

7. The loss of certainty

The affective relations of national identity and changes to the white sense of belonging since independence brought with it the renegotiation of subjectivity are discussed in this chapter. Ethnographic evidence indicates that a prior sense of being properly located and at home can give way or dissipate in the light of civil war, the reworking of national narratives and widespread emigration (Borneman 1992; Loizos 1981:130–2; Mamdani 1973). Accordingly, Gupta (1992:76) nominates that the structures of feeling that bind space, time and memory in the production of location should be studied in order to establish how certain spaces become, or cease to be, conceived as homelands. White Zimbabweans generally spoke of the slippage in associating their identity with the place Zimbabwe in tropes related to the loss of kin and community, changing cultural landscapes and a sense of ‘the end of our history’ generated by the process of land dispossession described in the previous chapter. Each of these will be examined below. The experience of compatriots, who, having imagined their homeland from afar, returned after independence to live in the place as home again, is then addressed. Towards the end of the chapter, steps taken by a minority of whites to counter their experiences of decentering and deracination and regain a sense of belonging in the country are outlined.

Homelessness: the loss of family and community

In Rhodesia, as in other colonial societies, the master narrative of progress reworked the physical space of the territory into which the Europeans moved, enabling and justifying their domination (Betts 1998:82). Earlier chapters referred to the pride taken in the country’s development, which reflected the intense bonding between the settlers and the place Rhodesia. They had, in effect, made Rhodesia their home by naming and building. Doubling between self and place was part of the ideological work that situated the settlers at the centre, allowing them to claim, and hold onto, a homeland. The seeming naturalness of their geographical markers, coupled with the ability of later generations of Rhodesians to unselfconsciously ‘step into’ them, reflected settler hegemonic power (George 1996:6). Centring moments such as these offered a sense of themselves as ‘at home’ and belonging, and gave rise to the feeling of their being securely and properly located (Radcliffe and Westwood 1996:163).

However Rhodesia as a place had ceased to exist politically by 1980. The impending birth of Zimbabwe called into question the ‘easy alliance’ (Carter et

al. 1993:viii) between the place and Rhodesian identity and brought in its wake significant white emigration. How did informants make sense of this turn of events and where responsibility for it lay?

One who fought for Rhodesia offered this explanation:

The war made us all the same, made one family of us. You'd mourn for a family in another part of the country that you'd never met. Call it the enemy complex. The rest of the world was against us, not a friend in sight. It made us a very tight community in a small country. We did not think we would lose the war so we did not anticipate mass emigration; it did not occur to us that this was possible. It was only in the last year or so of the war that the question in the armed forces became 'where are you going?'. And now indigenous whites are being denied their birthright.

A civilian concurred with this assessment, saying:

Whites did not anticipate that the end of the war and independence would lead to their families being dispersed. First, many did not think we would lose and, more importantly, did not think, in fact never dreamt, the country would fall into the hands of Mugabe. Ordinary whites were getting the wrong signals from the police and the Rhodesian forces. I went to one of their briefing sessions out at Norton [a commercial farming area near Harare]. We were told 'Don't worry, everything is under control', so whites weren't considering the implications of independence.

The white community appears to have been mentally unprepared—caught on the wrong foot as it were—at the end of the war. The departure of almost half their number in a matter of a few years¹ prompted some rethinking of the link between self, home and community, and, with the loss of family and friends, meaningful relationships with the locale began to give way. An elderly couple described the process whereby the place became 'unhomely' (Bhabha 1994:9) in the following terms:

Prior to 1979 we were a family of 52 people, mostly living around the Harare area. All but four have gone, leaving me [the wife] alone. The place has become foreign; it no longer feels like home...friends say to us, 'Why do you want to leave, your friends are more important than your family?' We don't agree.

A year after this conversation, the couple packed up and left Zimbabwe. A friend reiterated the details of their failed application to emigrate, yet determination

¹ Every year for the decade 1975–84 saw between 10 000 and 20 000 whites exiting the country, with 1980–84 being peak years (Dumbutshena 1993).

to join a daughter in Australia and remain there, illegally if need be, once their tourist visas expired. He said, explaining their actions, 'We should not underestimate her [the wife's] sense of disorientation in the new Zimbabwe; it had become a foreign land to her.' She had 'lost her home when the country changed its name' and symbolically joined its identity with the black African states of the region. The couple's sense of *dasein*, of oneness with the place (Dallmayr 1993:151), dissolved with the nation's changing externalities and the disintegration of their extended family. In much the same way, the informant who pleaded without success for her siblings to take up local citizenship in 1985, and was now the only member of her natal family remaining in Zimbabwe, found that

loss of my family is almost visceral. I need to be in close physical proximity to them. Before email, my family took on an almost dream-like quality, but email has helped. I have their photos on the computer. Email has changed my relationship with them; they have become more real. We visit every few years. I ask myself how does my husband put up with that? The cost of getting the two of us there and back [to Australia] equates to half my net annual salary.²

In this instance, advances in worldwide communication technology proved recuperative, allowing the informant to 'come home' by recreating links between people across a variety of sites. She lived, almost simultaneously, in several places (Hobsbawm 1991:66), offsetting somewhat the psychological pain of finding herself 'left behind'. In other cases, migration, as a process of social exclusion, made for bitterness and rivalry within families when some applications to emigrate were rejected while other family members were accepted and left for countries elsewhere.

Not everyone felt this degree of loss. Describing herself as a realist, a woman of Irish descent referred to the illusion of family stability when she said 'it's best if the kids go, we'll miss them but the Irish are travellers'. She, a relative newcomer, having arrived in Rhodesia in the mid 1960s on an assisted passage, continued: 'We did the same to our mothers. The young are just repeating what we did before them.' More philosophically, an older woman saw 'migration as a sacrifice parents make for the next generation. I have not a single blood relative left in Zimbabwe. Home is where the family is, but friends substitute for family.' A third person, present at the same gathering where the offspring of almost all the 30-odd guests were 'out of the country', chimed in: 'I've known everyone

² A year later, because of 'the significant and persistent' slide in the local currency after the war veterans' payout in November 1997, international airlines and some cross-border bus companies had begun to quote fares in US dollars—soon to be called the parallel rate—almost doubling them overnight.

in this room for at least 35 years. That's community, that's why I don't leave.' The investment in relationships and routines developed over half a lifetime produced a sense of security and substance for her.

Each critical moment of white nationalism had, however, coincided with a wave of mass emigration. 'We debated it at every crisis,' proffered one speaking for many, 'we seem to have lived our whole lives with a wait-and-see attitude.' And, once out of the country, they dated each other by the historical events that marked their exit. These episodes threw into question the survival of the white homeland, its uncertain future reflected in its inability to keep its European population. In view of this, family relationships provided an important frame of reference for most informants and a metaphor expressing commitment and association. For 'the lucky ones', it was a source of pride to have 'all the children in the country', something by which one knew oneself 'to be blessed', although this perception was to change during the late 1990s. In the absence of family, however, a feeling of community provided others with the comforts and security of home. In view of this, the departures of people of one's own kind impacted not simply on close relatives, it resonated more generally throughout white society. An informant said of the situation in 1983: 'We felt the pressure to leave. I remember counting 40 sets of friends who had left. We felt we should also. I'd look out the window and think how can I leave this beautiful place, but I must.'

The woman also recalled being shocked at a dinner

when a couple, also leaving like us, ran the country down. I did not do that, neither did my husband, not even to each other. We left very publicly with farewell parties given by old friends I could not imagine never seeing again, flashlight photos taken just in case. Returning was not difficult for we had not criticised the country. Fortunately we had not run the country down.

The narrative suggests the decision of others to emigrate tempers the sense of belonging and placement of those staying put because the act of emigration not unusually begins 'as the renunciation of the country' (Foerster quoted in King 1995:36). In a second instance, a young, semi-skilled man who, recognising that life was not necessarily any easier elsewhere, described himself as 'having thrown in my lot with the country', still found himself unsettled by a friend

who could have made it here, but left in 1998. His departure gave rise to an outpouring of criticism towards life in Zimbabwe and the government...it's a way for those leaving to deal with the pain and justify their decision to go. But it sends ripples through the community. The problem for us remaining is that much of the criticism is true or real.

Calling attention to the country's blighted nature is particularly unsettling for the elderly and unskilled, some of whom find themselves being left behind or abandoned. An eighty-year-old mused, 'Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be the last one left here.' Elderly informants worried about the imminent closure of their various clubs, which had provided some sense of stability and permanence (Malkki 1997:90):

The bridge club because people, especially the elderly, do not feel safe driving at night, and the sailing and gliding clubs are too expensive. They will likely collapse because of our falling community numbers and little black interest in these particular hobbies [in contrast with tennis or golf]. There are just too few people with the energy to put into running these clubs.

Acerbic comments, such as 'we're an endangered species' and 'would the last one to leave please turn the lights off', reveal the perception of a failing community among a younger section of white society. One of their number remarked:

Émigrés have sapped the strength of the white community and robbed it of expertise and skills. If everyone had stayed and stuck together then we would not have lost the war. They damaged the cohesion and pull-together attitude that the war inevitably fostered. But the camaraderie was disappearing, even before 1979.

In effect, the exodus, occurring in anticipation of the transfer of sovereignty, drained the white community of its lifeblood, leaving it changed. The sense of community as an extension of home, or home on a somewhat larger scale (George 1996:9), appeared to be giving way.

As an aside, it is worth noting that only a few people found themselves in the enviable position of feeling properly and securely located in Rhodesia. Others not part of the dominant European collective had never enjoyed an uncomplicated sense of belonging, of being at home, either in the past or currently. For instance, the young Indian businessman grateful to his great-grandfather for 'opening opportunities' by moving from one national space to another said, 'I've lived here all my life but I don't have a home.' Neither the place called Rhodesia nor the one called Zimbabwe provided a focus of significant feelings for him. How had this come about? In Rhodesia, as in other settler states, immigration and citizenship policies were built around the presumption that 'only those who embodied or could be assimilated to the culture and values' (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995:15, 21) of the dominant group were perceived as legitimate settlers and citizens. Asians did not qualify in this sense (Clements 1969:60), nor, in pre-independence black-nationalist writing, were Asians regarded as having a home in Rhodesia (Stigger 1970:3). Thus, they, like Memmi (1965:xxi), who belonged

to colonial Tunisia's more or less privileged Jewish minority, found themselves 'excluded from the active structuring processes, confined to a view of the world which always decentres them' (Shurmer-Smith and Hannan 1994:3), set apart by the colonists at the same time as they were not accepted by the dispossessed majority.

Since 1980, the Zimbabwean Government has demanded evidence of commitment and loyalty from this 'fence-sitting' minority before willingly conceding them a home. The businessman continued:

I'm Indian and I'm proud of it. But as an Indian I'm not welcome here nor in the UK. I returned [after studying in the United Kingdom] ready to invest heavily in the country. In fact, I began to do so. My wife said, 'Think carefully.' She was not as optimistic about Zimbabwe's future. While I don't think minorities will be kicked out, as in Uganda, indigenisation has certainly made life harder for us. It's the wrong concept. As a businessman, I put in 100 per cent effort, but the emergent businesspeople and the government treat me with contempt.

Like the overseas Chinese described by Ong (1993:771), this informant described his subjectivity as de-territorialised in relation to any particular country. Instead, extended family and community links, grounded in worldwide business and social networks, provided him with a sense of identity and belonging. And, following in his great-grandfather's footsteps, the informant was ready to move to other advantageous locations. In place of home thoughts, he offered a ditty recited by his sisters: 'Close your eyes, imagine you're in heaven; open your eyes, you're in Perth.' Perth, a place of future possibility, perceived as a sunny, clean city with little traffic congestion, invariably reminded informants from all races of Salisbury in the old days. While the businessman's sisters made Perth sound like paradise, he was nonetheless fearful of meeting racism in Australia, where he hoped to 'pass as Mediterranean', but his wife, 'imported six years ago from India' and still resident in Zimbabwe on a temporary visa, could not. Having lived abroad, he was aware that Australia, like the United Kingdom and other host societies, could have its own disadvantages.

After the compulsory acquisition of white farms late in 1997 and the subsequent sharp fall in the value of Zimbabwe's currency,³ white parents had with renewed

3 The currency began to 'exhibit volatility' on the heels of the war veterans' payout and the announcement of compulsory land acquisition in November 1997. On 14 November 1997, the date that became known as Black Friday, the Zimbabwean dollar began a sharp decline, losing half its value in the next eight weeks (*The Economist*, 24 January 1998, p. 48). Its value tumbled again nine months later, reflecting a general lack of confidence in the government's management of the economy. Public anxiety regarding the dwindling foreign exchange reserve—rumoured to amount to about one month's import cover—was exacerbated by factors such as Zimbabwe's entry into the war in the Congo in August 1998, the collapse of Boka's United Merchant Bank as well as pressure on the South African rand (*The Herald*, 1 October 1998, p. 13).

vigour urged the younger generation to emigrate. In hindsight, a grandmother described those who faced censure and left in the 1970s as ‘the brave ones’ and credited them with making ‘the right decision’. Contemptuous terms such as ‘the chicken run’, ‘gapping it’ and ‘the Beitbridge 500’⁴ had long lost their sting. Yet she said, ‘the whites who remained after independence were Zimbabweans. You never heard people of my generation or even 10 years my senior talking about going “home” to the UK.’⁵ The grandmother spoke here for an older generation of European women who by their very presence and willingness to break ties with ‘the mother country’ had made Rhodesia a white homeland (Kirkwood 1984:143).

At the same time, parents accused state leaders of employing threatening rhetoric, using terms such as ‘children of Britain’ that erased national belonging by ‘reducing the adversary to biological’ heritage (Anderson 1990:135), thereby ‘driving out our children’ and ‘creating a Zimbabwean diaspora’.⁶ Putting aside the social status attached to ‘pioneer ancestors’ and the negative perception of Britain described in Chapter 1, the ability to claim a British grandparent was proving to be of some practical use. The young who departed for the United Kingdom, however, found it ‘an unknown country’ and ‘a very foreign place’ and many, parents reported, hoped to move onwards to New Zealand and then to Australia. Parents therefore conjured up images of trauma and forced separation (Brah 1996:193) also suggested in the Central African Building Society (CABS) ‘Saying of the day’, broadcast each morning on national radio. An ironic verse, supplied by an emigrant now living in Queensland, Australia, went ‘Home is not where you live, but where they understand you live’.⁷ The contributor alludes to the perception that the loss of white locatedness, or sense of being ‘not home’, arises directly out of Zimbabwe’s political process, when court judgements refute that a white appellant’s ‘necessary domicile’, or domicile of origin, is coextensive with the domicile of choice (Hollander 1991:34).

Locally, the window of business opportunity, which had opened with economic liberalisation and trade deregulation, began to close as the government turned away from these policies, moving in the late months of 1998 to re-impose price controls and peg the value of the local currency.⁸ Consumer goods and communication facilities that had become available with economic reform, and

4 Beitbridge is situated at a border crossing with South Africa.

5 I heard this phrase only once during fieldwork, uttered by an elderly woman going to visit her daughter. She was ridiculed and roundly castigated by her friends and news of her *faux pas* spread around the room.

6 ‘Home sweet home?’, *The Financial Gazette*, 11 March 1993, p. 4.

7 ZBC Radio 1, 2 November 1998.

8 Zimbabwe adopted a floating exchange rate in 1994 as part of its economic liberalisation. On 15 January 1999, however, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, in an effort to stabilise the dollar, announced that the exchange rate would be pegged at Z\$40 to the US dollar and Z\$70 to the pound sterling. Companies would again have to apply for approval to obtain foreign exchange. The black market for foreign currency, which had operated during the 1980s and all but disappeared with economic liberalisation, reappeared.

that allowed the middle class some geographical, psychic and cultural multi-locality, started to disappear.⁹ An informant who had returned to Zimbabwe when business confidence was good, 'arriving at the brink on April Fools' Day 1996', reflected a few years later, 'we've come full circle, we're back to the austerity years' of UDI and beyond—'not an attractive prospect'. For others, insularity, 'the thought of going back to the pre-1990s', is 'dreadful; as the dollar weakens we'll become isolated again'. More senior whites, who had referred to themselves as 'economic prisoners' during the 1980s, indicating they would not entertain leaving because they were not permitted to take assets out of the country,¹⁰ found themselves to be 'prisoners' in a new sense with inflation¹¹ and the devaluation of the currency. However, an earlier emigrant now successfully relocated having 'put down roots and made a home' in Australia, on a return trip to her place of birth as a visitor but not yet a tourist (Taylor 1992:86), astutely noted:

9 Rising input costs (particularly imported components, fuel and electricity), wages and inflation, and the government's policy about-turn, all contributed to an economic recession and the reappearance of shortages, affecting in one way or another all Zimbabweans. Urban-rural remittances decreased as a result of rising living costs and higher unemployment in towns (MacGarry 1994a:24). The greater costs of transport and groceries made the 'month's end' trip home increasingly difficult for urban workers, who were unable to provide the gifts of money and goods that are an essential part of these visits. This inevitably created tension between rural and urban-based relatives.

10 The export of assets and capital had long been a bone of contention. The *Exchange Control Act* determined the export of goods by emigrants and holiday allowances payable to external travellers. Currency restrictions and limits on exporting household goods, put in place during the Rhodesian era, were tightened in 1981 and again in 1985 because emigrants were buying new household effects in order to evade exchange control restrictions on the export of currency. Thus, goods with a high foreign currency content, such as cars, electrical goods and lounge and dining suites, had to be more than four years old and used before they could be exported. This promoted illegal activities by resentful citizens and accusations of economic sabotage by authorities (see *Parliamentary Debates*, 26 August 1981, cols 1397–408, 1 September 1981, cols 1489–501; *The Herald*, 28 August 1981, p. 3, 7 January 1985, p. 3, 13 April 1985, p. 1). More recently, many émigrés had not declared their intentions to depart permanently in order to avoid the restrictions imposed by the *Exchange Control* and *Citizenship Acts*. To officially emigrate, applicants were required to lodge details of their belongings with a local bank. Where appropriate, the bank would approach the Reserve Bank Exchange Control Department for permission to export assets on behalf of its client. The Reserve Bank ruled on the ceilings allowed and the sum was discretionary. Should an applicant sell a major asset such as a house, the proceeds had to be placed in government bonds. If a house was not sold, the title deeds should be lodged with the bank—a process known as 'leaving the house in the custody of the bank'. Informants believed 'applicants can only lose; it's a power game'. Hence, many left unofficially—a logical decision given the increase in the holiday allowances to US\$5000 in 1998, making this a larger sum than the allowances permitted emigrants. By 2001, however, the value of the holiday allowance had become a moot point as the extreme shortage of foreign currency—with import cover down to one week's reserve (*The Financial Gazette*, 20 May 2001, p. 1)—made lodging an application a fruitless exercise.

11 At the time, inflation figures were a matter of dispute in Zimbabwe. While the Central Statistics Office compiled an average consumer price index (CPI) for urban areas that indicated year-on-year inflation of about 30 per cent (*The Herald*, 13 June 1998, p. 6), this rate was generally met with scepticism. During my fieldwork, critics noted that the basket of goods used for this purpose was outdated, and further, urban prices did not necessarily reflect prices paid outside the main cities (MacGarry 1994a:6). Banks produced quarterly reports that suggested inflation was higher. These sources indicated rates of about 35 per cent in mid 1998, rising towards the end of the year and throughout 1999 to more than 40 per cent (*Business Herald*, 30 July 1998, p. 4; *Zimbabwe Independent*, 11 December 1998, p. 4). While all Zimbabweans were painfully aware of the erosion of their purchasing power, the rural and urban poor were least able to protect themselves from price increases. Inflation thus served to increase the gap between income groups.

Leaving is no longer a decision many need to make. The choice has been taken from them by immigration cutbacks and unemployment in Australia.¹² At the moment when they probably want to make this decision more than at any time in the last 18 years the decision is no longer available, or theirs to make.

Changing landscapes and cultural dissonance

The new national geography, appearing during the first decade of independence and reflecting the 'shifting topography of power', ineluctably changed the nature of the white community's relationship with the place (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:10; Massey 1992:11). As the government took back the country, whites found they no longer fitted its landscape. While I was in the field, the urban landscape was also altering in other significant ways. Many whites reflected upon the ever-more unfamiliar face of Harare's suburbs in which they lived, where hawkers of every description abounded. The changing scenery was a direct result of the repeal of Rhodesian local authority by-laws, which had authorised small-trader activity only in particular areas and thereby restricted participation in the informal economy to certain non-white areas of the city. Few informants, however, made a connection between their being confronted by another side of the city and the policy of indigenisation, outlined in the previous chapter. Instead, whites read the changing urban landscape as symptomatic of the country's more general deterioration and a daily reminder that they lived in the unregulated and untidy developing world. They had a sense of historical decline, a departure from a golden age (Turner 1987:150), against which Zimbabwe's contemporary situation was measured and found wanting.

In addition, whites referred to their perception of being 'stranded' and 'cut off' from the West. For instance, an employee of an international freight company worried that 'the distance between the technologically efficient Western world and Zimbabwe is increasing. Zimbabwe is becoming broken down and tatty.' For others, there was a growing sense of shame and disintegration. One remarked, 'It's the going down that is so painful. It would perhaps be easier if the country had always been down.' A younger woman, descended from French Huguenots,¹³ voiced both frustration and estrangement when she said, 'I know we're in Africa, I know this is a Third-World country, but economically we were streets ahead of all other countries in the region at independence. The country had so much potential.' Reference to the country's 'potential', its

¹² See Castles and Iredale 1994.

¹³ The Huguenots were French Protestants who left Europe during the 1600s to escape religious persecution, the first of whom established themselves in South Africa in the late 1680s.

capacity to become an economic hub in sub-Saharan Africa, reflects the white reading of the colonial past described towards the end of Chapter 3. She, like many others, expected the country's development to follow the European and colonial pattern. Finding this not to be the case, 'Third World' is the name, the representation, the informant gives to a location (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a:89) where she cannot imagine her identity being realised, where she is, in effect, 'not home'.

The nation's 'failure' to mimic the Western modernising narrative evinced in the headmaster of a private school a sense of being misplaced. This perception surfaced when a black parishioner, resisting the colonial civilising mission in which the European participant 'invariably knows best' (Chakrabarty 2000:28; Gandhi 1998:28), passed comment at a church meeting that 'we prefer black disorder to white order'. The headmaster and his wife had assumed that blacks shared their cultural values and that 'order', as part of the colonial code, was valued by both ruler and ruled (Nandy 1983:2). Whites commonly overlooked the fact that independence, as an act of sovereignty, meant remaining Europeans would reside on African terms. Henceforth, as an expatriate lecturer pointed out in the last days of Rhodesia (Hills 1981:167), Zimbabwe would be run as representatives of the black majority saw fit. The headmaster's confusion suggested that previously he had enjoyed some certainty regarding where he belonged. 'Now,' he remarked, 'I've come to feel that they don't want us here.' He had been 'at home' when others shared his habits and the sense of order that regulated life in Rhodesia and he had felt confident of the location's agreed values. As Shurmer-Smith and Hannan (1994:3) tellingly point out:

[T]he world is a more comfortable place when the legitimized view of it coincides with one's own interests, when one perceives oneself to be at the centre and others at the margins, when one's own notions of hierarchy, morality, order and intelligence do not have to be strenuously defended at every turn.

Twenty years on found the headmaster disoriented and unsettled, aware that his values no longer equipped him to be a competent member of his religious congregation.

The sense of disconnectedness had come about rather differently for more liberally minded whites, as a result, they said, of 'our too high expectations'. One who identified with the causes of the black majority said, 'At first Mugabe seemed to have his finger on the pulse, he had the people's needs at heart. We had high hopes for his administration but these evaporated as the leadership

lost sight of its goals.’ A second¹⁴ described at greater length her hopes of a better life for all, something she had worked for in a voluntary capacity over the preceding two decades.

I’m old fashioned; home for me is being connected to my blood relations [although none remains in Zimbabwe]. I’m ‘home’ when I have aunts, uncles, grandparents and grandchildren around me to offer support and share the joys. For me, it’s not a place thing at all. I had a home in Rhodesia and then Zimbabwe when the kids were here. We realised around independence that they would probably go—a gloomy prospect but we have accepted that they should. Now Zimbabwe is somewhere we reside, not more.

There was, however, more to her sense of homelessness than simply the departure of her children, as she went on to explain:

We were longing for independence, we thought it would be wonderful, but it’s just been a disappointment. Our dream was that independence would bring a better chance for the downtrodden; we were not comfortable with being a privileged minority, I am uncomfortable even now. For the first decade, I kept hope of a better future alive. But from the 1990s, the dream kept getting further away. I felt the situation in mid 1998 could lead to upturn and change. But we got to the end of the year and I became ill as nil had happened. All we had was increased repression. I can’t bury my head and keep out of social issues, which is the advice friends give us. I’m angry that the [Anglican] Church has not stood up and issued statements about the situation here. The CCJP has done the most, but other religious bodies have not backed them up. My connectedness has died; we have become disappointed and disillusioned due to unfulfilled hopes. A small group of white Rhodies and black extremists make the trouble. I have no time for either, but they get the media coverage. Then you have the disillusioned blacks, the mass of poverty-stricken people. I can see no way they can get out of poverty. This is a country of no hope. I want to be part of a country of hope.

Hope had offered a hypothetical route for this woman’s homecoming, the cessation of her sense of alienation with an end to black poverty and lack of privilege, the vision transcending the past and closing the door on colonial history.

14 This informant had just completed 20 years of voluntary work, most of it in homes for needy children and with a programme for the destitute run by the Anglican Church. Unlike many whites, she took on these projects after independence, at a time when other whites had resigned from charitable organisations.

Hopes of change had come for many liberals with the formation of the National Constitutional Association (NCA) in May 1997. With a broad civic membership that embraced church and women's groups, businesspeople, professionals, farmers and students as well as NGOs and human rights representatives, the association encouraged public participation in constitutional reform and in addressing the economic and political challenges facing the country. By June 1998, with Morgan Tsvangirai in the chair, the NCA was poised to enter reform politics. In July, the organisation submitted a paper to the government setting out its proposals. In October, however, negotiations with the government received a major setback when riot police broke up a peaceful NCA demonstration protesting Zimbabwe's involvement in the war in the Congo while also pressing the need for constitutional change (Kagoro 2004:241–8). With hopes for a better life for the majority still unrealised, liberal attachment to the country weakened. Recognising this, conservatives pointed out that they, with fewer expectations, adjusted more readily to majority rule. Blacks, no less than conservative whites, were also critical of liberal positioning. They noted that white liberals had failed to demonstrate the acts of identification, described earlier, that were required of 'active' citizens. Black radicals perceived liberals to be, at best, irrelevant to the new nation and at worst 'enemies of black liberation'¹⁵ (Mandaza 1995:31). They attributed ulterior motives to voluntary work as liberal 'good intentions' were seen as racist and paternalistic and an integral part of the imperial system of power (Mafeje 1996:35). All in all, therefore, white liberals have not found their home in Zimbabwe to be a more comfortable place than in Rhodesia—something they had generally not foreseen in the run-up to 1980.

Coming home but 'not home'

During the first two decades of independence, however, not all whites were thinking about leaving. Some who were out of the country during the war were making a return journey in order to be part of the new Zimbabwe. And, by the mid 1980s, a few early post-independence emigrants were also on their way back, their return the ultimate rite of passage reflecting, some argued, reconciliation with independent Zimbabwe. Initially, the official reaction was encouraging. In line with the policy of national reconciliation, returnees were depicted as simply having a change of heart and a new appreciation of the good things about life in the country. Their return was taken to reflect well on the government and their skills were needed. Immigration authorities assured Zimbabwean passport holders that they could stay out of the country as long

¹⁵ Note, for instance, Febion Waniwa's letter 'We don't need white liberals anymore' (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 20 September 1996, p. 5). Every now and again, however, white liberals were thanked in particular for bringing world attention to bear on the Matabeleland massacres. See also 'We thank you white liberals', *Zimbabwe Independent*, 11 October 1996, p. 5.

as they liked, while permanent residents could be away continuously for seven years before their immigration status was jeopardised. The relationship with the land they called their home country had not been broken and all had an automatic right of re-entry.¹⁶ Certainly, informants coming back in the 1980s had little trouble re-entering Zimbabwe. Permanent residents were told they ‘could move around, and in and out, of the country like citizens’.¹⁷ Thus, access to the national territory was conferred on all returnees, the only substantive difference between them being that permanent residents, unlike citizens, could face deportation.

How had informants on the way back—having imagined home in Africa from a distance—found living in the place as home again? In the following passage, a conscientious objector relates the experience of departure from his homeland and return more than a decade and a half later:

I left in 1969 to go to Cape Town University. It was very hard to come home during the '70s because the army would pick me up. After two and a half years, I dropped out. When I realised I could not come home permanently, it broke my heart. I went to the UK from the Cape. My father wanted me to come back and do my duty. But later he relented when it became obvious that the war was not the five-minute affair whites initially expected. As people began getting killed, both parents changed their attitudes and supported my decision. But my heart was always in Africa, my family, and my roots. I always knew my sojourn overseas was temporary and that I would come back once the war was over and the country settled. I never had any doubt about this but my wife was less sure; she could have lived in the UK or Australia, though she came round once our first child was born. I did not like the British class-consciousness nor their racism—they never let me feel at home there. Getting back here was a long process. There were a number of changes making up a phase of my life. I had to sell property in the UK. I'd bought a house and then renovated it over two years. It was outrageously modern. I lived in it for six years but never attached to it, never put down roots. The house was featured in an English magazine called *House and Garden*, but I sold it and walked away without looking back. The sale represented my ticket home, the wherewithal to get back and set up a business. Arriving back was in many ways a non-event. My father had died, my brothers had emigrated and friends scattered to all corners of the world. There are very few around now. It's like 'Oh, I'm home', but there's no response. The white community will perhaps turn into a small but unique community. It will not be absorbed, but remain

16 'Dozens who "took the gap" applying to come back', *The Herald*, 5 April 1985, p. 3.

17 Zimbabwe Department of Information, 22 October 1984, p. 3.

separate partly because the powers that be keep impressing on the black majority how different we are. We could belong if this stopped. But, should the white community get as small as that in Kenya or Zambia, then we will try to go to Australia.

The man had sustained memories of home from afar and the sense of belonging in Africa throughout his time overseas. Yet, while yearning to return to something that once was, he discovered his home had altered in his absence. His recollections reflect the tension of being simultaneously 'home' and yet finding himself 'not home' in light of his father's death and the absence of friends. The place of his desire had become a place of no return (Brah 1996:192). His wife, returning to her place of origin as neither citizen nor stranger, proffered:

We wanted independence and peace to return to our home, and were glad that chaos did not follow the end of the war. But we did not anticipate migration dividing our families. Many parents now have a child on every continent. Home for me is a longing, a sense of belonging. It's very important. It's a gut thing, lots of little things rolled into one, that make you feel secure. My concept is very local—a house with a garden. I returned when my home country had sorted itself out. But I find I have no right to live here. My home has been taken from me.

The informant conflates the terms home and home country, suggesting the intersection of public and private, individual and communal that George (1996:11) argues is implicit in imaging a space as home. Conceiving of home as a place of refuge, however, she found the old, settled coherence had given way. The home to which she had returned no longer felt comfortable, for the location had been appropriated in her absence. Now classified as a 'foreign spouse', she admitted to mixed feelings about putting the effort into trying to make Zimbabwe her home again.

This informant's experience of homecoming contrasts sharply, however, with that of another woman, pregnant with her second child, for whom the essential elements of her conception of home have not proved transportable (Read 1999:36). She had never 'arrived' in Australia and, when her husband was 'invited'—or, in the words of another wife, 'enticed'—back while on holiday by his former mates with promises of a job and help with finding a place to live, they returned in 1996. The informant spoke of this in specifically domestic terms, choosing not to dwell on home as a metaphor for social relations on the broader, national scale:

I felt very isolated [in Perth] when I heard a friend, the first of my group, was pregnant. My husband also likes to share our friends' children, to know them as they grow up, to be part of their lives. I was depressed

that I would not share those kids. That was the main reason we came back. In Australia, it's not cool once you're a teenager to spend time with the family. Here we holiday together, and eat together regularly—we hang out with our families. There was no problem returning as we hadn't officially emigrated and we only have Zimbabwean passports. I refuse to worry about the longer term. If there's a coup we can leave again. We can start all over; we've done it before, we can do it again. But our friends were shocked by our decision [to return]. They asked why were we 'so stupid'. We've been back 18 months now and we're still asked, 'Are you happy you're back?' There are a lot of post-mortems.

Relationships with family and friends provided the fundamental meaning to the young mother's life (Jackson 1995:56) and underpinned her sense of being 'at home' again in Zimbabwe. Economic liberalisation, outlined in Chapter 6, gave this couple and other younger whites the chance to return, some re-entering the country under the government's new investor provisions. But, while the couple was welcomed back by those they knew, and parents spoke of 'getting our family back together' or 'getting the children back', white strangers were more critical, saying

those who return say they're back for the children, that this is a wonderful place to grow up. But that's a rationalisation. They want an easy life; they're lazy, incapable of change or working hard. Imagine being given a gift like that [entry to Australia] and throwing it away! Grab the chance with both hands!

Here the speaker intimates failure on the young mother's behalf and alludes to compelling pressures working against return. Yet critics such as this overlook that the place of one's origins represents the bedrock of identity in childhood (Taylor 1992:92)—something captured by a young man when he justified Zimbabwe as his home on the grounds that 'I grew up here, I went to school here, I broke my arm here, I have friends here, it's all I know'. During their absence, returnees, like their Newfoundland counterparts (Gmelch 1983:50; Richling 1985:243, 246), continued to think of Zimbabwe as their homeland and many wished to live near their families. They commonly re-experienced an acute sense of bonding with the place, of coming home at border crossings, with one describing how 'we always felt we'd got home once we'd crossed the bridge over the Limpopo [River, at Beitbridge]. We'd relax. South Africa is a much tenser place.' Even at the height of the civil war, many found a 'striking change of atmosphere' as the frontier with South Africa was crossed (Hudson 1981:195). A second, returning from Australia, said, 'I *know* I'm home when I touch down and meet the immigration officials. Harare is no battery-run airport. But before that, I *feel* I'm home, looking down to see if the grass is green, has there been rain, are the dams full.' She contrasts the personal and impersonal,

the disorderly versus the efficient (Australian) airport, before sharing every Zimbabwean's obsession with the seasonal quality of the rains. This was the landscape in which she grew up and she was grounded by its setting. It is her emotional experience and what has shaped her.

Another, finding his 'travelling' home unsatisfactory, also took the opportunity provided by economic liberalisation to return. The young man had been taken from Zimbabwe as an adolescent in the early 1980s after his parents' divorce, but returned on holiday each year as part of the custody arrangements. He elected to return on a permanent basis as a young adult in search of a location that was more stable, or fixed, in which he could again be 'at home'. His narrative, however, suggested that he too was disturbed by the sense of finding himself 'not home', his hopes dashed in part by political realities. Speaking metaphorically, he said:

My home for the last five years has been a canvas bag, a tent. It would probably have been better if I had left at age thirteen and never come back. I'm torn between two countries; it is a daily crisis I live with. I feel at home here as soon as I arrive at the airport, and see the Africans on the streets and climbing into ETs [emergency taxis]. I spent my childhood here, it is familiar, I know many people, black and white; it's a face-to-face community. In Australia, you have to get your information from the Yellow Pages; it's anonymous and impersonal. I never felt at home in Perth, another reason being that it lacked history, it felt like nothing important had ever happened there. History is an anchoring point for being at home. Harare has history. A battle took place on the site of my old primary school and in the surrounding region there are many remains of early Shona settlements. History is also important to my sense of identity; it helps me with who I am, locates me in the scheme of things. Trees are important too. Then there was two-faced Australian racism. In outback Western Australia, I've seen bars for Aboriginals and bars for whites. But Australians have the nerve to be critical of things in Zimbabwe. They come here as tourists to scrutinise and judge, all by Australian and CNN standards. In Africa, we live in the real world, with real poverty and real suffering. The international community holds double standards also. They didn't criticise Mugabe for sending tanks into Chitungwiza during the riots.¹⁸ Returning has put me in an aggressive mode. I'm very upset by the government's white conspiracy theories. Even the people in the communal areas don't blame the whites for all the problems. It's orchestrated from the top. I know my [economic]

18 While tanks and troops were deployed extensively throughout Harare's shopping areas after rioting in early 1998, local television had shown a convoy moving along the highway towards the satellite town of Chitungwiza, angering the public, who perceived the State to be 'moving against its own people'.

goals, but the path is blocked. It's a Rubik's cube. But it's better to try at this age [young and unmarried], otherwise I would never [have] known if I could have made a life here. Friends and relatives thought I was mad or 'cooked' to return as all they want to do is get out.

The informant's testimony suggests that home, perhaps contrary to his expectations, is an inherently unstable space. His narrative reflects the ambivalence that comes with the recognition that the coherence, the comfort and safety—the imagined consonance between self and place—are an illusion. He shares the double vision, the crisis of identity, of many returnees. Caught between homes and national affiliations (George 1996:70), he constructed the place of return in part as alien by making strange what was once familiar (Taylor 1992:86). As 'an African', he knows 'real' hardship in a way Westerners do not and is insulted by the ignorance and prejudice of those originating from other settler societies whose colonial histories are no more commendable than his own. At the same time, he was aware that his kind, as perpetrators of the suffering of others (Shurmer-Smith and Hannan 1994:43), could expect little international sympathy on account of their folly or the predicament in which they now found themselves. Nonetheless, he was distressed to find white businessmen unreasonably blamed for 'hatching a plot to make the lives of the masses unbearable' by the Minister of Information, Comrade Chen Chimutengwende, for in effect inciting the countrywide price and food riots in December 1997 and January 1998.¹⁹ The protests in fact marked the breakdown of the contract set at the beginning of economic reform in 1990 between labour, government and employers. While labour had kept its word to belt tighten and accept declining wages, the government had failed to demonstrate its commitment by cutting expenditure or meeting free-market targets (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Zimbabwe Economics Society 1998c). Continuing its profligate ways, the government had raised taxes on basic commodities to fund the war veterans' payout and later that year entered the war in the Congo.

The informant's sense of homecoming was also diminished by the inability to recover his former assurance of being 'at home' in Zimbabwe, for, by the year of his return, black attitudes towards returnees had hardened. The indigenisation

19 Whites found themselves blamed in remarks made by Comrade Chen Chimutengwende, the Minister of Information, Posts and Telecommunications, and in statements made by the Harare ZANU PF Provincial Office for the price/food riots in December 1997 and January 1998. A joint investigation by the Zimbabwe Economics Society and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (1998c:2) concluded, however, that these accusations were unfounded. The price rises in maize and other basic food commodities were triggered by several factors. Chief among them were an increase in government sales tax from 2.5 per cent to 17 per cent to finance the war veteran gratuities, an increase in the Grain Marketing Board's (a para-statal) selling price of maize due to seasonal grain shortages and the depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar against all major currencies ('Minister warns over price hikes', *Sunday Mail*, 11 January 1998, p. 1; 'Looting as food riots hit Harare', *The Herald*, 20 January 1998, p. 1; 'Give whites a break, Chen', *The Financial Gazette*, 29 January 1998, p. 7; 'Government insecurity catalyst for riots', *The Financial Gazette*, 29 January 1998, p. 9).

lobby saw them as competitors, referred to them as 'new immigrants' and opposed the return of supposedly 'large numbers' wanting to come back from Europe, America, Australia and South Africa.²⁰ The ruling party voiced its concern that 'Rhodesians' were 'in constant touch with each other world-wide, keeping the tribe together, cultivating a sense of community' on the Internet, while 'implanting the idea of [a] return "home" in the younger generation'.²¹ Not only were these white messages anti-government, they were also part and parcel of keeping 'Rhodesian' identity alive. Officials were therefore reluctant to let whites come back for they had 'run away from a black government'.²² By 'rejecting' Zimbabwe's national space for another, seemingly more desirable location, émigrés had effectively 'unwritten' the State's national project (George 1996:186). Inevitably, some applicants found their return path blocked, while whites more generally came to realise that access to one's home country, conceived as a place of origin and imminent return (Hobsbawm 1991:65), was no longer assured. The community began to refer to having 'our birthright cancelled', their sense of displacement 'made emotionally more resonant' through the State's process of othering (Jess and Massey 1995:134).

Homelessness as political process: subject formation and 'the end of our history'

Whites' claims to an automatic right of domicile and the inalienable right to a home on the basis of having been born in the country (see Chapter 5) are rich with connotations of origin and entitlement. Theirs is a conception of home as a place of rightful settlement—a 'natural' right and something one should not have to deserve or defend (Hollander 1991:33). Places, however, as systems of meaning constructed through the production of geographical locatedness, lack fixity and are therefore open to reworking and transformation (Massey 1995a:3; Hall 1995:178). Material presented up to this point suggests that white Zimbabweans, in common with the Ugandan Asians expelled in 1972 by Idi Amin (Mamdani 1973) and the Greek Cypriots who 'lost' their homeland after the 1974 coup and subsequent Turkish invasion of Cyprus (Loizos 1981:120–1), have heard a lot about themselves in policy statements and political speeches. These served to reshape white perceptions of their position in Zimbabwe.

20 'Returnees face tough task', *The Daily Gazette*, 1 November 1994, p. 1; 'Many Rhodies undergo a change of heart', *The Sunday Mail*, 11 December 1995, p. 1; 'Proceed with care with new immigrants', *The Herald*, 10 January 1997, p. 8.

21 'Ex-Rhodesians intensify anti-Zimbabwe campaign', *The People's Voice*, 26 July 1998, p. 1.

22 'Many Rhodies undergo a change of heart', *The Sunday Mail*, 11 December 1995, p. 1; *Parliamentary Debates*, 8 May 1996, cols 5135–42.

Contradictory statements made by political leaders led to confusion and rumour and drew whites into a process that shifted their sense of belonging, their unease growing steadily throughout the 1990s.

The government's handling of the land question proved critical in producing 'the break...the maiming' (Breytenbach 1991:74) that psychologically uncoupled whites from what they had thought of as their homeland. A farmer reflected that 'reconciliation was a promise made to minorities that we would be treated like any other citizen. We stayed after independence and did what was asked of us, we kept farming productively.' Indeed, farmers put money into dams and infrastructure as well as worker facilities during the 1990s in order to secure ownership and earn their place in the post-colonial state. They had tried in effect to 'enracinate' themselves by investing their profits in a 'hydrological revolution' described by Hughes (2006a:271) and through developing the land. Their being mobilised in the State's discourse as agents of productivity and economic development had provided farmers with moments of centring and belonging, and situated them within the national project. The informant said, however, that 'land designation represents a broken promise by government; the land question is not just about the past, it is also about our citizenship in the future'. He had put his faith in a civic concept of citizenship that extended legal and administrative protection to the private property of citizens. In common with other whites, he overlooked the fact that, to politically aware blacks, the Western and liberal language of individual rights rang of the defence of settler privilege. Another elderly farmer, alluding to the displacement of his community, which he had hitherto perceived as rooted in particular localities across the country, said, 'It's their continent. I used to think farming was a viable occupation. Not now.' He had also thought of himself as integrated, even indispensable, by virtue of the farmers' contribution to the national economy, only to find this was not so. A third, putting pen to paper with regard to the compulsory acquisition of productive white-owned farms, wrote 'when you take a man's house and his means of production, then you have certainly expelled him psychologically at the very least'.²³

The farmers' distress was reminiscent of Doris Lessing's sense of loss on learning she had been declared a prohibited immigrant in absentia many years earlier by the Garfield Todd government. She found her exclusion from the land in which she grew up almost impossible to comprehend:

It never crossed my mind I could be: the impossibility was a psychological fact, nothing to do with daylight realities. You cannot be forbidden the land you grew up in, so says the web of sensations, memories, experience, that binds you to that landscape. (Lessing 1992:11)

²³ 'Mugabe's many colours', *Zimbabwe Independent*, 19 December 1997, p. 6.

In essence, she belonged to Rhodesia and Rhodesia therefore belonged to her (Breytenbach 1991:74). Being designated a prohibited person in 1956 shattered this nexus, reproducing Lessing as 'an exile' and 'forcing a rift between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home' (Said 1990:357). Returning briefly in 1982, Lessing was asked by a journalist whether she felt she was coming back home. 'Yes,' she said, 'very much so. It's very painful to be locked out of the country you were brought up in' (Katiyo 1982:43). Banished as punishment for her political opinions, Lessing's remarks echo Malkki's (1997:89) perception that exiles can be conceived as people who have 'been driven from their homes', 'disconnected' from what they consider to be 'their natural setting, their cultural home, their indigenous region' and 'their place of origin'.

By the time my research was well under way, many members of the white community had 'neither an unequivocal sense of membership in their community of origin, nor an uncomplicated conviction of having left it behind' (Ferguson 1992:90). A farm manager drew attention to his community's sense of alienation, of being dislodged from national belonging, when he described the situation in Mazowe, an agricultural region close to Harare:

Only 5 per cent of farmers are reinvesting.²⁴ Most of us are holding back, unsure of the future. What is happening now has no logic. We attended the local CFU meeting in the district at the end of last year.²⁵ The reaction of farm owners was [of being] sick and tired. Their sons and farm managers said, 'That's it, I'm off.' Since independence, farmers have been repeatedly knocked down [through, for example, the lack of foreign exchange with which to purchase agricultural equipment, droughts, the tobacco levy, the forthcoming water bill, and so on] and managed to get up again. But I wonder if we will ever come out of this one [land designation]. So many single-owner, productive farms were listed. Why? I can't believe that it was a mistake and they would later be de-listed. I have no problem with the government buying multiple farms but don't just take them. Our citizenship means nothing. The farm workers are devastated. I read the newspapers. I know I am not wanted in my own country. I'm not a first generation; my family [father's side] has been in Africa for generations. We've done a lot for the country. I'm a fatherly figure for my workers and help them with medical facilities, a store and financially on a daily basis. I'm not saying I'm a hero but, while the farm workers appreciate what I am doing, my efforts are

24 Banks were also wary of lending to farmers whose property had been designated.

25 After the gazetting of farms for compulsory acquisition in late 1997, the CFU toured the country and addressed closed farmer meetings. Officials explained the implications of compulsory land acquisition and outlined the legal and administrative options open to those affected.

not recognised by government. We're written up in the papers as bad people. Politicians make wild promises that can't be met. This is my home, although the government tries to convince us otherwise.

The farm manager's words suggest that he had 'interiorised' (Brah 1996:115) much that the country's leaders and the media had told him about himself and his difference as a white. The manager's wife averred:

We made our decision to emigrate about nine months ago. At first we kept quiet about it, only telling our parents. Now that it is certain, we're telling more and more people. While some have tried to convince us to stay, to our surprise, many have not. Instead, they say that if they were in our shoes they'd be off; some even tell us they've got their papers in too! Now they tell me! Ours is a joint decision that was prompted by land designation and the price riots. The long term looks too uncertain. Before that we thought we'd always be here. Farming was to be our future and the kids' future. It now seems too risky. Once we started to consider the option, the reasons for leaving snowballed; we found so many reasons to go.

Others candidly admitted to finding 'living with this uncertainty frankly, very difficult', their conception of home as a durable place, a site of some permanence and safety, was rapidly giving way (Rapport 1995:268) with each political crisis—for rural and urban whites alike.

A white urban dweller said:

The sense of gloom and despondency is greater now than in the war. At least in the war we had the chance to win, which kept hope alive. Not now. This is the end of our home and our life here. I have no roots anywhere else. What are the farmers supposed to do?

Compulsory land acquisition, followed by farm invasions by war veterans and their supporters, thus gave rise to despair for these events were read by the white community as the nadir signalling 'the end of our history, the end of hope' and 'the end of our way of life', the spectre of their irrelevance to the country already before them.

Moving on: the search for simultaneity

While arguing for the discursive right to a place in the land, whites were now confronted with a critical question, namely whether it was possible, and if so how, for them to turn the page, leave their once-familiar home and move on. Generally speaking, defensive attitudes held by elderly whites made it difficult

for them to think of or imagine a way out of their sense of 'unhomeliness'. Yet around this time there were a number of anti-government protests and mass stay-aways. Standing in 1998 with three elderly women waiting for the local library to open, they had said to each other that 'the current situation can't go on much longer' and 'it will all be over by Christmas'. While their conversational tone was full of anticipation, even eager, they exchanged few concrete ideas regarding how political change would come about or who would replace the current leadership. Instead, most whites held that it was up to disenchanted blacks, rather than themselves, to take the lead in the NCA and support anti-government protests, thereby abdicating responsibility for finding a route out of their deracination. A civil rights activist elaborated upon his compatriots' reluctance to participate:

Whites here are part of the problem. They live in a laager, moving between Borrowdale, Kariba and such like. They will not recognise their contribution to the government's anger over reconciliation. It is so easy not to do anything on the grounds that the government is angry with them, or the government's own contribution to reconciliation is flawed... they act like victims... it is so easy to complain about the government but they [whites] won't join the opposition parties or the civil rights groups.

He suggests that active engagement could go some way in dispelling the whites' sense of themselves as victims while at the same time supporting their own enracination. But, according to Karen Alexander (2004:194), whites live 'off' rather than 'in' Zimbabwe, picking and choosing what they will allow into their lives. Certainly, the activist acknowledged that he 'knew only about a handful of others who think like I do'. A few high-profile whites, such as Mike Auret of the CCJP, lawyer and human rights activist David Coltart and critic Trudy Stevenson, had refused intimidation and joined in constitutional reform. The NCA's civil rights agenda was, however, dismissed by the ruling party as simply a manifestation of neo-colonialism and they were taunted with belonging to the 'unwanted section of society'.²⁶ As founding members of a new political party—and in the case of Coltart and Stevenson, soon to be opposition politicians—they also put up with ridicule and heckling at public meetings.

Nonetheless, after land designation, while nothing would be quite the same again, a new drift began to enter the conversation of a few younger whites with no intention of leaving. The optimistic note, commonly heard in the early

26 Government representatives took the position that modern transnational civil rights rhetoric espoused by the educated elite found within the CCJP, the Amani Trust and other civil rights groups was nothing more than a neo-colonial imposition, inconsistent with African cultural traditions and an example of white paternalism. See also ZANU PF Harare Province advertisements in *The Herald*, 11 August 1997, p. 8. Instead, the State argued that the rights of individuals should be understood as embedded in the communities to which they belonged.

1990s, that Zimbabwe's problems 'will all pan out' or 'come right in the end', even if the ways and means were obscure, was replaced with assertions of a new realism. For instance: 'I've now come to believe that the country has to hit rock bottom before it will start to turn around', or alternatively, 'I've now got used to the idea that the country will always be like this: politically unstable and with a declining currency'. These informants intimated that while larger political and economic factors appeared beyond their control, they might not be beyond their accommodation (Bhabha 1994:12). Although being 'at home' could no longer be as they had previously known it, the 'end of our history' could perhaps herald a period of homecoming if they were able to let go of the past and embrace the antithesis of all that they had held familiar (George 1996:27).

This idea was taken on board by the 'new breed' of urban white Zimbabweans—notably, those who were younger and openly critical of the 'continual carping' by their parents' generation. Tired of the 'unfair criticism of blacks' and the 'bitter pleasure' evident in stories of how the black government 'has messed it all up', some were ready to get involved in opposition politics. One of this group remarked:

The current debate on the state of the nation is circumscribed. Whites argue in terms of their needs, not the needs and future of the country as a whole. For example, they don't back the ZCTU [Zimbabwe Confederation of Trade Unions]. It's a good thing if we hit rock bottom, for that's the only way people will learn.

'Hitting rock bottom' would perhaps stimulate critical reflection regarding the state of the country and national goals by all Zimbabweans, and make 'people think Zimbabwean'. This informant implies an interstitial passage (Bhabha 1994:4) for whites, in which the move from one home to another begins with new priorities and ways of thinking that create sets of relationships with the capacity to generate non-hierarchical links between people and places. He and a small number of others put store in experiences of control and connectedness, of homecoming through simultaneity with the black majority, during the turbulent events taking place at the time.

The young man mentioned earlier as having 'thrown his lot in with the country' provides a case in point. He spoke of belonging and not belonging in different urban locales during the first trade unions' day of mass action on 9 December 1997, called to protest the government's proposal to raise taxes in order to finance gratuities and pensions paid to ex-combatants. This protest shut down all commercial and industrial sites across Zimbabwe as well as much of the public sector. Without much forward planning, he had hurriedly closed

his business and headed towards Africa Unity Square in central Harare, where demonstrators were converging. Access roads, however, were blocked and he found nowhere to leave his beaten-up, old car.

There were so many riot police and gas, I felt at risk. I couldn't find a place to park and I can't afford to lose the car. The violence was too much. I wanted to show solidarity with the people. I went home utterly frustrated and impotent. But in the suburbs it was a different story. There was harmony and togetherness. Black and white strangers were smiling and talking to each other, much more than usual; we were together on this issue, we all know that it is the government who is oppressing the people, not another racial group.

The young man's longing for wholeness and unity was a pervasive theme in his conversation. Conscious of living in an 'unhomely world', he was 'looking for the join' (Bhabha 1994:18); his words expressed his desire for social solidarity. Within the space of a few hours, the informant's sense of city alienation gave way to suburban equivalence, generated by the small acts of recognition and kindness that had some capacity to restrain schismogenesis (Bateson 1973:43-4).

The success and support shown on this and other days of ZCTU protest that continued into 1998 had a huge psychological impact. Sachikonye (1998:8) remembers 9 December as 'much more than just a massive national shut-down' and describes it as 'a coalescence of the public mood'. White businesspeople allowed workers time off with pay and supported the various days of mass action for an assortment of reasons. Some agreed with the political issues behind the protest and believed workers' grievances to be genuine. Others had been approached and asked by union officials to close, felt a hint of intimidation should they refuse and, as business owners, decided shutting up shop was preferable to paying for damages should looting occur. As it turned out, most demonstrations were generally peaceful, despite provocations by the security forces that prompted a change of ZCTU tactics. To avert confrontations with the State, striking workers were told to stay at home or stay away rather than congregate in the city centre.

The government for its part talked of a 'white conspiracy' and 'an unholy alliance' between white employers and the unions, accused workers of teaming up with 'the oppressors' and, likening it to a 'happy marriage', asked angrily 'why is there so much harmony' between employers and union leaders. A year later, the government was still talking of this 'strange and queer relationship' between capital and labour, not previously seen in Zimbabwe.²⁷ Yet black employers gave their workers the day off under similar conditions as white bosses. They too shared

27 *The Herald*, 13 December 1997, p. 1, 12 December 1998, p. 1.

the belief that the 'government must learn to manage money responsibly' and 'stop overspending'. When asked why they did not challenge the government's notion of a white conspiracy, however, they responded that they would rather 'let whites take the heat'. Not so Mr Kunjeku of the Employers' Confederation, who disputed ZANU PF's racialisation of the conflict. He publicly questioned the government's interpretation of events, angrily asking aren't 'black bosses able to make their own decisions, aren't they autonomous', and 'aren't workers able to think for themselves, don't they have legitimate grievances'? Kunjeku also pointed out that the overwhelming majority of all employers and employees were black and not 'the slaves' of whites.²⁸

Other whites, aware of being highly visible targets on the streets, phoned in messages supporting the stay-aways to a local radio station, 'honked' their horns as they passed protesters on their way to town and submitted letters of encouragement to the local papers. These marginal activities reflect shared concerns and 'difference within' an imagined collectivity (Bhabha 1994:13)—a perception also apparent in a second episode in which the young man above 'felt grounded, a Zimbabwean'. He had become 'fed up with planes flying low' over his house late one night and rang the air traffic controllers. The woman taking the call 'listened to my concerns, and talked openly and frankly about it. I was impressed for even though she could do nothing about the problem she did not give me "the blank face". I wasn't dismissed as just another unreconciled white.' Here the invitation to contribute existed and the traffic controller accepted the informant's attempts at authorship. Her recognition generated in him the feeling of being at home and of belonging. He was not interpellated simply as a white racist—where, as Shotter (1993:126) notes, the first question to be asked would be 'is he one of us'—but listened to seriously as was warranted of a fellow national or countryman. Consequently, the incident proved a pleasing experience, contributing to a perception of agency and formative of a sense of belonging within the national collective.

Occasionally, members of the black majority also publicly recognised and gave voice to black and white interconnectedness. For instance, the following excerpt refers to the common ground, rather than the difference, that is critical to a mutually recognised sense of belonging to the same country. More conscious of this with the benefit of distance, Munyaradzi wrote encouragingly from the United Kingdom: 'I know it's hard for them as it is for me to admit that, in spite of everything, we are inexorably related by the country we both call our own.' Then, after supporting in principle the redistribution of land, his letter went on:

28 *Issues and Views*, ZBC TV, 8 March 1998.

[S]o, for my white brothers, all I can say is hang on in there and try to make the best of a horrible situation. You have been through this before when you had your backs to the wall through sanctions... Because I am away from home I can look at the stupidity of white arrogance and the annoyance of black scapegoating with a clearer perspective... White and urban black Zimbabweans are closer in perceptions to each other than they are to Europeans or rural blacks. So, behave yourselves out there and stop poking sticks into each other's eyes.²⁹

Distance—being away from home—contributed to the writer's definition of a shared place as a source of belonging. Here again an act of recognition opened up social relations. In effect, Munyaradzi gave up 'the absolutes' and moved away from a binary conception of society (Bhabha 1994:14). His passage offered a space, a home, to whites once urban interconnectedness was acknowledged. This was an important and frequently overlooked idea in Zimbabwe. At some level, the author implicitly accepted the interrelatedness of black and white history and the fluidity, or unboundedness, of culture that gives birth to hybridity (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a:3).

The recognition of mutuality, of 'one's self in the other, the other in one's self' (Jackson 1995:118), articulated by a small number of blacks and whites was, however, the *sotto voce* to the Manichean starkness of the official narrative, in which notions of home were drafted into the service of nationalism (Bammer 1992:xi). Some months before the publication of Munyaradzi's letter Mugabe had described 'those who belong to one another' as those 'who fought the liberation struggle together'³⁰ when outlining the historical importance of the armed struggle. These comrades in arms, represented at Heroes' Acre by sculptures of the freedom fighters described in Chapter 4, possess dynamism and vitality. With noble heads held high, they appear 'to breathe' and 'blend naturally with their surroundings showing that they are at home' (Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications 1998:4). The figures' confidence in being 'at home' differentiates them from those who 'participated on the opposite side', 'the people's one common enemy',³¹ who remain under an obligation to prove political commitment, loyalty and patriotism.

Most whites, however, were unwilling to take up this political burden and its articulation of the past, which contributed only closure and fixity to their future. In view of the exclusivity of this state narrative and recriminations in the aftermath of the 1985 election, some had long argued that the white community should steer clear of politics. Others, however, made common

29 'Be more analytic and substantive', *Zimbabwe Independent*, 12 December 1997, p. 5.

30 'How Zimbabwe was won', *The Sunday Mail*, 16 February 1997, p. 1.

31 *Ibid.*

cause and supported the alliance of the NCA and labour leaders out of which a new political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), emerged in September 1999. The new party, with Morgan Tsvangirai, the ZCTU's Secretary-General, at the helm, evolved out of the trade unions' leading role in the civics movement. This newly formed cross-class and multiracial alliance committed itself to the rule of law and democratic process (Alden and Makumbe 2001:215, 233). The President had by this time let it be known that the policy of reconciliation would be revisited. 'Whites,' he said, 'are here at the sufferance of the blacks' and, evincing the State's power of eviction, could 'have all been expelled in 1980'.³² While some whites advocated that they should 'unanimously follow a passive course' and decline to vote in the forthcoming 2000 election, in order that they not be blamed for the result, others were galvanised by their community's alienation from the nation. They therefore supported the MDC and subverted Mugabe's message, saying 'Vote for a home—if you want a home, vote wisely', suggesting the wisdom of votes cast for the opposition. Thus 'home', operating in the same mythic field as family and nation, is a concept with profound emotional legitimacy (Anderson 1990:15, 31; Bammer 1992:x). As a metaphor for belonging, the term has an indeterminate referential quality (Bammer 1992:vii), allowing it to represent social relations at the domestic or at the enlarged national field (George 1996:13) while, in Zimbabwe, conferring or rejecting claims to a location as home provides a means of establishing minority difference (George 1996:2).

Conclusion

In sum, informants' ideas of home and home country coalesced around issues of entitlement and familiarity. The use of these terms conveyed the importance of family and community ties, tradition, history, agreed values, contentment, security, refuge, a rightful place of settlement and return, and so on. In each instance, the notion of home represented a territorial core and mythic space (Bammer 1992:ix) that had been shaped by people's experiences as well as the narratives that interpreted those experiences for them. During my fieldwork, however, the whites' sense of place and certainty was giving way within the wider political context of independence (Rose 1995:88). State-sponsored 'patriotic history' (Ranger 2004) constituted its villains and heroes out of the colonial memory, interpellating whites in such a way that triggered the dialectics of colonialism, disallowed doubling and thereby preventing whites from placing themselves within the national frame (Bammer 1992:xii). By freezing national belonging in the moment of the anti-colonial struggle, a hostile and combative dualism had been set up that worked against the recognition of

32 'Reconciliation policy may be revisited', *The Sunday Mail*, 28 February 1999, p. 1; Deve 1993:21.

racial interconnectedness and the permeability of boundaries (Massey 1992:14). The concept of home was thus implicated in the xenophobic resonance of Zimbabwean nationalism and, as whites saw it, their homelessness was part of the party's national agenda.

At the same time, understanding themselves as not belonging or feeling 'not home' in the country of their birth and residence was also of their own doing—produced by their reluctance to give up Euro-centrism and historicism (Chakrabarty 2000:7). For, generally speaking, white Zimbabweans have not stepped beyond the colonial hierarchy; they have failed to 'fit in' and accommodate themselves to the ways of the black majority. Instead, they have expected the formerly colonised to continue to accommodate them. Not recognising this, most had few ideas about how to retrieve agency and come home again by untying their identity from the isolation inherent in racial and cultural difference. While being at home had never been equally accessible to all those who were born in and inhabited the country, white narratives also suggested their displacement was 'a condition rarely experienced as absolute, unambivalent or final' (Ferguson 1992:90). There was not so much a definite break in their sense of belonging as a partial and conditional awareness of growing uncertainty, their experience of displacement being, as Ferguson (1992) avers, full of ambiguity and indeterminacy, even where the process was marked by significant events.