peter left for London, their life became miserable. Their social and economic status deteriorated further as Peter fails to send the eagerly awaited British pounds. He fails to complete his university education and instead demands money from his already economically impoverished mother. This brings stress and displeasure to his mother and the rest of the family as they thought it was him who was going to send them money instead of the other way round. So his immigration to London became a futile excursion as it brings out nothing tangible in terms of finance and economic improvement.

Out of frustration because his immigration to the land of plenty fails to yield anything positive, Peter eventually falls into the world of drugs and hence dies mysteriously in the streets of London. His death just like his leaving to go to London, his stay there and his death plunges the family into further social and financial difficulties as they have to organise for the repatriation of Peter's body from London so as to have a decent funeral as per the dictates of the local customs and demands of his extended family.

Henceforth, migrancy according to Manase (2014) is presented as a sarcastic alienating and transporting some of the migrants into confined spaces of demeaning jobs that result into constitution of disillusioned and displaced identities.

Manase (2014) further postulates that these demeaning jobs and the resultant alienation that the migrants find themselves in, serve to reveal the contradictoriness of economic migrancy. This brings to the fore the paradox of migrancy and the diaspora under desperate situations that

is prevalent in the metropolitan cities that the migrants enter which do not really offer opportunities to some of the migrants according to Smith (2004).

Lazarus' (2004) goes on to give an analogy of the continuum of the capitalist crises evident in the metropolitan spaces from the 1970s to the present. This compels one to note that crises in the United Kingdom and in Zimbabwe interlink and limit the opportunities for the migrants' economic survival. This is evident in 'Something Nice From London' when Peter fails to make it through in the diaspora and at the end of the day, the author metaphorically kills him to show that sometimes desperation and migrancy do not necessarily result in making life rosy. It has its own downturns which are also very difficult to bear with.

The crises appeals to the psychology of the migrant as they are holed up in the West. This has an effect also on the aspiring migrant in Zimbabwe who after witnessing the demise of Peter does not know whether to move out of the country or to stay put and face the economic and social crisis like anybody else. The reality on the ground can be summed up in that, those who migrate, have couriered themselves from one crisis emanating from an unstable state to another crisis in the, metropolitan cities which appear as prosperous global capitalist economies yet they exude policies that exclude migrants and therefore limit their opportunities.

It is important to note that there are those at home who expect to benefit largely from those that managed to go to the diaspora. They expect to receive 'something nice from London' but unfortunately it does not turn out to be that way. They have high expectations from the envisaged financial and goods remittances from the economic migrants. Smith (2004) puts across the fact that financial remittances keep featuring greatly in the lives of migrants in the diaspora and their relatives at home.

To substantiate this claim, Tevera et al. (2010) also point out that the remittance of funds and goods has managed to keep afloat and improved the lives of those in Zimbabwe during the post-2000 tough times. However, these remittances and high expectations present a problem to

both parties; that is those that remit and those at home. For instance, Lisa in ‘Something Nice From London’ fails to come back home for a number of years and it’s the same thing in ‘My Cousin Sister Rambanai’ where Thomas suffers the same ordeal. He fails to return home to bury his father. The most plausible answer to that is the fact that he has overstayed his visitor’s visa and had therefore become an illegal economic migrant.

The disarticulation finds its way into the space of family circles of some Zimbabweans at home. Moyo et al. (2012) consider these issues of dislocations as indicative of the ironical impact of migration at a social and let alone a family level. Petty jealousies start cropping up among the immediate and extended families and hence create fissures in the relations. This is shown and exemplified in the fall out between the caricatured and talkative Mai Lisa, who is an aunt to the narrator and the narrator’s mother in ‘Something Nice From London’.

MaLisa is shown as a talkative and flamboyant woman and thus reflecting the authors ridiculing of the detestable and deteriorating identities prevalent in some of the home-based Zimbabweans who were benefitting from the benevolence of the diaspora community. Somehow she always finds opportunities to brag and show good impressions about lives in the diaspora. She does this to belittle that narrator’s mother over Peter’s failure to remit any finances or goods compared to what her daughter Lisa has been doing.

Her mother (Lisa’s mother) takes every opportunity to tell us of her (Lisa) latest success.

*“Lisa has bought herself a car.”*

*“Lisa has moved into a bigger flat.”*

*“Lisa is flying to America, to Canada, to Italy, to France.”*

*She has sent money just today, two hundred and fifty billion dollars she sent, it is ‘only two hundred pounds, just imagine. She insists that I go on a holiday, but I told her, no, my child, not on four teachers’ annual salary. I said a new stove is more important. Can you believe that*

*she sent me more money, five hundred billion dollars? Just imagine. I will buy a new fridge from Radio Limited.* (“Something Nice From London,” pp. 84-85)

Ironically, MaLisa is blinded by the huge sums of money that the daughter sends her to an extent that she fails to put the money into good use so as to transform her Zimbabwean condition. She fails to make the remittances an agency for change in her family; instead she becomes a consumer who doesn't think about the next day.

The further irony comes in the fact that it is the narrator who had sponsored Lisa's travel and studies in the United Kingdom. So the narrator's family obviously expected something from Lisa as a thank you. This is in the same vein as in the way they had expected some remittances from Peter which in turn fail to come their way as he degenerates into a migrant failure and ultimately die. It is these dislocating effects and the tragic aspects of migrancy that characterise the post-2000 transnational links between Zimbabwe and the United Kingdom.

This becomes an absurd situation as the crises in both countries are pitted against each other leading to the perpetual alienation and fragmentation of the migrants and the migrants' home countries. The migrants face almost the same problems in both countries. In Zimbabwe they suffer from social, economic and political quagmire and in the diaspora they suffer from alienation and fragmentation as the migrants are not given equal opportunities as the natives of the host country.

#### **4.11 Cast your bucket where you are**

In the short “At the sound of the last post” from Gappah's anthology *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) exudes a solid and intimate but yet multifaceted and appeals to politics and the shrewdly diplomatic instincts of the weak. This is done through passive resistance through the narrator who is a woman, who has been subjugated, ill-treated, chided and finally widowed.

The narrator is a woman of foreign origin and married her husband while they were in exile and they were bound by love and they shared the same political vision and had a sense of hope

for the future. The only glance that we are given about her origins is captured in the statement, “*I forgot about the fight against apartheid in my own country as his battle seemed more urgent*” (Gappah, 2009, p. 9). So at the end of the day the woman narrator makes a sacrifice to be with her husband in a foreign land. Things don’t work according to plan in the country that she settles in. When she finally arrives in her husband’s country, she realises that her husband was formerly married and had a very unceremonious divorce where is given *gupuro* (a token of divorce that is given to a woman upon divorce) and asked to pack her bags and leave the matrimonial home.

It is important to take note of the fact that this story discusses issues to do with physical survival in a foreign land as this widowed narrator does not hail from Zimbabwe. She came to the country on her late husband’s ticket. The tables have turned as her husband dies and the relatives of the deceased do not like her. However she manages to defy the odds and leaves to tell the tale.

The story is set at the national Heroes Acre where the “Orator at the Funerals of Dead Heroes” (Gappah, 2009, p. 3) gives his graveside speeches. It is of paramount importance to note that the widow occupies a place of honour at the funeral such that being “*close to him in the widow’s place of honour, I am aware of his every movement. I watch him without moving my eyes*” (Gappah, 2009, p. 3). This puts the widow in perpetual glory as the badge of being a widow and her being the bereaved becomes some sort of triumph. The narrator therefore does not allow herself to be condemned to vulnerability and pittance but she decides to become very alert on what is happening around. She therefore prepares herself for life after the funeral. The narrator is aware of the fact that life is going to change soon after the funeral and her importance in the society which she borrows from her late husband will change and therefore it becomes important to prepare for the eventualities. The narrator makes a resolution that her days have to be full of contentment from the present day and not pride herself in momentary bliss.

Somehow the narrator has the instinct to survive from the scourge that many heroes and the mighty have fallen victim to. She presents this in very sadistic overtones and she lampoons how *“They are all culled, all of them, age and Aids will do its work even among the most gallant of heroes”* (Gappah, 2009, p. 6). Mlambo (2013) notes that what compounds the socio-economic and political crisis in the country is the HIV/AIDS scourge. The question that remains now is how the spouse survived given the husband’s sexual escapades in numerous extra marital affairs. Gappah (2009) in this case brings to the reader the fact that the scourge does not know any boundaries but cuts across the whole society.

This funeral provides a good insight into how the narrator brings a crucial avenue that can be used by those that are physically, politically and culturally weak but know the value of their sexuality in the modern context. As desperate as her situation in the marriage is, the woman has to ensure that she protects herself from HIV/AIDS at any cost. This is enshrined in the statement that *“He died, leaving me relieved that it had been years since I was wife to him in any but the social sense”* (Gappah, 2009, p. 18). This makes her survive the disease and she further disparages the late husband and others that have fallen to the scourge thus;

*Like the worthless dogs that are his countrymen, my husband believed that his penis was wasted if he was faithful to just one woman. He plunged himself into every bitch in heat, even that slut of a newsreader, the ruling party’s First Whore, who lends the services of her vacuous beauty to their nightly distortions.* (Gappah, 2009, p. 12)

The widow realises that given the odds that are against her in a foreign country, the best that has to happen is to first of all survive physically so that she could rise above the economic, political and social crisis that the country is facing and that she can possibly face as a person. After the funeral, we see how the narrator, a “foreigner” and just a “woman” is rebuked and scoffed at to such an extent that at one time she threatens to leave and go back to her own

country. She later on sticks to her principles and decides to make the best out of her circumstances despite what her sister-in-law Edna says of her:

*Ngazviende (let it go), she said, and good riddance. Real women were divorced to make place for a mhanje such as this one. Thus my introduction to the word mhanje; their word for the lowest form of woman, womanhood without womanliness, mhanje being a barren woman, a woman without issue, unproductive, a fruitless husk. (Gappah, 2009, p. 9)*

This story is set at the peak of a national crisis and there are a lot challenges that the people face and they are very dire and the situation is not good for anyone. However the story gives another dimension as the narrator is not only a victim of socio-economic and political crisis but is also a victim of gender discrimination. This becomes a double-barrelled challenge for women especially in a very patriarchal society whose social constructs and perceptions are discriminatory, biased and severely diminutive of the woman according to Mlambo (2013). The narrator therefore has to fight and triumph the crisis of 1999 to 2009 in its generality and she still finds herself fighting the battle of womanhood.

She develops a thick skin and instead of running away from her problems and challenges, the narrator finds herself equipped with one of the best tools she could use to her advantage. She develops a penchant for learning the language of her host country including the intricacy of intonations such that *“in the end I did not need him, as he had done at first, to explain words to me”* (Gappah, 2009, p. 11). The narrator has to hang on, has to persevere, and even when deserted by the husband, she still carries the day as evidenced by her pouring sympathy on Edna, the irritable and venomous aunt that *“she really should start investing more money in shoes; her unshaped peasant’s feet require something stronger than cheap zhing-zhong plastic leather shoes to contain them”* (Gappah, 2009, p. 9). In this Gappah (2009) is mocking the substandard shoes of Chinese origin which are mostly worn by the poor and downtrodden that cannot stand up for themselves and conquer challenges thrown on them. The narrator stands

on a vantage point where she has the audacity to mock the aunt as she herself never gave up and sees herself as much better off than her aunt Edna.

What also becomes apparent in the process is the fact that the author manages to find a voice in a politically capricious and weighed down society. She manages and survives the stifling silences of the day by criticising the society that she lives in and protested against what she perceived to be injustices and social ills of the day which are all linked to the mismanagement of the economy by Robert Mugabe and his government. At the end the writer through the narrator, captures the vision and aspirations of the people as she exposes the hopes and impediments that they face in a contemporary society.

The author further brings out the fact that to survive in a dystopian situation one has to ensure that they have to schematically and courageously use their voice. Her voice of defiance and protest is made clear as she thinks to herself that *“they did not tell me, his widow, of this decision and I had to hear of it from his whore on the evening news”* (Gappah, 2009, p. 20).

The narrator weaves her way into the political corridors of power so that she gains economic emancipation and regains her voice as the voice of the voiceless. She refuses to allow the death of her husband to metaphorically kill her and therefore in the midst of all the challenges she still sees windows of opportunity.

To make sure that she has her foot in what she wants to achieve, she refuses to bury her husband at the Heroes Acre, so she still remains herself even during the time of bereavement. She refuses to have the burden of widowhood where her down at all. Instead she robustly thinks of a gambit and she recounts that:

*And in that realisation, I saw my future. I have no home in my own country to go to; everything that I have invested in is here. I could choose to be an official widow to be trotted out at every commemoration of the heroes. Or I could choose my own path.* (Gappah, 2009, p. 23)

She fully realises that as Booker Washington said, she had to cast her bucket where she is. She has no country to go back to and hence she has to make her way in Zimbabwe which she now calls home though her husband is now late.

She becomes very cunning as she discovers that if she folds her arms and surrender to fate; she is the one who will be left with nothing at the end. She threatens emissaries sent to her by saying she will send the avenging spirit and goes to the length of saying she can go to the private press so as to expose the secrets that the ruling party has and could be very damaging. She uses her mental agility to survive in her adopted country which is something that is better than physical prowess.

She realises that this could be the only opportunity for her to make even the wildest demands, she makes her position very clear; *“I want my husband’s farm”, I said, “and I want it registered in title deeds in my name. I also want an uncontested seat in the new Senate”*. (Gappah, 2009, p. 23)

This is a woman of foreign descent who manages to make such a bargain against the government and the ruling party officials. She realises she has no investments of her own in her country of origin and also realises that if she is not clever she won’t have anything as well in her adopted country.

This is how the author unambiguously puts across her map of life:

*So the bargain was sealed: for a seat in the new Senate, and a farm in my own name, I would close my mouth and let them bury wood and earth in his name. They jumped at this; how could they not, when my husband had died early in August, that they could have a real funeral in the month that they commemorate men of the ruling party who have died still in agreement with the President. And so the spokesperson arranged everything, the coffin, the service, the switch after the lying in state at Stoddard Hall.* (Gappah, 2009, p. 22)

The narrator therefore concedes to the fact that it does not help to whine and grumble in abnormal times imagining a saviour coming to help. The only pragmatic way is to rise against odds and gather courage to survive.

#### **4.12 Similarities and differences drawn from the novel and the anthology of the short stories**

The anthology of short stories and the novel both raise the aspect desperate mobilities. This mobility defines certain aspects that become defined as desperate. The novel and the anthology raise aspects that can be defined as abject. A situation is raised where the characters move to the former colonial countries where the racially marked immigrants represent the ambiguous relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. This ambiguous and uncomfortable relationship forms the basis of desperate mobilities in the postcolonial context as enunciated in the anthology and the novel under study.

The desperate forms that are brought out in the works under study include forced and illegal migration where a contrast can be drawn between the cosmopolitan world and the impoverished homes where the migrants are running away from and have been forced into displacement. Both Bulawayo and Gappah reveal ways in which the subjects in their works deal with these desperate mobilities in an era which is marked by the failures of decolonisation as well as the failure to come to terms with racialization and a colonial legacy.

Furthermore, Gappah and Bulawayo articulate a vision that is essentially tragic as it acknowledges the “permanent legacy [of colonialism] that has set the conditions in which we make ourselves what we make” (Scott 2004). The abject state of the home country refuses to loosen its grip on the emigrants as evidenced in the anthology and the novel. Peter dies on the streets of London due to alcohol and drug abuse which might have stemmed from frustration in a foreign land. Darling still holds that dream that she will one day go back home despite the fact that her tourist visa has expired and hence finds herself in a very awkward position. Both

the anthology and the novel gives voice to manifestations of nostalgia as they draw parallels between their host countries and the country of origin.

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

This analysis has brought out the fact that during hard times, one way of surviving for most people is leaving the geographical boundaries of the country given the intensity of the socio-economic and political challenges. However for some, they realise that better to stay around in the country and fight the injustices and force their way through to what they want. Some escape the economic, political and social quagmire through illegal borders, have to manoeuvre their way through the rigorous processes of getting visas which they make short cuts and buy their way out of the country. Without downplaying the drudgery of life in crisis hit Zimbabwe and also condoning the political malaise, the ultimate conclusion reached is that the characters in these stories provide an alternative understanding of ordinary people's subjectivity and resourcefulness. Agency, resilience and innovativeness are all indicators militating against afro-pessimisms and these stories are inspirational and insightful.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study that has been carried to explore the desperate mobilities captured in contemporary Zimbabwean literature as explored in the short story anthology and the novel. The study used the reader-response theory in analysing the desperate mobilities.

The major objectives for the study were to:

- assess how the Zimbabwean community's families, cultures and identities are fractured and how new identities emerged in the selected fiction.
- explore how the reader-response can be applied in the fictional anthologies and literary works and allow readers to visualise migration, displacement and life in the diaspora;
- analyse how the fictional short stories present the common man's desperate mobilities into the diaspora in times of crisis.

The theoretical framework focused on the reader response theory to make an analysis of the short story anthology *An Elegy for Easterly* by Petinah Gappah (2009) and *We Need New Names* by NoViolet Bulawayo (2013). The study adopted the qualitative, desktop approach to the study as it was based on secondary sources of information.

The study has demonstrated that imaginative literature is a powerful tool that articulates social, political and economic issues surrounding the lives of ordinary people caught in impoverished countries and their need to escape to better spaces. It brought out issues that sometimes people don't normally talk about, what is described in literature as the unsayables. The two authors brought out the fact that the human agency is very omnipresent and instead of crying about problems and challenges and grovel about them without any solutions; the author's champion a hopeful gaze that aims to inspire the readers.

What prompted this research is the fact that some writers and academics are content with lamenting and cataloguing the sorrowful state of the Zimbabwean state in particular and African states in general.

This study through an exploration of desperate mobilities as presented in fiction thus fills a gap in knowledge on desperate mobilities. The title of this study recognises the multiple ways of viewing the situation facing the people and it has demonstrated that the life of the characters, despite a myriad challenges has major indications of positivity and hopeful management of the crisis.

What has come out as of paramount importance is the fact that the analysis of the anthology and the novel has revealed that when times are hard, one way to eke out a living is through penetrating out of the boundaries that confine the crisis. The characters involved in both the novel and the anthology have to leave the country by any means possible. They have to do anything possible to ensure they leave the country whether it is legal or otherwise. The analysis has seen characters leaving the country through illegal means like border jumping, through manoeuvring past the hurdles visa applications and also through getting legal travel documents as well as buying one's way out of one's country. Ultimately the characters in the anthology and the novel makes one conclude that there is provision of an alternative understanding of ordinary people's subjectivity and resourcefulness. This is despite the fact that Zimbabwe has been hit by a crisis and at the same time condones political malaise which the characters try to fight their way out of the quagmire. The resilience displayed and the innovativeness displayed are all indicators militating against afro-pessimisms and these stories are inspirational and insightful.

The other conclusion drawn in the study is that despite the sludgy life that people face in Zimbabwe and the social, economic and political hardships and challenges faced by the characters in the anthology and the novel, they have the audacity to push themselves till they

achieve what they intend to get. The short stories that have been picked up from the anthology and closely scrutinised together with the novel paint a picture of challenges from the social, political and economic angles. What stands out is the ability of the characters in the novel and the anthology to define their world to the best of their abilities. They therefore become masters of their destiny. Generally, the idea running across the novel and the short story anthology fills a gap that the research has been focusing on.

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