REPRESENTATIONS OF HOME AND DISPLACEMENT IN KOPANO MATLWA'S *COCONUT* AND NOVIOLET BULAWAYO'S *WE NEED NEW NAMES*

by

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DECLARATION

I **Masefoko Tshegofatso Glander Rasekgotoma**, Student Number 56869347, declare that **Representations of home and displacement in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* and Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names***, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature   Date: 28 January 2023

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my people, ba gaMogale le ba gaRasekgothoma; past, present and future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to God and my ancestors who made it possible for me to complete this study.

Sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor R.A. Alfred Musvoto for the insight, support, patience and dedication. I aspire to be as thorough, thoughtful and encouraging as you.

I'd also like to thank my daughter, who inspired me to fight even when I felt powerless.

Thank you to my everyone who helped carry me through many storms for me to be able to get to this point.

Thank you.

ABSTRACT

This study discusses how the concepts of home and displacement are portrayed in the selected novels of two Southern African writers: *We Need New Names* (2013) by Zimbabwe born and USA based author, NoViolet Bulawayo, and *Coconut* (2007) by South African writer, Kopano Matlwa. The study argues that the themes of home and displacement are recurring in African literature because of the enduring trauma that colonialism visited on the continent. The analysis of both primary texts reflects that the process of migration, whether voluntary or forced, inevitably leaves the affected individuals and communities displaced as they not only struggle to fit into their newfound homes but also suffer from various malaise, such as alienation, identity loss and lack of belonging among others. To this end, the study also argues that displacement is not only physical, but also psychological because migration distorts the characters' sense of home and leaves them perpetually struggling to recover both their senses of self and community. The study thus further contends that the process of migration is life-altering because it presents a turning point in the lives of the characters as they battle with numerous challenges in the new spaces that they find themselves in. The study draws **on postcolonial theory to conceptualise its arguments.**

Key terms:

Home, displacement, postcolonial theory, migration, dislocation, alienation, belonging, language, identity.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The concepts of home and displacement are recurring themes in postcolonial literature. The reason for this is that part of the colonial project involved altering place in colonised territories and the forced migration of people both within and without the borders of the conquered territories. As observed by Ashcroft *et al*. (1995), this shifting of location resulted in crises of people constantly trying to find themselves. These crises are inevitable because home, as McLeod (2000:210) underlines, "performs an important function in our lives. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the place. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong".

Some of the problems encountered by people displaced from their homes include homelessness, warped sense of identity and history, double-consciousness and alienation, among a host of debilitating problems. In this regard, Syeda (2015:51) notes that displacement "refers both to physical displacement and a sense of being socially, culturally and mentally out of place". Although colonialism eventually came to an end, some of its systems are still prevalent in formerly colonised countries. For example, in countries such as Zimbabwe and South Africa, systems of governance, education, culture and values that were imposed by the colonisers still exist. This is compounded by the fact that the ideals of independence in some post-independence countries were betrayed by the ruling elite, resulting in the continued displacement of the formerly colonised and distortions in their relationships with the places they call home. As a result, when postcolonial narratives engage with themes of home and displacement, they are not only in search of an enabling "relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft *et al*., 1989:9), but they are also confronting the wider traumas that colonialism imparted on its victims as well as the shortcomings of the post-independence leadership. Thus, as part of postcolonial writing, African literature is also concerned with narrating stories of social, economic and political instability, as well as changes in cultural norms, lifestyle and values. It is against this background that this study explores the ways in which the concepts of home and displacement are imagined and represented in two African novels:

Coconut (2007) by South African writer, Kopano Matlwa, and *We Need New Names* (2013) by Zimbabwe-born and USA-based author, NoViolet Bulawayo.

As one of the African countries that were once colonised, Zimbabwe is a society that is plagued by severe social, political and economic instabilities. Since the country gained its independence in 1980, its political transformation has been concentrated more on the ruling party (the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front [ZANU-PF]) than on the needs of the general population. While the formal end of colonialism and advent of independence gave the people of Zimbabwe hope of a better future, events did not turn out as expected. The economy took a plunge, and political instability and social disruption forced many people to migrate to different parts of the country and the world, in search of better opportunities. In recent years, Zimbabwe has descended towards failed state status due to the economic collapse and the government's inability to provide key services to its citizens (Orenstein, 2009:3). Furthermore, the economic decline, in turn, affected the social reproduction capacities of both urban and rural households (Murisa, 2010:6). The economic meltdown also created a myriad of social problems, most of which have been especially devastating for the majority of the ordinary working people. These social and economic crises are, among other things, manifested in the decline or absolute collapse of basic service delivery in housing, health and education, and the erosion of household incomes, leading to an increase in cases of food insecurity and general vulnerability (Murisa, 2010:3). Compounding these problems, was the 2005 decision by the ruling ZANU-PF party to carry out a controversial urban clean-up project known as *Operation Murambatsvina* (Drive out Trash), which was a police-led operation to rid the urban centres of informal housing and business structures. Although the operation effectively started in May 2005 and only lasted for a period of 16 weeks, "[its] negative effects are arguably still felt and experienced today" (Benyera & Nyere, 2015:624). These effects include displacement, poverty, a lack of health and education facilities for the displaced communities as well as forced migration for those whose homes were destroyed during the operation.

Like Zimbabwe, post-apartheid South Africa has been disillusioned with the new independence era, which failed to live up to the expectations of many South Africans,

especially black people who were marginalised during the segregationist apartheid system. South African literature has registered these problems in diverse ways, which include revisiting the history of the pernicious apartheid system and critiquing its legacies, which continue to haunt the post-apartheid nation in multiple ways. In this respect, some of the prominent concerns of South African literature include identity crises, alienation and social and economic inequities resulting from the displacement that took place, because of the racially motivated segregationist policies that successive apartheid governments imposed on the nation. Beinart and Dubow (1995:1) explain that "segregation was the name coined in early twentieth-century South Africa for the set of government policies and social practices which sought to regulate the relationship between white and black, colonizers and colonized". Under this system, the apartheid government's grand narratives hierarchised identities within the nation according to skin colour, with the minority whites at the top and the majority blacks at the bottom. The apartheid government also introduced acts and measures of "lawfully" promoting and maintaining segregation among the people of South Africa. Beinart and Dubow (1995:2) observe that:

> Segregation in South Africa encompassed many different social relationships. It is often discussed as a series of legislative Acts which removed and restricted the rights of 'non-whites' in every possible sphere. … One of the distinctive aspects of South Africa was the range and extent of its discriminatory legislation. Many facilities and services – from education and health, to transport and recreation – were progressively restricted and divided on a racial basis.

However, as already mentioned, despite the dawn of democracy (which filled many South Africans with the hope of a transformed social, political and economic order), the South African national space still "… reflect[s] Apartheid policies of spatial segregation" (Muyaka, 2009:1). This is despite the ideal of the "Rainbow Nation", which aimed to mould a new society that transcended the divisions of apartheid's racism.

As two contemporary Southern African women writers, Bulawayo and Matlwa, tackle related issues in their novels. Written six years apart, both novels display striking resemblances in terms of themes and visions – each writer focalises on the topical

matters that ordinary people grapple with in their respective countries. For example, Bulawayo pays attention to private relationships, political instability, displacement, solitude, sexual abuse, coming of age and migration, while Matlwa is preoccupied with identity, displacement, class inequalities, politics, sexual abuse, racism, power, culture and black consciousness. Positioned within spaces of interconnecting histories and identities, both *Coconut* and *We Need New Names* re-narrate the concept of home as a historically constituted terrain that is continually characterised by involuntary change and struggle. In Bulawayo's text, the home is imagined as a place of collapse and demise, where the quality of life continues to deteriorate rapidly under the new leadership in post-independence Zimbabwe. On the other hand, Matlwa presents home as a place marred by racism, alienation, loss of culture and identity, as well as inequality. While Bulawayo pays close attention to the effects of Operation *Murambatsvina* on the displaced slum dwellers in Zimbabwe, Matlwa closely examines how the legacy of apartheid affects ordinary citizens in post-apartheid South Africa. As home countries, both Zimbabwe and South Africa are presented in the selected narratives as having failed to fully deliver, among other things, on the economic freedom and unity that were promised during the struggle for independence in both countries. Instead, both spaces have become unstable sites of displacement, to the extent that the citizens no longer "feel at home". As a result of the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, Bulawayo paints a picture of people leaving their home country in droves, as they migrate to foreign countries in search of a better life. However, unbeknown to them, the diaspora would become a place of displacement, doubt, homelessness, longing, exploitation and even abuse. The same dilemma is explored by Matlwa in her novel, through the character of Fikile, who leaves her squatter camp home for the suburbs in search of a better life and future. Although Fikile finds a job at a restaurant called Silver Spoon in one of the affluent suburbs, the irony is that she discovers that she cannot belong to the new space that she finds herself in.

1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study to:

1. investigate how the themes of home and displacement are represented in the novels, *Coconut* and *We Need New Names*
2. assess the impact of displacement on the novels' main characters
3. investigate how cultural displacement is conveyed in both novels.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do the texts, *Coconut* and *We Need New Name*s, project home as a lost paradise and source of displacement?
2. How do the texts, *Coconut* and *We Need New Names,* imagine home as an intersection of the past, present and the future?
3. In what ways do the characters in the novels deal with the neurosis caused by displacement?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION

While scholarly work that critiques Kopano Matlwa's novel, *Coconut* (2007), has focused on themes such as identity (Goodman, 2012), race (Hlongwane, 2013), culture emasculation and race (Radithlalo, 2010), coloniality and identity (Moopi and Makombe, 2020), none investigates how the concepts of home and displacement impact on the lives of the characters in the text. A critical analysis of studies conducted on NoViolet Bulawayo's offering, *We Need New Names* (2013), also offers different perspectives. For instance, while Fitzpatrick (2015) focuses on the function of names in the novel, Ndlovu (2016) discusses the representation of African crises, migration and citizenship. The concept of migration is also further explored in Concilio, (2018) and Ndaka (2020), who address the issues around paradigms of migration and representations of African encounters and global modernity, respectively. In addition to these, Moji (2014) andAkpome (2019) offer interesting perspectives. While the former advances the concepts of dislocation, renaming and translation subjectivities, the latter looks at how memory, experience and space contribute to the reconstruction of the idea of home. The issue of home is further explored in Nyambi et. al.'s (2020) study, which looks at the

meaning of home, identity and belonging as experienced locally and transnationally. Evans's (2022) study focuses on the effects of displacement as experienced by females in foreign lands.

While some of these studies explore themes related to home and displacement as they are portrayed in Bulawayo's novel, none of them explores these themes in relation to Matlwa's novel, *Coconut.* Therefore, this study's importance emanates from the fact that it seeks to add onto the existing pool of knowledge, thereby interrogating Matlwa and Bulawayo's texts from different angles. The themes of home and displacement that the study discusses are not only important to the understanding of the identities and turbulent histories of the formerly colonised societies, but are also critical in appreciating their current political, social and economic experiences. In the process of discussing these themes, the study broadens discourses on contemporary Southern African literary representations as well as those on postcolonial literature in general. By focussing on the themes of home and displacement in the works of Southern African women writers from different countries, the study gives voice to women writers' accounts of the nation, which are often subverted in favour of patriarchal versions. The study, furthermore, demonstrates that although postcolonial writers often explore the same themes, their writing cannot be generalised, as writers across regions engage with these themes in their own inimitable ways.

1.5 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The discussion of the primary texts that have been selected for study utilises postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory explores discourses that tackle the experiences of colonisation around the globe and how the process of decolonisation is taking place. These discourses look at significant parts of the history that have been overlooked by the West in the process of writing histories about the colonised. The theory closely examines and responds to the literature produced during and after colonialism, whose main aim is to highlight the effects of the dominance of colonialism on certain cultures and countries and pays attention to how the coloniser and colonised operate culturally, socially, psychologically and politically in their daily encounters with each other. The concept of

postcolonialism does not only emphasise the period that followed after colonialism ended, but it also delves into the aftereffects and changes that came to be because of colonisation. These changes show how the act and processes of colonisation altered the lives of the colonised, thereby impacting the cultures, identity, ways of living and being, relationships, power, values and language that contribute to the overall identity of a community.

In their seminal work, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989:2), Ashcroft *et al.* used the term 'post-colonial' to refer to "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day [since] there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression". This reference suggests that for a culture to be deemed or referred to as ''post-colonial'', it must have gone through all the processes a colonised country goes through and also must have experienced changes (both negative and positive) and challenges which still linger long after colonisation has ended. Thus, postcolonial literature refers to the discourse which engages with "the effects of colonization on culture and societies" (Ashcroft *et al*., 2007:168). The effects of colonisation on culture and societies mentioned by Ashcroft *et al*. (2007) suggest that any discourse that comments on, criticises, discusses or lays out the state of history, heritage, ways of living as well as the communities affected as a result of colonisation, forms part of postcolonial literature. Literatures from Africa, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, The Caribbean, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and South Pacific Island countries are classified as "postcolonial" literature, because they have "emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (Ashcroft *et al.,* 1989:2).

For Young (2003:2), postcolonialism encompasses "a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed". This means that postcolonial literature rewrites and re-presents human experiences, specifically the often-subverted encounters of the formerly colonised "Other", from new and alternative dimensions that differ from the dominant and monologic

discourses of the coloniser, which invariably portray the colonised in a negative light. In this respect, Young (2003:7) underlines that post colonialism:

> … seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave . . . [it] is about changing [the] world . . . It threatens privilege and power. It refuses to acknowledge the superiority of western cultures.

It is also important to note that postcolonial theory is multifaceted because it engages with a wide range of problems the colonised and the formerly colonised experience as a result of colonialism. As Krishna (2009:2) observes:

> … postcolonialism articulates a politics of resistance to the inequalities, exploitation of humans and the environment, and the diminution of political and ethical choices that come in the wake of globalization. If neoliberal globalization is the attempt at naturalizing and depoliticizing the logic of the market, or the logic of the economy, postcolonialism is the effort to politicize and denaturalize that logic and demonstrate the choices and agency inherent in our own lives.

Lunga (2008) shares Krishna's view that it is not practical for postcolonial theory to look at just one problem, when she argues that:

> … postcolonial theory represents a complex field of study, encompassing an array of matters that include issues such as identity, gender, race, racism, and ethnicity … focuses on exploding knowledge systems underpinning colonialism, neocolonialism, and various forms of oppression and exploitation present today … challenges epistemic violence; that is, it questions the undervaluing, destruction, and appropriation of colonized people's knowledge and ways of knowing, including the colonizer's use of that knowledge against them to serve the colonizer's interests. Postcolonial theory therefore offers a critique of imperial knowledge systems and

> languages and how they are circulated and legitimated and how they serve imperial interests (193).

The above viewpoint highlights points of convergence of the interconnectedness of knowledge, identity construction and deconstruction, and the reconstruction of systems that govern societies, and how these systems marginalise the vulnerable while serving the interests of the ruling classes. This means that postcolonial theory serves as an important tool to comment on, challenge and form ideas around policies and practices that govern communities that have experienced colonialism. Postcolonial theory is also important for this study because Bulawayo and Matlwa's works present a striking illustration of the consistent characteristics of colonialism that are still prevalent in two different Southern African countries, and how these affect the home space and the characters' views and experiences of what 'home' signifies to them as individuals and as a collective.

1.6 POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM

Postcolonial criticism draws attention to differences in cultures and identities in literary texts. One purpose of postcolonial literary criticism is to challenge the claims of universalism constructed by Western norms that judge all literature through ''universal'' Western standards. Therefore, these western norms disregard cultural, social, regional and national differences presented in literature (Barry, 1995:191). To this end, Walder (2005:2) holds that postcolonial consciousness entails and rather demands a double awareness of the colonial inheritance working within a specific culture, community and country, and the changing relations existing between these communities, cultures and countries.

Fanon, one of the earliest postcolonial theorists, argues in *The Wretched of the Earth (*1961:227) that "colonialism is a source of destruction and trauma for colonized peoples who are taught to look negatively upon their people, their *culture* and themselves". Fanon (1961) strongly believes that the definite step for colonised people towards finding their own voices and identities is to reclaim their own past. It is therefore aptly observed that "post colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction" (Ashcroft *et*

al., 2006:2). Ashcroft *et al*. (2006) suggests that postcolonial discourses are an ongoing process of discovery and rediscovery through which the previously colonised continue to confront colonialism, even after the period of formal colonisation has long passed, because some of the effects of colonialism last beyond arbitrary time frames. As Loomba (2007:207) states: "[p]erhaps the connection between postcolonial writing and the nation can be better comprehended by better understanding that the nation itself is a ground of dispute and debate, site for competing imaginings of different ideological and political interest". Loomba (2007) is of the view that the best way to understand postcolonial literature is to look at the contexts from which the literature stems, because these contexts are rich sources of information and are often first-hand experiences of communities that have been affected by colonisation.

Therefore, the discourses related to postcolonial theory can be used to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct social interactions for the purpose of understanding the experiences of the people and the communities affected by the acts and processes of colonisation. Carby (2007:215) notes:

> While attaching the prefix, "post" to colonial can indicate significant breaks in consciousness and subjectivities, for me the term lacks the political and historical referents to the powerful social movements of the anti-colonial and masks the significant continuities in the history of violence and capitalist exploitation in the modern, modernising and late modern worlds. While it is absolutely necessary that the culture and politics of late modern and neo-liberal racial and gender formations be understood in all their contemporary specificity, I would argue for the need to simultaneously name, locate and analyse these formations as the historical legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

Place and displacement are recurring themes in both postcolonial literature and postcolonial theory. These motifs are recurrent because, among other things, during colonialism, many colonised people were forcibly uprooted from the places they identified as home to locations they were not familiar with. This dislocation resulted in feelings of

displacement, nostalgia and longing for the familiarity of the places they identified as home. It is also important to note that the displacement also occurred as a result of voluntary relocation or movement within the same country from one area to another, or movement from one country to another on the same continent or a different continent, all due to various circumstances. Exile could also mean that one is "exiled" from a familiar place to a location that is completely new to them, thereby causing physical and cultural displacement and homelessness. Theorists such as Safran (1991), Tololyan (1996) and Cohen (1997) characterise diaspora in various ways. For instance, according to Safran (1991:83), the term "diasporic community" seems to be used increasingly as a metaphoric designation for several categories of expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court.* Safran (1991) is of the view that by virtue of moving from one country to another due to different social, political and economic issues, one automatically becomes part of a diasporic community.

Cohen's (1997:24) view of what constitutes a diasporic community is mainly similar to that of Safran (1991), but he adds some elements to it. For example, he observes that the definition of 'diaspora' needs to include those groups that scatter voluntarily or as a result of fleeing aggression, persecution or extreme hardship. Nonetheless, Cohen (1997:24) argues that the same definition should also consider the necessity for a sufficient time period before any community can be described as a diaspora. Cohen (1997) acknowledges that diasporic communities not only form a collective identity in the place of settlement or with their homeland, but also share a common identity with members of the same ethnic communities in other countries.

1.7 NOTIONS OF HOME AND DISPLACEMENT

In her essay on the poetics of home and diaspora, Friedman (2004) highlights the various perspectives from which the concept of home can be understood depending on one's experiences in the space(s) they call home. For example, she notes that the commonplace and overly used phrase:

> "[t]here is no place like home" means home is the best, the ideal, everything that elsewhere is not. Places elsewhere can never bring the same happiness

> as home. Alternatively, inflected, the phrase turns into its opposite. 'There is no place like home' also means that no place, anywhere, is like home. Home is never land of dreams and desire. Home is utopia, a no place, a nowhere, an imaginary space longed for, always already lost in the very formation of the idea of home (2004:191).

Friedman's (2004) observation above affirms that postcolonial literature explores different meanings of home and how these spaces shape the world of those who are exposed to them. Bulawayo and Matlwa, each in their own inimitable way, focalise on their characters' thoughts and ways in which they inhabit and interact with these sites to make the reader aware of their characters' views of the spaces they call home. Through reading *We Need New Names* and *Coconut*, one can understand the complex challenges and often contradictions that characters encounter vis-à-vis the spaces they call home. The texts reveal the times and places the characters live in, and how the social, cultural, economic and political circumstances shape their experiences, feelings and meanings of the places they call home.

According to Boym (2001:251), "to feel at home is to know that things are in their places and so are you". Thus, the ideal home is one of intimacy and familiarity, where the subject derives safety from their knowledge of the surroundings. This implies that it becomes a concern if a person feels they are no longer familiar with a space they call home and starts to experience a sense of loss of both the self and everything that contributed to their socialisation. As Terkenli (1995:325) opines "recurrent, regular investment of meaning in a context with which people personalize and identify through some measure of control" results in what one refers to as home. Terkenli's (1995) view suggests that for as long as there is no consistent meaning and identity that are placed as a result of control, the place within which one dwells will not equate to home, at least not to everyone, given different reactions from different people. According to Porter (2001:304), once a feeling of unfamiliarity becomes strong, people find an alternative through the act of remembering: "If home is unavailable, people turn to the memory of it as a compensation strategy". This means that by remembering home and what it represents, those displaced from their homes have a coping strategy through which they can carry themselves

whenever they miss their familiar spaces. Terkenli (1995:329) shares the same view when he highlights that the importance of remembering home through memory serves two purposes: (1) familiarising the unfamiliar and thus actively engaging in creating a home in the new place; and (2) nostalgia (as homesickness) and thus holding on to the belief that home is fixed in the space they left behind. Similarly, Darwish (2002:77) affirms the importance of the idea of carrying home as a memory, when he states that:

> Home is a place where you have a memory; without memories you have no real relationship to a place. Also, it is impossible to return. Nobody crosses the same river twice. If I return, I will not find my childhood. There is no return, because history goes on. Return is just a visit to a place of memory or to the memory of the place.

The above definition of home shows that even if it becomes impossible to return to the exact way things were when one left home, it is very important to carry the experienced memories and to remember home, because it is through memories that people learn to live and exist. Darwish (2002) further underscores the importance of holding on to the memories that form part of the place one refers to as home and using them as a source of reference in future. Home, therefore, contributes to who we are and how we perceive and interpret the reality around us.

The concept of home can never be discussed without the inclusion of the concept of displacement, as the two are interconnected – they overlap and affect each other in a mutual way. Displacement could be described as the voluntary migration or forceful removal or movement of people from one place to another, that is characterised by feelings of unbelonging and uprootedness. According to Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng (1998:7). displacement is defined as a forced removal of people from their homes through armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violations of human rights and other causes traditionally associated with refugees across international borders. Likewise, Bhabha (1994:199) describes displacement as:

> that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of

> exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering on the edge of "foreign" cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafes of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. Also, the gathering of people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned; the gathering of incriminatory statistics, educational performance, legal statutes, immigration status.

If home, as already noted, is "associated with freedom, a sense of belonging and personal dignity" (Hout, 2006:193), conditions of displacement, such as exile, in contrast, are "a state of cognitive and emotional dissonance whether generated by war and political/sectarian division in one's own nation or induced by physical uprootedness abroad" (Hout, 2006:193). This explains that once people find themselves removed from their place of belonging and socialisation, they are more likely to feel out of place, which equals to them feeling displaced.

Safran (1991:83-84) affirms this view in his discussion of the feelings of displacement experienced by people who move from one country and settle in another as follows:

> Expatriate minority communities that are dispersed from an original center to at least two peripheral places, that maintain a memory, vision or myth about their original homeland; that believe that they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host country; that see the ancestral land as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; they are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland and of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland.

Safran (1991) moves that the dispersal from an original place of one's socialisation may be as of a result of seeking social and economic utopia. Thus, it is still important for people

to be ready to feel displaced as the new place within which they find themselves rooted may leave them feeling out of place and longing for that which they have left behind in their original place, or that which they may experience should they move to a different space. Safran's (1991) thesis is important to this study because it provides a context through which to appreciate experiences and memories of the characters in the primary texts selected for discussion. Furthermore, it is also useful in understanding the abstract concept of cultural displacement and its effects on the two novels' characters, thereby making it possible to compare the meanings of home and displacement from the different cultural spaces in which the narratives are set.

What is striking is that these novels explore the same themes that are presented from different types of homes and displacement, but that are not unique to any space that has previously been colonised. Longing for a better future, desperation to fit in, identity problems, reflective nostalgia, familial displacement, mental displacement and othering are some of the themes explored by the authors in the primary texts selected for analysis in this study. The examination and comparison of the two texts revealed that the concepts of home and displacement are experienced by individuals and communities in different ways, and these differences affect their engagement with the problems they encounter in the spaces they call home or in their displaced state.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

As already mentioned, the concept of home is one of the dominant themes in African literature. In literary representations, the term "home" may refer to a metaphor, community, nation or a mental creation. The connotations of the concept depend on the intentions and experiences of the writer, thus what it represents always differs. The idea of home is seldom discussed without looking at the concepts of unhomeliness or unhomely, displacement, identity and language since they are all part of who we are as individuals. In postcolonial literature, there is a change in how different theorists view the concept of home, as observed by Gabriel (1999:11):

> [w]hile home as a set of material, communal, and emotional securities, was very often projected as a space of pastoral stability in the discourse of anti-

> colonial nationalism, the increasingly diasporic context of the nation has fundamentally problematized that definition. Contemporary scholarship, in the field of cultural and literary studies, anthropology and geography, has drawn attention to the instability of home.

This view is true for Matlwa's text *Coconut*, which lays bare the instability of home through two characters that are different and yet share a similar longing for change of homes because they find themselves frustrated by their lives and everything surrounding them. Matlwa paints a picture of homes that are shaken by different social and economic challenges, and thus for her, home is an unstable space. According to Bammer (1992: viii), this instability in how home is presented in literary accounts as "manifesting itself on a staggering – some believe, unprecedented – scale both globally and locally. On all levels and in all places, it seems "home" in the traditional sense is either disintegrating or being radically redefined." While home is normally perceived as a place where everyone feels safe and comfortable, and a place very few would want to trade for spaces they do not know, Matlwa and Bulawayo's texts project it as an ambivalent place, a site of both stability and instability.

According to Di Stefano (2002:38), "home is not necessarily a fixed notion ... more than a physical space; home might be understood as a familiarity and regularity of activities and structures of time". This means that homes are not necessarily where one is born, but rather, any place or location where an individual feels they belong. As bell hooks (1990:148) notes, "home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives… that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become". These views are not only reflected in Bulawayo's narrative *We Need New Names*, but they also affirm how migration from one area to another, with the same people whom one refers to as "their own" with the same values, principles, ways of living and shared trauma and hope, still contributes to the building of a space called home. This also suggests that through visiting a place that was once called home in the memory, people are able to recreate their home through storytelling and affirming each other's stories through shared experiences.

Hence, Terkenli (1995:325) argues that home is the result of “recurrent, regular investment of meaning in a context with which people personalise and identify through some measure of control”. His opinion suggests that for people to call a specific place home, they need to have, over time, accumulated familiar meanings vis-à-vis that place, which enable them to forge identities that are in harmony with the place. This familiarity means that the individual is to some extent “in control” of their surroundings and, therefore, for Terkenli (1995), socialisation into a particular home space puts people at ease as it enables them to better understand and relate to their surroundings and share the same values and norms held by the place which they view as home.

In *The politics of home: Postcolonial relocations and twentieth-century fiction* George (1996) explores the notion of home in some colonial and postcolonial literatures written in English in the 20th century. She argues that the word ‘home’ “connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, *shelter, comfort, nurture and protection”* [emphasis added] and “becomes a social construct based on the relation of inclusion and exclusions” (George, 1996:1- 2). To explain George’s (1996) view, during the period of colonisation, those in power dispossess and exploit the powerless ideologically and physically and, as a result, the oppressed are alienated from themselves and the very spaces to which they should feel a sense of belonging.

George (1996:9) further observes that “one distinguishing feature of places called home is that they are built on select inclusions… which are grounded in a learned (or taught) sense of kinship that is extended to those who are perceived as sharing the same blood, race, class, gender, or religion”. For her, a home is “a place that is flexible, that manifests itself in various forms and yet whose every reinvention seems to follow the basic pattern of inclusions/exclusions.… Its importance lies in the fact that it is not equally available to all. Home… is not a neutral place” (George,1996:9).

In her discussion of two novels written by Lebanese migrants, Hout (2006:193) proposes that:

> feeling at home is associated with freedom, a sense of belonging and personal dignity, wherever and whenever these may be found and enjoyed.

> Exile, by contrast, is a state of cognitive and emotional dissonance whether generated by war and political/sectarian division in one's own nation or induced by physical uprootedness abroad.

The concept of exile is introduced here because most of those who do not "feel at home'' have either been exiled from their familiar places or have become migrants outside the borders of their home countries. They do not feel like they belong and, as such, feel rejected by the foreign communities and nations they settle in. The exile's experiences of foreign culture, language and environment leave them feeling "imprisoned", as they cannot fully express themselves within the communities, they live in. Because they are unable to claim the nations and communities they settle in as theirs, the exiled often end up frustrated and longing for the homes they left behind. The exile or migrant's longing for the home nation they left behind can also give rise to nationalist sentiments, because, as Said (2001:176) argues "[n]ationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs; and by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages". For Said (2001), nationalism is a source of stability and belonging because it alleviates the destructive effects of exile. Said's (2001) views echo Rejai and Enloe's (1969:141) observation that "nationalism refers to an awareness of membership in a nation (potential or actual), together with a desire to achieve, maintain and perpetuate the identity, integrity, and prosperity of that nation". At the centre of Rejai and Enloe's argument is the notion that nationalism thrives on group identities, that are cemented by a shared affiliation to a specific nation.

This means that the concept of home "cannot always be physical" (Porter, 2001:304). Memory is an important part of who people are because it enables them to revisit and reconnect with their past experiences and link them to the present. Thus, Porter (2001) views home as an active recollection and a yearning of the past, which may encompass familiarity, loss, estrangement, nostalgia, happiness and longing. To support this, Pierre Nora (1989:12) asserts that active commemoration of the past takes place defensively if the environment of the memory itself is absent. Ahmed (1999:343) explains that the question of "being home" is a question of the "discontinuity between past and present".

By this, Ahmed (1999) posits that intervals or gaps between being familiar with a place contribute to what one identifies as home. To anyone who is in a foreign place, thinking of home is "an act of remembering" (Ahmed, 1999:343). This act of remembering denotes a recollection of shared identities, cultures, awareness, familiarity and ways of living.

According to Anderson (1983:6), a nation is "an imagined political community" created "in the minds" of each of its members. This means that as much as a home is a physical geographical place where we were either born or socialised to become who we are, a home can also be a mental construct. Terkenli (1995:331) asserts that "the creation of home is eventually an accumulation of all thoughts, feelings and symbols resulting from the interaction and the personalization of the new space, regardless of whether that space was chosen voluntarily or was forcefully imposed on the subject". Boym (2001:251) affirms Anderson's (1983) and Terkenli's (1995) conceptualisations above when he observes that home is a state of mind (that does not necessarily coincide with a specific location). As a result, he argues that individuals suffer from nostalgia once they start thinking about home. Boym (2001) identifies two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective nostalgia. Restorative nostalgia "stresses nostos (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" (Boym, 2007:13). Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, "thrives on algia (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming – wistfully, ironically, desperately" (Boym, 2007:13).

Because of various experiences of home, it is not easy to distinguish clearly between the home and (national) homeland or home country. Jin (2008) explains in *The Writer as Migrant*, that the word 'homeland' has two main definitions: it could refer either to "a person's native land or to a land where a person is present at the moment" (2008:65). Jin (2008) further notes that:

> In the past, it was easy to reconcile these differences because the home in homeland also referred to one's origins and past in one specific country, while today, the meaning of home in homeland has changed such that one person could have a home in multiple places and thus refer to more than one country as a homeland.

According to Bhabha (1992:141), the notion of “unhomely” is not of the absence of home, but “the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place” that “creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself… in a state of “incredulous terror”” (Bhabha, 1992:141). Bhabha (1992) is of the view that the state of unhomeliness entails feelings of alienation and unfamiliarity which one experiences within a specific space, and which leave them in a state of solitude and fear. As a result of the alienation, one, in turn, finds himself or herself disconnected from social conventions, socially isolated, culturally estranged and feeling unsafe and hopeless. This is linked to the notion of the uncanny, which Vidler (1992:6) characterises as “a special case of the many modern diseases, from phobias to neuroses, variously described … as a distancing from reality forced by reality”. In her book, *Critical Theory Today* (1998), Tyson states that being unhomed “is to feel not at home even in one’s own home because you are not at home in yourself: that is, your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak” (421). Tyson (1998) suggests that although the space a person lives in may have characteristics of the familiar place they called home, as long as they feel their identity and cultural being are not in place, physically, they can never feel at home anywhere in the world. According to Brah (1996:180), “‘home’ can simultaneously be a place of safety and of terror”. This means that there are often circumstances within the places we call home that may force us to feel like we do not belong and instil a sense of longing within us.

In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo shows through the different characters’ experiences in different countries how the slow-changing world around them shapes their diverse views of what it means to be at home, and how through their thoughts and actions, they cannot help but feel displaced. To this end, Ndlovu (2016:140) argues that “Bulawayo’s narrative makes clear the indelible inscription of one’s country of birth in notions of self-definition even as the migrant status gestures towards its negation”. This view is echoed by Nyambi *et al.* (2019) who argue that home is a source of life and a place that affirms one’s identity and culture. Consequently, it becomes difficult for migrants to arrive in their host countries and not remember the home they left behind in their native countries as it reminds them of who they are.

In *Coconut,* Matlwa paints the same picture of characters experiencing their home in two contrasting dwelling spaces of the same country, which brings forth a wish for assimilation for the purpose of feeling at home and desperation for acceptance, which results in most of the characters being left in a state of displacement. Thus, the novel effectively foregrounds the scars of colonialism and apartheid through the struggles of its central black characters: Fikile and Ofilwe. Although the two come from different socio-economic backgrounds, they continue to be traumatised on a daily basis by aberrations, such as racism and identity crises obtained from the legacies of apartheid. While this type of "everyday … distress" may not "produce dead bodies or even, necessarily, damaged ones" (Cvetkovich, 2003:3) it nonetheless scars the psyches of the traumatised. Consequently, some of Matlwa's characters experience unhomeliness in their own homes, as Kenqu (2015:119) observes: "Ofilwe … feels deeply unhomed in her family's triple-storey Tuscan-styled home, despite its luxuriousness and the comforts it affords". In addition, Ofilwe's family lives in an estate where they have to follow rules that often prevent them from practising their cultural beliefs – something that could be described as akin to imprisonment. Thus, the family is left with no choice but to trade their beliefs for the rules of the estate because the residents of the estate find their cultural beliefs offensive. Fikile, on the other hand, feels that she does not belong in the township where her home is located because she, among other things, distances herself from fellow community members whom she despises and labels as "uneducated criminals" (Matlwa, 2013:129).

1.9 METHODOLOGY

This study employed the qualitative approach as a methodology with close textual analysis as an approach. Schwardt (2007:195) defines research methodology as a theory of how an inquiry should proceed. It involves analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry. Qualitative research is described by Creswell (2014:32) as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Patton (2001:39) defines qualitative research as:

> an approach that uses a naturalistic approach which seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as real world settings, where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomena of interest…it is any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification, but instead the kind of research that produces findings derived at from real-world settings where the phenomena of interest unfold naturally.

The purpose of qualitative research, as foregrounded by Patton (2001) above, is to increase understanding of human conditions and experiences. Qualitative research, therefore, places emphasis on understanding behaviour in context. A research approach, on the other hand, is described as "plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis" (Creswell, 2014:295). The close textual analysis approach adopted in this study focused on Matlwa's novel *Coconut* (2007) and Bulawayo's novel *We Need New Names* (2013), which were the two primary sources of data analysed. Where necessary, secondary sources of data, such as journal articles, reports and books were used to strengthen the arguments. Thus, the conclusions reached at the end of the study are based on the analysis of the two selected literary texts.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

To deliver the desired results in the form of answering the research questions posed in 1.3, this study is presented in four chapters. Chapter One introduces the study by providing the background to the study, its aims, research questions and the rationale for embarking on the study. This chapter also provides a detailed outline of the theoretical and conceptual framework employed in the study as well as a review of the literature related to concepts 'home' and 'displacement' as themes in postcolonial literature.

In Chapter Two, the study analyses the novel *Coconut*, in terms of the themes of displacement and home. The chapter interrogates the meaning of the imagined home in the text, and how the physical and cultural displacement affects the characters in the novel. This chapter argues that the characters' identities are shaped by the socialisation

they receive at home, and that without the knowledge of who they are, their heritage and cultural practices, they constantly interrogate themselves in search of their identities.

Chapter Three analyses the novel, *We Need New Names,* in order to find out how the author represents home and displacement. The chapter also explores the significance of home and the impact of displacement on the characters. The chapter contends that home is an intersection of the past, present and future; a place of constant longing, instability and a source of displacement – a lost paradise. It also argues that the host countries in which migrants settle in search of better life opportunities are a constant reminder of their not being at home, as they fail to acclimatise to their new environments.

Chapter Four provides a conclusion that presents the study's findings as per the analysis of the primary texts in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. This chapter also evaluates the extent to which the discussion of the selected primary texts addressed the research questions presented in Chapter One of the study. The chapter also provides recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO: HOME AND DISPLACEMENT IN *COCONUT*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One introduced the study by outlining its aims, research questions and the rationale for embarking on the study. Chapter One also provided an overview of postcolonial theory and how it is used to critique the concepts of home and displacement in postcolonial literature. Furthermore, the chapter reviewed some of the literature relevant to this study and delineated the contributions of the current study and its position within the body of existing scholarship on the topic chosen for the study. This chapter analyses South African author, Kopano Matlwa's novel, *Coconut* (2007), and argues that the characters' interaction with the places they call home is distorted by the legacies of apartheid, which include economic and social inequalities, and racial stereotyping. The argument in this chapter also contends that although Matlwa's characters do not migrate outside the borders of their home country like those in Bulawayo's novel (see the discussion in Chapter Three), they are nonetheless alienated from the spaces they call home because they struggle to define themselves and to relate to their environment. In other words, the characters in *Coconut* experience displacement and cultural dislocation within the borders of their own home country as if they were in the diaspora. Furthermore, this chapter also argues that the identities of the characters in Matlwa's text are shaped by the socialisation they receive, their cultural heritage as well as their experiences in the spaces that they call home. The chapter concludes that Matlwa also imagines the home space as an extension of the community and a site that supports and legitimises men's domination over women.

2.2 HOME AND DISPLACEMENT IN *COCONUT*

Coconut is a two-part narrative text set in post-apartheid South Africa that focuses on the lives of two young, black female protagonists, Ofilwe and Fikile. The first part of the novel is preoccupied with Ofilwe Tlou, whose family is well off and can afford her and her brother, Tshepo, opportunities and a lifestyle that were once only enjoyed by the white group of the society during the apartheid era. The Tlou family lives in the suburbs in a gated complex, their children attend Model C schools (schools that were previously

reserved for only white learners during the apartheid era, which divided the nation and its spaces according to race) and they shop in the malls that were once reserved for white people. As a result, Ofilwe has white friends and classmates, and speaks English most of the time, at the expense of her own first language.

The second part of the novel is narrated by Fikile Twala, who lives in a shack in a township and earns a living as a waitress at a restaurant in the suburbs. The character of Fikile captures the plight of an individual and a family that has not been privileged enough to attain the opportunities Ofilwe's family have. Fikile experiences self-displacement due to her dislike of the place she calls home because she believes that she belongs elsewhere. The township Fikile lives in is a space characterised by poor transport, educational and economic infrastructures. Although the novel is set in post-apartheid South Africa, Fikile's home and community continue to reflect the legacy of apartheid, which Gibson (2003:117) describes as follows: "The legacy of apartheid is a legacy of inequality – economic inequality, social inequality, and political inequality – and especially the unequal evolution of South Africa's political culture." Thus, although Fikile lives in a South Africa where apartheid laws have been officially abolished, as a black person, her experiences in life continue to be negatively affected by the legacy of this system.

From the very beginning, Fikile feels "unhomed" and her situation can be best explained in terms of Bhabha's (1992) already mentioned notion of the "unhomely", which connotes feelings of alienation and unfamiliarity that an individual experiences within a specific space which leave them in a state of solitude and fear. The state of alienation that individuals experience from "unhomely" spaces also leaves them feeling disconnected from social conventions, socially isolated, culturally estranged, unsafe and hopeless. Fikile's meaning of home is discussed in terms of safety, social conventions and hope for the future, and how they contribute to her feelings of displacement and the problems she encounters with regard to her identity.

Coconut also explores the theme of identity as it is shaped by the homes the characters live in. The novel uses flashbacks to reveal the characters' interior and exterior feelings, as well as background information about their lives and events that have shaped their

experiences and contributed to their displacement and unbelonging. In literature, flashbacks are devices used to introduce the reader to the experiences that characters have gone through before getting to where they are. Bridgeman (2007:57) notes that "narrative texts employ flashback … as a matter of course, in order to fill in the past history of protagonists while avoiding a lengthy introduction or in order to reveal new facts". This means that the reader is only able to make sense of where the character has been and how they got to where they are, through the information the character introduces when they look back into their lives. Flashbacks are thus an important literary device in *Coconut*, as they bridge the characters' experiences in the past and their encounters in the present. For example, Ofilwe uses flashbacks to narrate her curiosity about the history of her people's beliefs before they converted to Anglicanism:

> "Mama, what did we believe in before the missionaries came?"
>
> "*Badimo*."
>
> "*Badimo*?"
>
> "Yes, Ofilwe, *Badimo*."
>
> "*Badimo* and what else? What else did we believe Mama?"
>
> "Just *Badimo*, Ofilwe."
>
> "But surely we had our own traditional rites, a name for our God, a form of worship? Whatever happened to that?" (9)

Through this memory, Ofilwe connects her history and that of her family to the present, where she finds herself in the Anglican church: a church whose history she neither knows nor understands, and whose name she cannot explain. She acknowledges that she comes to this church because it is the only source of spirituality she has learnt to know since a very young age when her family moved to the urban areas. Ofilwe's flashbacks to her journey into the present-day young lady she is informs the reader that as a source of the core being of her identity, religion and spirituality are some of the important elements of her life that she does not know much about. Flashbacks, as observed by

Mafela (1997:127), are a "technique mostly used by authors to supply background information of characters and events. The author waits until things are moving and then goes back to fill in the necessary background information". For the characters in *Coconut,* the act of looking back at events that shaped their lives, specifically those that inspired their perception of and attitude towards the spaces that contribute to them feeling displaced, helps the reader understand them better. Through their accounts, Matlwa's protagonists vent their frustrations about how the world around them does not seem to understand them and the challenges they are dealing with daily; feelings and experiences of displacement and unbelonging; identity conflicts and abuse. Although Ofilwe and Fikile (the two main characters in *Coconut*) are from different worlds in terms of their upbringing, family experience and education, they have challenges in forging and negotiating their identities in post-apartheid South Africa and struggle with belonging in the respective spaces they call home. As a result, they find themselves displaced on more than one occasion in the text.

Matlwa tackles the themes of home and displacement by looking at the experiences of the main characters in the spaces they call home. For Ofilwe, displacement is experienced when she struggles to fit in with her new community after she and her family migrate from their old home in Mabopane to the gated Little Valley Estate in the suburbs, a community that was formerly reserved for white people under apartheid. As Ofilwe notes, the move provides her family with the opportunity to access better education and business opportunities:

> Our family of four – Mama, Daddy, Tshepo and I – has been coming to St. Francis Anglican Church ever since we moved from a vaguely remembered Mabopane to Little Valley Country Estate. Our new home was closer to my father's Sandton City offices and Tshepo's preparatory school. I was to begin nursery school that year and Tshepo grade one, although he should have been in grade two but was held back a year, because he did not speak English as well as his new, elite, all-boys' school would have liked. (6)

The movement of the Tlous from Mabopane to Little Valley Estate has to be understood in the context of apartheid's segregationist laws, which divided space and how it was occupied according to race. These racial divisions and segregations were done to fulfil, "the apartheid system['s] desire … [for] unambiguous racial classification" (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010:24). This means that there were places, such as the townships and rural areas that were especially designated for non-white people, while the urban areas and towns were reserved for people who are white. This resulted in unequal distribution of services, with urban areas getting better amenities because apartheid logic deemed white people superior to blacks, whom it condemned to live in filthy environments and small houses. Through this arbitrary division of space according to racial binaries, apartheid did not only ignore the cultural and racial diversity of the country, but also "institutionalized whiteness as a racial and political construct of mechanical perfection" (Griffiths & Prozesky, 2010:24).

Although the movement to Little Valley Estate provides the Tlous with opportunities they could not previously access in Mabopane, they soon discover that they do not entirely live comfortably in their new community and home as it is an "alien" place that constantly forces them to question themselves, their values and norms, and to conform to new customs and standards of the white community surrounding them. For example, the Tlous' attempt to hold a thanksgiving ceremony to appease their ancestors does not end as planned because their neighbours report them to the security guards for contravening the Little Valley Estate rules:

> Tshepo was thus the one who received the letter of warning from the two security guards that explained that the couple in No. 2042 behind us had alerted them that we were sacrificing animals after they spotted a chicken hung up on our washing line. The letter warned that we were liable to be heavily fined because we had breached rules no. 12.3 and 15.1 in the Little Valley Country Estate Code of Conduct Handbook (73).

The security guards visit the Tlous' home because they believe that they have contravened the rules of the gated complex they stay in by slaughtering animals. While

to the Tlous, the act has cultural significance, as it is a sacrifice to their ancestors, their white neighbours see it as animal cruelty. The fine imposed on the family for hanging the chicken on the line metaphorically suggests that staying within the white community comes at a price and, as blacks, the family has to come to terms with the fact that, in their new home, they cannot practise certain cultural and spiritual beliefs that define them and give them their identities.

To appreciate the significance and meaning of home for Ofilwe, it is important to refer to Said's (2001) argument that through movement from one place to another, one can better explain and compare experiences of the places they call home using a past and present lens. Said (2001:186) observes that: "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal". With the change of space, changes of notions of language, culture, knowledge, values, conceptions and interaction often follow, and perceptions become new meanings of the place called home. True to Said's (2001) words, Matlwa paints Ofilwe's experiences of struggles of belonging and relating to those around her following her family's move to Little Valley Estate, as she realises that almost everything she believed and knew in terms of culture, values and language, is constantly questioned by those around her new space. She has become conscious of the fact that the people she interacts with in her new community do not treat her as they treat her white friends. For instance, her pronunciation of words is repeatedly "corrected" by her white friend, Belinda, each time they engage in a conversation:

> *"Say 'uh-vin' Fifi. You bake a cake in an 'uh-vin', not 'oh-vin', 'uh-vin'."*
>
> *"This is boring, Belinda, let's see who can climb the highest up that tree." "No, Fifi! You have to learn how to speak properly."*
>
> *"I can speak properly." "No you can't, Fifi. Do you want to be laughed at again? Come now. Say 'uhvin.'" "Uuh-vin."*
>
> *"Good. Now say 'b-ird.' Not 'b-erd', but 'b-ird'* (29)

The above scene illustrates that Belinda perceives Ofilwe's pronunciation of words as "incorrect", and thus she feels obliged to teach her the "correct" pronunciation. Although this mini-lesson leaves Ofilwe unhappy, she fails to express her unhappiness at the time, only to lament at a later stage when she and Belinda had a fight. Ofilwe continues to struggle with language as she also comes to the realisation that she has minimal knowledge of her mother tongue, Sepedi, and starts making attempts to learn. She acknowledges, "How foolish [she] must have looked (59)" during a gathering with Tshepo and his friends, that she was just "sitting there silently with not a thing to share" (59) about her language and culture. Ofilwe decides to learn with every opportunity that comes her way:

> I decided not so long ago to take it a word at a time. The plan was that in every spoken sentence I would try to use a single word of Sepedi. Just like an athlete, I would gradually increase the workload until eventually I would be strong and fluent (59).

Nonetheless, this exercise proves to be difficult as no one pays attention to her, or even tries to help her. Ofilwe then finds herself in the middle of two worlds that neither embrace nor accept her: the world of the Western-influenced community and that of the African-influenced community, both in which she does not feel at home. She struggles to fit in when she is with her English-speaking friends due to her accent and, at the same time, she finds it difficult to partake in conversation with those who speak Sepedi. She has always believed that speaking English would enhance her status in society, and as a result, she looks down on her family members who speak Sepedi because she thinks they cannot teach her anything:

> *It is because I am smart and speak perfect English. That is why people treat me differently. I knew from a very young age that Sepedi would not take me far. Not a chance! I observed my surroundings and noted that all those who were lawyers, doctors and accountants, all the movie stars that wore beautiful*

> *dresses, all the singers that drove fancy cars and all my friends who owned the latest clothing, did not speak the language that bounced berserkly from Koko to Tshepo to Malome Arthur to Mama and back to Koko again. I did not care if I could not catch it. I spoke the TV language; the one Daddy spoke at work, the one Mama never could get right, the one that spoke of sweet success* (38).

While Ofilwe fully embraces the English language because of the opportunities it opens up for her, she shuns her home language, Sepedi, because she believes it does not enable her advancement in society. It is clear from the above quotation that Ofilwe's sense of displacement and unbelonging started from the time she began to view herself as superior to her extended family members because she speaks English. Just like Belinda mocks her accent and pronunciation, Ofilwe looks down on her cousins because they do not speak English:

> How can I possibly listen to those who try to convince me otherwise? What has Sepedi ever done for them? Look at those sorrowful cousins of mine who think a brick is a toy. Look at me. Even the old people know I am special. At family reunions they do not allow me to dish up for myself. "Hayi!" they shout. "Sit down, Ofilwe." They scold my cousins for being so thoughtless. "Get up and dish out for Ofilwe, Lebogang!" They smile at me and say "You, our child, must save all your strength for your books." Do you see, always tell my cousins that they must not despair, as soon as my schooling is over, I will come back and teach them English and then they will be special too (36).

One could also argue that Ofilwe's extended family fuelled her views of the role of the English language in one's life through encouraging her to read books written in English and speak the language. Ngugi (2009) highlights how language can be a hindrance in the formation of identity:

> The problem of language and memory presents itself differently for the writers of the diaspora and of the continent. In the diaspora, the question is this: how

> you raise buried memory from the grave when the means of raising it are themselves buried in the grave or suffocated to the level of whispering ghosts (42).

Through Ofilwe's constant struggles with language in the text, Matlwa shows how language constitutes a form of displacement. The importance of language in the construction of identity is further highlighted by Ngugi (2009:40-41) when he observes that "memory and consciousness are inseparable... [and that] language is the means of memory, or, following Walter Benjamin, it is the medium of memory".

For Ngugi (2009), language is the means through which we remember and recollect the past; hence, it is also critical in affirming one's roots, sense of being and belonging. Conversely, a loss of language results in a loss of memory and identity, which leaves displaced individuals like Ofilwe feeling even more alienated because, among other things, they have to rely on language to integrate themselves into their new communities. A lack of knowledge of the language used in the places they find themselves in, leaves the displaced at crossroads and traumatised by the constant struggle to fit in.

According to Jones (2004:17), family and community are human organisms that are the bedrock of any society. They provide the sustenance, values, direction and protection that make it possible for individuals who live in a defined location to prosper and thrive singularly and collectively. This means that the family and the community within which individuals find themselves are instrumental in their decision making, values, norms and other ways that contribute to how their lives pan out, as they contribute to their process of socialisation. Jones (2004:17) defines a community as:

> … the social structure that mediates between the individual resident and the state and private elites, guiding social transactions between these different worlds to advance and protect the interests and needs of individuals and groups within neighbourhoods or local communities.

The community, as a group of people who share common interests, cultures, norms and other values is an extension of our homes and families. This is because, as Chen (2015:75) argues,

> The home not only provides a physical and imagined space in which prescribed relationships among members are established, but also produces a synergetic force that integrates contributions of family members and functions to extend the connection of the home and the society, nation, nature, and the supernatural. This relational orientation opens up the potentiality of historical continuity and the possibility of future development of the home in human society.

Matlwa imagines the community as an extension of one's identity (and therefore an important element of home) in order to show that both public and private spaces shape the characters' identities and their relations with the society around them. Through participation in shared values, culture and norms, one is socialised into being a member of society and, in that way, they forge an identity that is rooted in the ethos of that society. However, as the novel demonstrates, the relationships the characters have with their communities do not positively contribute to the characters' sense of identity, as the wider South African space in which these communities are located constantly reminds them of their skin colour, language and cultural differences. For instance, the community Ofilwe finds herself in unsettles her because it is fraught with prejudices, such as racism, which leave her feeling rejected. In particular, her school community as the community that she interacts with most, rejects her, as even those who are black like her, look down on her based on her place of origin – Mabopane. Ofilwe's first recollection of such alienating treatment from her school community is when she was asked about where she was born. When she said 'Johannesburg', a fellow black girl in her class, Zama, accused her of lying and said she was "born in a stinky shack" (14). Matlwa uses this incident to set the mood for how Ofilwe is perceived by those around her. Zama is of the view that, just because Ofilwe was not born in the urban area of Little Valley Country Estate, she was born in a shack. As a home, "a stinky shack" not only suggests that Ofilwe was born poor, but also points to the already mentioned apartheid politics, which condemned blacks to live in filthy

townships that lacked proper housing facilities. Thus, Zama's association of the township of Mabopane where Ofilwe was born is stereotypical, as much as it is Matlwa's way of capturing the psychological damage the apartheid system has caused for the South Africans. Stereotyping happens when an individual perceives another individual from a point of categorising and concluding that they do certain things based on race, gender, beliefs, cultural background and so on. As a community, the school that Ofilwe attends does not accept her for who she is, and in subtle ways, the people who are supposed to make her feel at home and belong, such as Zama, make her feel out of place and unaccepted. Zama's stereotyping attitude is echoed differently in another incident where Stuart Simons (one of Fikile's classmates), upon seeing the brand-new Mercedes-Benz that Ofilwe's father is driving, concludes that the car was a proceed of crime: "Nice wheels, Ofilwe, who did your father hijack this one from?" (15)

Stuart's comment shows that he does not believe that Ofilwe's father can afford to buy a fancy car, instead, he looks at him with racial prejudice; because he is a black man, he cannot afford to buy such a fancy car. By suggesting that Mr Tlou highjacked the car, Stuart replays the apartheid era racial stereotypes and negative images, which invariantly insisted that the black other could only realise success through criminal activities.

Stuart's negative construction of black people can be further explained in terms of Fiske and Neuberg's (1990:4) observation that,

> perceivers initially categorize others immediately upon encountering information sufficient for cueing a meaningful social category. This information may be in the form of a physical feature (e.g., skin color, clothing, hair style), a verbalized or written category label (e.g., "Melissa is a banker"), a configuration of category-consistent attributes that cue a label in the memory (e.g., young, male, dishevelled, defiant expression, carries a knife), or some other forms of information that becomes accessible concurrently with the initial perception of the target individual.

Fiske and Neuberg's (1990) observation above suggests that stereotyping pushes the agenda of perception, regardless of whether it is factual or not, and people belonging to

a particular group are assumed to share the same traits and behaviour because of being members of that specific group. Furthermore, as Fiske and Neuberg (1990) indicate, the categorisation of others often has negative connotations, which are embedded in the memory and are automatically attached to the picture of the person being stereotyped. Thus, the reality of the victims of stereotyping is overshadowed by the perception of their gender, skin colour or physical characteristics, and may result in the wrong perception of the victims.

Interestingly, Fikile, another protagonist in the text, like Stuart Simons, also stereotypes black people. Unlike Ofilwe, who is desperate to be accepted in the community that extends as her home, Fikile despises and distances herself from the township community that she lives in because she does not regard it as her home. She has a deep-seated hatred for her black community, which started when she was young and, later in life, this is manifested, among other things, by how she describes black people in negative images, which repeat the racial prejudices of the bygone apartheid era. For instance, she describes how one day, a man seated next to her on the train, tried to hold a conversation with her as follows:

> I do not look at this man, this man who is a thief like all the other men in this train, and probably an alcoholic and a rapist too. I shift back in my seat, straighten up my back, raise my magazine so it is closer to my eyes and begin to hum lightly, flipping through the pages, while working hard to keep the 'piss' off look on my face (133).

Fikile's attitude towards the black community in which she lives can be explained in terms of Fanon's argument in his book *Black Skin White Mask* (1952), where he observes that a person's identity and cultural affiliation are determined by their skin colour. In his work, Fanon (1952) further argues that in a colonial context, a "normal black child, having grown up with a normal family, will become abnormal at the slightest contact with the white world" (121-2). This process occurs when black people are exposed to white people and their ways of living, and then aspire and work towards being assimilated in the white culture. As part of the struggle to be accepted as white, they denounce their own already learnt

experiences, culture, values and norms. This means that an encounter with the westernisation of things has a great ability to alter one's viewpoint about themselves and the environment around them. This is the case with Fikile: through her interaction with white people and reading magazines that put western values on a pedestal while denigrating African values, she has become obsessed with becoming white so much that she hates herself, but she is not aware.

Fikile suffers from an inferiority complex and to deal with the problem, she wears a mask that Fanon describes in his *Black Skin White Mask*. As Fanon (1952) observes, Fikile has "two ways of experiencing the problem" of inferiority complex: "'Either [she] ask[s] people not to pay attention to the colour of [her] skin; or else, on the contrary, [she] want[s] people to notice it" (174). Fikile desires that people notice her skin because she hopes that since she carries herself like white people, imitating their accent and manners, those who see her as black will somehow disregard her colour and embrace her as part of the western community. The same applies to when she yearns for people to notice her abilities to act white and not according to her skin colour because to her, her skin colour does not matter, what matters is that she attains "Project Infinity", a plan she mapped out to make sure that she achieves her goal of becoming white, regardless of the cost. What Fikile does not realise is that she is alienating herself from her black community which she looks down upon while on her quest to become a part of the white community, the latter rejects her. The uncanny result is that she ends up as a displaced other, who does not belong to any community. Fikile also normalised and internalised the view that associates the colour of the skin with a certain behaviour because she generally views black people as destructive:

> … just look at how scummy the townships are. Have you ever seen any white suburb looking so despicable? In some townships it is difficult to differentiate the yards from the garbage heaps. It really is a disgrace (134-135).

Because Fikile considers herself above the people in her community, she does not "feel at home" and as a result, she determined herself "to be white" (135) and left her

community. Fikile has been psychologically damaged by apartheid because she associates whiteness with beauty and virtue while she connects blackness with ugliness and dishonesty. In Spencer's (2009) view, Fikile is a coconut to the extent that she "betrays … [her] African culture by gravitating towards the social expectations of a hegemonic westernized culture" (68). As already highlighted, she makes a conscious decision to learn and imitate western values and cultural practices while looking down on her own values.

For Fikile, the home that she shares with her uncle is just a "hole" (109) that leaves her "vulnerable to the many monsters of the night" (109). The reference to a hole connotes the fact that the space that she lives in is too small and does not offer her privacy and intimacy – that is why she expresses joy at the thought of leaving it. Every morning, Fikile exclaims that "I am glad it is time again to leave this hole" (109). Fikile's home also constantly reminds her of the sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of her uncle:

> I'd be sitting on the kitchen floor still in my uniform writing out my mathematics or practicing my English readings when I would hear him dragging his feet through the dirt past the Tshabalala's house to our one-bedroom hovel at the end of the Tshabalala's garden … so I would close my books, clear the floor and stand facing the front door so I could see what kind of expression he had on his face when he walked in. And if it was that sorry look … that sorry, pathetic 'Oh, woe is me' look, then I would know that tonight would be one of those nights when it would happen (112).

This sexual abuse might also be another reason Fikile despises her community at large. In other words, her traumatic experiences make her conflate the private space of the home she shares with her uncle and the extended community as a site of trauma. Salmona (2013) notes that the memory of a traumatic experience, such as abuse, leaves the victim feeling alienated, which seems to be the case for Fikile. In her own words, Salmona (2013:169) observes that:

> As long as it remains non-representable and non-verbalized, the 'ghost' memory of violence constantly haunts the psyche of the traumatized victim … the victim has the impression of being double, even triple, oscillating continuously between the most bleak depression and the urge to move mountains.

Fikile's traumatic experiences in her home leave her feeling vulnerable in as much as they trigger her desire for a different life elsewhere, where she can start afresh and leave her past behind. By dissociating herself from her home and everyone in her community, she also believes she is freeing herself from the pressure of forging relationships:

> … what is the point? I will not be living in this dingy old township forever, so why build relationships with people I have no intention of ever seeing again? I want nothing to do with this dirt. Not ever. Not ever in my life again. And I think the people here at the station know it. That's why the Pick n Pay ladies look at me the way they do (129).

Fikile is displaced in the sense that she is socially and culturally out of place; completely out of sync with the home space and community from which her identity is forged. However, while her dissociation with both home and community can be attributed to her ordeal, it is also clear that it is a result of the magazines that she reads, which give her an idealised notion of home. When she was young, she preferred spending her time indoors with her grandmother (rather than playing outside with her peers), reading a lot of magazines as she acknowledges that she "lived in those magazines, and the more [she] read, the more assured [she] was that the life in pages was the one [she] was born to live" (167). Fikile's bold assertion that she was born to live the life represented on the pages of these magazines shows that she is determined to do whatever it takes to realise this dream.

Her desire to become white is similar to that of Modisane in his autobiography, *Blame Me on History* (1986), where he writes that the state of being white goes beyond the physical manifestation of the skin colour:

> I want acceptance in the country of my birth, and in some corner of the darkened room I whisper the real desire: I want to be accepted into white society. I want to listen to Rachmaninov, to Beethoven, Bartok and Stravinsky; I want to talk about drama, philosophy and social psychology; I want to look at the paintings and feel my soul touched by Lautrec, Klee and Miro; I want to find a nobler design, a larger truth of living in literature. These things are important to me, they are the enjoyment of a pleasure I want to share (218).

Modisane's dream is comparable to Fikile's as they both long to immerse themselves in the western culture and experience the life they believe is only the preserve of white people. However, unlike Fikile, Modisane is aware of the problems associated with belonging and rejection, as he admits that he is "the eternal alien between two worlds" (1986:218). He further explains the phenomenon of his in-betweenness as follows:

> There is a resentment – almost as deep-rooted as the prejudice itself – against the educated African, not so much because he is allegedly cheeky, but that he fails to conform to the stereotype image of the black man sanctified and cherished with jealous intensity by the white man; such a native must-as a desperate necessity-be humiliated into sub- mission. The educated African is resented equally by the blacks because he speaks English, which is one of the symbols of white supremacy, he is resentfully called a Situation, something not belonging to either but tactfully situated between white oppression and black rebellion (1986:94).

In Modisane's view, the dilemma of black people who seek to live outside the racial stereotypes associated with their skin colour is that they are shunned by fellow black people and rejected by white people who continue to oppress them. Fikile though, does not realise that her dream of immersing herself in the white world, will alienate her and leave her feeling like the ''situation'' that Modisane describes.

2.3 HOME AS A PLACE OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND PATRIARCHAL DOMINATION

In *Coconut*, Matlwa presents the Tlou household as a place that is dominated by patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. Throughout the novel, Ofilwe's father is portrayed as a successful person, who has control over how the family should conduct itself, from deciding which career path Tshepo should take, to determining who Ofilwe should befriend. According to Kimmel (2013:184), hegemonic masculinity is associated with characteristics such as "being strong, successful, capable, reliable … [and] in control". This definition also implies that "being a man means 'not being like women'" (Kimmel, 2013:185) as stereotypical patriarchal discourses associate women with negative traits such as weakness and unreliability. To this end, hegemonic masculinities are seen as ''traditional'' forms of masculinity that are generally defined in many cultures by ''machismo, domination of women, aggressive-ness and predatory sexual behaviour'' (Van der Walt, 2019:20). To affirm their masculinity, the dominating men often resort to physical and emotional abuse of their subordinates. In the case of Matlwa's *Coconut*, hegemonic masculinity is mostly manifested through controlling men, such as Ofilwe's father, who dominate women and children through acts of sexual, verbal and financial abuse.

Matlwa shows that Ofilwe's father, the dominating male figure in the first part of the text, strives to be "louder" than the women around him and to be the only one whose word is final. His relationship with his wife is not that of equals as he, among other things, uses his financial power and superior education, to assert control over her. For example, Ofilwe's mother is reminded of her little education when she tries to argue with her husband: "You could not even finish high school Gemina" (2007:81). This utterance not only belittles Ofilwe's mother, but it also makes her feel unimportant. However, despite not having finished school, Ofilwe's mother was previously employed as a nurse (an indication that she is a hard worker and critical thinker) until her husband stopped her from working, thereby creating a situation where he could bully and dominate her as she became financially dependent on him. As Ofilwe notes, "when daddy decided two or three years ago, that nursing was too demanding for his apparently overworked wife, they

agreed he would give her a weekly allowance to cover her daily expenses" (50).The fact that ''daddy decided'' is important because on the one hand, it foregrounds the power and control John has over his wife and on the other, it captures the wife's powerlessness. The wife's powerlessness is underlined by the fact that she is not allowed to make decisions regarding her own career. By making her leave her job, John becomes the only source of income within the family, an act that takes away Gemina's financial freedom. The ensuing lack of financial freedom leaves Gemina vulnerable and confined to the domestic space and therefore unable to resist her husband's bullying. Through the experiences of Ofilwe's mother, Matlwa shows that patriarchy expects women to be uneducated housewives who take care of their husbands as Gemina now 'wakes up at 4.30am every morning' (79) to cook samp and beans for her husband's breakfast as 'nothing else fills his stomach quite the same' (79), and whose voices do not matter as they are punished for having opinions that differ from those of men, which in turn renders them psychologically displaced. From the hegemonic masculine point of view, characters like Ofilwe's mother are seen as weak, unsuccessful, incapable, unreliable and not in control. Characters like John on the other hand, are seen as financially capable, more important, and in charge.

Ofilwe's father does not only want to dominate and ignore his wife's opinions, but he also cheats on her. Matlwa shows that some women in the society are raised and socialised to support and maintain oppressive traditions through the character of Ofilwe's grandmother who chastises her daughter for complaining about her husband's cheating. Ofilwe's grandmother sees her daughter as "stupid" for wanting to leave the luxuries her husband provides her with. Through encouraging Ofilwe's mother to stay in her marriage and ignore her husband's infidelity, Ofilwe's grandmother acts as an accomplice in the oppression of her daughter. To her, the benefits that come with being economically advantaged by virtue of being married to a well-off man outweigh the pain and frustrations her daughter experiences in her marriage.

By observing her parents and eavesdropping on her mother's conversation with her grandmother, Ofilwe realises that her home is a site of trauma and misery for her mother because of her father's actions, and that she is even thinking about getting a divorce:

> She was crying, Mama never cries. Koko was on the other end … However, this conversation was different. Koko was speaking softly and sternly with Mama. Koko said that Mama needed to stop acting like a spoilt child, Koko said that John-Daddy-was a man and that men do these things with other women, but that does not mean he does not care for Mama. Koko said that Mama lives a life that many women from where she comes from can only dream of and that she cannot jeopardise that by 'this crazy talk of divorce' (2007:12).

The fact that Koko chastises Ofilwe's mother is important because it shows that the Tlou home is a space characterised by patriarchal oppression. The stance that Ofilwe's grandmother takes, which promotes the oppression that Ofilwe's mother suffers, confirms the fundamentals of Marxist feminism, which, according to Tong (2009:96), "…regard classism rather than sexism as the fundamental cause of women's oppression…". By focusing on Ofilwe's mother's class and economic status rather than her individual standing in the society as a woman who hurts and needs wounds healed, Ofilwe's grandmother exacerbates her daughter's pain as she puts economic factors above her own daughter's wellbeing. Koko fails to consider the possibility of her daughter's previous work experience as something that could help her if she gets divorced, but looks at her daughter's husband as the only means to her survival. One can argue that she sacrifices her own daughter for the material benefits that come with being married, and in the process, abetting patriarchal oppression of women.

Ofilwe's grandmother adopts this stance because she comes from a generation where marriage meant everything and being married to an economically well-off husband commanded respect in the community. She discourages her daughter from leaving her husband even though she is clearly in distress, because she fears she will lose the respect she has among her peers. Hence, culture plays a significant role in the preservation of male domination.

As Gaidzanwa (2003) posits, in the African culture, marriage and children have been perceived as a measure of success and worth for generations. For Gaidzanwa (2003:7):

> Marriages of African women have inadvertently contributed to attempts to lock African women into restricted domestic roles in colonial and post-colonial Africa, and this specific construction of African women attempts to lock them into domesticity as if this is an uncomplicated, liberating and problem-free construction of African womanhood.

Gaidzanwa's (2003) observation is important because it highlights how in some African cultures, the institution of marriage has disadvantages for women because their male partners tend to dominate the home space. Her observation further shows how, through the processes of socialisation, some African women further the interests of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity by dismissing women's pleas to leave their marriages. Ofilwe's grandmother's refusal to support her daughter, who intends to move out of her unhappy marriage, leaves the latter feeling helpless, unhappy and oppressed in her home.

Ofilwe's father's dominance of the home space is also seen in how he seeks to control his children – Tshepo and Ofilwe. For example, when Tshepo decides to pursue his studies in African Literature and Languages in defiance of his father's advice that he must study Actuarial Sciences, the father labels him "a lazy little bugger" (80), who is "a disgrace to our name" (80). Likewise, when Ofilwe decides to end her friendship with Belinda, her father again tries to impose his opinion by saying that Ofilwe's friendship with Belinda must be fixed, and in the process ignoring his wife's view that ending the friendship was good for Ofilwe. Ofilwe's father's dominance in the home space affirms Morrell's (1998:608) observation that:

> Hegemonic masculinity does not only oppress women but in addition to oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity silences and subordinates other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy.

Morrell's (1998) view is that those in power look down on those they know do not hold as much power as them, regardless of gender, race and social standing. This means that those who find themselves oppressed by hegemonic masculinity will always experience

the oppression, for as long as they remain subordinates. The devastating effects of such oppression are evident on characters such as Tshepo and Ofilwe. For instance, because of the tension created by his father's domination, Tshepo has decided to distance himself from the family (82) in order to avoid conflict. The reader is also alerted to the fact that Tshepo has taken to creative writing as a means to voice his frustrations. On the occasions that Tshepo is at home, he "hides" on the second floor of the house (82) as this is the only space in his home, where he feels safe and able to recreate his own world.

Ofilwe, despite her young age, also registers the trauma caused by her father's domination when she laments the fact that "normal" conversations no longer exist between her parents as their angry exchanges always "fly through the innocent and exposed walls into my room making me awake… (81)". The tension stemming from these disputes also affects her relationship with her brother, Tshepo and her parents. Ofilwe notices how overtime, Tshepo "lacks opinion about anything, and then months later he ceased speaking altogether" (83). As a result, Ofilwe is now unable to spend time with him as she used to do in the past. Thus, her father's domination of the home space has placed a wedge between herself and her brother, who was "her only company and [she] his" (90). She further expresses how without Tshepo, she cannot "think of anything worthwhile to do" (90). It is apparent that her brother's absence has created a void, which can potentially lead her to depression. Ofilwe's sadness is compounded by the fact that she also notices that her mother, like Tshepo, is no longer as open and chatty as she used to be (55). It can therefore be concluded that Gemina and her children have been rendered voiceless by the oppression that they experience at the hands of the domineering patriarch of the family. However, the novel shows that their "silence" does not necessarily mean that they have acquiesced to the power of the dominant patriarch as it enables them to retreat to alternative spaces that the patriarchy have no power to control. For example, Tshepo's already mentioned dependence on his writing enables him to ''speak…those things that people are afraid to hear" (80). Thus, through creative writing, he gets an opportunity to express his thoughts and to be heard. Likewise, his silence and disappearance into his room can also be regarded as a strategy through which he rebels against being dominated and dictated to both within his home and the community at large. Despite these strategies, it is apparent that the control John has over

his family affects the different family members in negative ways that leave them battling various psychological problems.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Matlwa successfully uses the characters of Fikile and Ofilwe to portray the extent to which black people in South Africa experience displacement in their quest to find better living conditions and opportunities in upper-social spaces dominated by a different race, especially white people. While Ofilwe tries to be absorbed into the cultural traditions of the upper-class community, she does not realise that this comes with alienation, as she continuously struggles to fit in. Although her family is materially rich, the psychological effects of not being accepted by white people bother her and she ends up trying to go back to her roots, even though it proves to be difficult. Fikile's efforts to be assimilated into the western culture estrange her from her home community, while at the same time, she is not accepted by the white community which she admires. Matlwa's characters affirm Shih's (2010:31) view that, "identity mainly involves belongingness through which people share fixed and collective categories with others, such as kinship, homeland, biological, or cultural heritage; sameness and difference". This means that one cannot know who they are without making reference to the home that birthed and socialised them, their relatives and their beliefs as these distinguish them from others. As Gilroy (2000) asserts, identity is "an ongoing process of self-making and social interaction" (103). This assertion highlights that identity is a continuous process that people employ to collectively function within a society and that people use as a guide to action. This is true of Matlwa's characters who, as demonstrated in this chapter, constantly battle with their identities in their everyday interactions with those around them and the places they call home. The next chapter analyses the themes of home and displacement as they are represented in NoViolet Bulawayo's novel, *We Need New Names*.

CHAPTER THREE: HOME AND DISPLACEMENT IN *WE NEED NEW NAMES*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the strategies that Kopano Matlwa uses to inscribe home and the challenges it represents to the characters, especially the two protagonists, Ofilwe and Fikile, as they try to navigate their ways in life. The chapter also highlighted that the concept of “home” is represented through various elements, such as language, community, hope and identity. The discussion of home and displacement as they are explored in *Coconut*, also demonstrated that these concepts affect the characters’ definitions of the self as well as their perceptions of the world around them and how they relate to it. The chapter further argued that Matlwa’s characters’ sense of home is shaped by their past and present encounters.

This chapter examines how Zimbabwean author, NoViolet Bulawayo, inscribes the concepts of home and displacement in her novel, *We Need New Names.* The discussion in this chapter argues that Bulawayo’s text imagines home as a place of collapse, where the quality of life has deteriorated under the post-independence leadership in Zimbabwe. Throughout the novel, the characters experience place displacement within the borders of their country and, as a result, they develop an urge to leave the country to go to places they believe will open doors of opportunities and freedom. Through the novel’s main character and child-narrator, Darling, the reader witnesses the journey it took for the children (Darling and her circle of friends) and those around them to arrive where they are today. The novel chronicles the nation’s history, from the “old” country before colonialism as experienced by the character portrayed by Mother of Bones, to the period when the country was colonised, then to the time when the country gained its independence (an era of hope and anticipation), and to the current time, where the country is fractured and its citizens are seen “leaving in droves” (Bulawayo, 2013:102) in search of better opportunities in foreign countries. This mass migration gives weight to Rushdie’s (1991:12) observation that “the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity”. Thus, in Rushdie’s (1991) conception, the past serves as a “home” from which people can draw their identity and

reaffirm who they are. Therefore, losing the past means foregoing a great part of who people are.

Bulawayo's text highlights that the characters experience their country – which represents their home – as a dystopic place, characterised by economic collapse, disease, poverty and displacement. As observed by Ndlovu (2016:134), the setting of the text, "… Paradise, an ironically named imaginary squatter settlement, hints at most of the issues depicted in the rest of the novel, poverty, hungry and abused children, AIDS and the condescendingly problematic attitude of the West towards African problems". However, ironic as it is, the name 'Paradise' also embodies the hope that the characters who live in the shanty town have for the future, specifically, a better life outside the characters' home country and community. Although, as already mentioned, Bulawayo's characters leave their crises-plagued home country in droves in search of better lives in foreign countries, the irony is that the diaspora would also become a site of displacement and homelessness, where they are exploited and abused; a source of insecurity where they begin to doubt their own identities. This chapter therefore argues that displacement as depicted in *We Need New Names* is associated with loss of home, resulting from moving from the original point of dwelling and ending up inhabiting an unfamiliar place either within the home country or in foreign lands, such as America. If, as already mentioned in the previous chapter, "feeling at home is associated with freedom, a sense of belonging and personal dignity, wherever and whenever these may be found and enjoyed'', the displaced characters in *We Need New Names*, do not "feel at home", as they are in "a state of cognitive and emotional dissonance" (Hout, 2006:193). According to Hout (2006), the state of cognitive and emotional dissonance is "generated by war and political/sectarian division in one's own nation or induced by physical uprootedness abroad" (193). For Darling, the protagonist in Bulawayo's novel, starting a new life in a new country, results in constant mental conflicts as she battles alienation and discomfort. She and the other migrants to America also struggle with conforming to the new rules, language, weather and everything unfamiliar to their lived experiences; as a result, they find themselves feeling out of place and displaced. Thus, Ndlovu (2016:134) notes that "Bulawayo's novel as a space of cultural articulation does not depict a free and rooted subject or a privileged migrant subject with a possibility of finding new and fulfilling ways of being." For Ndlovu

(2016), the characters in *We Need New Names* are in a perpetual dilemma, as he further argues that:

> At home, Bulawayo's subject suffers from an inordinate desire to migrate to countries perceived as offering a better livelihood. Ironically, once the subject leaves the place of origin and birth, the reader witnesses the intensification of the subject's feelings of dislocation (2016:134).

After migrating to America, Darling is introduced to a new culture; one that is neither hers nor of the new country, but a culture for the immigrants. Rushdie (1991) states that this culture is a "second tradition, quite apart from their [the immigrants] own racial history. It is the culture of and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacement, life in a minority" (20). Thus, if Darling's homeland could not nourish her dreams, America, her new home, makes it even more difficult for her to achieve these dreams, as the realities that she encounters are not what she had expected. Among other things, she struggles to fit into the American society and to hold on to her identity. Bulawayo's novel explicitly foregrounds these complex cultural spaces occupied by the migrants in order to highlight the fact that home and displacement are physical and psychological phenomena, experienced by individuals in multiple ways and at different levels.

3.2 HOME IN *WE NEED NEW NAMES*

In *We Need New Names*, the main character Darling, offers the reader details of her relationship with Paradise, the squatter camp she lives in. These descriptions, ingrained in the real-world setting of the text, hum an undertone of socioeconomic inequality, spatial ruins, child abuse and diseases. These undertones highlight the dystopian nature of the Paradise squatter camp and capture in microcosm the political and economic turmoil in Zimbabwe, Darling's home country. Sargent (2001) defines "critical dystopia" as:

> a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view

> as worse than contemporary society but … holds out hope that the dystopias can be overcome and replaced (222).

As a critical dystopian narrative, Bulawayo's text uses an imagined setting that forces the reader to contrast their experiences to that of the imagined, invented setting they are reading about. As Sargent (2001) notes, a critical dystopian text encourages readers to hope for the best out of the situation presented to them in a dystopian setting, thus fostering a better outcome perspective for the prospective future. Gordin, Tilley and Prakash (2010) hold the view that dystopia is not the opposite of utopia, but rather, "utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society" (1). In other words, a dystopian society could be experienced as a utopian society for certain members of the collective society, while, for others, it can be the opposite. This view is confirmed by the contrast between the affluent suburb, Budapest, where the houses are described as big and beautiful, and Paradise, which is made up of "tiny shack after tiny shack crammed together like hot loaves of bread" (28). Taking into consideration the view held by Gordin et al. (2010), Mzilikazi Road, the road that divides Paradise and Budapest, functions as a dividing line that separates the dystopia experienced by the people in Paradise, and the utopia that is enjoyed by the economically privileged dwellers of Budapest.

Through the re-enactment of *Operation Murambatsvina*, Bulawayo introduces the theme of loss of land and forced removals. Palmer (1977) highlights the social importance of land as follows:

> Loss of land … means losing the graves of one's fathers/mothers and the home of one's childhood; the sense of community, of the ordered pattern of nature, of the continuity and meaning of life, are destroyed. When people lose their land, there can only be deep and bitter resentment (Palmer, 1977:1).

What Palmer posits is that land represents home, history and a sense of being. Thus, being forcibly removed from a place, which is one's site of identity, psychologically

dislocates those affected. This notion is supported by Mungoshi (1972) when he observes that: “[n]othing is certain to hold you together than the land and a home, a family” (28). The land that Mungoshi (1972) refers to is the soil that feeds those who live on it, the trees that have become shelters on sunny days and ancestral appeasing spots, the graves that occupy the earth and the overall surface that smells and looks familiar and invokes the historical stories of its people. The forced removals were so traumatic to the community of Paradise that they left Darling with recurring nightmares about the incident:

> The men driving the bulldozers are laughing. I hear the adults saying, why why why, what have we done, what have we done, what have we done? Then the lorries come carrying the police with those guns and baton sticks and we run inside the houses, but it’s no use hiding because the bulldozers start bulldozing and bulldozing and we are screaming and screaming. The fathers are throwing hands in the air like women and saying angry things and kicking stones. The women are screaming the names of the children to see where we are and they are grabbing things from the houses: plates, clothes, a Bible, food, just grabbing whatever they can grab. And there is dust all over from the crumbling walls; it gets into our hair and mouths and noses and makes us cough and cough (66).

. Similar to Darling’s traumatic experience, Onai, the main character in Tagwira’s novel *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006), experiences the brutality of the police when they come to demolish a shelter in her yard:

> All Onai could think of was that their bulldozer would trample her little vegetable patch. If they torched the shack, the searing heat would wilt the vegetables. The defenceless plants were still very young and delicate. She suddenly saw splashes of red; then cornucopia of stars and black spots. Her migraine hovered, with an onslaught of pain. Her chest felt heavy with the effort of restraining her anger. One day, my chest will explode, she thought. Very coldly she said, ‘I will do it myself.’ The officer ‘starred at her, openly

> surprise. He laughed contemptuously. ‘I really think you need a man for a job like this’. She stared back at him and shouted, ‘I said I will do it myself!’ With a start, he backed away slightly. He shook his balding head, scratching the receding hairline in exasperation, and walked towards the riot police who were waiting expectantly across the road, ready to stifle any disturbances (Tagwira, 2006:142).

This scene is a graphic revisitation of the already mentioned *Operation Murambatsvina* – Operation Drive out Trash, which was carried out by the ZANU-PF government in 2005 to rid the urban spaces of slums and illegal structures. This resulted in the displacement of many people in urban areas who found their homes bulldozed to the ground. According to Nyamanhindi (2008:118), on 19 May 2005, with little if any warning at all, the Zimbabwean government embarked on this operation. The Zimbabwean government argued that the reason behind the operation was ‘to rid the country of illegal structures, crime, filthy stalls and squalor’ (Musiyiwa, 2008:65). As a result of the brutal evictions and damaging of properties performed by the operation, many people were left destitute and displaced. Chari (2008:110) states that Operation Murambatsvina was claimed to have lasted for 37 days and was officially announced as having ended on 25 June 2005. Although the operation lasted for a short period of time, as claimed, its effects have lingered longer and, as described by Darling, have left the victims traumatised. Bulawayo shows through government’s act of destroying people’s houses, that true to George’s (1999) view, the families in Darling’s community have become dispossessed by their government, and as such, disconnected from the places they call home. Due to the complexity of starting over and familiarising themselves with the new place and eventually calling it home, Darling and her community find themselves without a sense of home, which is described by Marschall (2017) as a place that “can be established through subjective, multisensory and bodily sensations such as the feel of the climate, the smells, sounds, and especially the taste of local food, but first and foremost through social participation or interaction with local relations” (147). This means that due to a lack of familiar experiences and interactions, and the forced shifting sense of home, Darling and her community must now negotiate the difference between their lost home and the current space they settle in to rebuild their homes and start life afresh.

Darling catalogues the trauma visited on her community following the loss of their homes and the pain they went through as they tried to restart their lives from scratch:

> They appeared with tin, with cardboard, with plastic, with nails and other things with which to build, and they tried to appear calm as they put up their shacks, nailing tin on tin, piece by piece, bravely looking up at the sky and trying to tell themselves and one another that even here, in this strange new place, the sky was still the same familiar blue, a sign thing would work out. But far too many appeared without the things they should have appeared with (74).

The trauma wrought by the operation is so widespread that the pain it causes is experienced communally by all members of Darling's community. This shared trauma results in a shared process of "mourning", where the community as a group laments the loss of their homes. As noted by Herman (1992:228), "as the group shares mourning, it simultaneously fosters hope for new relationships. Groups lend a kind of formality and ritual solemnity to individual grief; they help the survivor at once to pay homage to her losses in the past and to repopulate her life in the present". Darling's community's movement from one place to another to start afresh is sustained by the collective as they share resources, hope and empathy towards one another. As argued by Said (2001), through movement from one place to the other, one can better explain and compare experiences of the places they call home using a past and present lens. With the change of space, there are often follows alterations of changes in notions of language, culture, knowledge, values, conceptions and interaction, and perceptions become new meanings of they place called home. Although destabilising, it is important to note that the dispossession that Darling and her community experience also serves as an opportunity to experience a new home with its own new characteristics that may be different from the ones enjoyed previously. While Darling describes her previous demolished home as 'real' with running water, the same home did not provide her with a sense of community (where she could hear stories of women sitting under the tree plaiting each other's hair or see men sitting under the jacarandas), as in Paradise. Thus, the new environment creates an opportunity for new memories, history, smell and events associated with the place Darling

and her community now call home. This view is also expressed by Salman Rushdie in his book *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), where he uses the metaphor of broken mirrors to capture the idiosyncrasy of the migrant's double perspective, stating that the migrants' vision is incomplete as they are "obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost" (11). As the community's vision carries more than one meaning or perspective, it allows the migrants to forge new outlooks of their new and old homes. This vision, as Rushdie (1991) posits, "often results in migrants being both insiders and outsiders of their society at the same time" (19).

When Darling and her community are displaced internally in their home country after their houses are demolished, the intimacy they know that is associated with the home space is lost with their former houses. A loss that reflects the breakdown of the past, the present and the future is laid out through the conversation between two family members who converse about a missing stool that has disappeared with the ruins:

> "Woman, where is my grandfathers' black stool? I don't see it here."
>
> What, are you crazy, old man?
>
> I don't even have enough of the children's clothes and you're here talking about your dead grandfathers' stool!
> You know it was meant to stay in the family – my greatest grandfather Sindimba passed it on to his son Salile, who passed it on to his son Ngalo, who passed it on to his son Mabhada, who passed it on to me, Mzilawulandelwa, to pass on to my son Vulindlela. And now it's gone! Now what to do? ... All I'm saying is that stool was my whole history (74-75).

The above conversation foregrounds the grief that follows the loss of an item that is symbolic of cultural identity and belonging. Its loss means that the connection between various generations within this family's lineage has been severed, as the object will not be passed to the next generation. For this family, one could argue that their home may never be the same without this stool, because it is no longer possible to connect with the meanings and identities that it represented. As Terkenli (1995:325) opines "recurrent,

regular investment of meaning in a context with which people personalize and identify through some measure of control" results in what one refers to as home. Thus, the loss of the stool deprives this family from an opportunity to create meaning going forward, as the one item that connected the different generations in the family is lost in the debris.

Apart from the destruction of homes that leaves Darling and her community traumatised, Darling's dystopian country reflects a home space ravaged by diseases that end up killing people because there are no functional health systems in place. Darling's father, who had abandoned his family for many years, returns home sick and instead of being taken to the hospital, Darling's mother and Mother of Bones keep him at home in an attempt to nurse him back to health, as "there are no doctors or nurses at the hospital because they are always on strike" (95). Darling's father's condition is severe as much as it is hopeless as he is "unable to do anything, vomiting and vomiting, … and defecating on himself, and smelling like something dead in there, dead and rotting, his body a black, terrible stick; … so thin, like he eats pins and wire …" (89). The novel graphically details Darling's father's illness in order to foreground the extent to which social amenities have collapsed in Darling's home country and the trauma of this visit on children like Darling. Although Darling is still very young, she is clearly traumatised by her father's illness as she has to help her mother take care of him. She notes that, "because I have to watch Father now, like he is a baby and I am his mother, it means that when Mother and Mother of Bones are not there, I cannot play with my friends, so I have to lie to them about why" (91). The responsibility of having to take up the role of caregiver to her father at such a young age does not only leave Darling dejected, but also makes her realise that the same sickness that is making her father's skin feel like "dry wood," and his eyes "sunken" like "he has swallowed the sun" (103) also affects her mother:

> Mother's eyes are tired and her face is tired; ever since Father came she has been busy doing things for him ─ watching him and cooking for him and feeding him and changing him and worrying over him (97).

The plight of Darling's immediate family represents in microcosm a crisis that is unfolding at a wider scale in the country, highlighted when Darling draws the reader's attention to the many graves of young people who have died prematurely because of AIDS:

> When you look at the names together with the dates you see that they are really now new names of the dead. And when you know maths like me then you can figure out the ages of the buried and see that they died young, their lives short like those of house mice. A person is supposed to live a full life, live long and grow old, like Mother of Bones … It's that Sickness that is killing them. Nobody can cure it so it does as it is pleases – killing, killing like a madman hacking unripe sugarcane with a machete (133).

Although Darling is only a child, she is aware that the victims of the diseases were far too young, and that they should have lived longer. The ages of the deceased also bring to mind social ills such as child rape, which leave child victims like Chipo, one of Darling's friends, at risk of contracting deadly diseases. While Chipo's rape is not described in detail, it is alluded to after she witnesses a similar incident at church: "He did that, my grandfather … he got on me and pinned me down like that and he clamped a hand over my mouth and was heavy like a mountain" (41).

The absence of a vibrant health system exposes people to unscrupulous religious leaders such as Vodloza and Prophet Birchington Mborro, who take advantage of the sick's desperation and vulnerability to swindle them out of their money. Vodloza, for an example, advertises that the services provided at his "healing" practice should only be paid for in foreign currency:

> Vodloza, bestest healer in all of this paradise and beyond will proper fix all these problemsome things that you may encounter in your life: bewitchness, curses, bad luck, whoring spouses, childlessness, poverty, joblessness, aids, madness, small penises, epilepsy, bad dreams, bad luck with getting visas especially to usa and britain, nonsenseful, people in your life, things disappearing in your house etc. etc. etc. please payment in forex only (29).

Problems, such as “poverty”, “joblessness”, “getting visas especially to USA and BRITAIN”, and his blunt announcement of the mode of payment, “FOREX ONLY”, reflect how dire the situation in Darling’s home country is, and how desperate everyone is to make a living. Similarly, when Mother of Bones tells Prophet Revelation about Darling’s father’s sickness, the prophet says that the sick man is afflicted by demons which could be exorcised provided they found him “two fat white virgin goats and five hundred US dollars” to pray for and cleanse Darling’s father (101).

The “spiritual” leaders demand payment in forex because the local currency has lost its value due to hyperinflation. This point is also registered through Mother of Bones, who laments as she counts her money, how she does not “understand … how this very money that I have in lumps cannot buy even a grain of salt” (25). Her plight captures the experiences of the Zimbabweans at large, as it is similar to that of Jabu, a character in Jinga's novel, *One Foreigner's Ordeal* (2012), who has millions of Zimbabwean dollars, but cannot even afford to buy a plate of sadza. While the local currency is worthless, it is not easy for the majority of Zimbabweans to access the foreign currency which is now used in most of the transactions, as Mother of Bones further highlights: “And the American money they are talking about … just where do they think I will get it, do they think I will just dig it up, huh, do they think I will defecate it? (25) The lavatorial language used here is significant, as it expresses her desperate and frustrating situation as well as the depth of her pain, the latter, which is described as follows: “You can see the pain on her face now, like something inside her is breaking and bleeding.” (25)

Hove and Mavengano (2019) share the same sentiments when they posit that:

> The inhabitants of the marginalised spaces are so overburdened by the collapsing Zimbabwean economy to the extent that defecating, and all its unsayable concomitants, become metonymic of their emasculation. Citizens feel insulted and cheated by their government; therefore, they vent their disappointment through deliberately scatological and raw language (5).

Mother of Bones represents the broken hearts of different generations of Zimbabweans as she has lived through and experienced the government's empty promises as the political landscape changed from one form to another. Darling tells us:

> There are three homes inside Mother's and Aunt Fostalina's heads: home before independence, before I was born, when black people and white people were fighting over the country. Home after independence when black people won the country. And then the home of things falling apart, which made Aunt Fostalina leave and come here. Home one, home two, and home three. There are four homes inside Mother of Bones' head: home before the white people came to steal the country, and a king ruled; home when the white people came to steal the country and then there was war; home when black people got our stolen country back after independence; and then the home of now. Home one, home two, home three, home four. When somebody talks about home, you have to listen carefully so you know exactly which one the person is referring to. (194)

The above excerpt shows how the character of Mother of Bones has experienced the country's changes in its different phases. The three homes Darling talks about represent different phases of history the country went through until it arrived at its current state. Mother of Bones represents a generation that has experienced her home country in its abundance before colonial rule, in its fighting during colonial rule and in its decaying state after the end of colonialism and during the period of political and economic collapse that is currently prevailing in the country. For her, one could imagine, the current situation is even more frustrating, as she can compare it to the different phases and times she has experienced it in. Each generation that Mother of Bones witnessed reminds her of the changes in the home country's history and deceptive promises for the voters in changing a socio-political, economic and psychological landscape that continues to shatter people's dreams and hope. Darling uses Stina's words that "a country is a Coca-Cola bottle that can smash on the floor and disappoint you. When a bottle smashes, you cannot put it back together" (160) to symbolise that her home country has broken lives across generations, and it is for that reason that it is now "the home of things falling apart" (193)

and “a terrible place of hunger” (193). In Zimbabwean literature, hunger is a recurring motif that features prominently in some of that country’s seminal works, such as Mungoshi’s novel, *Waiting for the Rain* (1975), Dambudzo Marechera’s award-winning collection of short stories, *House of Hunger* (1978), and Shimmer Chinodya’s novel, *Harvest of Thorns* (1989). By contrast, the metaphor of “things falling apart” was popularised in African literature by Nigerian author, Chinua Achebe, through his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1959), whose title and proem come from William Butler Yeats’ poem, *The Second Coming*. With regard to *We Need New Names*, Moji (2014) posits that: “Hunger is what prompts them [Darling and her friends] to cross the border into Budapest, just as material lack prompts them to dream of escape and migration” (184). Moji’s (2014) observation is evident when Darling and her friends talk about their future – they speak about “blazing out of this kaka country … make lots of money come back and buy a house in this very Budapest” (13). Likewise, Darling tells her friends that she will be leaving the country for America where she will be living with Aunt Fostalina “eating real food and doing better things than stealing” (10). While Sbho, one of Darling’s friends, does not project her future outside her home country, she nonetheless sees herself living in Budapest, married to a man who will “take me away from Paradise, away from the shacks and Heavenway and Fambeki and everything else” (12). The experiences of hunger, poverty, sexual violence, collapsing healthcare system and overall economic meltdown in Zimbabwe act as push factors that make the characters desire a life away from home. Spickard (2009) describes push factors as “those elements of the social situation in the sending country that make individuals want to leave”, while the pull factors are “those features that draw them to a particular destination” (115). This means that the migrants leave their home because they are drawn to their prospective host countries by opportunities that may not be available in their home countries.

3.3 DISPLACEMENT IN *WE NEED NEW NAMES*

In postcolonial literature, displacement has turned into one of the burning issues because of its intensive and prolonged psychological, physical and cultural impacts on human beings (Saha, 2015:319). As already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the themes of migration and other forms of human movement are predominant in *We Need*

New Names. From the very beginning, the reader is confronted with images of children who are moving from their poor home, Paradise, and crossing roads (that serve as boundaries) to the neighbouring residential district, Budapest, in search of guavas to satisfy their hunger. This movement continues to dominate the text as many characters migrate from one place to another, both within and outside the borders of the country, in search of better opportunities. These various forms of movement bring forth different types of displacement: physical, cultural, psychological and social, which Bulawayo's characters grapple with. Al Deek (2016:30) observes that displacement can be divided into shifting categories (geographical, psychological and cultural, the latter being subcategorised into linguistic displacement), which influence the experiences of self, space and time. This means that the characters in *We Need New Names* experience displacement in multiple ways which influence their responses to the places they find themselves in and their interactions with such spaces. When Darling's dream of staying with her aunt Fostalina in America is fulfilled, she immediately realises that immigrants like her are unable to belong to the new environment, as she experiences a myriad of debilitating experiences, which range from the inability to relate to the new context (both physically and culturally) and the failure to realise their aspirations in the new space. In short, the America that they experience, contrary to the one that they had imagined, is a site of numerous forms of trauma, which leave them suffering from various mental and physical pathologies. Their plight and the withering dislocation they experience as a result of leaving their home countries is succinctly summed up by Stina, when he observes that "…leaving your country is like dying…" (122). The death that Stina talks about symbolises cycles of shame, indignity, violence, poverty and displacement that are often experienced by communities and individuals who migrate from their troubled home countries to foreign lands in search of better opportunities. Ashcroft (2009) argues that displaced migrants lose "[a] valid and active sense of the self" (8-9) as a result of the ensuing dislocation. Unlike the "organic belonging" they feel when they are in their homelands, immigrants like Darling find themselves unable to socially adjust to their new environment as they are not considered part of its culture. The sense of displacement is exacerbated by the fact that most migrants, as Darling acknowledges, fail to realise the dreams that they nurtured when they migrated to foreign lands:

> And when we got to America we took our dreams, looked at them tenderly as if they were newly born children, and put them away; we would not be pursuing them. We would never be the things that we had wanted to be: doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers. No school for us. (243)

Since they cannot become the professionals they had envisioned when they left their homes for America, Darling and many others resort to working menial jobs, just to make a living:

> We worked with dangerous machines, holding our breath like crocodiles under water, our minds on the money and never on our lives. Adamou got murdered by that beast of a machine that also ate three fingers of Sudan's left hand. We cut ourselves working on meat; we got skin diseases. We inhaled bad smells until our lungs thundered. Ecuador fell forty stories working on a roof and shattered his spine, screaming, Mis hijos! Mis jijos! On his way down. We got sick but did not go to hospitals, could not go to hospitals. We swallowed every pain like a bitter pill, drank every fear like a love potion, and we worked and worked (246).

The picture that emerges here is that of a desperate group of migrants, who live on the margins of the American society and, as a result, have resorted to doing dangerous jobs that leave them either dead, crippled, sick or frustrated. The menial jobs that Darling and other migrants do in America, coupled with the hostility they experience, constantly remind them that they are foreigners who do not belong to the society that hosts them. As Said (1994:48-49) writes:

> The fact is that for most exiles the difficulty consists not simply in being forced to live away from home, but rather, given today's world, in living with the many reminders that you are in exile, that your home is not in fact so far away, and that the normal traffic of everyday contemporary life keeps you in constant but tantalizing and unfulfilled touch with the old place. The exile therefore

> exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting or fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half detachments, nostalgic and sentimental on one level, an adept mimic or a secret outcast on another.

The difficulties that migrants experience in their attempts to fully integrate into the new community that they settle in means that they cannot be part of that community's culture. For example, Darling is constantly "teased… about my name, my accent, my hair, the way I talked or said things, the way I dressed, the way I laughed" (167). Her outsider status emanates from the fact that she is defined using identity frames and narratives that are not in harmony with the identity context that she is accustomed to back in her home country. These hostile experiences leave her feeling an overwhelming sense of displacement which makes her and the other African immigrants long for home, as they start comparing their current host spaces to those they have left behind. This longing is akin to what Said (1994) calls the "double perspective", a way and a strategy through which the migrant copes with their reality:

> Because the exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actual here and now, there is a double perspective that never sees things in isolation. Every scene or situation in the new country necessarily draws on its counterpart in the old country. Intellectually this means that an idea or experience is always counterpoised with another, therefore making both appear in a sometimes new and unpredictable light (44).

The "double perspective" that Said describes above, is also evident when Darling reflects on her struggles to articulate herself fluently in English in the context of how she used to communicate with ease, using her native language back in her home country:

> Because we were not in our country, we could not use our own language, and so when we spoke our voices came bruised. When we talked, our tongues thrashed madly, staggered like drunken men. Because we were not

> using our languages, we said things we did not mean; what we really wanted to say remained folded inside, trapped. In America, we did not always have the words. It was only when we were by ourselves that we spoke in our voices. (242)

Apart from reflecting the double perspective that afflicts the migrant, the above excerpt is also crucial because it reflects how the language barrier restricts the migrants' social interaction. Gregory and Holloway (2005) note that, among other things, language is:

> used to establish membership of a group and, conversely, to restrict access to outsiders; to indicate allegiance to a cause; to establish, and sometimes coerce into, a position; to restrict communication and the type of communication; to influence the construction of a situation (38).

Through the use of language, people can engage with those around them, understand their feelings and lived experiences, and affirm their own identity and those of the people they interact with. At the same time, language plays a crucial role in socialisation and identity formation, as it can be used as a tool for both inclusion and exclusion. This is so because language carries cultural values, as it articulates the worldview of the societies from which it evolved. Consequently, for Darling and her fellow foreigners, the fact that they cannot communicate using their mother tongues in America means loss of power, being misunderstood and inability to "feel at home" in their new community. As a result of the ensuing alienation, they constantly reminisce about their experiences back in their home countries where they were understood and able to cement their identities because they could express the realities around them as well as their experiences in their mother tongue.

In order to cope with their displacement, many immigrants find themselves forging group identities which provide them with a sense of community. Darling expresses this point when she observes how her otherwise dull home becomes suddenly vibrant when people from her home country visit her aunt, Fostalina:

> The onliest time that it's almost interesting here is when Uncle Themba and Uncle Charley and Aunt Welcome and Aunt Chenai and others all come to visit Aunt Fostalina. I call them uncles and aunts, but we are not related by blood, like me and Aunt Fostalina are. I never knew them back home, and Uncle Charley is white, for instance. I think the reason they are my relatives now is they are from my country too – it's like the country has become a real family since we are in America, which is not our country … everybody will be speaking our real language, laughing, and talking loudly about back home, how it was like when they were growing up before things turned bad, then ugly (160).

This observation is very important as it shows the significance of collective memory. As pointed by Wertsch and Roediger (2008:320):

> collective remembering inevitably involves some identity project – remembering in the service of constructing what kind of people we are … [collective memory] is resistant to change even in the face of contradictory evidence. In collective remembering, the past is tied interpretatively to the present, and if necessary, part of an account of the past may be deleted or distorted in the service of present needs.

This means that as a collective, it is easy for Fostalina and her fellow compatriots to rediscover their identities in the face of adversity and rejection. They also use these gatherings as occasions for indulging in their indigenous food and listening to music by Southern African artists – activities which strengthen their bonds, as they are reminders of the "collective" culture which they left behind and which they continue to share as a people:

> The uncles and aunts bring goat insides and cook ezangaphakathi and sadza and mbhida and occasionally they will bring amacimbi, which is my number one favorite relish, umfushwa, and other foods from home, and people descend on the food like they haven't eaten all their lives. They tear off the sthwala with their bare hands, hastily roll and dip it in relish and pause briefly

> to look at one another before shoving it in their mouths … After the food comes the music. They play Majaivana, play Solomon Skuza, play Ndux Malax, Miriam Makeba, Lucky Dube, Brenda Fassie, Paul Matavire, Hugh Masekela, Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtukudzi – old songs I remember from when from when I was little, from Mother and Father and the adults singing them. (160-1)

Through these gatherings, Fostalina and her friends form and maintain "a sense of group identity, group cohesion, and group continuity" (Harris et al., 2008: 214). The group identity they forge enables them to get through the struggles of being in the diaspora because, as Reese and Fivush (2008) note: "[m]ore highly collective memories may help establish shared identities and bring individuals into a sense of shared purpose, and this collaboration seems to be related to a higher sense of well-being" (209). This act of togetherness also fosters the African indigenous principle of Ubuntu, a philosophy that emphasises the importance of togetherness and celebrates the values that extol oneness for the purpose of social cohesion and collective survival. As opined by Chigara (2012), this philosophy literally means, "We are in this together. Therefore, it is in our common interest to co-operate in order to succeed" (224).

Despite the security that Bulawayo's characters derive from forging collective identities that help them cope with the challenges they encounter in foreign lands, they continue to suffer from psychological displacement, which makes them long for home. According to Aciman (1999), psychological displacement has to do with "compulsive retrospection" (13). This condition involves "memories [that are] perpetually on overload, seeing, feeling, being doubled in exile. When exiles see one place they're also seeing – or looking for another behind it. Everything bears two faces; everything is shifty because everything is mobile" (Aciman, 1999:13). The main suggestion in Aciman's (1999) thesis is that a person who is psychologically displaced continuously tries to make sense of their surroundings and, as a result, they overthink and constantly look back to where they come from in order to make sense of where they are. As Darling's new life progresses in America, Bulawayo lets the reader into the mental hardships that torment characters, such as Tshaka Zulu and Uncle Kojo. These characters are alienated and, as a result,

they find it difficult to adapt to the new environment. For instance, the psychological problems that Tshaka Zulu displays show that although he is a migrant to foreign lands, he still carries with him the burden of his history and other past experiences. Roberto Beneduce (2016) argues that when they migrate, migrants often carry with them their history of "social marginality, paranoid symptoms, racial phobia, violence, an unaccountable resentment of the small pitfalls of daily communication, and an overwhelming feeling of dispossession" (264). As a result, these experiences give rise to feelings of vulnerability and psychosis, as Darling explains with regard to Tshaka Zulu:

> People are standing in a circle, listening to Tshaka Zulu sing a traditional song. Even though his body is all wrinkled with age, he looks beautiful and fierce in a knee length skirt made of sharpened bones, and hoop earrings dangle from his ears. On his head is a hat made of animal fur. He wears matching armbands around his thin arms. In one hand is a long white shield scattered with little black spots. Tshaka Zulu has the large booming voice […]. When the song finishes everybody applauds, and Tshaka Zulu beams with pride. It is his thing to perform at weddings and wherever people from our country are holding events and looking at him at it you would never think there was something wrong with him, that he was really a patient at Shadybrook (178).

The image of Tshaka Zulu presented here is that of someone who, within his migrant community, plays a significant role in matters relating to culture and the spiritual world. Furthermore, the name Tshaka Zulu, also brings to mind the famous 19th century Zulu king and warrior, whose strength, ambition and leadership united his Zulu nation. Given the strength and mental fortitude of the illustrious Zulu king that Tshaka Zulu is named after, it comes as a surprise to the reader that he is admitted as a patient at Shadybrook, a mental hospital. When Darling notes that "there was something wrong with him" (178), the reader realises that Tshaka Zulu battles psychosis. As a result, he is alienated from his community and the only time he feels part of the community is on occasions such as wedding ceremonies. Beneduce (2016) describes Tshaka Zulu's character as one that is symbolic of "cultural idioms of suffering and forms of historical consciousness" (263). This

makes sense because Tshaka Zulu is afflicted by a sense of guilt that affects not only him, but many other migrants. He is worried that the investment and sacrifices he made to get the documents required to travel to America have not yielded the results he anticipated. Although he succeeded in journeying from his home country to America, Tshaka Zulu lives with the guilt of defying his people's wishes and exchanging his family wealth for an opportunity to start afresh in another country, because "[f]or his passport and travel, Tshaka Zulu sold all his father's cows, against the old man's wishes" (240). Tshaka Zulu appears to be preoccupied with the idea of who he possible could have become back at home had he not defied his father's wishes, as opposed to who he is in the America he sold his possessions for – a delusional and mentally disturbed old man, who not only becomes important when there are events involving people from his home country, but is also under observation all the time at the mental clinic where he has become resident. As a result of the frustration stemming from his inability to realise a fulfilling identity in a foreign land, Tshaka Zulu ends up experiencing bizarre psychological fits and hallucinations. One such incident is registered by Darling as follows:

> At Shadybrook, Tshaka Zulu meets us at the door […] hands me a real spear, and says, Be armed, warrior, those white vultures, wretched beaks dripping with blood, must not be allowed to settle on this black land. […] In addition to wearing his dress, Tshaka Zulu has painted his body a bright red color, and his head is all red and black and white feathers. […] Tshaka Zulu is rushing, his animal-skin skirt swooshing, the colourful feathers on his head dancing. Then he breaks into a run, […] Tshaka Zulu's spear sails in the air, but it doesn't go far before falling on the pavement. By the time he bends to pick it up, the police cars have descended. Doors open and bang and I'm seeing guns all over […]. Drop your weapon! Stop! Get on the ground! Show your hands! Drop your weapon! Drop your weapon! And I know that Tshaka Zulu will not drop his weapon. When I look over my shoulder, he is lunging skyward like some crazy plane trying to take off (273).

The above incident is significant to the extent that it foregrounds Tshaka Zulu's rather desperate attempt to reconnect with the precolonial past of his people. Such a past is

irrecoverable even back in his homeland; therefore, his spear and traditional dress – symbols of a precolonial culture – are out of place both in America and back in his homeland in the 21st century. Consequently, it is as if the more he tries to reconnect with his past, the more he finds himself losing his sanity. He is a broken man, with a cultural void that has made him delusional. To fill this hollowness, he desperately tries to clinch to his roots by incoherently recalling the history of colonial conquest and resistance in an effort to define and maintain his identity in the American context. Therefore, Tshaka Zulu embodies characteristics of what Ahmed (2007) calls a melancholic migrant; a migrant whose life is characterised by sadness because they cannot let go of their loss:

> The melancholic migrant holds onto the unhappy objects of difference, such as the turban, or at least the memory of being teased about the turban, which ties it to a history of racism. Such differences – one could think of the burqa – become sore points or blockage points, where the smooth passage of communication stops (2007:133).

Tshaka Zulu's melancholia is compounded by the fact that the "unhappy objects of difference" that he clings onto (a spear, animal-skin skirt, feathers, etc.) do not enable him to connect with his past but conversely remind him of his "betrayal" of his family and his loss in the process of trying to rebuild his life in a new country. Therefore, his demise at the hands of the American police who perceive symbols of his culture as destructive weapons, symbolically captures the depth of the dilemma of migrants stuck in foreign lands, whose only way of "escape" seems to be death.

His plight is comparable to that of Farai, a character in Chinodya's (2005) *Chairman of Fools* (2005). However, the difference is that Farai's mental breakdown happens in his home country – after returning from America – when he suddenly realises that his experiences in America have alienated him from his culture and society. When he becomes aware of his struggles, he drives himself to hospital but does not check in as he starts hallucinating: "[t]he annexe walls are sheets of iron. There are no windows. He cannot find the doors. He bangs on the iron walls. Five women with shaven heads, dressed in white sheets, fall from the sky and surround him" (86). These hallucinations

eventually make him run back to his car and drive away, while he "wishes the crane would demolish his car and his head and finish him off, so that he could be reduced to nothingness. So that his spirit can be freed into space" (88).

Chinodya's (2005) character perceives death as better than the current mental hardships he is going through, and feelings that he is "empty, weightless, lost." (55). One could argue that this was the case with Tshaka Zulu, whose mental struggles tormented him until death. For both Farai and Tshaka Zulu, displacement means "the loss of home, social relations, work, rights, predictability and ontological security" (Hammar *et al.*, 2010:268). The way this loss affects the physical well-being of the displaced individual is articulated by Noxolo (2014) who observes that "the body is often the locus of identity and difference … the body is out of place and often ultimately either symbolically or actually dismembered" (77). This means that if one feels as if their whole being is dismembered, they will feel incomplete and lost, and this feeling will likely manifest psychologically.

Another character, who like Tshaka Zulu, wrestles with identity problems in a foreign country, is Uncle Kojo, Fostalina's Husband, who hails from Ghana. His marriage to Fostalina, who is from the same continent but different home country, plunges him into a state of alienation owing to their different cultural and linguistic backgrounds that render them "strangers" to each within the home they share. Uncle Kojo is unable to communicate his feelings and thoughts to his wife in his home language because his wife, Fostalina, a Zimbabwean national, is a Ndebele speaker. The constant fights that erupt between him and Fostalina always end up with each one of them resorting to speaking in their native language. For an example, when Fostalina reprimands Kojo for spending too much time watching television, he "doesn't seem to bother about listening to her and he walks away speaking in his language that nobody understands" (152). The language barrier becomes even more visible each time Fostalina hosts her fellow countrymen because Kojo leaves the house out of frustration, as he cannot speak the language they use during their discussions. Sometimes he does not leave the house, he:

> sits there looking lost, like he has just illegally entered a strange country whilst everybody speaks their real language, laughing and talking loudly

> about back home, how it was when they were growing up before things turned bad, then ugly (161).

The language barrier means that Kojo is unable to narrate his own childhood anecdotes in his home language because the visitors will not understand him. Although the inability to understand the Ndebele language spoken by Fostalina and her friends creates a sense of displacement for Kojo in his home space, he too, becomes “alive” when he meets his countrymen and feels confident enough to express himself fully. Darling observes how Kojo feels comfortable when he is surrounded by his own compatriots from Ghana, as seen at Dumi’s wedding:

> I keep watching Uncle Kojo; whenever he is with someone from his country, everything about him is different – his laugh, his talk, his eating – it’s like something cuts him open to reveal this other person I don’t even know (179).

Although this “other person” emerges periodically, it is evident that the feeling of freedom and belonging Kojo experiences when he is with his people changes his mood completely and temporarily relieves his yearning for home. Kojo also relates better to his countrymen than he does to his own family, especially his son, TK. This is because TK was born and bred in America, and as such, his socialisation is influenced by American culture and, consequently, he has no regard for or interest in his Ghanaian roots, something that bothers Kojo much. The fact that TK was born in the diaspora also means that he and his father do not share the same feelings about their roots, including language, cultural norms and values.

When TK announces that he decided to join the army and go to Afghanistan to fight for America, Uncle Kojo (nicknamed Vasco Da Gama), realises that his son does not see himself as Ghanaian, but as American. This drives Kojo into an angry fit and he hits his son:

> When TK said he was joining the army, I didn’t even think he was for real. He just came one day when we were all eating spaghetti and said, I’m joining the army. I remember Vasco da Gama saying, What did you say? I remember

> TK looking at him like somebody had told him he was a man or something and saying, I said, I'm joining the army. I remember Vasco da Gama standing up calmly like he was going to the restroom and, instead, slapping TK real hard. I remember the cracking of it, like Vasco da Gama had dynamite in his hands (262).

Uncle Kojo's anger and frustration at TK's decision to join the army gives rise to depression, which makes his longing for home more intense:

> After TK was sent to Afghanistan, Uncle Kojo was fine at first, and then he wasn't. Now he has this thing about traveling, about being on the road; whenever he gets behind the wheel, it's like he wants to discover America. He went to the doctor and was told to take some time off, which he did, and to go home, which he couldn't do; even though he went to college and has been here for thirty-two years and works and his son, TK, was born here and everything, Uncle Kojo still has no papers. So the best he can do is drive around, sometimes short distances, sometimes long ones, which is why we now call him Vasco da Gama behind his back (258).

Uncle Kojo falls into a state of psychosis because he is unable to go back home to Ghana; he knows that if he leaves America, much like other migrants, he will not be able to come back. He is also depressed by the fact that the 32 years he spent in America have not yielded any positive results as one would have expected; he is still the migrant without papers today as he was three decades before. The more he desires to journey back to his native land, the more he realises that "in America, roads are like the devil's hands, like God's love, reaching all over, just the sad thing is, they won't really take me home" (191).

The only source of comfort for Uncle Kojo appears to be food from his home country, possibly because it makes him feel connected to his culture:

> What happened is that after TK left, Uncle Kojo stopped eating, and … when Vasco da Gama just kept on without eating and started losing weight, Aunt

> Fostalina went online and got recipes from his country because that's the only food she could get him to eat (261).

The same connection is also seen in aunt Fostalina and her friends when they "cook home food" (161), and in Darling when she receives a package of guavas from her friends back in her home country. Darling describes the sensation she felt while eating the guavas from her home country as follows: "I leave the house, Kalamazoo, and Michigan, leave the country altogether and find myself back in Paradise" (197). Thus, home for Kojo, Darling, Fostalina and her friends is imagined with every bite of the food they take, as it alleviates the alienation they feel in their displaced and depressed states.

In their journeys of migration, both Uncle Kojo and Tshaka Zulu display psychological dislocation emanating from living outside one's cultural space because, culturally, America does not nourish the African immigrant. The two characters also share similar frustrations, as they are only able to rediscover their identities on "special occasions". Tshaka Zulu realises his self-worth when he gets recognition for performing at social events, while Kojo gets self-assurance from the company of his fellow countrymen. However, for both characters, the experience is always short-lived because when they revert to their "normal lives", they begin to yearn for home. As a coping mechanism, they cling to everything that is familiar to them: food, language, family, space and so on.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined how NoViolet Bulawayo inscribes the concepts of home and displacement in her novel, *We Need New Names.* The discussion highlighted that Bulawayo's text imagines home as a place of collapse, where the quality of life has deteriorated under the leadership of the post-independence Zimbabwean government. As a result, Bulawayo's characters are displaced both within the borders of their country and in the diaspora where they have 'escaped' to, in the hope of accessing the opportunities that lack at home. The discussion demonstrated that the movement into the diaspora does not necessarily bring succour to the characters, as it comes with various forms of trauma, which leave them socially and culturally alienated, thereby leading to their displacement. As the analysis of the novel further demonstrated, African migrants

like Fostalina, Kojo, Tshaka, Darling and others live on the margins of the American society because they cannot fully acclimatise to their new home in the host country.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to show how the concepts of home and displacement are represented in the selected works of Kopano Matlwa and NoViolet Bulawayo. Chapter One introduced the study by, among other things, outlining that the two themes are recurring in postcolonial literature because of the unsettling effects that colonialism and its legacies continue to have on the formerly colonised people's sense of belonging, place and identity. Despite this, home and displacement are not experienced or represented in a uniform way in postcolonial literary representations. As shown from my argument in Chapters Two and Three, Matlwa portrays home and displacement against the background of a post-apartheid South Africa, which continues to be adversely affected by the legacies of the bygone apartheid era, while Bulawayo imagines home and displacement in terms of a lost paradise, where the post-independence leadership has betrayed the aspirations of the people, who now find the national space hostile.

The analysis of *Coconut* in Chapter Two revealed that the different meanings attached to home are shaped by the displacement obtained from the legacies of the apartheid system and their continued effects on post-apartheid South Africa. To this end, the study captured that Matlwa depicts displaced characters within the home country's borders who struggle to belong in the new physical and psychological spaces they find themselves in because of the distortions imposed on their society by apartheid. The pervasive influence of the bygone apartheid era and its policies on the present is captured by the fact that Matlwa's characters do not succeed in totally escaping from the economic and psychological problems emanating from the legacies of apartheid, as their attempts to disengage from the marginal spaces it carved out for blacks lead to new problems from which they do not know how to escape, as demonstrated by the plight of Ofilwe's family, who cannot be fully accepted in the suburbs they have moved to in search of better living conditions, and that of Fikile, whose attempts to distance herself from her immediate home space and the community around her leaves her alienated and displaced. Although in *Coconut*, the themes of home and displacement are explored against the background of post-apartheid South Africa, they mostly take on the form of intrapersonal occurrence and, in private spaces, and as such, they are not as politicised as in Bulawayo's novel. This has enabled Matlwa to capture even the minutiae relations within the home space, such as sexual

abuse and the domination of the patriarchy. Matlwa deliberately imagines home as a meeting point of the past, present and future – where the legacy of the bygone apartheid era continues to affect the nation's present and future – so as to capture the enduring damage that apartheid as a discriminatory policy has inflicted on the South African society.

The discussion of *We Need New Names* in Chapter Three revealed that Bulawayo portrays home as a hostile place characterised by political and economic meltdown, hunger and a lack of educational opportunities that push the characters to migrate en masse to foreign countries in pursuit of better living conditions and opportunities. Her narrative revolves around the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina to show how the forced movement of people by the post-independence government left many Zimbabweans homeless and displaced within the borders of the country. The analysis of the text also revealed that Bulawayo explores the themes of home and displacement in the context of a collapsed economy and a dysfunctional social and political system, all of which conjoin to displace the characters into foreign lands where they seek respite from the problems at home. However, as the discussion in Chapter Three further demonstrated, the diaspora that the nation's citizens "escape" to does not bring them the succour they seek, but instead perpetuates and sometimes even worsens the destabilisation they "fled" from in the home country. Bulawayo takes care to detail these problems in order to highlight the magnitude of the unsettling social, political and economic crises authored by the post-independence leadership in Zimbabwe. In short, Bulawayo imagines home as a lost paradise so as to capture how the post-independence leadership in Zimbabwe alienated Zimbabweans from the very sites from which they used to derive their identities.

While both texts foreground the challenges the characters encounter at home and in their various states of displacement, they do not offer safe spaces that enable the characters to recover from the trauma of their encounters. The closest they get to offering such spaces is when they highlight the strategies the characters adopt to cope with their realities. In *We Need New Names*, these strategies range from Darling's attempts to learn the "correct" pronunciation of words and phrases in the American accent to the "get togethers'' organised by other immigrants, such as aunt Fostalina who seek to reconnect

with home through fostering a communal identity and memories of the past among her compatriots in the diaspora. Matlwa's characters also attempt to blend into their new communities as demonstrated through Ofilwe, who is "taught" by her friend, Belinda, to "correctly" speak English in a way that is acceptable in her new environment. While the strategies that the characters in both texts adopt somewhat enable them to survive the alienation and displacement in their environments, they continue to battle psychological problems as demonstrated through Tshaka Zulu, Uncle Kojo, Fikile and Ofilwe.

Both *Coconut* and *We Need New Names* foreground characters who are in perpetual distress in order to highlight the magnitude of the trauma caused by both displacement and loss of home in postcolonial societies. They achieve this by presenting the experiences of displacement and migration from a migrant's perspective, which registers the latter's frustrations with the spaces they call home as well as their marginalisation within the new spaces they have migrated to. Thus, although they are set in different contexts, the analysis of both texts revealed that the concepts of home and displacement affect the character's sense of identity, both as individuals and as a group.

In the light of the above arguments, it is recommended that future studies should:

- compare how the themes of home and displacement are portrayed in the works of both male and female writers in order to find out if gender plays a role in how authors inscribe these themes.
- Investigate how the themes of home and displacement are portrayed in literary works from other parts of the content, such as North, East, West and Central Africa.
- Focus on how the concepts of home and displacement are explored in other genres of literature, such as drama, short stories and poetry.

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