

## **Naming, space and power in Noviolet Bulawayo's *We need new Names* (2013) AND Lawrence Hoba's 'The first Trek – The pioneers' in *The Trek and other stories* (2009)**

Elda Hungwe

### **Abstract**

This paper examines the relationship between place naming, space and power in Lawrence Hoba's 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. I argue that place naming is a concept fraught with exclusionary and inclusionary tendencies and results in the creation of physical, cultural and imaginative borders and boundaries. The ability to include/exclude and create borders and boundaries is chiefly an exercise of power and dominance. These borders and boundaries testify to the fact that space is heterogeneous and unevenly constituted. Political and economic considerations largely influence this unevenness, which chiefly translates into the realm of the social and symbolic given that space is a social construct. Place naming is also reflective of the desire to control, manage and police spaces. In *NoViolet Bulawayo's We Need New Names*, I focus on the street names (Mzilikazi Street, Hope Street and Chimurenga Street) and place names such as Paradise, Budapest and Shanghai, which I read as reflecting the racial, class and gender dimensions of spacing in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Bulawayo uses place naming as a trope to reflect the heterogeneous nature of space in post-colonial Zimbabwe and challenges the conventional nationalist myth of sameness and equality. In Lawrence Hoba's 'The First Trek - The Pioneers', I examine how place naming is used as a trope to underscore the racial, class and gender dimensions of the land reform programme executed by the Zimbabwean government in post-2000. I argue that such place naming is largely exclusionary as it marginalises women and the poor.

**Keywords:** exclusion, identity, inclusion, literature, place naming, power, space