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The Mobile Workshop

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8 Traffic Control: A Surveillance System for Unwanted Passengers

*Ke nna lexokolodi le lesa leputlelele la
nkô ye nthso,
Se-nwa-meetse le 'dibeng tsa baloyi.*

*Wa re ke tla lôwa ke mang?
Ke paletse le-ija-motho le 'fsifising la
nkata,*

*Mo dinkatawana le dinyamatsana di
bokollaxo madi bosexo le mosexare.
Ke nna lexokolodi le lese lepopoduma le
dumêla teng.*

*Baxêxo ba nhteile ba re ke nna
Ke-sa-ya-Borwa.
Ke hlanamile xa e se nna marwala-
dithoto,
Namana ye nthso yaBorwa,
Ke nna moloji-moso
Moloji wa bosexo le mosexare,
Ke nna Ramaêtô setsubalala lesokeng,
mohlôya-tsela,
Ke nna lexoletsa mollô teng.*

*Ke laditse pitsi kxang
Re ile re siana ya re ke lebelô, mohlaba
wa re ke nabile,
Ka feta nna namane e nthso.
Kei le ke fihla motse-molla-kôma,*

*Ba re ba mpotsisa, ka re ke tswa xa
ntintilane,
Ke tswa setsibye,*

Ke tswa naxeng tsa kxole.

Ba re mphaxo O tla tsea wa eng?

I am the black millipede, the rusher
with a black nose
Drinker of water even in the fountains
of the witches.

And who do you say will bewitch me?
I triumphed over the one who eats a
person (the sun) and over the pitch-
black darkness,

Where the carnivorous animals drink
blood day and night.

I am the millipede, the mighty roarer
that roars within.

My people have named me, they say
I'm-still-going-south.

I have changed, I am no longer a
carrier of
goods, the black calf of the South,
I am the black witch
The witch of day and night,
I am a traveler the vigorous rapid one
and hater of the road,
I am the one that kindles fire in the
stomach.

I have won the horse,
When we raced I was the fastest, the
sand filled the air

And I passed, I the black calf.

I arrived at the place where the
circumcision drum was beating.

When they asked me I told them that,

I come from a place which nobody
knows,

I come from the unknown, from a
far-away country.

They asked me what kind of provision I
would take?

*Ka re xa ke tseye mphaxo ka etsa
mafsêxa a a xeno
Nna ke lalêla ka tlala mo-ja-o-sa-hlalle.
Kei la mathudi boxadi bya Ramaêsela,*

*Xe nka hwetswa mathuding
mokxolokwane ó ka lla
Wa etsa sebata-kxomo xe nkwê e swere
ya mosate.
Xaxeso ba nhloboxile.*

*Xa se nna ngwana-lapa,
Ke lexokolodi le tumisa khuiti,
Xa ke ditelwe ke tlala,
Ke ditelwa ke bana ba naxa;
Xa ke ditelwe ke maoto-bohloko,*

*Le xo loba ke loba xo bôna
Xa ke rate xo huêla dikôma
Dikôma xa se tsa bo motho;
Baxeso ba itaetse xe ba ntesa k aba
lexwara-xwara.*

Metse nkabe e se ya thopya

*Nna sexakalala mohla motse ó eme ka
dinao,
Naxa e re: 'Ke tla ba khutisa kae
mafsexa a?
Ke dula ke le dihloko mo tseleng*

*Ke wêla-wêla mekoteng
Ke etsa noka xe e êla,
Ke rwele motse wa monna yo moso
Ba ka ntirang benye-tselo*

*Nna lexokolodi
Le lesa se polakêla-dinakô/
(Demetrius Segooa, in van Zyl 1941,
130–132)*

And I said I do not take provision like
these cowards of yours.

I sleep without food, I, the omnivorous;
I shun the verandah where Ramaêsela is
married,

If I be found on the verandah a
triumphal outcry will be heard
Like the great cry when the leopard has
victimized the royal animals.

At my home they have lost all hope of
ever finding me

I am not a house-child,

I am the millipede that praises the vlei,

I am not delayed by hunger,

Nor am I delayed by sore feet,

But I am delayed by the children of the
wild;

To pay tribute, I pay tribute to them.

I do not want to die for the sacred

The sacred belong to nobody;

My people have committed national

suicide by allowing me to become a
deserter

Villages would not have been taken
into captivity.

I the brave, when the village stands on
its feet (in danger)

And the country says: Where shall I
hide them these cowards?

I remain with my feet on the road
(always travelling)

And go falling-falling into the dongas,

I imitate a river which is in flood

Carrying the village of a black man.

What can they do to me, the owners of
the road

To me the black millipede

That rushes for scheduled times?

This is a *setswana* poem about the train, likened to a black millipede traveling in very difficult conditions, such as the heat of the sun and the thick, impenetrable darkness of the night, the hills, and the mountains. Its journeys are endless; surely, it also has to be tired like every other being. As something that conveys all kinds of things to their destinations, the train calls itself a being that consumes everything (van Zyl 1941, 153). It is vulnerable here to *vatemala's* poetic innovation, to *vatemala's* intellect. Why, its

many wheels are feet—so many, like a *xekolodi*'s! From that perspective, the *setswana* poem would fit perfectly within emerging portraits of the locomotive and automobile: as cultural objects and spectacles. Trains and railroads, bicycles and cycling, and more recently airplanes and cell phones (Schivelbusch 1977; Mom 2004; Seiler 2008; McShane 1994; Sheller and Urry 2004 and 2006; Creswell 2006; Cwerner, Kessler, and Urry 2009)—these narratives of means of transport and communication have dominated even the so-called new mobility paradigm (see Mom et al. 2011). In these emerging narratives, if it is not the means of transport or the physical infrastructure that carries it, it is the traveler—the human traveler.

Elsewhere, I show how ordinary people in Mozambique—and, indeed, Zimbabwe today—have turned the road into a *thriving, transient marketplace* (Mavhunga 2013, 2014). People can be seen bringing to the roadside all kinds of merchandise to sell: charcoal, chicken, vegetables—anything that might tempt the motorist to stop. The human dimensions and meanings of cars to *vachena* and *vatemala* have only begun to be explored (Gewald, Lunning, and van Walraven 2009; Green-Simms 2009; Hart 2016). To be fair, the importance of the car as an historical element in *vatemala*'s experience—or perhaps the experience of the car in Africa—had been signaled as early as 1986, but apparently the call was not followed (Kopytoff 1986).

Much of the recent transport scholarship on Africa focuses on human-fabricated and inbound modes of transport (cars, trains, airplanes; e.g., Gewald, Lunning, and van Walraven 2009; Pirie 2009). The railroad and road literature has dealt extensively with construction, with teams of African forced laborers cutting and digging through thick forests and *hutunga*-infested swamps to build roads, railroads, and later airstrips to host these incoming Western artifacts (Akurang-Parry 2002; Akintoye 1969). Because they were press-ganged into this arduous work (Heap 1990, 2000; Akurang-Parry 2000; Law 1989; Machin 2002), the majority exercised several stratagems to escape their conditions: migration to neighboring territories ruled by a different European country, temporary flight into the bush, and downright sabotage of bridges, roads, and railroads (often named after “important” *vachena*, for all the back-breaking slavery that went into building them by *vatemala*; Likaka 2009).

Once built, the railroad tracks became material extensions of *vachena*'s territorial aggression, linking labor reservoirs to mines and farms, and these sites of production to coastal ports, from which minerals, cash crops, rubber, and timber were shipped to factories in Europe and the United States. The existing literature does not make explicit this point about the outward-facing nature of railroad infrastructure that *vachena* designed, and *vatemala*

built (Robinson 1991; Bekele 1982; Dubois 1997; Pirie 1993, 1997). By contrast, Tanzania and Zambia's ambitious TAZARA railway line built in 1970–1974 was aimed not only at connecting the two countries, but also at facilitating the shipment of freedom fighters and matériel for the liberation of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa (Monson 2009). Today, the view of *vatemala's* heads of state is that China is helping Africa build infrastructure to link African countries to each other, where *vachena* were only interested in extractive infrastructures facing toward Europe (Foster et al. 2008).

The research on cars is still only beginning, but substantial literature exists on roads. Like the train, the coming of the automobile led to massive conscription of *vanhu vatema* as “road-cutting gangs” (Zhao 1994; Chiteji 1979; Sunseri 2002). Contrary to earlier research however, such road work affected and involved not just the men conscripted but the women left at home who fed them, who Kathleen Sheldon (2002) calls the “pounders of grain.” At the construction site, Landeg White (1993) has superbly captured the drama of *vachena's* bridge construction. The negative impact of roads (displacement—making it easier for *vadzvanyiriri* to downpress *vatemala* even more) and their benefits (easier transportation) have received some attention from historians and policy studies (Stephens 1994; Chilundo 1995). Historical studies of automobiles themselves only began in the last decade, with a focus on the car, bus, lorry, and motorcycle as environmentally, economically, culturally, and politically transformative means and ways (technology) (Gewald, Lunning, and van Walraven 2009; Pirie 1993, 2011; and several other articles).

This chapter takes the mobility discussion in a totally different direction—away from trains, from *vanhu* (humans) and means and ways as the central actors, to *mhesvi* subverting the transport systems that *vanhu* contrived. This is to further the thesis of this book—the idea of *mhesvi* as mobile workshop, this time as a passenger taking a ride on pedestrians, disabling ox wagon transport, riding on automobiles and on bicycles, and forcing *vanhu* to institute mechanisms and infrastructures of traffic control. The glossary at the back of the book should help the reader understand *chidzimbahwe* and other regional keywords.

How *Mhesvi* Determined if a Person Rode or Walked

Prophylactic settlement could only be effective with good control of foot, bicycle, and automobile traffic in and out of *mhesvi*-infested areas. Herein lie profound connections between mobilities of *vanhu* and mobilities of *mhesvi*.

The tapestry of footpaths illustrates the role of foot transport as a mode of conveyance from place to place and of haulage transport, especially for trade, migration, and military expeditions. It shows that footpaths were the first roads of Africa, ox wagons and palanquins (*machila*, or hammocks) among the first “cars” (i.e., if we take *car* to be shorthand for *carriage*). *Vatema* not only physically carried the white man’s burden; they also carried the white man himself, as a burden reclining and dozing off in *machila*. Later, the *machila* was improved into a *gareta* (bush cart), which was basically a chair with two long handles at front and back, with one *mutema* pulling in front and another pushing from behind the chair (Gewald, Lunning, and van Walraven 2009, 25).

Bulls, donkeys, mules, and horses were ridden and used as pack animals or to draw wagons, sledges, carts, and plows. Rivers were crossed via drifts or wooden bridges. *Magwa* (canoes; singular *igwa*) and *zvikepe* (boats; singular *chikepe*) were made and deployed as freight and passenger craft across and along rivers and from one coastal settlement to another. Many of the *magwa* that incoming *vachena* used in the hinterland, starting with the Portuguese (since 1498) and then the British and many other itinerant *vachena* (subsequently), were and are still locally made (Sheriff 2010).

Well into the 1950s, ox wagons still plied the beaten track, with two black men on foot—one an outrider (conductor), the other the driver—and in between them at least eight spans of oxen towing heavy loads, often including the white client who paid for their labor services. Since the nineteenth century, South African men played an enabling role as foot transport vehicles in *vachena*’s encroachments of their land and those of others: by missionaries, traders, explorers, concession-seekers, and hunters. These mobilities prepared the way for *vachena*’s partition of the region. By their micromobilities inside the horse, ox, or donkey’s body, *hutachiwana* that caused *n’gana*, and horse sickness, rinderpest, and African Coast fever, immobilized *zvipfuyo* as means of transport for *vachena*, forcing them to walk while exclusively relying on *vatema* to shoulder and head-port their burden (trade goods and supplies). This can be seen clearly in practically every travel writer’s account (as referred to in chapters 1 and 2).

In the northern, northeastern, and southeastern areas, the biggest problem was movement of *vatema* across *vachena*’s boundaries to and from mine, farm, and emerging urban workspaces since the beginning of gold mining in South Africa in 1886. During famine years, mine agents scoured the countryside for *vanhu vatema* prepared to trade their labor for grain (van Onselen 1974, 276), providing free transport as far as the roads and footpaths into the countryside allowed. A pattern emerged in which *vatema*

from Northern Rhodesia (colloquially called *mabwidi* in *chidzimbahwe*) preferred to work in the mines, while those from Nyasaland (*Manyasarandi* in *chidzimbahwe*) took up farmwork (Scott 1954). Figure 8.1a shows men carrying *misengwa* (luggage) embarking on their journey to collection points, at which Southern Rhodesian government lorries awaited them (figure 8.1b).

By 1950, non-Southern Rhodesian black employees made up 50 percent of the total workforce; of these, 56 percent were in Mashonaland (maize and tobacco farms around Salisbury and Umtali) and 40 percent in Matabeleland (at Wankie colliery and the Nyamandhlovu sawmills; and the rest miscellaneous; Scott 1954, 45–46). Most of these figures must be read as *vanhu* passing through *mhesvi*-infested areas separating Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Mozambique from Southern Rhodesia, potentially carrying *mhesvi* on their bodies.

The pedestrian and ox wagon background detailed previously clears space for consideration of two incoming things that local actors strategically deployed as means and ways of moving around in southern Africa: the automobile and the bicycle. They matter to this discussion because of the way *mhesvi* subverted them into means of short- and long-distance transport. The train is excluded because there is no evidence of any such subversion by the *chipukanana*. This chapter emphasizes the intellectual agency of *vatema* in seeking means and ways of earning a living in the wake



a)



b)

Figure 8.1a, b

Embarking on *rwendo* (journey) to the mines and farms on foot (left), and boarding lorries from the mines (right).

Source: Scott 1954.

of increasingly restricted access to land and the biting effects of taxation under *vachena's* rule. The resultant mobilities from *misha* (villages) to *migo-dhi* (mines), *maguta* (towns), and *mapurazi* (white-owned farms), including across borders via undesignated crossing points, inadvertently offered *mhesvi* ready means of transport. Herein lies an interesting history of mobilities through which means and ways (vehicles), people (migrants to and from work), and *zvipukanana* (*mhesvi*) became vehicles for *hutachiwana*.

The Automobile and *Mhesvi*

Starting as surreptitious affairs from individual homesteads, and winding through neighboring *misha* and *dondo* or *sango* (forest; plural *masango*), footpaths merged into beaten tracks across and along the borders, staying that way until they reached railheads and, from the mid-1920s on, automobile roads. By the mid-1930s, there were over three thousand miles of road networks available to the Free Migrant Labour Transport Service for labor recruits who signed up to go to designated Southern Rhodesian mines and farms registered with the Rhodesia Native Labor Bureau (RNLB). The Nyanja-speaking recruits from Nyasaland called this transport *ulere* or "free" (Scott 1954, 36). *Vedzimbahwe* called it *urere* (free-bee; see figure 8.2). These bus and truck routes followed the Zambezi inside Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) to Kalabo; another followed the same river into Mozambican territory to tap into Nyasaland (now Malawi).

Two *ulere* routes are of interest to *mhesvi*-related traffic control: one from Luangwa and Kafue (Northern Rhodesia) through Chirundu to Sinoia (now Chinhoyi), the other from Msusa and Misale (Nyasaland) through Darwin (Dande) to Mutoko. Later, the Misale-Mutoko route expanded to Chikwizo in 1947 while the Zobwe-Tete and Honde-Umtali (Mutare) ones were also absorbed into the *ulere* system (Scott 1954, 40). These two routes were connected to an older tapestry of paths to the Rand, which later followed the Mozambique-Southern Rhodesia border to Pafuri and thence to the Rand. Another followed the Savé from Vilankulo to Masenjani and the Shabanie (Zvishavane) Mine recruiting depot at Marumbini and thence either to Shabanie or to Pafuri and the Rand. One of the collection depots for road transport to the Rand was located at Pafuri, in the armpits of the Limpopo River.

The *ulere* lorries were part of a larger automobile presence in post-1920s southern Africa. These vehicles came from three US companies (Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors) and three British automakers (Morris, Austin, and Land Rover), which had a virtual monopoly in the southern African market

exclusively and discriminatively for the enjoyment of *vachena*. Government statistics show that 1,722 private motorcars were registered in 1934. Of these, 1,407 were from the United States and 308 British-made (“More Motor-Cars in Southern Rhodesia” 1936, 21).

For *vapambepfumi*, the road motor vehicle was proving to be “a powerful supplement to the railways in the development of Rhodesia” (“The Civilizing Influence of Roads” 1929–1930, 144). The most obvious reason was flexibility of access. The road could reach “immense blocks of settlement, far removed from the main line of the railways.” Such areas had every ingredient needed for agricultural success, but experience the world over had shown that “the building of branch railway lines to assist the development of agricultural areas [was] not economically sound.” Prior to the adaptable materiality of the road motor vehicle, there was no alternative to the branch railway “when a district had outgrown the transportation limits of the ox wagon.” Yet Rhodesia avoided the “uncommercial risks” of the branch line. The construction, operation, and maintenance costs were too heavy in relation to the value of agricultural traffic (144; “The New Pioneers” 1929–1930, 102).

The Iron Tortoise and the Inciter

In the same period (1920s onwards), the coming of the bicycle added a new dimension to the speed of the traveler on foot, while retaining the element of flexibility. Pedestrian and cycle traffic were as much if not more of a challenge to the control of *mhesvi* (the inciter) as motor vehicles. In fact, by 1960, the director of Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Control observed that bicycles had become “the most efficient carriers of tsetse to the control points. Flies carried per 100 cars were 0.7; per 100 cycles 10.7 and per 100 pedestrians 1.9.”¹

Without ascribing to it any malicious intentions, *mhesvi* was subverting means and ways of transport such as cars and *hambautare* (“iron tortoises,” as *vedzimbahwe* called bicycles) and organic vehicles such as people and draft cattle into its own means of transport. If US automakers completely dominated southern and central Africa’s roads, British manufacturers had a virtual monopoly on the iron tortoise—the cars of *vatema*. Bicycle makers exporting to Rhodesia included Norman Cycles (Kent; the Norman); British Salmson Ltd. of London (the Cyclaid bicycle); the Hercules Cycle and Motor Company Limited of Aston (the Hercules bicycle); Phillips Cycles Ltd. of Sethwick (the Phillips); New Hudson (the New Hudson Tourist Roadster); Rudge-Whitworth Ltd. of Coventry (the Rudge); the Birmingham Small

Arms Company of Birmingham (the BSA); Sunbeam Cycles Ltd., Birmingham (the Sunbeam); Armstrong Cycles of Birmingham (the Armstrong), and Raleigh, Nottingham (the Raleigh).

Vatema deployed these *hambautare* as their favored mode of transportation between workplaces in *maguta* and *kumusha* (villages), not least because automobiles were, throughout the Rhodesia period, the preserve of *vachena* and a very few *vatema* who could afford secondhand cars. The bicycle was in demand not solely for conveying its rider from one point to the other; *vatema* also remodeled it into a transient workspace for performing all kinds of work (Mavhunga 2014), as a platform for staging their own modes of everyday innovation (Mavhunga 2013).

Two stories often told about bicycles in *vatema's* experience of *hudz-vanyiriri* have a bearing on the *mhesvi* theme of this book. The first relates to World War II. When the war ended, combat veterans from Burma and Malaya, where Japanese enemy fire had not discriminated between *vatema* and *vachena*, returned to a segregated Southern Rhodesia. While *vachena* were awarded farms, *vatema* were rewarded for their service merely with bicycles. To add insult to injury, *vatema* were forcibly removed from their lands to make way for these new landowners and were resettled in *mhesvi*-prone areas. Thus positioned in the buffer zone between the *mhesvi*-infested areas and the white-owned farms, *vatema* acted as a human shield against veterinary disease and as vegetation-clearing agents to suppress *mhesvi* habitat or incursions. Many returned to find their families removed to the *mhesvi*-prone areas to make way for white officers and white soldiers who opened ranches and new farms under the Land Tenure Act. They were still required to carry a *stupa* or *chitupa* (an identity document *vatema* were to carry always or face arrest) and to follow the Native Registration Act, which mandated that all *vanhu vatema* must carry an extra pass in addition to *chitupa* (Matibe 2009, 5).

Hambautare (*xikanyakanya* in *xitsonga*, after the sound of pedaling, *kanya-kanya-kanya*) must be located within a larger economy of *vatema's* importations and strategic deployments of Western-made goods. Like possessing a musket in the late nineteenth century, ownership of a bicycle meant that someone was a real man. The bicycle was one of many consumer goods produced either in Europe or locally in the factories that *vachena* had established. On white-owned farms, people learned to operate farming equipment such as plows, cultivators, ridgers, and motor vehicles. When returning to their *misha*, they went into the “blacks only” sections of cities to buy clothes, shoes, blankets, *hambautare*, floor polish, shoe polish, petroleum jelly, beauty cream, metal cooking pots, hunting knives, sugar,

soaps, matches, cigarettes, soft drinks, sewing machines, wrist watches, radios, gramophones, cameras, furniture, and other goods to take home. They loaded these goods into the carriers of the “chicken buses” or the “long chase” (long-chassis omnibuses) at *misika yemabhazi* (marketplaces for buses; bus stations) to begin the long, dusty, and bumpy journey home (Mavhunga 2014, 71-98).

Zvechirungu (*chidzimbahwe*) or *svexilungwini* in *xitsonga* (meaning “the things of the white people”) were also imported in the form of ideas carried out of the industry or city in the head and transplanted into *musha* to express new modernities. This is how iron or asbestos-roofed brick houses, cement-plastered and painted walls, grocery stores, table manners, and the four o’clock tea traveled from *vachena’s* suburban house in the *guta* (singular of *maguta*) to *kumusha*, sometimes via their lodgings in the crowded black quarters called *marukisheni* (locations). *Vatema* purchased the goods not just for their own use, but also as resources for resale and as equipment for business. Through a combination of thrift, risk-taking, and innovation, some of these men later bought cars, amassed sizeable herds of *mombe*, built “modern” houses in their rural homesteads, built grocery stores at the local shopping center, and even started bus companies and hotels (Mavhunga 2014, 136–140). Black entrepreneurs like Mwaera and Machipisa in Highfield Township, Moses Chikuhwa of Glen Norah, and George Tawengwa of Mushandirapamwe Hotels and Buses fame all began humbly, riding on their retrofitted bicycles selling tomatoes or exchanging grain for *huku* (chicken). Bus operators like Isaac Maziveyi, owner of two buses under the Maziveyi Omnibus Service stable, were in business by the early 1950s. The likes of Mvrechena, Matambanadzo, Chinaka, and Mucheche became brand names of buses and hotels, but the bearers of these names arose from very humble origins (Chikuhwa 2006, 106). Others (men as well as women) distinguished themselves as owners of tailors’ shops, often run as family businesses that sprang up at shopping centers in urban locations and rural areas, sewing cutoffs collected from urban textile or garment-making factories into *hembe dzemapisi* (clothes from pieces).

A dearth of new bicycles or repairs in the *varungu’s* workshops spawned the development of bicycle-repair shops, mobile (bicycle-borne) and under-the-tree welding workshops, and tire-repair workshops in the countryside. The remittance of overseas and locally manufactured things to *kumusha* depended on the existence of *tsika* (culture) and facilities for thrift and retirement packages that allowed some *vanhu vatema* to buy and install grind (or hammer) mills, to build *magirosa* or *zvitoto* (grocery stores), or to

establish a bus company plying rural routes. The feedback loops between *guta* and *musha* that made such savings and investments possible were the very same ones that transformed *munhu mutema* traveling back and forth by bicycle or on foot into vehicles for carried *mhesvi* (Mavhunga 2014, 138–140).

Carried Fly: The *Mhesvi* Passenger and Traffic Cleansing

The development of *migwagwa* (roads) was considered paramount to monitoring the movements of *mhesvi* and its passenger *hutachiwana* and the potential vehicles for both: *vanhu* and their *mombe*. The dilemma facing the government's use of rural development as a strategy of controlling *mhesvi* was how to utilize roads for surveillance against the *chipukanana* while preventing it from catching a ride on *ngorodzemoto* (carriages of fire; or *motokari*, motor cars) plying these roads. That is why from the 1920s on the government set up *cleansing chambers* (see figure 8.3) and *tsetse gates* to monitor and cleanse cars, cyclists, and pedestrians of *carried fly*. Almost all



Figure 8.3

The fly chamber through which all *motokari* on busy roads passed.

Source: *Proceedings and Transactions of the Rhodesia Scientific Association* 1960.

ngorodzemoto were owned by *vachena* prior to 1950, with very few *vatemala* who could afford them. By contrast, all cyclists, pedestrians, and rural commuters (lorry and, later, bus passengers) were *vatemala*.

The term *traffic control* is first mentioned in the chief entomologist's annual report in 1928, expressing alarm at the increasing danger of "motor vehicles being used more freely for prospecting, etc." and carrying *mhesvi* with them (Jack 1930).² In May 1929, a bill was passed in the legislative assembly to "secure the necessary powers for the control of traffic from fly areas." By the end of the year, however, the *mutemo* (law) had not been implemented, in part because "effective treatment of motor vehicles, without having recourse to the use of deadly poison, constitute[d] by no means a simple problem."³ The first comprehensive, practical steps to control traffic coming out of *mhesvi*-infested areas, right on their edge of such belts, began in 1930 and proceeded well into the 1970s.

In what became known as the "Zambezi Front West" and the "Zambezi Front Central," the road (*mugwagwa*) that cut through *mhesvi*-infested and noninfested areas enabled motor vehicle traffic to pass through that had to be cleansed of carried *mhesvi*, leading to the assignment of cleansing chambers. The Kariba Dam also placed further barriers to cross-border mobilities that were already difficult—except by boat for *vanhu* and *mhuka*. There were two major roads. One was the Salisbury-Lusaka highway via Chirundu Border Post, which passed through Hurungwe Native Reserve and the *mhesvi*-infested areas of Makuti and Chirundu. The other was the Bulawayo-Livingstone route passing through Gwai and Shangani and the *mhesvi*-infested Mapfungautsi plateau.⁴ There were other (minor) roads going to tin and tungsten (Sebungwe District) and mica mines (Hurungwe), both in *mhesvi* territory.⁵

From 1939 to 1945, the Chirundu highway became an important route for moving black troops and supplies traveling to join the Allied War effort in Burma. *Mhesvi* lurched onto the truck convoys, providing a headache for the guards manning the chambers at Chirundu, Makuti, and Vuti.⁶ In the postwar era, the massive drought of 1948 dispersed *mhuka* in all directions in search of water and grazing, carrying *mhesvi* on them into Hurungwe and triggering the catastrophe covered earlier. Then, from 1953 to 1963, during the construction of the Kariba Dam, more dispersals occurred due to the displacement of the Tonga people from the Gwembe Valley into Hurungwe and other areas.⁷

The river barriers of the Zambezi were entirely absent on the southeastern border with Portuguese-ruled Mozambique. The most critical mobilities remained those by foot, hoof, or paw. That is why the fences were

necessary: not only to create buffer zones, but also to channel *kufamba kwevanhu nemhuka* (human and animal traffic) to tsetse gates for inspection. Here, the transborder movements on the Zambezi Front East (Rushinga) and the South East Front (Savé and Runde regions) illustrate how *vachena's* arbitrary borders had simply cut straight through *misha* (villages) organized along kinship lines and set up transgressions by other kinds of animals and plants. As people now visited their relatives, they carried *mhesvi* back and forth (Mavhunga and Spierenburg 2007).

A major problem from the onset of fences was that of roads passing through both *mhesvi*-infested *matondo* (plural of *dondo*, forest) and *misha*. Some led to several active mines, farms, emerging towns, and neighboring countries. Others were maintenance and patrol roads for tsetse control work that soon became the only public roads available. Either way, all roads in Hurungwe Native Reserve were fairly busy and had to be manned.⁸

To ensure that vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists using these roads did not carry *mhesvi* out of Hurungwe, there was only one exit point located on the eastern boundary of the reserve. It was here that a cleansing chamber was installed in July 1952. All traffic was barred from crossing anywhere other than at the designated gates, with the exception of a few stiles erected over the eastern fence to enable *vatema* on foot passing between the reserve and the farms to cross.⁹

Pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles were controlled lest they become vehicles that carried *mhesvi* from infected to clean areas—a process *vachena* called *mechanical transmission* or the problem of “carried fly.”¹⁰ This *traffic cleansing* took place at deflying chambers and tsetse gates (see figure 8.4), where “carried fly” catching rides on *ngorodzemoto* (motorcars), *hambautare*, and *vafambi* was apprehended. Administrative centers like the chief’s court, Native Commissioner’s offices, dipping tanks, cattle sale pens, and shopping centers pulled human traffic toward them, thus acting as magnets for the movement of *mhesvi*.¹¹

The “cleansing” or “deflying” chamber was established on roads and the “tsetse control gate” on footpaths *vatema* used. At each cleansing chamber was a gate guard (*mufrayi*) dressed in uniform. In his hand was a fly net and hand spray pump. The traffic arriving was supposed to stop at the control point, where *mufrayi* first examined it for *mhesvi*. Any clinging on were caught in the net. The guard also sprayed the motor vehicle around and underneath to unsettle any *mhesvi* that might be relaxing or hiding there. Just in case the critters made for the shade of the open-sided, grass-roofed huts, their undersides were liberally sprayed with persistent OCP. This is something that came later in the 1950s; prior to that, arsenic was used.



Figure 8.4

Fenzi yetsetse and *gedhi retsetse*: a typical tsetse fence and gate, with *mufrayi* standing behind the gate to inspect traffic.

Source: *Proceedings and Transactions of the Rhodesia Scientific Association* 1960.

Attracted by the shade, the flies flew in and landed literally on their own deaths; OCPs killed them through skin contact.¹² The issue was not whether the guards manning these chambers caught flies every month, but whether motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians passing through them were *mhesvi*-free going into uninfected or deflyed areas.¹³

Conclusion: Transport Systems and Dangerous Insects

Before takeoff, planes from several airlines flying out of Africa are sprayed with a pesticide aerosol. The New York-bound South African Airways flight that makes a stopover in Dakar, Senegal, is sprayed, as is the Emirates Airline flight that stops in Lusaka, Zambia, en route to Dubai. Apart from causing eye irritation for people wearing contact lenses, the aerosol is “completely harmless”—or so we are told. It kills *hutunga* and other *zvipukanana* that might be hiding under our seats or clothes. It is good for us. What can you do—get off the *ndege*?

This chapter has shown that the connections between human-fabricated transport systems and portable, tiny *zvipukanana* carrying deadly viruses is not new. We see it today with *hutunga* carrying Zika and ticks carrying multiple viruses. The significance of measures we see at airports or at the checkpoints on roads as we leave game reserves is the link between microbial mobilities inside *zvipukanana*, *zvipukanana* riding on our cars, buses, and planes, and these latter transport systems becoming conveyors of people, *zvipukanana*, and *hutachiwana*.

Seen from *musha*, the sites where *vachena* had designated cleansing chambers and tsetse gates become workplaces. The *mugwagwa* (road) and *nzira* (footpath) that *vatema* used in their everyday itineraries on bicycles or on foot and which later *vapambepfumi* passed through in their automobiles were a site of knowledge production where the mobilities of cars and pedestrians at once become (potential) mobilities of *mhesvi* and the *hutachiwana* they carried. It was because of *mhesvi* that the gate and chamber were established; they were an infrastructure of the mobile workshop: the *mhesvi* on the move, forcing *vachena* to keep it under surveillance, providing *vatema* with work. Without *mhesvi*, the control of the movement of *vanhu* and *mhuka* would not be necessary—which was another way of saying that the traffic being controlled ultimately is not that of cars or bicycles, but the traffic of *mhesvi* itself, because of the deadly passenger it carried inside it.