



**LAND AND IDENTITY IN ZIMBABWEAN FICTION
WRITINGS IN ENGLISH FROM 2000 TO 2010: A
CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

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**Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the School of
Languages and Literature, Department of African Languages and Literatures**

Faculty of Humanities

University of Cape Town

November 2013

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Respective geographical settings of fictional narratives and site visits

Field visits made across Zimbabwe include the following places:

- Chipinge, Town and Southdown Estates: August 2010
- Mutare, Mutare Central, Mutare South and peri-urban, Penhalonga
- Marondera, Chihota Communal Lands
- Harare, Mbare, Chitungwiza, Harare North/Charlotte Brooke and Harare South
- Bindura
- Gweru
- Bulawayo
- Matabeland North, Hwange, Victoria Falls

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preamble

Zimbabwean history has shown that land ownership and cultural identities are intertwined. Apart from it being the nexus of existence, land among the indigenous ethnic groupings, is viewed as an essential key to people's sense of belonging and self-knowledge. Lineages trace lands previously traversed and settled upon, including forebears' feats and foibles, which records are passed down through totemic recitations, rituals and land traditions that remind families, communities and individuals about their anchoring, bundle of duties, responsibilities and privileges within the geographical spaces that they occupy. Loss of land through colonial conquest of the indigenous population then entailed loss of an invaluable resource to life. The ancient law of survival that thou shall eat through the sweat of your brow was replaced by a new principle that thou shall be employed (Ramoso, 2005: 8). As a result, land became, and has remained a hotly contested subject. Understood as finite piece of the earth surface that gives human beings authority and control over their lives and environments, land has demarcated power across the ages. In the African worldview, its access and ownership also largely influence perceptions about the significance of human worth, over and above the psycho-spiritual, environmental, cultural and political securities that it embodies. It is for this reason that land is viewed as an essential key to people's sense of belonging and self-knowledge.

It is also worth noting that conceptions of individual identities are deeply embedded in a people's cultural values. Shona terms like *muuyi/mutorwa*¹, *mubvakure*², *mupambevhu*³, *mubvandaripo*⁴, *mwanawevhu*⁵, *rukuvhute*⁶, *mukomana/musikana wekuseri*⁷ and

¹Stranger or alien in the country/land/community.

²Someone who does not belong with the community or an arrivant.

³Usurper of the land; one who unlawfully appropriates the land.

⁴Illegitimate heir to the estate; a son born outside marriage that a husband adopts into his family.

⁵A child of the soil; rightful owners of the land.

*nyikayaramba*⁸ among others, buttress how conceptions of land underpin individual and community identities. These terms show that dignity, social status and identities that individuals and communities acquire are based on their relationship with the land. The terms also impact directly on people's sense of un/belongingness, being, self-image, self-worth, and self-confidence, including guiding principles that may affirm or negate active participation and contribution in life.

As far as land ownership is concerned, Zimbabwe's history shows that settler conquest underpins the underlying turmoil and exploitative relationship between colonial settlers and original inhabitants. The new set-up demanded that the original inhabitants reorient themselves in line with their new realities of being "other people's tenants even in their own lands". (Abrahams, 2000: 376). By alienating the indigenous inhabitants from their land, the new system undermined their self-sufficiency, and also fractured and distorted relationships and identities. They were subjected to a negotiated social reality that dislocated them from cultural traditions, self-respect, spirit of place, as well as self-perceptions of history and lived experiences. Abrahams (Ibid) rightly observes that such a scenario "does not make for decency, pride, [and] self-respect".

The situation, unfortunately, was carried over into Zimbabwe's post-independence era. As observed by Sachikonye (2012: 1), "The struggle between settler colonialism and African nationalism [over land] reverberate[s] well beyond [attainment of political independence in] 1980". The aim of the current study then, is to critically analyse the interface between lived land realities and their impact on identities as depicted in selected texts of literature published between 2000 and 2010 against the backdrop of the realities explained above. The study also examines various responses to the land question, particularly the writers' envisaged solutions regarding the challenges characterising the

⁶The umbilical cord. It symbolises a people's link with the land; symbol of the right to heritage of the land. Dzvairo's poem, "Birthright" (in Kadhani and Zimunya (eds), 1982) illustrates this symbolism. It is also a signifier of "traditions on which development should be founded" (Gambahaya, 1999:191).

⁷Backyarder; lodger; tenant.

⁸Nyikayaramba is a compound name. It means a distinct group of people have disowned, rejected or have shown complete disapproval of certain ideas, ideologies or practices that undermine or insult their culture and identity.

post-2000 era. For example, some support land redistribution for the cause of social justice in view of colonial land apartheid whilst others blame it for the deepening economic decline and political polarisation characterising relations in the country. Critics like Sachikonye (2012) similarly regard the aftermath of land occupations as a lost decade. On the other hand, others like Sadomba (2011), Scoones (2010) and Hanlon et al (2013) acknowledge the empowerment benefits arising from land redistribution for the marginalised majority. These disparate views represent lived realities that the selected narratives explore, confirming that Zimbabwean land issues are as complex as the diverse interests that the Zimbabwean society pursues.

1.2 Aim and scope of the study

The major aim of this study is to analyse how Zimbabwean literary voices across the racial divide explore the land-identity conundrum that is hotly contested in the aftermath of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land occupations and other redistribution processes. It aims to interrogate how the selected fictional narratives depict both long-held views and emerging perspectives on Zimbabwe's land question. Further, the study examines the land realities that the writers depict with a view to promoting national dialogue. The latter aims to promote greater social cohesion, peace and oneness that are critical for more sustainable human development in post-independence Zimbabwe.

The study analyses trajectories of land and identity in the selected Zimbabwean-authored post-2000 fictional narratives in English with a view to establishing the writers' commitment to a sustainable future for the greater Zimbabwean society against the backdrop of the post-2000 land occupations. The choice of texts has been guided by the manner in which the texts cumulatively trace the historicity of Zimbabweans' land issues and the land question itself as a continuum from pre-Independence through to post-2000 Zimbabwe. Specifically, the study examines writers' images of belongingness and relationship with the land and its beneficiation. The research also examines the fictional trajectories' sensitivity concerning how the grassroots relate to and benefit from the land and the various securities that it offers, including the psycho-spiritual, economic, socio-cultural, geophysical and political aspects that touch people's daily lives. The research

also explores the writers' views concerning the experiences and cultural agency of the marginalised majority in the history of the land question in Zimbabwe. It examines how these narratives re-image land and its impact on constructions of identity[ies]. The first ten years after 2000 are particularly important as they are perceived to be a watershed in the country's history. The period "is ideologically and politically significant in the history of Zimbabwe in that it marks a radical change in terms of the state's approach to land redistribution" (Magosvongwe, 2009: 83). Ngugi (1972: xv) observes:

Literature does not grow in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society.

It is therefore important to examine the interface between literature and the unfolding land developments. In analysing this interface using African-centred approaches, it is hoped it becomes relatively easier to locate and understand the Zimbabwean land question within its historical and cultural contexts. For the reason that land is culturally and politically significant in the African context, the fictional narratives of the period responding to the land question should be critically examined.

The focus is on short stories and the novel. This allows for gleaning diversified views concerning Zimbabwe's land-identity conundrum. Also, by bringing together voices across the racial divide, the research envisages contributing critical knowledge concerning Zimbabwe's peculiar land experience and its complexities, thereby promoting inclusive dialogue in pursuit of peace and oneness. In line with this thinking, Robertson (2010: 19) citing King (1992: 23-32) argues:

[A]ny solution to any problem creates problems of its own. If we cannot know these problems because we have left out of the formulative process people or things that increase our sensitivity to these problems, it readily becomes apparent that we have not done the job we set out to do.

In critiquing these Zimbabwean-authored texts, then, the research envisages promoting African-centred approaches that centralise dialogue and oneness so that peaceful and sustainable alternatives could be sought on issues concerning land and identity in post-

2000 Zimbabwe. In the African worldview, no-one has a monopoly of knowledge (Aime Cesaire, 1995). As the Shona people of Zimbabwe put it: “No one man can put his hands round a baobab tree. There is also space for all birds to fly in the sky without colliding”. Such a philosophy averts monolithic approaches to the post-2000 Zimbabwean land and identity issues.

The selected texts are presumed to be a representative sample of the major views playing out in society, envisioned to broaden an understanding of land discourses characterising post-2000 Zimbabwe. Fiction writings in English have also been selected for the easy accessibility of English across the Zimbabwean society. Their possible influence on national and international relations is also very real, hence the need to subject them to critical analysis.

In its analysis of the writers’ responses to and images of land in post-2000 Zimbabwe, the study examines the role of the indigenous people in the land reform process, especially their agency. Agency concerns itself with critiquing the “ordinary man’s participation in creating something new, a new nation” (Fontein, 2006: 144). According to Asante (1998: 177), agency is “the evolving ownership of action or the subject role of Africans”. Establishing agency accentuates the philosophy of participation that entails people taking responsibility for development initiatives and transformation of their respective communities and society. Muwati and Gambahaya (2009: 68) observe that, “Without agency and transcendence, transformation and change become far-fetched possibilities”. Viewed in the context of struggles for re-asserting and restoring Africans’ dignity and human worth through land reform, the fictional works are therefore worth exploring.

Novels to be examined include *The Book of Not* (Dangarembga, 2006), *Absent: The English Teacher* (Eppel, 2009), *Jambanja* (Harrison, 2006), *Case Closed: A Detective Story Set in Zimbabwe* (Henson, 2002), *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira, 2006), and *Harare North* (Chikwava, 2009). Short story collections include *Somewhere in this Country* (Chirere, 2006), *An Elegy for Easterly* (Gappah, 2009) and *The Trek and Other Stories* (Hoba, 2009).

1.3. Background to the study

If you do not know where you are
Or where you have been,
You cannot know where you are going-
And, if you do not know where you are going
Any road will take you there

(West African saying cited by Urmilla Bob in Chiwome and Mguni, 2000: 120).

The study examines how literary voices intervene to suggest peaceable and practicable interventions to Zimbabwe's land question through analysing fictional narratives which could mirror prevalent views in society, including society's perceived value systems as depicted by the writers. The background gives a cursory view of cultural, socio-historical and political developments in Zimbabwe undergirding a new genre of post-colonial literature in English, responding to land and identity. It is common knowledge that the land occupations that began in 2000 were not the first since independence. In the 1980s, landless people occupied farms that had been abandoned by their owners who had left the country at independence. It should be noted that the Lancaster House Agreement made it difficult for the government that came into power in 1980 to distribute land on a large scale to the landless majority since land could only be purchased from the minority white farmers who owned most of it, on a willing-seller-willing-buyer basis. Compounding this situation was the fact that the new government did not make land redistribution a top priority, a fact observed by Hanlon et al (2013: 57):

Land may have been at the forefront for the guerrillas and in political speeches, but the new government did not give top priority to land reform; ... [and] did not take options available to it ... resettlement accounted to only 3% of the investment funds requested at the March 1981 Zimcord.

It is not surprising therefore that the 1990s saw further 'illegal' occupations due to the government's slow pace in redistributing land. These heightened from 2000 because of intensified pressure on communal lands arising from the economic meltdown

(Raftopoulos (2009: 211). The government finally yielded to pressure, and in 2000, a “new Land Acquisition Act was passed ... the Accelerated Land Reform and Resettlement Programme, the “Fast Track,” was approved” with the idea of co-opting and containing the land occupations (Hanlon et al, 2013: 76).

The literary works under study are inspired by the war-veterans-led land occupations that came at the heels of the failed 2000 Constitution Referendum (Sadomba, 2011; Moyo et al, 2008). These occupatons are the ones that have caused intense contestations. That these occupations dominated the headlines of both the public and independent media in Zimbabwe and beyond does not come as a surprise. From these media reports, it is clear that the land reform programme has heightened polarisation even within the country. Tension over land redistribution has deepened between the country’s major political parties — Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU, PF)⁹ and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)¹⁰. Land redistribution has also generated controversies concerning conceptions of human dignity, human worth, human rights, victim/victimhood, social in/justice and the rule of law in colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe. For instance, there are inconsistencies regarding the conception of human rights and human worth applied in examining violations, violence, land dispossessions displacements and redistribution in the era in question. Human rights based on whiteness or blackness, political correctness, affluence, class, level of education, gender and ethnicity, raise questions concerning the significance of human worth in colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe. For these reasons, the Zimbabwean land question has courted controversy locally and internationally. For instance, in 2001, the USA government passed the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZiDERA) asserting that relations between Zimbabwe and USA can only be normalised on condition

⁹Nationalist party bringing together the two major African nationalist parties, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), whose military wings Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) respectively, fought in the armed liberation struggle against colonial settler rule.

¹⁰ An opposition political party formed in 1999 as a coalition of the National Constitution Assembly (NCA), Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and other civic groups.

that Zimbabwe observes the rule of law and restores the pre-2000 land status. The European Union (EU), Canada and Australia imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe in response to the land redistribution programme that targeted white-owned commercial farms for resettlement (Raftopoulos, 2009: 218). Over 75 aggrieved white farmers whose land had been compulsorily acquired sought judicial litigation at the Windhoek-based regional SADC Tribunal that declared the government's position illegal (Chigara, 2012: 202).

That the Zimbabwean land question is political, and requires solutions that embrace the socio-political demands for land redistribution appears irrefutable¹¹. How Zimbabwe handles the controversial land reform process has far reaching impact regionally and internationally. Although it is impossible to rewind the clock of history and undo the past, the controversies surrounding the land reform process cannot be fully appreciated outside the context of the historical origins of Zimbabwe's land question, including efforts to achieve social justice instead of defending parochial partisan interests. Therefore, while it is important to address issues such as the violence that often accompanied the land occupations and the deepening socio-economic and political crises in the post-2000 period, it is equally important not to lose sight of the need to conceptualise the land occupations within their socio-cultural and historical contexts. In the same vein, the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2004: 3) observes: "Throughout the southern African region, the land question is commonly viewed through the lens of historic injustice". ICG also further observe that one size does not fit all with regards to land reform. The group emphasises the need for urgent and meaningful action to resolve landlessness among the generally marginalised majority in both rural and urban areas so as to redress social inequities.

Across the political divide and the broad cross-section of the Zimbabwean society, the general consensus is that equitable land redistribution is long overdue. Differences arise

¹¹ Article Five of the 2008 Global Political Agreement (GPA) acknowledges that the land redistribution programme, whose major goal is the equitable distribution of land to empower the majority of the country's population, should not be reversed.

on modalities. On her visit to Zimbabwe in 2012, the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, Ms Pillay, argued that human rights issues are about equitable distribution of resources. She commended that land reform in Zimbabwe is a form of enhancing human rights. She further urged a proper distribution of land so that all the people benefit¹². The challenge, therefore, for contemporary literary writers and critics alike is coming up with alternative readings to land and identity in a manner that encourages renewing attitudes for meaningful social transformation and self-regeneration. As bearers of social memory in the African worldview, their conceptions in critiquing the land experiences go a long way towards liberating both the intellectual and physical spaces that Zimbabweans require for self-regeneration. It is imperative to establish how the selected writers conceptualise and project land and identity[ies] in Zimbabwe's post-2000 phase.

Writers' efforts to reconstruct or re-image land and identity in the context of these lived experiences then, are crucial because they have a potential to influence society's perceptions about land redistribution. The nomenclature used to refer to the land reform programme reflects the controversies surrounding the land question. Land redistribution has been variously termed 'land repossessions', 'land restitution', 'land invasions', 'land grab', 'land seizures' or 'land expropriation', 'Third *Chimurenga*' or '*Jambanja*¹³'. *Jambanja* remains the popular term used for the post-2000 land occupations that constitute the background to the narratives and period under review. The current study pays particular attention to images used by writers in their responses to the land question. Furthermore, as already indicated, the intellectual influences of literature as both a discipline and a subject in schools and tertiary institutions can never be underrated or ignored, hence the imperative interface this study makes between literary creativity, lived land experiences, and society's expectations.

1.4. Area of study

¹² "Land reform promotes human rights"- UN Envoy, *The Herald*, Wednesday 23 May 2012.

¹³ *Jambanja* as concept and practice receives closer attention in Chapter Four when analysing Eric Harrison's autobiographical narrative using this title.

The research examines the concept of land and identity in Zimbabwean fiction writings in English published between 2000 and 2010 within the context of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform programme and its historical ambiance. Taking into account the major trends in the environment within which the texts were generated, the research analyses the fictional works as representations of emerging perspectives on land and identities in post-independence Zimbabwe. As highlighted earlier, literature attempts to mirror and shape society, including creative and imaginative ways of dealing with social challenges in order to promote collective survival. Literary creativity responding to the land question presents the researcher with reasonable grounds for critical analysis. MacGarry's (1994) question: "Land for which people?" opens areas that require direct investigation and critical attention in post-2000 Zimbabwean literature in English and society.

The thesis that whoever holds the key to the construction of knowledge today does also hold the key to power (Ramose, 1999: 46) partly explains why the land issue has generated immense interest among Zimbabwean creative writers across the racial divide. The fact that Zimbabwean pre- and post-independence experiences demonstrate that issues of land and identity are intertwined justifies the notion that knowledge construction around land and identity may therefore not be left to chance. This perhaps explains the emergence of a plethora of land narratives in the post-2000 period in Zimbabwe. Such a scenario justifies the need for the writings to be appreciated within their literary and historical contexts.

Human development from biblical times shows that land underpins conflicts and struggles to affirm individuals' and communities' rights to geo-physical space for life sustenance. Complexities, contradictions and suspicions surrounding Zimbabwe's land question as engrained in its political and historical background demand that land and identity be closely analysed with a view to examining attitudes and conceptualisations playing out in society in the period under review. Zimbabwean artists' responses to the land question with all its complexities therefore offer a rich area of study.

Titles like *African Tears* (Buckle, 2004), *Jambanja* (Harrison, 2006), *Case Closed* (Henson, 2004), *The Book of Not* (Dangarembga, 2006) *The Trek and Other Stories* (Hoba, 2009), *Paradise Plundered* (Barker, 2007) *Harare North* (Chikwava, 2009), *The Chimurenga Protocol* (Mtizira, 2008) and *An Elegy for Easterly* (Gappah, 2009) within the creative arts, show the intellectual tussles over Zimbabwe's land question. Similarly, political science titles like *The Unsettled Land: State-making & the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893 – 2003* (Alexander, 2006), *From Wilderness Vision to Farm Invasions* (Wolmer, 2007) and *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being* (Pilososof, 2012) on one hand, and *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis* (Hammar, Raftopoulos, Jensen, 2003), *The Silence of Great Zimbabwe: Contested Landscapes and the Power of Heritage* (Fontein, 2006), and *Contested Terrain* (Moyo et al, 2008), on the other, show contestations over Zimbabwe's post-2000 land question playing out in the country's intellectual terrain.

It is indisputable that the Zimbabwean writer in the tumultuous post-2000 period has the challenge of comprehending and responding to the subtle impact that the land question continues to have on issues of identity and belongingness. The question is, whose values, from which epistemological centre and for whose benefit? The inevitable need to rise up to the realities of material, spiritual, cultural and political domination become more acute in relation to how land and identity are conceptualised, including human dignity and human worth in the culture-free globalising world. It appears that many people misconstrue globalisation to mean embracing dominant foreign trends at the expense of one's cultural identity, oblivious to the resultant spiritual, economic, socio-cultural and material carnage.

1.5 Rationale

Land ownership and a people's identity are inseparable. That land redistribution was long overdue cannot be disputed. Whilst literary creativity on the land question has been prolific in post-2000 Zimbabwe, critical practice appears to have adopted a 'wait-and-see' attitude, perhaps due to the controversial nature of the subject. Authors and critics alike are confronted by questions of social cohesion, nation-building, nationalism, and

social justice that have attracted national and international attention. It is therefore crucial to examine the various artists' responses to and perceptions of the land question in post-2000 Zimbabwe, given the fact that land redistribution motivates and inspires the creative works under scrutiny. Therefore, in examining these literary works from an African-centred perspective, the study seeks to expose the value systems and responses to land within an African cultural context. Also, given the fact that such literature often finds its way into the classroom as recommended or prescribed texts, the writings have a potential to directly impact on conceptualisations of race, agency, transcendence and destinies for the people of Zimbabwe. It is for this reason that the writers' perceptions about the land issue need to be subjected to scrutiny.

Further, there has been no attempt to bring black and white voices to dialogue on land as a subject that directly touches on livelihoods and destinies of people in Zimbabwe across the racial divide. In line with pursuit of inclusivity, peace and oneness, it is critical that dialogue over the land question includes voices across the racial divide. History has shown that the realities of the people of Zimbabwe across the racial divide are inseparable. Inclusivity in the fictional narratives entails inclusivity of ideas within mainstream discourses on land and identity in literature. The historical domination of one group by another mainly accounts for the complexities undergirding land challenges that post-2000 Zimbabwe is grappling to resolve. The narratives' impact on the identity[ies] of the people of Zimbabwe should not be ignored. The compartmentalisation of experiences on the land issues buttresses apartheid approaches to land that have disenfranchised the majority of the indigenous population.

In many ways, the fiction writings in question reflect cultural, social and historical realities of land developments in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The research therefore envisages that an examination of these writings would, in the Akan Sankofa spirit, be a worthwhile contribution to discourses that urge Zimbabweans across the racial divide to "go home again — to rebalance, to rectify, to put [their] life and [their] life experiences" (Temple, 2010: 143) in an order that prioritises peace and oneness in resolving Zimbabwe's land issue, for the greater good.

Zimbabwean land experiences show that “no other people has ever been so deeply involved in the lives of black people” (Baldwin, 1995: 165) like white farmers. Thus, an examination of black experiences with land in colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe simultaneously entails discussing white experiences with land as well. For this reason, white-authored narratives formulate part of the accounts that explore perceptions of identities and human worth in relation to the land question and its centrality towards social stability and human progress in the post-2000 era. It is therefore critical to examine the constructions of land and identity the said writers use in a situation whereby racial relationships were defined in terms of master/servant, oppressor/oppressed and creator/consumer, with the colonisers as masters and the marginalised majority as servants and consumers. These historical realities are also critiqued in the context of “the dismemberment of African space and memory” (Armah, 2010: 8) and its traumatic effects on the African psyche, including the country’s neo-colonial contradictions, principal of which is land access. As Achebe (1989: 100) rightly observes: “Contradictions if well understood and managed can spark off the fires of invention.”

How writers take up the contentious subject of land and identity in fiction writings to ennoble self-renewal is worth examining. Writing is also claim to territorial and intellectual spaces which warrant critical examination, especially the views and images that writers project. Gikandi (1992) observes:

to write is to claim a text of one’s own, textuality is an instrument of territorial repossession, because the other [person] confers on us an identity that alienates us from ourselves, narrative is crucial to the discovery of our selfhood.

Therefore, creativity and its criticism constitute the very process of reclamation of both geophysical and intellectual space. The process makes significant contributions to debates on Zimbabwean land and identity that remain conflict-ridden and controversial. The critical examination of the literary works will hopefully bring players directly involved in the land reform process, and those in whose name land reform has been instituted, from the fringes to the centre as active agents whose shared historical experiences can help forge strategies beneficial to society’s greater good.

1.6. Theoretical framework

The battle for theory marks the battle for the ownership of minds (Hudson-Weems, 2007: 20). Ideas that inform the study/reading of literature are therefore critical. In studying/reading literature it is critical to debate and not to consent. It is also worth noting that in order to avert distortions and misreading of African experiences, African theories be used. Furusa (2002: 53) rightly suggests that theories “that are essential and adequate for interpreting African [experiences] are found in African culture and history”. For this reason, the study adopts an African-centred approach, including Afrocentricity in its critique of literary texts that focus on Zimbabwe’s land question. Theoretical framework receives closer attention in Chapter Two. The critique of texts is guided by the Asantian theory’s location of literary texts and voices (Asante in Mazama, 2003: 235-244). Asante (Ibid: 238) highlights three critical elements that would help readers and critics to locate texts; namely: language, attitude and direction. Language and its nuances give undercurrents concerning writers’ attitudes towards their subjects. Stylistic and linguistic uses also symbolise the writers’ attitudes about experiences and situations. Direction that writers posit is also understood from “the line along which the author’s sentiments, themes, and interests lie with reference to the point at which they are aimed” (Ibid: 240). Cumulatively, Asante’s theory of locating texts, then, sheds light on issues of philosophical underpinnings, purpose, intended audience and goals.

Although Asante is the first proponent of Afrocentricity as a theory, he builds upon critics like Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Dubois, Franz Fanon and James Baldwin, among others, who focus on using African-centred approaches to restore African dignity. In their view, the latter can best be resolved by holistically re-examining issues of African fractured identities, spatial dislocation and mis/identification. Afrocentricity places self-consciousness at its centre in order to “assume fully one’s place in the world” (Mazama, 2003: 25). Like Asante’s Afrocentricity, Hudson-Weems’ African Womanism is also used in the study. Both emphasise recovery of socio-historical memory, intellectual space and agency in the lives of the dehumanised if the latter self-name and self-define their experiences from a position of critical self-knowledge. Afrocentricity presupposes that a people’s lived experiences is better understood and appreciated if approached from the

worldviews of the people directly affected. Urmilla Bob (in Chiwome et. Al, 2000: 120) observes:

An Afrocentric perspective implies a viewpoint and a perceivable centre from which to derive a coherent and constructive framework which has serious implications for research and what we claim to be [empirical] knowledge.

It follows that critical understanding and appreciation of the Zimbabwean post-2000 land-identity conundrum is best approached from the cultural realities of Zimbabweans. For this reason, Zimbabwean literature on land should be analysed from a Zimbabwean perspective. In line with this observation, Furusa (2002: 17) argues that “[l]iterary theories exist and function within a framework of culture”. Therefore it is pertinent to examine values and philosophies of life which inform the selected writers’ depictions of the struggles for land in Zimbabwe. Literary creativity becomes a site of struggle. Giving an example on the need to safeguard Zimbabwean cultural identities, Asante (2007: 101) observes:

We are caught between the Limpopo and the Zambezi; if we cross the first we are leaving behind Great Zimbabwe and if we cross the second, we also leave behind the Great Zimbabwe. The resolution of [Zimbabwe’s land issue] can only come from our own cultural centre. As we stand on the pinnacle of Great Zimbabwe, we must see our world going out to the various ends but not being defined by one or the other.

Thus, to offer meaningful appreciation of the selected fiction writings’ re-imagining of land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe, it is critical to examine in whose voices authors speak, and to what extent their trajectories promote national cohesion and oneness – essential ingredients in any nation’s development. Zimbabwean’s conceptions of land and identity are a product of their cultural and historical experiences. Critics of African literature argue that writers and their fiction writings are shaped by their cultural, economic, social and political environments. It is therefore imperative that their writings be examined using the historical and cultural centre that has shaped them. This entails using a framework that places African value systems and cultural norms at the centre. Furusa ((2002: 18) argues that “such an understanding helps to clarify the implications of

utilising theories and concepts that come from one culture to explain phenomena in another culture”. In line with this approach, Ani (1994: 306) further observes: “[f]unctioning with someone else’s definitions is dangerous to the self-image, the self-concept”. In this regard, both literary creativity and critical practice expose certain ways of understanding reality about Zimbabwe’s post-2000 land experiences and their impact on Zimbabweans’ conceptualisations of identity, which in turn shape perceptions of belongingness. Gwekwerere et al (2012: 110) argue that Eurocentric identities of African people subvert the complexity of the African experience in history and give Africans identities that interlock to diminish their sense of self-worth. Clarke (1991: 58) similarly observes: “When other people control what we [know] about ourselves, they will also control what we do for ourselves”, explaining why this research advocates “Moving the centre” (Ngugi waThiongo) in its critique of the writers’ re-imagining and re-drawing images about the Zimbabweans’ experiences with the land.

Other Afrocentric artists and literary critics, including Armah and Achebe among others, are also used in the study. Their approaches resonate well with Afrocentricity cited above and, closer home, with Zimbabwean Chigara’s (2004, 2012b) *Humwe*¹⁴ theory that draws heavily from indigenous Africans’ experiences and philosophies. The theory has its basis in the indigenous African philosophy of human dignity and democratisation of both land use and agricultural labour. Chigara’s *humwe* principle centralises and valorises peace, reciprocity and togetherness/oneness with a view to upholding every individual’s human worth for the greater good.

¹⁴The word literally means “We are in this together” (Chigara, 2012: 224). It has its origins in the philosophy of inclusion that underwrites every community member’s participation in families’ agricultural activities. In this manner, culturally, the weak and poor members of the community get assistance and have their livelihoods protected against hunger. The philosophy included sharing land and agricultural implements for the good of the whole community.

As a principle, it emphasizes “individual and social altruism for the benefit of the whole” (Ibid).

In the context of the land struggles of post-2000 Zimbabwe it would mean togetherness or oneness in fighting to protect and promote significance of human worth and human progress. It also means rallying/coming together; or dialoguing for mutual concessions and acceding to collective social responsibility; teaming up to assist the less fortunate and materially weaker members of the community to protect them from calamity; a shared way of living; common social vision that originates from democratisation of both land use and agricultural labour among the African communities.

It is hoped that by adopting African-centred theories in analysing land and identity in the selected fictional writings, the current study deepens and broadens appreciation of Zimbabwe's land question, including aspirations characterising and undergirding both the writers' voices and the Zimbabwean majority's dreams of re-establishing and fostering human dignity and human right to life sustenance through transparent and more equitable land redistribution.

1.7 Literature review

Land and identity as a theme in Zimbabwean literature in African and European languages has been a predominant subject since the colonial days. Whilst there has been prolific research on Zimbabwe's land question in the post-2000 period in other disciplines, little critical attention has been paid to fictional narratives focusing on the same subject. There has been a tendency to avoid the subject of land in post-2000 Zimbabwe, most probably because of its controversial and emotive nature, including the fact that land redistribution is still an unfolding process which critics may consider not prudent to comment on. Further, some issues relating to land and identity have the potential of dividing the country that is still in the process of forging national cohesion. Yet, it is critical that dialogue over the land question across the racial divide be initiated because land touches on livelihoods and destinies of all Zimbabweans, directly or indirectly. History has shown that the realities of the people of Zimbabwe across the racial divide are intertwined.

McDermott Hughes's opening chapter of *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging* (2010) dwells on Anglophone writers' art that explores European belongingness on the Zimbabwean soil/land. Hughes lambasts a European consciousness that shuts out the local inhabitants of the land in favour of the land and its resources. Hughes' views resonate with Chennells' (1982) and Moyana's (2000) observations concerning European settler mentality in Zimbabwe. Hughes (2010: 17) questions: "Can white souls rest in African soil?" It is significant that McDermott Hughes makes this observation concerning mainstream Rhodesian writers in the context of the post-2000 land occupations. By examining only mainstream Rhodesian writers, Hughes

replicates racial exclusiveness that he decries. Prioritising the land and its wealth over the indigenous population has remained potentially explosive. Thus, the current research's thrust to bring white and African literary voices to dialogue on land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Tirivangana's unpublished doctoral thesis, "Towards a Theory of Africa-centred Metaphysics: A Critical Exploration of the Ngozi Theme in Selected Zimbabwean Fiction" (2011), examines the connectivity between African metaphysics and the land as embedded in the country's institutions. In his view, colonialism was *ngozi*¹⁵ for which reparations should be paid. His views are in line with the nationalist liberation struggle's vision for land restitution. Tirivangana's literary critique of *ngozi* in Zimbabwean black-authored colonial fictional narratives resonates with the significance that ordinary indigenous people attach to post-2000 Zimbabwean land phenomena. The current study, however, examines how the selected post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives depict land experiences, especially their influences towards shaping people's conceptions of their human worth and dignity, including the well-being of their communities for sustainable development. Excluding white-authored narratives responding to the land question similarly entrenches existing racial binaries, an aspect the current study bridges.

Kahari's introduction to *The Search for Zimbabwean Identity and Ufuru: An Introduction to Black Zimbabwean Fiction in English, 1956-1980* (2009) exposes the devastating effects of the violent settler colonial land appropriations and massive land dispossession of the indigenous population. Kahari observes that killing Africans and dispossessing them of their land, including decimating their institutions as colonialism did, is a crime against humanity. Kahari's analysis focuses on the colonial fictional writings of the first seven black writers to publish in English — Solomon Mutswairo, Ndabaningi Sithole, Stanlake Samkange, Wlison Katiyo, Dambudzo Marechera, Stanley Nyamfukudza, and Charles Mungoshi. Although Kahari avoids dealing with post-2000 fiction narratives focusing on land, his analysis of the above writers' works that decry the

¹⁵In this context it is mass murder of the African race that can never be put to rest until reparations have been paid.

violence of colonial land dispossession whilst applauding Africans' struggles to re-assert their humanity, subtly accentuates the indigenous people's struggles to repossess their land in the post-colonial period. Indirectly, his leaving out white-authored narratives presupposes Zimbabwean racial polarisation over land. Viewing land in terms of black and white, and never from a Zimbabwean perspective, further entrenches binary identities that deeply ingrain racial prejudices the country should uproot. Like Hughes, Kahari's pigeonholing of land and identity along racial lines undermines interracial dialogue over an issue that directly affects all Zimbabweans. The current study bridges this gap in its analysis of Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives across the racial divide that respond to the land question in the post-2000 period. Kahari's observations are pertinent in that they highlight some of the concerns that the selected writers in this research are interrogating. These observations are also dealt with in the analysis of texts that contextualise the Zimbabwean land question and its impact on perceptions of identities.

Similarly, like Kahari, Primorac's (2006) *The Place of Tears* examines black-authored colonial fictional narratives using Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of time and space. Her introduction, however, touches on the land question in post-2000 Zimbabwe whereby she expresses strong views against the government's land redistribution programme. In her view, land redistribution is orchestrated by ZANU-PF and its government against white commercial farmers resulting in deeper poverty and hunger and therefore retrogressive. Unfortunately, her sentiments can be viewed as an anti-African and racial stance to land redistribution. In her titling and introduction alone, *The place of tears* subtly projects heartache and trauma engendered by the Zimbabwean land reform, perhaps associating the trauma with the violent displacements on the commercial farms. The issue of violence that Primorac raises is explored in greater detail in Chapter Four that deals with white-authored narratives responding to the post-2000 land issues.

Bull-Christiansen's *Tales of the Nation: Feminist Nationalism or Patriotic History? Defining National History and Identity in Zimbabwe* (2004) touches on land and identity in Vera's *Nehanda* (1993) and *The Stone Virgins* (2002). She analyses collective identity as represented in *Nehanda* and *The Stone Virgins*, drawing links with the armed

liberation struggle, post-independence dissident activities and the Third Chimurenga discourse. The post-colonial approach she uses misses the spiritual significance of land that defines African unities, African spirituality and African identities trans-generationally. From an African-centred perspective, Christiansen fails to link land and the collective African struggles that Vera explores. In the African worldview, land undergirds human worth, thereby providing the guiding principles of traditional African life as embedded in *humwe* that centralises peace and togetherness. The current study partially fills this gap in Christiansen's study by using African-centred approaches.

Gambahaya's unpublished doctoral thesis, *An Analysis of the Social Vision of Post-independence Zimbabwean Writers with Special Reference to Shona and Ndebele Poetry* (1999), with the University of Cape Town, touches on the land question in the background to the study. She observes that from 1980 when Zimbabwe became independent, no serious efforts had been made to address the land question in Zimbabwe, both in reality and literature, a fact that the current study also acknowledges. Gambahaya does not go beyond the cursory remark concerning delayed land redistribution. The current study takes the land question beyond the 1990s by exploring Zimbabwean writers' perception of the post-2000 land redistribution exercise including its aftermaths, as well as the relationship between land and identity in the Zimbabwean context. It is important to critique the new developments concerning the land question, especially how the redistribution processes continue impacting on Zimbabweans' conceptions of themselves, their livelihoods, human worth and place in the world. This study's critiques of fictional narratives also explores what greater good has accrued from land redistribution in post-independence Zimbabwe

Kirstin Boltz's *Women as Artists in Contemporary Zimbabwe* (2007) explores the differentiation of African men and women in accessing land. She uses Manichean allegories that separate African women from their men-folk and children despite their being collectively disenfranchised by the colonially-induced land dispossessions that threaten their livelihoods and survival as a race. Boltz (2007: 229) argues: "Even today the reality in Zimbabwe is such that women are wondering what their relationship to land

actually is — and to their own bodies”. To argue a women’s case for land ownership outside the historical conditions that created land scarcity and land hunger among the indigenous population in the first place would be misleading and distorts the land realities in Zimbabwe. This in turn diverts attention from the devastating impact that colonial land dispossession continues to have, including impact on identity[ies] and people’s participation in self-development, social transformation and nation-building, aspects that the selected narratives in this study partially examine. Further, Boltz’s study is potentially divisive, pitying Africans against each other when they are collectively victims of a system that was imposed on them. Her approach diverts readers’ attention from appreciating Africans’ collective right to land as a right to sustenance and survival. Further, her exclusion of the white woman’s voice presupposes whites’ privileged position on issues pertaining to land. The current study takes readers back to analysing the Zimbabwean land question holistically, for humanity’s greater good.

In Vambe and Chirere’s *Charles Mungoshi: A Critical Reader* (2006), Chirere uses *Waiting for the Rain*’s Garabha to show the resilience of African spiritual and cultural identities despite the dislocations engendered by colonial African land dispossession. The current study builds up on this cultural issue within the post-colonial land experiences that some selected post-2000 fictional narratives depict. This further reinforces the marginalised indigenous majority’s aspirations about land that scientific research, mostly focusing on agricultural productivity, overlooks. The current study takes up aspects relating to spirit of place symbolised by Chirere’s critique of Charles Mungoshi’s Garabha in *Waiting for the Rain*. It examines how approaches to land redistribution and people’s reconnecting with traditional lands could promote social cohesion for collective human progress in post-independence Zimbabwe. Whilst colonial African-authored fiction writings subtly project pre-independence Zimbabwe’s being a house of hunger because of settler machinations, this study examines how the selected writers conceptualise and depict land and identity with a view to promoting peace and oneness for sustainable human development.

Muponde and Primorac's *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* (2005) dwell on how creative writers generally depict Zimbabwean perceptions about Zimbabwe as a nation. Chennells and Ranger are among the contributors in this anthology that touch on land directly as a subject. Chennells' chapter on white-authored autobiographies resonates with his PhD thesis cited earlier. Peculiar to his writing is consistency relating to whiteness and white supremacy being accountable for black nationalism in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe: "Stupid white blunders create black nationalism". The current study's analyses of land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives examines whether there has been any epiphany regarding the blunders that Chennells bemoan.

Other emerging popular topics on criticism of Zimbabwean literature in English in the post-independence phase dwell on the liberation struggle, need for African-centred theoretical frameworks, autobiographical writings and HIV/AIDS among others. Literary criticism focusing on fictional narratives that respond directly to the Zimbabwean land question in the form that this study takes could then still be in the making. Pilosof's (2012) *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe* makes exceptional insights into white narratives depicting land occupations. The current study hopes to promote retrospection, introspection, as well as objective intellectual dialogue intra- racially and inter- racially, as well as nationally and internationally, with a view to promoting human dignity, peace and oneness that are central to nation-building and development.

1.8 Research methodology

The study critically analyses post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored selected fictional narratives in English responding to the land question using African-centred approaches including Afrocentricity. The analyses take the form of desk research using the fictional narratives as raw data that is critiqued within the African-centred frameworks. However, though not evident in the thesis, the researcher's field visits across the country were extremely helpful in enabling the researcher to familiarise herself with the length and breadth of the country's geo-physical landscapes, including land distribution patterns and

communities, conservancies, national parks, water bodies, mission and mining settlements, Harare's low and high density suburbs, and Harare's newly-established peri-urban settlements. The visits undergird invaluable insights for deeper appreciation of the respective writers' tussling with land and identity within the unfolding land redistribution process.

Further, direct touch with the physical environment and the social re-organisation of the land structures and systems remain invaluable for deeper insights, allowing independent judgment of the land question at hand within its socio-historical, cultural and economic milieu. This somewhat releases the researcher from the entrapping effects of desk research that objectifies individuals and communities that creative writers depict. It is refreshing to interact with real people and the environment outside the frozen parameters of fictional narratives. The interface enlivens the Zimbabwean land question and its complexities. In making the current study relevant to the Zimbabwean society for which it is primarily intended, interviewing real people directly affected by land redistribution, including some authors (Aaron Chiundura Moyo, Memory Chirere, Ignatius Mabasa, Mashingaidze Gomo and Petina Gappah) provided insights that desk research alone could not have sufficiently provided.

Furthermore, land being multidimensional and hotly contested across disciplines, the study also uses political science, economic history and other social sciences research publications in its analysis of the selected fictional narratives. Texts include Thomas' *Rhodes: The Race For Africa* (1996); Samkange's *What Rhodes Really Said about Africans* (1982); Moyana's *Zimbabwe's Political Economy of Land* (2002); Stoneman's *Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State and Capital in Southern Africa* (1988) and Chigara's *Re-conceiving Property Rights in the New Millenium: Towards a New Sustainable Land Relations Policy* (2012) among others.

Because land redistribution is still on-going and therefore too close to the writers' and critics' experiences as both participants and witnesses, collapsing the foregoing methods situates the Zimbabwean land-identity conundrum within its socio-historical, cultural,

political and economic matrixes. The cumulative effect of the complimentary methodologies boosted psychological and intellectual confidence for the researcher to explore the unfolding, controversial and hotly contested land-identity subject whereby everyone claims authority. The idea for compressing the methodologies as a window into appreciating trajectories of land and identity in the texts at hand also demonstrates that the writers' depictions are not about disembodied beings, but stand to reflect Zimbabwean lived realities. The interface also makes it easier to distinguish myth, symbolism and stylistic preferences from lived realities. Lefkowitz (1996: 52) argues that "[o]nly a few of the people teaching in universities today seem to have not forgotten that not long ago symbolic myths of ethnic supremacy were responsible for the deaths of whole populations".

1.9 Thesis statement

The study uses an African-centred critical analysis of selected Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives in English produced between 2000 and 2010 focussing on land and identity against the backdrop of the post-2000 land occupations. Using the thesis that whoever constructs knowledge holds the key to power, the study uses fictional narratives across the racial divide, shying away from perpetuating partisan and exclusionary attitudes towards the subject of land that has the potential to collectively make or break the Zimbabwean people. Dialogue, candidness and transparency over land in Zimbabwe's post-2000 period as depicted by respective selected narratives have the potential to promote respect for human dignity, human worth and oneness for Zimbabweans' greater good. Through an African-centred expository analysis of black and white-authored fictional narratives, the thesis synthesises the processes, attitudes and views undergirding discourses of land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Afrocentricity's integrative approach towards a holistic examination of land-cum-identity in the selected fictional narratives is critical in that it subtly calls for introspection regarding authors' depictions of present and past land experiences as Zimbabweans strive to establish a sustainable future that centralises oneness, human worth and human dignity. This interface is critical because literary criticism feeds into and from the cultures and society within which it is developed.

1.10 Structure of the study

Chapter One introduces the study. It focuses on the preamble, aims and scope of the study, background to the study, area of study, rationale, theoretical framework, literature review, research methodology and thesis statement. The chapter gives a general overview of the study and introduces the reader to the thrust and complexities surrounding land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwean fiction writings in English.

Chapter Two explains theoretical framework. It focuses on African-centred approaches, including Afrocentricity, used to critique writers' trajectories of land and identity in the selected fiction narratives. The chapter justifies why African-centred approaches and Afrocentricity are culturally better placed to critique the Zimbabwean land-identity question – challenges and perceived practicable alternatives – within the context of lived African realities.

Chapter Three explores post-2000 Zimbabwean black-authored novels that situate and contextualise the post-2000 land debate within the Zimbabwean lived socio-historical realities, thereby providing an important link in the constructions of land historiographies in post-2000 land narratives. The chapter examines the writers' explorations of colonial fracturing of indigenous land systems, distortion and fragmentation of identities, the sacrifices of the armed liberation struggle, the indigenous people's mixed reactions to land reform in post-2000 Zimbabwe, including some of its pitfalls. It also analyses the way the writers depict the Zimbabwean land question as a historical continuum that directly influences belongingness, nation-building and sustainable social development, including its overspill into the Diaspora.

Chapter Four analyses Zimbabwean white-authored novels that respond to post-2000 land developments. It focuses on the writers' handling of the Zimbabwean post-independence commercial farm frontier and how it affects identities, dignity and the humanity of those encompassed within its boundaries. The fictional narratives' trajectories are critical in their reflections on some of the pitfalls of partisan attitudes when examining the complexities characterising Zimbabweans' perceptions of the land question.

Chapter Five analyses short story collections that give anecdotes of post-2000 land experiences and their aftermath, including influence on conceptions of land and identity. The chapter tracks writers' depictions of the land issue past the land occupations of 2000, examining emerging perspectives and pitfalls that may undermine the need for more equitable land redistribution in post-independence Zimbabwe. Trajectories and symbolism are appreciated within the African-centred framework with a view to subjecting practicable alternatives that writers posit to scrutiny. This furthers intellectual debates and literary criticism on the Zimbabwean land question with a view to promoting greater good for the Zimbabwean society.

Chapter Six is the conclusion. It synthesises the findings from the chapters. It also proposes areas that need further research in re-thinking and re-presenting land in Zimbabwean literature in English with the objective of advancing ideas that promote respect for human dignity, human worth and oneness for greater human progress and society's greater good.

1.11 Conclusion

This introductory chapter lays the foundation and focus of the research, emphasising the interplay between the methodology, aims and objectives against the backdrop of the indigenous Zimbabwean worldview and society's conception of the functional role of art/fictional creativity and its criticism. It also highlights the Zimbabwean land question within its lived socio-cultural, economic and historical contexts, including the latter's potential towards influencing and shaping fictional writers' trajectories, thrusts and visions. The tight rope between Zimbabwean history and literature given that fictional narratives are drawing from unfolding post-2000 Zimbabwean land experiences, begs the research to analyse effectiveness of writers' trajectories and their grasp of Zimbabwean history, socio-cultural values and people's aspirations using African-centred frameworks. This takes the study to Chapter Two that explains the theoretical framework in greater detail.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: AN AFRICAN-CENTRED APPROACH

The battle for theory marks the battle for the ownership of minds (Hudson-Weems, 2007: 20)

2.0 Introduction

Conceptually, the research adopts Afrocentricity and other African-centred approaches that resonate with African values and aspirations, drawing heavily from distilled African experiences and philosophies as embodied in critically-considered African indigenous traditions that continue influencing communities' worldviews. The working definition of Afrocentricity for the purposes of this study is the one given by Maulana Karenga (cited by Mazama, 2003: 8). Afrocentricity is cogently defined as “essentially a quality of perspective or approach rooted in the cultural image and human interest of African people”. In line with this, Furusa (2002: 55) holds that, “[a] correct understanding and appreciation of African literature/[experience] begins with a correct understanding and appreciation of the very forces and factors that give African literature/[worldview] its meaning and significance”. It is important that African scholars and Africans realise that theories “that are essential and adequate for interpreting African literature/[experience] are found in African culture and history” (Furusa, 2002: 53). This helps to prevent misreading, distortions and misinformation arising from engaging outside theories to examine Zimbabwean peculiar land issues.

Appiah (1992: 94), citing Richard Wright, similarly argues for the need to understand African philosophy when examining African and related experiences: “(1) The thought of the African people is intrinsically valuable and should be studied for that reason, if for no other; (2) it is important to the history of ideas that we discover and understand the relation between African thought and the thought of the Western world...the correct pattern of intellectual development...will become clear only as we begin to understand the basis and direction of that development...(3) it is important in understanding practical affairs that we clearly delineate their underlying philosophical motivation”. These Wright

propositions on African philosophy are critical to informative intellectual debates on post-2000 Zimbabwean fictional narratives focusing on land and identity.

Philosophy as a reflective activity is based on concepts “regarded as central to that canon/[tradition]: beauty, being, causation, evil, God, gods, good, illusion, justice, knowledge, life, meaning, mind, person, reality, reason, right, truth, understanding, and wrong” (Appiah, 1992: 87). Therefore critique of a people’s conceptualisation of phenomena and situations should be based on critical reflections on their philosophy of life and their responses to evolving socio-cultural and historical conditions. The argument is that transposing other ideals upon Zimbabwean land experiences, or substituting Zimbabwean lived land-identity realities with other assumptions misinforms and misdirects readers’ attention from the critical issues impacting on the lives of Zimbabweans. This builds distorted images that un/wittingly veil the forces that should be characterised and addressed concerning the Zimbabwean land question. This is the framework that guides Afrocentricity and African-centredness for the purposes of this study. That meeting basic human land needs ensures that humans are at the centre, as opposed to self-serving motives, makes the African-centred approaches more appealing, sustainable and practicable. For example, Chiwome and Mguni (2012: 320 citing Vilakazi) observe:

Gandhi and Nehru had to go deep into the well of the soul of Indian civilisation and Indian humanism, to find and mobilise the full strength of Indian people, necessary for victory over British colonialism.

In the indigenous Zimbabwean worldview, “peace and oneness are the guiding principles of traditional African life” (Chiwome and Mguni (2012: 321). Therefore, “without centralising these values, [Zimbabwean] literature becomes dehumanised” (Ibid).

2.0.1 Afrocentricity and location of art: A cursory view

The proponent of Afrocentricity, Molefi Asante (1998: 2), describes it as “placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African [experiences], culture

and behavior”. The theory is especially important in the examination of fictional narratives focusing on Zimbabwe’s post-2000 land redistribution process, including its strengths and pitfalls.

The current study is conscious of Lefkowitz’s (1996) criticism that Afrocentric intellectuals transform myth into history thereby misleading and misdirecting students regarding Africans’ contributions to civilisation and participation in history. As indicated earlier, Lefkowitz’s criticism justifies all the more the reason why African experiences should be self-named and self-defined if ‘the ability to define reality and have other people respond to your definition as if it were their own’ (Nobles, 1985: 107) is the key to safe-guarding any people’s survival interests. Hence, whilst Lefkowitz expresses reservations concerning symbolism, myth and history in Afrocentric-related studies, she misses how that symbolism culminates from distilled experiences and stereotypical images that certain groups use to characterise relations with other human beings and the cosmos. Therefore, whilst indeed symbolism constitutes a good part of the analyses in the current study, the images in the selected land narratives are subjected to scrutiny against the backdrop of lived experiences, recurrent attitudes and genuine aspirations undergirding complexities characterising the Zimbabwean land question. For this reason, the study examines the writers’ trajectories of land and identity within the Zimbabwean socio-historical, political and cultural milieu that define the continuum of struggles for land and assertion of human dignity.

That the theory strives for a balanced critique of African experiences entails that it critiques the pitfalls of national consciousness (Fanon, 1967; Appiah, 1994), including possibilities whereby politicians ride on national aspirations for land while they pursue self-serving ends. Conversely, national consciousness is double-edged to the extent that it allows Zimbabweans to attain critical knowledge about their place in the world. In this regard, the post-2000 land experiences provide a unique window. In the African worldview, the writer “has a bundle of duties which are expected from him by the society, as well as a bundle of rights and privileges that society owes him” (p’ Bitek, 1986: 19). For this reason, the fictional narratives’ trajectories of land and identity are

examined within the parameters of African “cultural aesthetics and epistemological codes” (Muwati, 2009: 25). These help to locate the texts and the directions that they posit.

That the selected Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives focus on real issues and realities confronting the Zimbabwean society in the post-colonial period places the texts within the realm of African literature. African-centred theories of literature, including Afrocentricity that the study uses, place the study within a perceivable cultural centre. Among most African communities, being cultured means being nurtured and socialised within beliefs, values and traditions that promote a particular philosophy of life. This becomes one’s identity. Being cultured refers to one’s identity or sense of being/humaneness, premised on whether one is nurtured according to the shared philosophy of life or not. Being nurtured in a culture then, affirms one’s identification within that philosophy of life. To this end, culture affirms identity[ies] of individuals and communities.

This explains why the study subjects the Zimbabwean land question in the post-2000 period to scrutiny from the perspective of the African people whose views have been excluded despite forced removals from their land by white settlers. Mazama (2003: 26) succinctly summarises the African-centred paradigm that suffices for this study:

The African experience must determine all enquiry; the spiritual is important and must be given its due place; immersion in the subject is necessary; holism is a must; ... not everything is measurable because not everything that is significant is material; the knowledge generated by the Afrocentric methodology must be liberating.

Holism implies “[t]he researcher must examine everything possible to be able to make an adequate case” (Asante, in Mazama, 2003: 106). For this reason, when examining social and human reality in literature as is the case in the current study of land and identity, critical analyses may not be made in isolation from historical, geographical, religious and or socio-cultural underpinnings. Human life is too complex to be dissected and pigeonholed into independent dichotomies. Further, by its very nature land is a

multidisciplinary subject, therefore demanding holism that the African-centred framework embraces. Hence, Akbar (in Mazama, 2003: 139) argues: “A holistic model must include the full dimensions of the human make-up: physical, mental and metaphysical”. This integrative approach discourages artificial demarcations when critiquing situations and realities. It encourages dialogue, in addition to nurturing critical thinking. For example, citing Malcolm X, Karenga (Ibid: 83) argues: “the language and logic of the oppressed cannot be the language and logic of the oppressor if an emancipatory project is to be conceived and pursued”. Asante, (in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 36) critiquing the inadequacy of Eurocentric theories in examining African experiences similarly argues:

The Jews of the Old Testament asked, “How can you sing a new song in a strange land?” The Afrocentrists ask, “How can the African create a liberative philosophy from the icons of mental enslavement?”

African-centredness helps to uncover the areas of divergence and convergence, especially the language and logic of respective players involved in the land question. The language and logic help to locate the texts and trajectories in addition to broadening and deepening social orientations within their historical milieu. This in turn helps to establish points of departure regarding Zimbabwean land realities, social relations and significance attached to human dignity with a view to promoting greater human good. Baldwin (1995: 31) has it, “[W]e cannot escape our [interests], however hard we try, those [interests] that contain the key – could we but find it – to all that we later become”. Therefore, in analysing writers’ treatment of logic and agency in Zimbabwe’s on-going land reform process, it is important that the study establishes the various ways of viewing the Zimbabwean land reality in order to transform attitudes and achieve self-regeneration. The African-centred interpretation of phenomena that the current study uses therefore remains a constant reference point.

Apart from insisting that writers are legislators of their communities (p’ Bitek, 1986), who record the vision and mores of their communities (Soyinka, 2000), whose works are also the granaries of their people’s experiences, African conception of art demands that

writers suggest practicable intellectual solutions to challenges confronting their communities (Achebe, 1989). They are the philosophers of their communities and societies. Within the African-centred framework, then, writers' trajectories should suggest alternatives that promote greater human good by reflecting holistically on people's experiences and their desired destinies. In this regard, African-centredness underscores the need for critical self-consciousness gained through critical self-knowledge so that people can motivate themselves to renew and transform their lives and communities.

2.1 African-centred blocks guiding the current study

The research draws from ideas of intellectuals like Marcus Garvey, Franz Fanon, James Baldwin, W E B Du Bois, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Amilcar Cabral, Molefi Kete Asante, Clenora Hudson-Weems and Ben Chigara, among others. These thinkers focus on the potentialities and possibilities for the oppressed peoples of colour "to act as free men and women guiding their own destiny" (Garvey, 1986: 9). They concur that with critical self-knowledge derived from a critical knowledge of history and culture, and motivated by a common vision deriving from distilled shared experiences, African peoples can muster the change that they want. Asante (in Mazama, 2003: 101) makes it clear that the arguments fall within the framework of African liberation.

The proponents of Afrocentricity as a culturally-ingrained philosophy argue that Africans cannot be bystanders on issues that directly affect their realities and existence, including narrating their own experiences in their own voices, what Hudson-Weems (2004; 2007; 2012) calls "reclaiming ourselves" through "self-naming", "self-defining" and "self-knowing". African people's agency and transcendence, therefore, become uppermost so that Africans take the initiative to participate fully in the struggles that liberate their lives and transform their livelihoods for greater human progress. The literary critique of post-2000 Zimbabwean land experiences as represented in selected post-2000 fiction writings would similarly examine people's struggles for land within the socio-cultural, historical, religious, psychological and economic lived experiences of the Zimbabweans themselves.

This falls within Akbar's (in Mazama, 2003: 137-142) emphasis on holistic knowledge as a core in the Afrocentric approach. He argues: "A collective, spiritual, and affect/symbolic system addresses a multidimensional being capable of vast potential and the capacity for transformation" (Ibid: 142).

In view of this logic, the principal reason why Afrocentric thinkers insist on raising the consciousness of the victims of colonial exploitation and cultural domination is to expose colonialism's damage to the perpetrators and victims alike. It is cognizant of the contact between Africa and Europe that accounts for the exploitative relationship between Europe and Africa. Afrocentric thrust stresses greater good or common good, what Karenga (Mazama, 2003: 91) defines as "a good beyond personal comfort and position". Retrospection and introspection are therefore intended to inculcate collective responsibility to achieve constructive change. Primary among these is acknowledging, recognising and accepting all people as human beings with human needs and a right to life like any other. The back-to-Africa metaphor (Marcus Garvey) that Afrocentric scholars embrace is a symbol of their freedom. It implies embracing African values and philosophies as a guide in the struggles to reassert their dignity. The desire to be treated justly, to enjoy privileges like any other citizens, and to be empowered to freely develop themselves on their own terms, is the motivation for embracing Africa as the cultural centre. The symbolism is significant in that Africa becomes the sanctuary from which Africans can trace and conceptualise their spiritual connectivity with the land, including their relations with the cosmos. This motif shows that not everything significant is material. The study analyses this more closely in chapters that follow.

To the extent that African-centredness and Afrocentricity accentuate the cultural values, collective survival and agency of the African people in emancipation struggles, the research also draws from indigenous philosophies, cultural values and historical experiences of the indigenous Zimbabweans. It is difficult to talk of African recovery without considering how social practice evolves in response to new conditions. Commenting on the agency of the African people in response to colonial land dispossessions, Alexander et al (2000:84-85) observe:

The early nationalism has been described as a rural indigenous response to the colonial occupation of African land. Africans were being evicted from their land to make way for white-owned commercial farms. This caused the Africans to organize themselves in defense of their indigenous rights to this land.

Thus the interconnectedness between historical accounts of Africans' struggles to restore human dignity, cultural values and land traditions is one murky area that Afrocentricity unravels. The Afrocentric literary theory, then, endeavours to marry fictional narratives with real life experiences, making literary creativity and its criticism relevant to life.

Sensitivity to history therefore becomes a prerogative for Afrocentric theory and practice. For example, colonial history of massive land dispossessions and removals, as well as minority holding of land and the resultant fractures could alert the Zimbabwean society about the hazards of inequitable land distribution. This is an important lesson concerning the imperative need to avoid replicating similar mistakes in post-2000 Zimbabwe. It is for this reason that Fanon (1967) implores Africans not to imitate Europe in order to ensure that they do not commit the same mistakes that Europe did when she came into contact with Africa. Fanon's contribution to Afrocentricity lies in his advocacy for Africa's need for inward reflection, as opposed to looking to Europe to provide solutions or answers to colonially-induced material and psycho-spiritual problems confronting Africans today. Fanon's contribution is relevant in critiquing the selected writers' respective trajectories and their envisioned solutions to the land question in post-independence Zimbabwe.

Further, Afrocentricity is clear that liberation and empowerment are unattainable until the formerly colonised have undergone a decolonisation process. For instance, Fanon (Ibid), Ngugi (2006) and Armah (1973; 2010) emphasise that until people understand the hazardous effects of colonialism carried over onto post-independence Africa, decolonisation as a process would not take root. This aspect is intricately linked to consciousness of identity that is briefly explored later in the chapter.

Conceptualisation of agency to bring about change is central to the African-centred view of African liberation. Marcus Garvey views the continued treatment of blacks as second

class citizens of the human race, as white people's bluff to enslave, colonise and continue to exploit Africans (Garvey, 1986: 10-11). Garvey's conception of agency is that Africans were "created in the image of the same God [and] have the same common rights ... [to] lift [themselves] up from the doubts of the past ... slumbers of the past ... lethargy of the past" (Garvey, 1992: 90), and that Africans can pay no higher tribute to their Divine Master than being masters of their own destiny (Ibid: 91). In the context of this study one would cite Ntiri's call to be inward-looking in struggles for renewal and emancipation:

The onus of responsibility for the destiny of the Africana [man and] woman therefore rests on [him and] her. The growing need to be self-named, the desire for reclamation of [his and] her historical past, the search for a stronger sense of belongingness and a greater call for cultural rootedness, therefore, provide the rationale and justify the urgency and necessity for a new direction for the [Zimbabwean] man and woman] (Ntiri in Hudson-Weems, 2004:5).

This resonates with Garvey's conception of African agency as predicated on the deep respect and appreciation of the accomplishments and struggles of the African people throughout history. For example, rather than inculcating shame and fracturing self-esteem, colonial conquest and slavery should inspire the younger generations to fight domination of any kind and to be resilient in their struggles for emancipation. Embracing foreign approaches without adequate scrutiny would continuously disenfranchise Africans and deny them opportunities to develop themselves on their own cultural terms. As Karenga (in Mazama, 2003: 80) observes: "[T]he Afrocentric vision is one of generating problematic from one's own life experience, and then relating and comparing it to the experience of others". The foregoing views are taken up by Molefi Asante (1998, 2003, 2007), among others, in his conceptualisation of Afrocentricity.

Therefore, present conditions and facts relating to land and the African people in Zimbabwe should be interpreted and appreciated in relation to white people's experiences in Zimbabwe who have had monopoly of land ownership. The comparative

thrust of the Afrocentric approach is therefore critical in that it “values particular cultural and historical experiences as fruitful grounds from which to generate reflective problematics and to critically understand self, society and the world” (Ibid). This deepens understanding of one’s and others’ conditions/situations. The “point is that a disembodied knowledge, an abstract discourse on humans cannot and does not produce a quality [assessment of peculiar situations and experiences]” (Karenga in Mazama, 2003: 81).

Another important aspect of Afrocentricity is its corrective thrust to knowledge-construction about African experiences, thus, justifying Hudson-Weems’ observation cited earlier that the battle for theory is the battle for the control of minds. As argued earlier, alien theories incompatible with African values would most likely generate inadequate knowledge and misinformation that would not help to redress colonial imbalances pertaining to land ownership and its resultant impact on issues of identity. The African-centred reconstruction of knowledge promulgated from land research should therefore never be knowledge for knowledge’s sake, but knowledge that interrogates the present in the context of the past experiences in order to promote deeper appreciation of issues so as to enhance greater human good within the context of a more just society. African-centred approaches in studying Zimbabwean land issues then, stem from the mission to develop and guide the community towards achieving oneness and peace. This resonates with Gyekye (2003) and Chigara’s (2004; 2012a, 2012b) conceptions of African communalism whose values underscore social well-being, peace, reciprocity, interdependence, cooperation and solidarity within communities, “all of which conduce to equitable distribution of resources and benefits of society” (Karenga, in Mazama, 2003: 85). For this reason, the present land realities should be critiqued with a view to reflecting upon and understanding the issues holistically so that more sensitive and practicable approaches can be adopted to promote greater human good. The latter promotes shared responsibility that in turn encourages integrative approaches when examining social challenges like the Zimbabwe’s land question at hand. This perspective provides one of the guidelines in the analysis of the selected fictional works.

2.2 Moving the centre to Africa: Zimbabwe's post-2000 land experiences

In many respects, Zimbabwean land experiences of 2000 and beyond were unprecedented. They highlight the cost, complexities, pitfalls and potentialities of radical reconfiguration of land in post-colonial Africa. One of the principal drivers behind the liberation war was reclaiming the land, “so simply taking it back is an important goal. And, as in Europe, the United States, and Rhodesia after the Second World War, land is seen as a reward for those who risked their lives or suffered in the war” (Hanlon et al, 2013: 116). “The land redistribution issue [therefore] made a decisive difference in the agenda of the general elections from 2000 to date” (Magosvongwe, 2010: 47). This constitutes the background against which the selected creative works in the current study were produced. Much as “history matters” (Ranger in Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 219), the important question is “Which history for what Zimbabwe?” (Ibid). An African-centred approach should explore the “livelihood dynamics and the complexities of social differentiation within redistributive land reform” (Cousins, in Scoones 2010: v) from an African socio-cultural perspective. In critiquing the selected narratives then, it also interrogates the diverse range of real life responses to Zimbabwe's land reform process embodied in the narratives' trajectories. The African-centred approach allows for critical analyses of how the fiction narratives promulgate ennobling alternatives that help society to transform itself into a more just society that redistributes resources more equitably in spite of predominant challenges. Further, an African-centred framework would “sustain the African spirit” (Zimunya, 1982: 70), unlike other mediated approaches. An African-centred approach is envisioned to project the needs, interests and aspirations of the greater Zimbabwean majority.

It would be worth examining the extent to which writers rise up to challenge partisan interests characteristic of political rhetoric, intellectual domination and sensational media hype that divide society. Since one's culture and worldview regulate one's response and behaviour towards the society and the world, African cultural values provide an anchor for Africans to view the world around them so that they are not defined by anyone's culture but themselves alone. This ennobles the Zimbabwean society in its self-regeneration processes, hence the need to interrogate the selected texts using frameworks

that are compatible with the African environment in which the creative works were generated. This is particularly important, bearing in mind that colonial educational approaches designed entrenched systems to prop and “carry over colonial values into the period after independence ... fetter[ing] the development of the [colonised and intellectually] enslave[ing] peoples” (Rodney, 1983: 286-287). Images of black inferiority and white superiority shackle and cripple conceptions of human worth. Therefore writers and critics responding to Zimbabwe’s land question need to move away from individualistic and materialistic rationalisations and adopt approaches that advance the common good.

Literary theories underwriting creativity and critical practice diminish or nourish people’s chances for positive transformation. Muhwati (2010: 160, citing Asante, 1998: 173) argues:

It is intellectually self-defeating to seek inspiration for our creativity and critical practice from elsewhere, since ‘all analysis and creativity is culturally centred and flows from ideological assumptions’.

In addition to excavating the historical underpinnings of land injustices in Zimbabwe, an African-centred reading of the fiction narratives selected for the current study should unravel the cultural traditions, values and African aspirations over the ages. An understanding of the ideological assumptions undergirding African land struggles is therefore hoped to encourage “responsible participation and contribution” (Muhwati, 2010: 161), in line with the bundle of duties and responsibilities that individuals have towards their societies (p’Bitek, 1986).

Apart from generating decontextualised readings, using Eurocentric frameworks would alienate most African peoples from their cultures, identity and most importantly, their land. Moving the centre in critical enquiry makes the study compatible with the needs of decolonisation in Zimbabwe’s post-independence era. Baldwin (1964: 16) argues that the limits of blacks as “worthless human being[s]...defined and described and limited” (Ibid: 29) by white-imposed definitions of the African world psychologically prepared blacks

for their victimhood based on white supremacy and black inferiority. Ephraim (2003: xiv) bemoans that people's readiness either to forget conveniently the facts of history, or maliciously distort those facts - primarily for "the psychological reason of gratifying an obsessive need for self-aggrandizement [...] has been the brunt of the burden of being black" in both pre- and post-independence Africa/Zimbabwe. The stamp that each selected text carries is therefore worth noting because it distinguishes respective writers' orientation and direction.

The selected writers' depictions of the land experiences are critical to the well-being of the inhabitants for whom both literary creativity and critical practice are intended. Issues like belongingness, birthright/heritage, social justice, human dignity and human rights violations that are at the centre of Zimbabwe's land reform process are better critiqued using a theoretical practice that acknowledges and interrogates the land question more holistically. Land in the African worldview cements families and communities trans-generationally, it inscribes people's identities and relations throughout life. Sensitivity to these practical nuances underscores the need for writers and critics to construct trajectories "that prompt change in the course of our practical activity by changing the ground, the basic assumptions of our thinking about black life" (Ephraim, 2003: 418). African philosophy (Freire, 1970: 65) argues for,

[literature] that affirm[s] women and men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future.

To this end, viewed from the indigenous Zimbabwean perspective, Afrocentricity becomes an intellectual movement and practice in critical self-awareness, self-introspection and collective liberation with people deriving legitimacy and inspiration from African culture and history. As an alternative approach to reading African experiences and phenomena, it emphasises the need to celebrate and affirm human life, agency and dignity. Ephraim argues:

For wherever human beings are held in high esteem, there you will find a way of life and a set of guiding principles or an ideology of life-affirmation. We need such a worldview and a way of life as an antidote to the prevailing [nihilism in some of our creative arts].

This ensures that society nurtures creativity and develops its human resources for the common good. In Ephraim's (2003: 416) words, "this philosophy must be lived, and not merely be memorized like one in a mesmeric trance". Such a philosophy promotes human dignity and self-worth.

Afrocentricity strives to liberate Africans from being "beings for another" (Freire, 1995: 12), providing an alternative that strives to liberate their consciousness by offering them "the independent review and construction of knowledge about [Africa and Africans] in the light of the unfolding African experiences" (Ramose, 1999: 36). Like Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism, Afrocentricity regards the need for freedom and justice in Africa as inseparable from the need to recognise the full dignity of "Black people and their equality as citizens of the world" (SADC, 2000: 10). Garvey's contribution discussed earlier highlights this aspect. Non-recognition of the humanity and dignity of the African makes him an expendable and malleable object that is prone to manipulation and exploitation, even in the post-independence era. The Zimbabwean writers' responses to the post-2000 land experiences offer a unique case-study.

The centrality that Afrocentricity accords to history is critical to this study. Baldwin (1963) observes: "To accept one's past, one's history is not the same as drowning in it, it is learning how to use it". History therefore should be viewed as an opportunity to re-learn and ennoble people to constructively deal with the present. Adopting an African-centred approach, with its emphasis on the history and culture of African people, enables an interrogation of the history and impact of land dispossessions in Zimbabwe. As critical enquiry and practice, it therefore investigates and reviews issues of human dignity and development from the perspective of the African person's cultural values and traditions that are predicated on altruism for the benefit of the community and broader society.

Karenga identifies seven core-cultural African characteristics constituting shared orientations about Afrocentricity. They include the centrality of the community, respect for tradition, a high level spirituality and ethical concern, harmony with nature, the sociality of selfhood, veneration of ancestors and the unity of being (Mazama, 2003: 9). These aspects are critical in the shared perceptions and attitudes towards Zimbabwe's land occupations from 2000 and beyond. These occupations are at the heart of African lives. As an experience, they would therefore be best evaluated from an African-centred perspective.

In a multi-cultural and multi-racial environment and culture-free globalising world, Afrocentricity shows that people who cannot stand up for themselves and their worldview cannot only lose the respect of others, but also sacrifice their right to life and human dignity. The violence characterising land struggles from pre- to post-independence Zimbabwe shows that creative writing and critical enquiry on the Zimbabwean land question “cannot effectively survive critical approaches that stress a-historical depersonalisation and essential unimportance of racial history, racial community, and racial traditions” (Barksdale, Praisesong, 2007). A-historical depersonalisation in critical enquiry would distort Zimbabwe's land experiences and further entrench the existing chasms and strife about land.

2.3 Identity defined and conceptualised – An African-centred perspective

Identity is a multi-splendoured concept. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, International Student's Edition* (New Eighth Edition: 743), defines identity as a noun that means who or what somebody or something is. It suggests that identity is being sure of one's place in society. It further describes identity as “the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others: a sense of national/cultural/personal/group identity; the state or feeling of being very similar to and able to understand somebody or something”. All the foregoing meanings are pertinent when analysing the trajectories and images in the fiction narratives focusing on land that have been selected for this study.

Identity indicates who I understand myself to be as a person or who we are as a group in a specific setting at a certain point in history. This means that identity is dynamic as people might master several identities alongside each other through the life-course depending on cultural, situational and historical circumstances. Identities are social as they are defined in relation to others. Identities are also cultural. People are humanised into society and shaped by cultural elements like art, language, practices, beliefs, traditions, gender and other meaning processes gained through life's experiences. For example, land is critical in defining indigenous Zimbabwean identities. For most black Zimbabweans, land is a sacred and existential material resource that unites them across generations and gender, giving them assurance of belonging and security. For this reason, land in the African worldview cannot be privately-hoarded without upsetting the cultural and social equilibrium, a view supported by Bakare (1993: viii) when he observes: "According to the [African] tradition, land belongs to the living-timeless, the living and the future generations". Thus, for Africans, nothing is certain to hold you together better than the land. Identity can thus be viewed as social and cultural belonging.

Some of the larger identities that shape people are cultural identities within which a myriad of other 'shifting identities' (Bekker, 2001) can be defined, depending on one's expected social role at any specific time. In this regard, identities are therefore not cast in stone, as they are dependent on social situations and cultural expectations (Magosvongwe, 2009: 84).

Ways by which people strategically position themselves for specific interests against others, intra-nationally and internationally, especially in the colonial and post-independence contexts also constitute identity critical for the current study. Social identity, then, remains as multi-pronged and as complex as human interests. Interests include economic power, political, physical, religious, intellectual flagship, self-determination, emancipation and empowerment, among others. These influence people's outlook and attitudes. "Differences between peoples in language, moral affections, aesthetic attitudes, or political ideology – those differences that most deeply affect us in our dealings with each other" (Appiah, 1992: 35) constitute identification that the current study explores. Classification of people into races partly informs identity critical to the current study. Appiah's (1992: 34) conception of identity based on W E B Dubois'

conception of race is also critical for this study: “The history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of history”.

Identity can also be conceptualised as affinities that bring people together or put them into a certain social category. Using Appiah’s discounting of W E B Dubois’ badge of race, affinities include “social history of slavery; the discrimination and insult; ... this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas” (Appiah, 1992: 41). The land experiences that give background to this research entail re-orienting conceptions about identities and how they influence reading and interpreting experiences and phenomena. That the latter subtly touches on conceptions about writing about Africa in transition needs no pleading. What does writing about land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe mean to the world? “The language of empire – of centre and periphery, identity and difference, the sovereign subject and her colonies – continues to structure the criticism and reception of African literature in Africa and elsewhere ... mak[ing] the achievement of critical balance especially difficult to maintain” (Appiah, 1992: 72). This explains why it is especially important that upon reading these literary texts, the reader-critic in this study sees the trajectories under scrutiny in their cultural, historical, political and social settings.

Fossilised layers of identity deriving from Zimbabweans’ evolving experiences beg that for the purposes of the current study, identity should be defined and conceptualised within an Afrocentric perspective. A cogent definition has been offered thus: “the question of the liberation of the Black Man ... the meaning of being black in the world” (Mangu, 2006: 149, citing Archie Mafeje). This view resonates with Boesak’s (2006: 176) conception of African identity. He observes:

Being African is not simply a question of sharing the land; it is sharing the fate of Africa. Africa is not just a place, but the manifestation of a vision. Africa is not just the land we come from, but the destiny we are called to fulfill.

In the case of post-independence Zimbabwe, it has been argued that people cannot talk of a post-independence national identity without the resolution of the unfulfilled objectives of the liberation struggle (Mandaza in Bekker *et al*, 2001), particularly restoring indigenous ownership of land and management of the country's resources – human and material. Identity may also refer to the Africans' plight after the attainment of independence, with a yearning for social and economic empowerment under the leadership of the African elite. The ideas surrounding sanctity of human life and human agency, ethnicity, age, communal and urban spatial demarcations also constitute critical identities that define dichotomies critical for decision-making processes.

Appiah (1992) and Fanon's (1967) express reservations about identity as a construct of race that people can exploit for economic and political expediency. Baldwin explores this closely when he examines the plight of the Negro and his predetermined fate in America. A similar conceptualisation could be applied to the colonial experiences and apartheid land laws and labour that are predicated on race cited earlier. Identity can also be defined in terms of political affiliation. Paradoxically, for internal 'political correctness', identities can be defined in terms of people's political allegiances within a country. Zimbabwean post-2000 politically-motivated violence between ZANU-PF and MDC supporters gives a good example of how countries and nations' identities can be interpreted in the broader world. Some countries have been described as pariah states because of perennial internal instability that renders them ungovernable. Such conceptualisation of identity should be noted in the current study.

The desire to be seen, recognised and be acknowledged, as shown by James Baldwin's titles, *Nobody Knows my Name* and *Invisible Man*, give another example of the quest for identity (Magosvongwe, 2009: 84). Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism as strategies aimed at initiating and sustaining African Renaissance offer another expression of identity. Liberation movements like Civil Rights Movement, Pan-Africanism, Black Consciousness, including African armed struggle movements like ZANLA, SWAPO, ZIPRA, Mau Mau, among others, represent some identities defined along peoples' aspirations for liberation and recognition as human beings worthy of human rights like

any others. Consciously embracing African philosophy and practices can also be viewed as a quest for identity. Ngugi (2002:3) observes: “It is this culture that allows a community to imagine and re-imagine itself in history because culture is to a community what a flower is to a plant ... the flower ... often so readily defines the identity of so many plants”.

Huntington (2002) explores the current clashes between the West and the Moslem world as a clash of cultural identities that have seen peoples creating enemies and adopting alliances in the interest of collective survival. Zimbabwean indigenisation and restitution programmes have similarly created hostilities that threaten African survival. Ani asserts that culturally you cannot be human if you belong everywhere (Ani, 1994). Culture is thus analogous to identity and ideology, “a relevant commentary on important current events and issues” (p’ Bitek, 1986: 46-47). This aspect comes out clearly in the currency for imperial ventures in Africa and elsewhere. Indices and terminologies used for measuring colonial people’s human worth can be traced to dehumanising descriptions as in Kipling’s “half devil and half-child¹⁶” that shows the identity of African people as “the lowest, and stands/[standing] at the foot of the ladder ... His intellect ... always move/[ing] within a very narrow circle” with their “senses ... developed to an extent unknown to other ... races” (Gwekwerere et al, 2012: 95 citing Gobineau in Bidiss, 1970: 135). Cumulatively, Western dehumanisation of the African people is gender-neutral, showing that as an inferiorised race, Africans share a common destiny. Such a background explains how and why Africana Womanism emerges emphasising African common struggles for survival and the importance of critical self-consciousness and historical knowledge in the waging of such battles.

Africana Womanism descriptors of Nommo: Self-naming, Self-definition (Hudson-Weems, 2004) show the critical implications of embracing identities people craft for themselves that are in tandem with their aspirations. Morrison (1988: 190) observes: “Definitions belonged to the definers — not the defined”. This means that power lies with

¹⁶ The image is used in Rudyard Kipling’s poem, “The White man’s Burden” that valorises African colonial conquest as a civilising mission on the part of the British.

the one who can impose his or her definition of the problems at hand. Impliedly, with their definitions, definers surreptitiously suggest solutions that guide decisions and preferred alternatives. Kwame Toure (Stokely Carmichael) observes: “Those who have the right to define are the masters of the situation” (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967: 36), hence Ephraim’s call that “black people have an obligation to change the situation completely, if they truly desire to save themselves from utter destruction” (Ephraim, 2003: 19). Identity as a concept is therefore loaded with undertones that may not be easily discernible to an uncritical mind. In light of the above contestations concerning African rationality or lack of it, including black Zimbabweans’ subjection to Western education based on European conceptions of knowledge, truth and reality, it is critical that in its analysis, the current study examines labels, definitions and images of identities the selected writers use in re-drawing and re-constructing Zimbabwe’s post-2000 land narrative. The trajectories that the fictional narratives depict become critiques of identity[ies] within Zimbabwe’s land debate, perhaps suggesting how greater human good can be achieved.

2.3.1 Gender identity defined and conceptualised – An African-centred perspective

Gender identities in the African worldview are generally neutral. For example, there are male mothers and female fathers in Shona. Land formed a very important subject in defining identities, with father and mother’s genealogical relationships and rights to the very land forming the centre of one’s consciousness of belonging (Hodza, 1974). Gender identities are role-defined. Similarly, *mukoma*/elder sibling, ethically tasked with defending the vulnerable, infirm, disabled and aged family and community members, is gender-neutral. In light of the social safety networks founded on the family institution as the anchor, duties and responsibilities define identity. For example, the decisive role played by Nehanda¹⁷ in giving “orders to [her] people to defend themselves” (Samupindi, 1992: 33) against “foreigners who were snatching away their land, cattle and their heritage” (Ibid: 37) makes her a hero in Zimbabwean history and an embodiment of her

¹⁷The only African woman in Zimbabwe’s colonial history hanged for fighting to defend her land and people. She successfully led the Mashona in the First Chimurenga of 1896-97 against British settler occupation. Nehanda was hung on 28th April 1898 in Salisbury, Rhodesia.

people's aspirations. That she becomes the embodiment of Zimbabwean African nationalism therefore does not come as a surprise. Henceforth, the concept of heroes in Zimbabwean politics changes as woman's identity embraces the nation as opposed to the home locale. This explains women's taking up arms in the 1970s liberation struggle, justifying their interment at provincial heroes' shrines and the National Heroes Acre in post-independence Zimbabwe. Struggles for land and identity at the centre of the current study are therefore not a new phenomenon. Identity in light of struggles for collective survival is gender-neutral. Boesak (2006: 176) gives a pertinent description of African identity closely tied up with the foregoing that is critical in the current study:

Being an African is not simply a question of sharing the land; it is sharing the fate of Africa ... the manifestation of a vision ... the destiny we are called to fulfill.

Other conceptions of gender identities crucial to this study predetermine wo/man's relationship with the land and environment. For example, field/land in customary practice was traditionally the woman's preserve because men were mostly hunters. Women are/were the workers of the land (Batezat et al in Stoneman, 1988: 154) and, in some cases, could also own land ¹⁸ (Muhwati and Gambahaya, 2012: xviii citing Mararike, 2003: 11). That is why among the Maungwe, Mutasa and Jindwi of the Manyika of Zimbabwe, the daughters, sisters and paternal aunts (*madzitetete*) of the Manyika Ishe were sometimes appointed to rule over many *matunhu*. Muhwati and Gambahaya (Ibid) submit that there are also references to *masadunhu echikadzi* (female provincial leaders) among the Jindwi of Bocha and Ishe Nemaikonde's area with other accounts indicating that women ruled both as *masadunhu* and *madzishere* in Mutoko, Seke and Chihota.

Bourdillon (in Schoffeleers, 1978: 248) notes that among the Shona of north eastern Zimbabwe the man is the oracle of Musikavanhu/Creator/"Dzivaguru/Great Pool/High God/Donor of rain", "the owner of all the land" (Ibid: 249-250) who also owns the sky,

¹⁸ Interviews with octogenarians Hamilton Zimunya and Noah Shumba of Chigodora Village, Vumba, Mutare South in August 2010 revealed the crucial spaces, geophysical, cultural and social, accorded to princesses in their clans. Princesses held *shita/matunhu* in their jurisdiction, hence some sacred days or *chisi* on their weekly calenders in honour of their leadership.

making them the rainmakers and guardians of the land (Bourdillon in Schoffeleers, 1978: 235-255). Ironically, man has to look for the rain to make the land productive, in as much as woman tends the land for it to produce. The two are intertwined. This intricate link makes each gender indispensable for the survival of the family as a unit. This example shows the extent to which images and metaphors of land are culturally codified.

Traditionally, land is also connected with the seasons and therefore with the woman's biological cycle. The connection between the seasons and the woman's cycle connects the woman directly with nature and the land. In Shona culture, the woman was traditionally the calendar in an African home. This explains why women could control when conception should take place, and knew how to balance productivity of the land with reproduction. Achebe's *Arrow of God* explores the intricacy between land, its productivity and the seasons among the Igbo. Ngugi's *The River Between* explores the link between cultural identity and belongingness with the land among the Gikuyu. Only an African-centred critique of the land question can therefore expose the severity of the damage inflicted by colonial land dispossession and its legacies among the indigenous population. The current study, then, examines writers' sensitivity to values that define African identity. How land traditions shape practices and conceptions of being, belongingness, social cohesion, psycho-spiritual security and sense of place therefore come to the centre of the study's African-centred examination of land and identity.

With colonialism, indigenous communities saw women becoming guardians of the African land because of socio-economic pressures that engendered male labour migration. As men left homes in search of employment, women remained behind looking after the land and home. Laureta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* explores this motif intricately, exposing the crucial role South African women played in the Black Nationalist movements against apartheid. In light of the shared dehumanising experiences on the basis of race, this discussion on gender identity brings in Hudson-Weems African Womanism in the matrix of Africans' struggles for survival.

2.3.1.1 Contextualising Hudson-Weems' Africana Womanism

Among Africana Womanist descriptors crucial to note in the interrogation of the texts under study is the “co-existence of a man and a woman in a concerted struggle for the survival of their entire family/community” (Hudson-Weems, 2007: 289). The current study then, examines the coming together of African men and women in fighting to reclaim geophysical and intellectual space. This is critical in that the fate of Africa affects man, woman and child. From an African-centred perspective, it therefore becomes imperative that Africans name their experiences in the manner that adequately captures their needs, aspirations and vision for survival as a collective. This explains how *Nommo*/self-naming and self-defining become critical in discourses as sensitive as land redistribution that affects collective survival. Hudson-Weems (2007: 22) argues:

It spans from correct terminology, to clear definition, to appropriate application, and finally to actual practice, constant in ensuring that the experiences of Africana [men and] women are articulated in an African-centered framework...

The theory emphasises that Africans create criteria favourable to their struggles to re-assert their human worth and dignity. It emphasises grounding in African values based on distilled “unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of [African peoples]” (Ntiri in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 316). That the Africana woman is “family-centred, and a partner with males in the struggle for social change, strong, spiritual, and nurturing” (Ibid) attunes the theory to African needs trans-generationally and trans-continently. Africana Womanism's quest for wholeness recognises African philosophy that sees complementarity of woman, man and child in fighting together for collective survival. Intra-racial male-female competition for prominence and space distracts them from the primary cause of their collective survival. How the writers in this study approach male-female relationships as part of identity construction makes critical contributions in studies about Zimbabwean society's self-renewal.

2.4 National identity and land – The case of Zimbabwe

National identity within post-independence Zimbabwe is reflected in such titles as *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business* (Hammar and Raftopoulos, 2003) that discusses Zimbabwe's land question. *Zimbabwe's Lost Decade* (Sachikonye, 2012), which explores the crises in post-2000 Zimbabwe also expresses a national identity. This Zimbabwean identity derives from the common geophysical boundaries that people share which was defined at colonial occupation that dispossessed indigenous peoples of their land. This backdrop brings up the contentious issue of race regarding Zimbabwean national identity. For example, Pilosof's *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers'Voices From Zimbabwe* (2012) explores the invidious position that confronts Zimbabwean white farmers over land after almost a century of domination, a legacy some never created but benefitted from. Some critics could conversely speak of "the unbearable blackness of being" in colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe. The dichotomy of whiteness and blackness bespeaks of dichotomous values concerning how land is viewed in the country. The dichotomy subtly shows conflicting interests undergirding racial identities. These complexities constitute conceptualisations that in turn impact attitudes concerning human worth, dignity and right to land as a primary resource that ensures life sustenance. The unresolved questions of race and racial ownership of land/major resources remain major talking points. In the African worldview the artist "carves his moral standards on wood and stone and paints his colourful 'do's and don'ts' on walls and canvas...employs ... sweet songs and funny stories, rhythm, shape and colour, to keep individuals and society sane and flourishing (p' Bitek, 1986: 40). Therefore, how selected writers re-present this dichotomy in post-2000 Zimbabwe land narratives for greater human progress is critical. Like p' Bitek, Ngugi (2003: 12) enjoins African writers to rise up to the challenges of their vocation and mission to lead society through to renewal:

No renaissance can come out of state legislation and admonitions ... But renaissance, as rebirth and flowering, can only spring from the wealth of imagination of the people, and above all, from its keepers of memory.

Magosvongwe (2009: 84) also makes a pertinent observation about identity worth examining in the current study. She observes:

However, from a leeward perspective, it has also been argued that with prolonged psychological and cultural domination, some people lose a positive sense of identity and self-worth, culminating in loss of self-confidence. With loss of self-confidence, people lose their dignity and are most likely prone to self-mortification which makes them easy prey for exploitation and manipulation.

The African-centred definition of identity, summed up in relational terms with others, makes a thought-provoking conclusion: *Motho ke motho ka batho babang* — a person is only a person through other persons (Boesak, 2006: 180). Molefi Asante (2007) contends that there could be no social or economic struggle that would make sense if African people remained enamored with the philosophical and intellectual positions of white hegemonic nationalism as it relates to Africa and the African people (Asante in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 30). Chigara similarly supports the view that there should be re-orientation of identity[ies] so that human worth rather than race/class provides guideline to human conduct in the 21st-century human-rights clamour:

We shall all become, when our capacities to choose to recognise, promote and protect the inherent dignity of all individuals regardless shall have become second nature in all our dealings with others (Chigara, 2012b: v).

2.4.1 Contextualising Chigara's *Humwe* theory

Humwe is “southern Africa’s own age-old social engineering principle of *Ubuntu/Ubwananyina*. It literally means: “We are in this together. Therefore it is in our common interest to co-operate in order to succeed” (Chigara, 2012: 224). It emphasises togetherness on issues of social cohesion and collective survival. It has its basis in indigenous traditional farming practices that called whole communities to assist with planting, weeding and harvesting crops of a beleaguered family. Where some families lacked adequate land, they would get some from the richer members of the community. The philosophy places value on the survival of every human being by guaranteeing food security. On matters of polity, collective consultations were used in order to sanction communal approval and support.

Humwe as the unwritten African human charter emphasises recognition of the humanity of the others for one’s humanity to be in turn affirmed (Rukuni, 2007: 17). Ramose

(2005) similarly supports *humwe* through the African *Unhu/Ubuntu/Botho* philosophy that is the core of African culture's celebrated values that centralise oneness: "You cannot be a human being without other human beings around you" The philosophy gets further appraisal from Pala (2010) at her visit with the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation, Zimbabwe (May 2010):

The idea of the sanctity of personhood and human agency was enshrined in everything we did ... In principle and practice, human rights were the cornerstone of life and a good mind. Every human being — child, woman, man, stranger and foe — had the right to be and to be heard. Therefore consultation was at the heart of decision-making ... We were taught to treat each other with respect, protect the rights of persons with disability and include them in all activities to the best of their ability.

In light of this African philosophy, how the selected texts represent togetherness or *humwe* on matters of land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwean unfolding land experiences is worth examining.

2.4.2 Contextualising Rukuni's "Being Afrikan" theory

Rukuni argues that the best that Africa can offer to the world today is its cultural values whose core is *Ubuntu* — I am because you are — reinforcing the *humwe* philosophy explained earlier. Being Afrikan also emphasises the wisdom of the elders on issues of survival, including respect for traditional leadership as in the cases of land that directly affect communal survival. Alexander (2006) explores how the same traditional leadership was manipulated to serve colonial interests. Rukuni admits the irrelevance of his professorship gained through researches that ignore the values and traditions of the African communities they are designed to serve.

Being Afrikan in his view begins with acknowledging and respecting the values that the African communities live by. "Culture is about how people live, how they behave, what are the accepted norms of living with others, of acting, of thinking and of communicating" (Rukuni, 2007: 21). Socialisation into a culture equips its adherents with the requisite tools to interpret experiences and respond to situations, including how to

interact with the environment. It also helps people to understand their place in society and the larger world. All these pointers are critical in ennobling people to navigate and negotiate their way in life. In this regard, it is important that the current study examines the extent to which the selected writers depict land and identity in the on-going furore that threatens peaceful co-existence intra-nationally and internationally, including how practicable their envisaged alternatives are within the Zimbabwean reality.

That Rukuni also emphasises the need for Africans to borrow intelligently from other cultures shows that ethnic and racial identities evolve. He emphasises that Africans should build upon Africa as the cultural centre, drawing from its mine of experiential wisdom. Being Afrikan entails that Africans approach their culture as a rich resource that should be used to provide answers to some of the most fundamental questions about humanity today, including post-colonial Zimbabwe's land challenges. Rukuni (2007: 17) argues:

Unless we Afrikans rediscover ourselves, our roots and heritage, and embrace and understand, even love everything that made our ancestors survive and thrive, unless we understand how our ancestors succeeded so well in creating a dynamic society in the past, we cannot create a new, modern Afrikan society.

Rukuni exhorts Africans to know themselves first, anchor themselves in their identity and history, and mine ideas from their indigenous knowledge systems in order to build lives and communities compatible with the changing environment. Borrowing should be done intelligently after assessing needs and potentialities. This is how communities and nations grow and develop. The current study therefore places the ennobling influence of the writers' trajectories under scrutiny.

Rukuni takes up cultural identity and memory that are at the heart of Soyinka's (1976/2000) and Ngugi's arguments for African renaissance based on respect for African values and languages. Soyinka observes that the African world, like any other, is unique. Further to that, he adds that to ignore this simple route to a common humanity, and pursue the alternative route of negation, for whatever motives, perpetuates subordination of the African continent (Soyinka, 2000: xii). Soyinka enjoins Africans to uphold their

cultural anchor. “There is no such thing as an Abstract African”, (Ngugi, 2009: 62) Ngugi enjoins. Yet, Fanon (1991: 40) discourages Africans not to be prisoners of culture and make it a crutch:

Discovering the futility of his alienation, his progressive deprivation, the inferiorised individual, after his phase of deculturation, of extraneousness, comes back to his original positions. This culture, abandoned, sloughed off, rejected, despised, becomes for the inferiorised an object of passionate attachment.

Fanon criticises blindly embracing culture, exhorting psychological renewal by using the positives of African philosophy as cited earlier. Ngugi (2009:57) observes: “The colonised as worker, as peasant, produces for another. His land and his labour benefit another. This is ... effected through power, political power, but it is also accomplished through cultural subjugation”. In Ngugi’s view, cultural subjugation is more dangerous because it kills the spirit and drains people of their historical memory. Consciousness therefore “becomes a site of intense struggle” (Ibid). Critical to the African-centred conceptualisation of identity is that “a person without a consciousness of his Being in the World ... is lost and can easily be guided by another to wherever the guide wants to take him, even to his own extinction” (Ibid: 58). The latter opens areas of interrogation in the analyses of land and identity central to the current study.

2.5 Conclusion

Insofar as self-rediscoursing is concerned, “creative efforts and scholarship [should] not distance themselves from real life ... This entails going into real life and studying it” (Gambahaya, 2006: 56). The chapter argues that African-centred approaches in this study bring real life situations in critiquing land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored texts. p’ Bitek (1986: 37) argues that the ability to think, see and interpret the world as an African is gained through full participation in African culture and life.

Inclusion of more than one African-centred theory and voice derives from the Shona maxim that argues that the sky is vast enough for all birds to fly without colliding. This philosophy defies monopoly of knowledge in dealing with subjects as complex as land in

post-independence Africa, Zimbabwe specifically. “The aim is to open fields of enquiry and to expand human dialogue around questions of social, economic, historical, and cultural concern” (Asante, 1999: 112) such as Zimbabwe’s post-2000 land redistribution. Further, as Gambahaya (2006: 43) rightly argues: “The varied problems of African [people], emanating from within and outside the [African] race, have to be solved on a collective basis within Africana communities”. This reinforces the view that Zimbabweans should collectively use methods amenable to their situation and resolve the land question in a manner that promotes sustainable livelihoods for all Zimbabweans, now and in the future. Frantz Fanon (1967: 78) argues that African people “ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them”. This includes literary theories used to critique the fictional narratives in the current study. African-centred theories can best respond to problems and challenges relating to African experiences in African geophysical spaces. Using *humwe* philosophy in land redistribution, for instance, prioritises human worth and human dignity that should guide decision-making processes pertaining to land use and large-scale redistribution in Zimbabwe. The philosophy recognises that cultures evolve and adapt to new realities. The study therefore derives relevance by situating the selected fictional narratives’ re-imagining and re-drawing of land-cum-identity within parameters that should see Zimbabweans transcending partisan minority interests for society’s greater good.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MISSING LINK: DIALOGUING LAND AND IDENTITY IN SELECTED POST-2000 ZIMBABWEAN BLACK-AUTHORED FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

How can we cover up pits in our courtyard with leaves or grass, saying to ourselves that because our eyes cannot now see the holes, our children can prance about the yard as they like? (Ngugi, wa Thiongo, 1987: 7)

3.0 Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine how selected black-authored post-2000 fictional narratives interpret, name, define and respond to issues of land and identity in the post-independence phase. The novels to be critiqued include Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006), Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty Of Hope* (2006) and Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009). The chapter critiques how the respective writers use their creativity to re-create, re-draw, re-image and re-cast land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe. It seeks to examine the extent to which their trajectories inculcate models that promote significance of human worth, especially against a backdrop of patronising attitudes that continue polarising society by dehumanising and depersonalising certain groups of people. This is critical because literature as a social science is not a disembodied subject. It draws from society and the ideas that it generates also find their way back into society, mostly through the school curriculum. An examination of the success of the writers in situating/locating the land question within its socio-cultural, material, spiritual, political and historical ambience is pertinent in this chapter, as it would provide the backdrop against which complexities undergirding land and identity should be appreciated.

Zimbabwe's land question directly impacts on people's daily lives and livelihoods, thus it can neither be wished away nor examined outside its cultural and socio-historical milieu. This interconnectedness of land, human dignity, human worth, sustainable human development and spiritual identity within a historical continuum that these black-authored fictional narratives explore provide a missing link that needs close interrogation in literary-based researches focusing on the Zimbabwean land question in the post-2000 period. The texts in this chapter collectively look into the historical link of the land

question from an African perspective. They address injustices concerning land, especially continual exclusion of blacks from accessing land and other major resources in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe. They further raise pertinent contradictions concerning land imbalances and the way these have been handled in Zimbabwe's post-independence. That black Zimbabwean writers critique the black political elite's commitment, or lack of it, to facilitating the marginalised majority's accessing land provides an important link in studying complexities undergirding land redistribution.

The selected fictional narratives, though produced against the backdrop of the post-2000 land occupations, cut across different historical epochs, thus exploring the Africans' quest for land within its socio-historical contexts. The introspective approach that the texts adopt provides a window for self-criticism required for critical self-knowledge and critical historical knowledge necessary for identifying and rectifying land injustices in a manner that promotes sustainable human development.

In the African worldview, "problems, crises, challenges are, have always been and will continue to be a necessary ingredient of living. And, it is precisely the facing and tackling and solving of them, that life is all about" (p'Bitek, 1986: 25). For these reasons, these novels' inclusion is not contrived. Texts selected for this chapter may not individually directly deal with land in a manner similar to Chapter Four's *Jambanja*, but nonetheless raise pertinent aspects relating to land in Zimbabwe's post-2000 period. Their significance in the current study, then, remains invaluable.

One of the major responsibilities of the artist in African society is to explore even those issues that could be deemed as too sensitive to explore. As the sensitive needle of society, the artist risks being irrelevant if s/he tried "avoid[ing] the big social [political and economic] issues of the contemporary African" (Achebe, cited in Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1981: 74). In light of this observation, "If landscape is understood as the description of the land and its role in the cultural, economic and spiritual life of the community" (Loflin, in Nazareth, 2000: 261), it is critical to examine the selected novels' responses to land in its various complexities that undergird the volatile Zimbabwean experiences.

Thelwell (1987: 109), in reference to African-Americans, highlights a people's basic right to self-name and self-define. This could similarly apply to post-2000 black Zimbabwean-authored land narratives, particularly in relation to issues of identification, and preferred choices pertaining to responsibilities that Zimbabweans carry towards resolving land challenges. Impliedly, then, failure to write on issues as fundamental as the post-2000 land redistribution process, would be an abdication of responsibility to self-name and self-define. To this end, Vambe (in Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 100) observes:

Critical practice is not an innocent undertaking. It is the process whereby values that often find their way into people's lived experiences are generated, debated and naturalised as knowledge which defines people in terms of history, time and place/[space] ... In many ways it dramatises the struggle of values in the field of literature and life.

As was the case with traditional African communities that used folklore to inculcate cultural values that cemented communities and defended collective survival, African writers should take seriously their "responsibility to teach the younger generations ... and to raise their awareness about cultural, social, economic, and political issues affecting their communities" (Bofelo in Mngxitama et al, 2008: 211). Literature, then, becomes "an effective medium to reflect on life and those experiences that shape life" (Ntiri in Hudson-Weems, 2004: 12). This promotes greater human progress as society taps into its human capital for potential self-regeneration.

3.1 *The Book of Not* (2006)

3.1.0 Synopsis

The on-going armed liberation struggle to reclaim African land and related securities opens the narrative. Tambudzai, the narrator and chief protagonist, who is a student at the Catholic-run Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart (Sacred Heart), fails to identify with the African cause. She cannot fit into her rural home and war-torn village at a *morari*¹⁹ that opens the book. She cannot forgive herself for having been at the "primitive

¹⁹ *Morari* also *pungwe* or war night-time rallies, were held by guerrillas during Zimbabwe's War of Liberation in the 1970s. Guerrilla fighters or *vanamukoma* or the Elder Siblings held these for consciousness raising and politicisation of the masses (Presler, 2000: 65-66). *Pungwes* from 2000 are

scene” (p. 29). Netsai’s leg is dismembered at the *morari*, terminating her dream to train as a liberation war fighter in Mozambique. Babamukuru, the mission headmaster and Tambudzai’s benefactor, is also beaten, almost fatally, at the *morari* on allegations of being a *tshombe* or traitor indoctrinating Tambudzai by sponsoring her Sacred Heart Western-based education. The rest of the novel dwells on Tambudzai’s vain travails to fit into Rhodesian institutions beginning with Sacred Heart, Twiss Hostel and Steers, Darcy and MacPedi Advertising Agency where racism is institutionalised. Central to the narrative are the black population’s determination to transform and regenerate their lives, starting with the armed liberation struggle to extricate the country/land from European control. However, as shown through Tambudzai’s eventual realisation, liberation in all its forms is not handed out by institutions to people. Tambudzai’s reflections run concomitantly with the battle to free Africans from political, cultural and psycho-intellectual domination. She re-configures “Rhodesia’s diverse antagonistic freedoms” (p. 166) as typified in the apparent rifts between “the Rhodesians and the guerrillas” (p. 181). Because of cultural dislocation arising from “absence of anchoring” (p. 9), due to her exposure to Western-based education at the mission, Tambudzai hates her rural background (p. 9) which she dismisses as “moribund” (p. 91), including her uneducated mother’s “nothingness” (p. 9). Sacred Heart being a miniature and epitome of Rhodesia, Tambudzai exposes the racism and hatred for black presence that is endemic throughout the country’s institutions. Despite her efforts to be accommodated among the white community, she is constantly reminded to be grateful and consider herself lucky to be enrolled at the college where she is privileged to acquire “*Unhu*, that profound knowledge of being” (p. 102). Further, despite excelling in her studies, Tambudzai is denied the award for the best “O” Level results that goes to Tracey Stevenson, – a “well-rounded human being” (p. 155), subjecting her to perceive herself “worth nothing” (p. 157). Tambudzai recoils from challenging Sacred Heart, equating the problem to “a scale of struggle similar to David and Goliath” (p. 163- 164). Ironically, the basis of her *unhu*

resistance meetings of protracted mobilisation and political education of the marginalised people led mainly by War Veterans. In some cases, *pungwes* resurfaced as street demonstrations, *biras*, mobilisation for housing co-operatives and informal sector development (Sadomba, 2011: 230).

becomes dysfunctional. The resulting pain makes her search for the meaning of *unhu*. She does her “A” Level science studies by proxy and subsequently gets low points that see her studying Sociology at the University of Zimbabwe, much to the disappointment of her mission mentors, Babamukuru and Maiguru. Upon completion, Tambudzai takes up temporary teaching to everyone’s chagrin, especially after “spending all that time with all those Europeans” (p. 195).

Tambudzai leaves teaching, becoming a sign-writer for a white-run advertising agency, where Sacred Heart’s Tracey Stevenson is among her superiors. She resigns unceremoniously from the advertising agency for being excluded from enjoying the spoils deriving from her expert creativity purely on the basis of her race. On the day she leaves employment, Tambudzai is also thrown out of the exclusively white-run Twiss Hostel. Jobless and homeless, the stripped Tambudzai discovers and accepts that she belongs with Mai (her mother) and sibling Netsai whom she has until now shunned for their failure in life because they are not holders of certificates of education. The story ends with Tambudzai walking emptily to the room that she would soon vacate, wondering what future there is for her, a new Zimbabwean. Through the disillusioned Tambudzai who finds it “harrowing to be part of such undistinguishable humanity (p. 211), Dangarembga makes the liberation war - the gateway to “this... our new Zimbabwe (p. 210), subtly exploring land through Africans’ contact with colonialism and its accompanying legacies.

3.1.1 Titling

The titling suggests that Dangarembga is not reinventing the wheel, but re-visiting issues, roots and routes that readers are already aware of but could be downplaying. Because “a nation cannot successfully forge into the future without taking thorough stock of its past [experiences and present circumstances]” (Gambahaya and Magosvongwe, 2005: 16), Dangarembga brings up and re-visits old and familiar issues about Zimbabwean land experiences. Her titling courts readers not to ignore the basics, the root cause of the Zimbabwean land challenges, subtly presupposing non-partisan approaches, indirectly exhorting all Zimbabweans to take responsibility and learn from the past in order to

amicably resolve the land contradictions characterising post-2000 Zimbabwe. *The Book of Not* is not directed at any one section of the Zimbabwean society. In Armah's words:

What are we if we see nothing beyond the present, hear nothing from the ages of our flowing, and in all our existence can utter no necessary preparation of the future way? (Armah, 1973: 204).

If a nation flowers into the seed that is sown today, *The Book of Not* subtly hints at the need for introspection, retrospection and critical self-examination regarding land redistribution for the greater good. It is in this light that land and identity in *The Book of Not* should be read.

3.1.2 Rhodesia: Metonym of mis/identification

The socio-historical and introspective approach to Zimbabwe's land struggles through Tambudzai, the protagonist, closely follows the history of the land question in Zimbabwe. It helps readers to establish for themselves the root causes of the perennial land predicament, or the point at which the rains began to beat them (Achebe, 1989: 44-45). Rhodesia is an ambivalent metaphor, symbolising inclusion and exclusion along racial lines in terms of accessing land and the country's major resources. In its metonymic function, Rhodesia as country and land symbolises the rallying point for identification for either blacks or whites. Rhodesia's ambivalent binary of white Rhodesians and the African population could be disempowering for both racial groupings, thus, probably justifying *The Book of Not* being an indictment of settler imperialism – the “Rhodesians [who] never die” (p. 153). Colonial and post-independence Rhodesia/Zimbabwe sees whites enjoying exclusive privileges deriving from legal ownership of land. Sacred Heart's guitar club anthem, ingrained in the youths from a tender age, boasts – “This land was made for you and me. ... Neath fair Rhodesian sun” (p. 160), thus, reinforcing the *terra nullius* doctrine that disregards African presence on the African land. Rhodesian exclusive land ownership un/wittingly exposes forcible indigenous land dispossession and domination which has remained the major cause of contention between the black majority and whites in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe. Muzondidya (in Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009: 172)

observes: “Conscious of the racial protection guaranteed by the constitution, white farmers/[Rhodesians]were generally reluctant to relinquish their colonially inherited privilege”. The currency of colonial conquest as justification remains morally indefensible in a human rights era and commitment to eradication social injustices and poverty. Dangarembga intricately explores the extent to which society has shifted from colonially-induced conceptions of white superiority and inferiorised African human worth and human dignity, aspects that could remotely explain the intra-racial tensions over land in post-2000 Zimbabwe as touched upon in Chapter One.

Naming the country, “Rhodesia”, after the colonisers entailed effacing indigenous identities, institutions, knowledge systems and structures perceived to undermine colonial interests. Ramose (2005: 6) observes that “[t]he close connection between land and life meant also that by losing land to the conqueror the African thereby lost a vital resource to life”. Colonialism systematically created a landless, vulnerable, expendable population of paupers with the majority forced into migrant labourers in cities, mines, mission stations and farms, making them susceptible to exploitation and manipulation. Echoing Rhodes’ view of the English as “the finest race in the world” (Thomas, 1996: 7) with a divine mandate over the whole planet, N.H. Wilson – Southern Rhodesia Native affairs Department, 1925 – boasts: “We are in the country because we represent a higher civilization, because we are better men. It is our only excuse for having taken the land” (Moyana, 1984: 58). To this end, Dangarembga observes: “It’s about what you are meant to know and what you are meant not to know!” (p. 118).

Displacement and domination entail inverting and distorting intra-racial relationships, including those between the coloniser and the colonised premised on who owns the land. That ‘Rhodesians never die’ (p. 153), then, means Rhodesians’ indelible impact on the geophysical and psycho-intellectual landscapes of the land they occupy. Dangarembga partially explores the trauma and scars of the Rhodesian settler legacy of domination through Tambudzai. This subtly takes readers to the seedbed of land contestations, controversies and conflicts, aspects that any holistic approach to post-2000 land occupations should address.

Pre-independence Zimbabwe was a racially divided society. This means that viewing land in pre-independence Zimbabwe/Rhodesia means looking into two nations sharing the same geophysical boundaries, yet pursuing conflicting ideals define their separate identities – “Rhodesia’s diverse antagonistic freedoms” (p. 166). Whilst Rhodesians fight to retain dominion of the entire country, fighting “for their right to a beautiful country” (p. 94) in Tambudzai’s view, Africans fight for human dignity through equal access to land and space: “Imagine living in Zimbabwe! ... You will be able to go into whichever toilet you like! And any school for that matter. ... You’ll be treated like everyone else” (p. 94). Notwithstanding the writer’s idealised vision of a post-independence Zimbabwe, *The Book of Not* can be viewed as “a sustained quarrel with the subject of imperialism” (McClintock, 1995: 4). Land as a central metaphor in this novel serves a metonymic function, representing the physical space whose restrictions typify the power discourses in the country – land – Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

Rhodesian restructuring of the Zimbabwean landscape into tribal trust lands, purchase areas, conservancies, parks, state lands, mission stations, mines and cities, and privately-owned commercial farms, meant re-ordering and re-orienting blacks to new forms of relating with the land. The resultant encasing disabled and fractured the identities and sense of being of Africans because space and roles were defined in line with new definitions befitting their dominated identity (Palmer, 1977). The psychological violence on perceptions of identity and being, as well as the resultant trauma, are dramatically captured through Tambudzai’s reminiscing about Sacred Heart, a metonym of Rhodesia:

You came to a school where you frequently had to pinch yourself to see if you really existed. Then, after that was confirmed, you quite often wished you didn’t. So you ducked away to avoid meeting a group of people. That’s when you found out how you were going to manage after all” (p. 114).

Sister Emmanuel dreads “a situation where Rhodesian farmers come in here/the school and insult [African girls] for using their daughters’ bathrooms” (p. 73). This paints images of African girls as lesser humans who should not entertain “aspirations above my/[their] station” (p. 66). Anyone who ventures so like Tambudzai does, is labelled to have “a complex” (p. 89) whose “inability to be part of the [Rhodesian institutions]

causes her/[him] considerable distress” (p. 89). The onus to re-adjust to new land and diminished human status lies with the Africans. For African pupils in white institutions, apart from seclusion to “the African dormitory” (p. 162), it also meant “paying the same fees ... but legally not being able to have the same treatment” (p. 128). In addition to destroying the self-esteem and dignity of the Africans, new land restructuring entails predetermined destinies along racial lines. Through Tambudzai, Dangarembga introspects on how land and identity in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe fractures and distorts human potential.

Written against the backdrop of the land occupations, the narrative posits whether colonial currency that effaced African identity and dignity should subsist in a democratically-instituted society. The present land realities are understood in terms of the layering of black and white experiences readable in the spheres of land ownership – individual and collective. Thus, given transposition of colonial land inequities onto post-independence Zimbabwe, the narrative impliedly critiques whether the discriminatory currency and “justification advanced in earlier days for refusing to recognize the rights and interests in land of the indigenous inhabitants of settled colonies” (Chigara, 2012: 206) should continue subsisting in post-independence Zimbabwe. By revisiting the racial dichotomies and subterranean discourses embedded in colonial African identities, dehumanisation and deprivation, Dangarembga subtly challenges readers to re-visit, re-examine, introspect and retrospect in order to re-image Zimbabwe’s land question as a reality that should be carefully considered in its lived socio-historical context. Subtly, Dangarembga revisits Africans’ colonial world and potentialities encapsulated within the confines proscribed by respective land acts (Palmer, 1977: 242- 246). She demonstrates the centrality of land ownership from the viewpoint of the African people. That she brings together the galvanising factors of land and liberation in the armed liberation struggle against dissatisfaction about non-delivery of land after whites’ departure at independence in 1980 (p. 196-197), shows that socio-historical processes that undergird the current study are not “analysed as isolated events in the lives of unanchored individuals” (Chiwome and Mguni, 2012: 317).

3.1.3 Disabling images and attitudes: Land and identity re-examined

Zimbabwean experiences show that it is difficult to discuss land outside the socio-economic and political discourses that are entwined with national history. *The Book of Not* shows that racialisation of the Rhodesian landscape poisoned relations across the racial divide. Tambudzai summarises Rhodesian racial violence that demeans African humanity thus:

Even if we behaved as if it was not known, it was known. A person was a nanny, a cook, a boy gardener, boy messenger, boy driver, and a member of the African dormitory until this nanny, cook or boy became a terrorist. Then the person achieved a name. With the name came a photograph printed in the *Umtali Post*, or even the *Rhodesia Herald*, or, if the person were particularly notorious, the *Sunday Mail* ... a terrorist ripe for decapitation (p. 110).

This distortion of African identity to legitimise domination reflects the well-known race relations in Rhodesia. It is noteworthy that blacks who fight for land restitution are “terrorists” (p. 110). The latter ironically remained “invisible” (Baxter, 2010: 382). Tambudzai collapses personal and collective African identity in the ‘boy’ and ‘terrorist’ metaphors, thus showing racial identity enamoured in psychological violence that reinforces black marginality in geophysical and material terms. The ‘terrorist’ metaphor that Rhodesian media manipulates distorts blacks’ land and other social realities. Dangarembga’s movement of past events into the space of debates on post-2000 land occupations and their aftermaths signifies land as a seedbed of racial violence and instability that should receive the critical attention and sensitivity that it deserves if natural/social justice is to be achieved.

The narrative subverts the terrorist metaphor, pointing instead that the ones who come to invade, occupy, dispossess and displace others are the ones violating, destabilising and causing terror, and therefore deserve the terrorist label. Rhodesian sensibility uses ‘boy’, enhancing the anarchic element that ‘terrorist’ embodies. “Boy” images deployed to characterise blacks irrespective of age and gender cast the picture of an intellectually incapacitated population, incapable to dialogue with the erstwhile rational settlers. This attitude gives the white coloniser adequate justification for the colonisation of African

land. In post-independence socio-economic discourses, any successful African sarcastically earns the title *murungu* (white-man), an indication of how colonialism mutilated African identities. Hudson-Weems (2007: 259) sees rightly that “stereotypical race messages, imagery, and models of white-dominated media can be counterproductive to the political, [material] and psychological liberation of Blacks”. She further argues that if white superiority is perceived as more attractive and beneficial this often means that collective African/Black cultural and freedom objectives become subordinate to individual economic achievement. Negative images and psychological disunity perpetuate psychological black oppression that translates into manipulation and exploitation in other spheres of life. The long-term repercussions of such transmutations and binaries onto post-independence Zimbabwe are shown in Tambudzai’s self-effacement at Twiss Hostel and the advertising agency. Tambudzai conceives herself as part “of undifferentiated flesh” (p. 207) that are only distinguishable by their smiles (p. 243). Commenting on identity and self-worth, Hudson-Weems (2007: 258) makes the following critical observation:

On a cognitive individual basis, racial and group identification is essential to normal psychological functioning. Identification is a psychological phenomenon that serves to increase feelings of worth and importance by identifying with, or taking on the characteristics, values, or cultural attributes of some ... group perceived as ideal or superior.

White superiority and black inferiority as buttressed in the transposition of ‘boy’ images onto the politically-independent landscape partially account for mis-orientation over land in the African post-independence phase. Ngugi’s *Matigari* similarly explores Kenyan post-Mau Mau “boy” phenomenon encapsulated in the John Boy metonym whereby land and the economy remain in the hands of the Kenyan whites, with the John Boys used for window-dressing whilst the majority of the black population remain destitute. Such post-independence realities compel Matigari Manjiriungi, the liberation war fighter, to go back into the bush and take up arms against the post-colonial government.

Dangarembga’s narrative further equates Zimbabwean land struggles to spiritual battles for recovery of the African soul and rightful heritage, an indication that land “is central in

defining identity, relationships, [space, belongingness] and culture” (Loomba, 1998: 73). Rhodesian media usage that Dangarembga depicts appears instrumental in shaping the general public’s psychology and attitudes concerning blacks’ right to land. Negative media publicity casts all African efforts to reclaim lost lands in black light. However, if human worth and access to principal resources in a country are premised on race, class, ethnicity, gender, cronyism or any other prejudicial determinant, the façade is bound to crush as evidenced by the raging liberation war in the novel.

Dick’s attitude towards the liberation war appears dismissive, bespeaking of the insignificance he attaches to African agency in their struggles to reclaim their land as well as their dignity. Dick, Tambudzai’s immediate senior at the advertising agency hardly remembers “that stint in that fucking bloody place ... People here say the *Chimurenga*. Or else they call it the *hondo*” (p. 239-240). Conceptually, then, *hondo*/war for land did not end with attaining political independence, as there was no immediate return of African land to the landless majority. “The war, after all, had been fought primarily over the question of stolen lands” (Baxter, 2010: 490). Racial domination of land, including related major resources, is the kingpin of structured poverty – material, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, cultural and social – among Africans. This galvanises mass support for land repossession (Phimister in Stoneman, 1998: 8). From the point of view of the African people, political independence and land repossession and its bounty are inextricably intertwined. Land constitutes the core of independence promises, as indicated earlier.

The narrative/writer shows ordinary people’s ecstasy at the prospects of owning land, an inherent yearning to regain a lost dignity, humanity and self-rule that Africans²⁰ express: “We are expert at farming. And the land now, we are getting it!” (p. 200). These images place the narrative at the level of ideological advocacy, rendering the images corrective to the colonial and distortions of Africans relationship with the land. Africans fought for restitution of a lost heritage. As cited from Hanlon et al (2013) in Chapter Two, land

²⁰ Interviews in August 2010 with writers Memory Chirere, Aaron Chiundura Moyo, Ignatius Mabasa and Mashingaidze Gomo, and also former employees at Jack Hulley’s Chigodora Farm, Vumba in Zimunya, Mutare South, echoed this view almost as a refrain to any question to do with Zimbabweans’ post-2000 land occupations.

restitution would thus be more appropriate and in line with social justice. In line with this perspective, Dangarembga's African-centred appreciation of post-independence land issues focuses more on the principle of land repossession rather than details about immediate economic returns. Tsikata sees well when she observes:

Arguments discounting land as an issue of livelihoods have resonance especially in countries without a history of settler colonialism and high levels of land concentration and dispossession of local populations (Tsikata, 2009: 19).

Land in the African worldview goes beyond agricultural production. Land is central to social security, eco-biodiversity, socio-economic development, identity and a sense of belonging²¹. In Zimbabwean terms, then, touching the land issue is dealing with people's fractured identities, the nature of their livelihoods, psycho-social security, their place in the world, as well as opportunities that are open to them.

3.1.4 Rhodesian Systems vis-à-vis African Re-orientation

Dangarembga's recasting of people's aspirations for land and male-female relationships reflect male/female identities subjected to colonial indiscriminate exclusion and deprivation. The African-centred perspective on land puts African women's lives at the centre of Africans' "own survival and the survival of [African] culture and history" (Hudson-Weems, 2007: 80), highlighting African "unique [land] experiences in this racially hostile world" (Hudson-Weems, 2007: 80). Focusing on the politics of survival, Dangarembga's narrative becomes "an intellectual response to oppression" (Appiah, 1992: 152) and deprivation in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe, issues that all Zimbabweans should fight collectively, especially in the post-independence period. In pre-colonial African communities women were never excluded from the land, with some being community leaders in their own right²². Muhwati and Gambahaya (2012: xviii citing Mararike, 2003: 11) submit:

²¹ Pillosof (2010) explores white farmers' voices in *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being* using similar arguments, showing land as the nexus of livelihoods for most Zimbabweans.

²² Interviews with octogenarians Hamilton Zimunya and Noah Shumba of Chigodora Village, Vumba, Mutare South in August 2010 revealed the crucial spaces, geophysical, cultural and social, accorded to princesses in their clans. Princesses held *shita/matunhu* in their jurisdiction, hence some sacred days or *chisi* on their weekly calendars in honour of their leadership.

Records dating back to the 17th Century indicate that Ishe (chief) Mutapa had many female *madzishe* (chiefs) who administered their *matunhu* (provinces). In the 19th Century and early 20th Century, the daughters, sisters and paternal aunts (*madzitete*) of the Manyika Ishe were sometimes appointed to rule over many *matunhu*. There are also references to *masadunhu echikadzi* (female provincial leaders) among the Jindwi of [Zimunya]/Bocha and Ishe Nemakonde's area. Other accounts indicate that women ruled both as *masadunhu* and *madzishe* in Mutoko, Seke and Chihota.

In the African conception of identity, history of the clan, ethnicity, family, town, village, province, race and nationality as modern ways of locating individuals and defining their essence of belongingness remain real. Allusions to gender equity in Dangarembga's envisioned post-independence land redistribution are therefore worth noting. "Equal treatment in land ... settlement schemes" (Goebel, 1999: 75) in post-independence Zimbabwe is especially critical in light of convoluted arguments relating to land and gender deriving from liberation war losses, migration and HIV/AIDS, among other social developments. Moyo (in Bowyer-Bower and Stoneman, 2000: 15-56) submits that by 2000 6% of women own land in line with Zimbabwe's reformed inheritance act and the Legal Age of Majority Act. However, post-2000 land occupations/*jambanja*²³ witnessed more women obtaining land ownership rights unlike previously. Hanlon et al (2013: 158) observe:

Women were at the forefront of *jambanja*, participating alongside men in the struggle to gain access to land. To a large extent, obtaining A1 land was self-determined, as those who really wanted it persevered until they were allocated, either individually or as part of the family ... having access to better or more land has transformed the lives of many of them.

Dangarembga hints at how the Rhodesian colonial environment that restructured Zimbabwean land into tribal trust lands, purchase areas, state land, safari parks, mining areas, cities, mission stations like Sacred Heart and commercial farms imprisoned and controlled indigenous women's potential to be protagonists of their own development. Colonial ideology systematically transformed Zimbabwean women into perpetual minors,

²³ The metaphor and ethic of *jambanja* receive closer examination in Chapter Four that discusses the concept and principle that Eric Harrison appropriates and uses to explore white farmers' displacement and forcible removals from the land. An Afrocentric conception of *jambanja* goes beyond the instantaneous occupations to embrace issues of natural justice and land restitution for Africans who were earlier victims of white land grab that had been sanctioned by both the 1888 Berlin Conference and Colonial Occupation.

thus reversing and distorting women's place and roles according to African traditions (Stoneman, 1988: 155). This set-up explains Maiguru's encasement under Babamukuru at the mission. Her views during lessons are disregarded on the basis of her sex, showing how colonial reconstructions of gender fracture African conceptions of gender and human dignity. Africans are told what and what not to teach: "It's about what you're meant to know and what you are meant not to know!" (p. 118). Land in the narrative should be understood in light of these encasements. Commenting on Rhodesian fractured male-female relationships and indigenous women's marginalisation, Furusa (in Mguni et al 2006: 2) argues:

The British reproduced and valorised European culture within the colonized Zimbabwean geopolitical and mental spaces....The British colonial forces transformed ...areas into oppressive encasements controlled and policed through western discourses of gender relationships and practices which offered limited possibilities for Zimbabwean women. ...The ...process reinforced inequalities...

Colonial de-womanisation and devaluation of indigenous women is commonplace in Zimbabwean literary discourses in English unlike literature in indigenous languages. Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart's *Zimbabwe Takes Back Its Land* (2013) cited earlier argue that women are central players in small scale farming, some owning land in their own right. Thus, despite the contradictions and challenges of capitalisation militating against agricultural production in post-2000 Zimbabwe, indigenous women, including other marginalised peoples, show that if afforded the land and opportunities, they would become protagonists of their own emancipation and transformation. Ironic, in this regard, is that missions as pinnacles of civilisation are principal at disabling other sections of humanity. As Clarke observes: "The Christian church in many ways became the handmaiden of European world domination and to some extent it still is" (Clarke, 1992 in Ani, 1994: xvi).

Further, Rhodesian Christianity that sanctions "the troops ... mounting a great exercise [of repressing Africans] to enable us to continue with our mission to educate you [Africans] in a Christian way" (p. 132), resonates with original missionary collusion in the militarised dispossession of African land at colonial occupation. Sacred Heart stance

subtly echoes Carnegie (Ranger, 1967: 36) celebrating occupation at the defeat of Lobengula: “We expect great things. Now is the grand opportunity of Christianising the Matabele”. Vambe’s *An Ill-Fated People* (1972) also chronicles Roman Catholic priests’ direct military dispossession of the VaShawasha people of their land. Ironically, the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe subdivided the same land into peri-urban residential stands to avert the Government’s compulsory land acquisition and sold exorbitantly to affluent Zimbabwean home-seekers, now proudly owning Chishawasha Hills and Manresa adjacent to Chikurubi. In this regard, Rhodesian missionary racism, though subtly disguised, continues to disable the communities that it should be serving and saving from socially-inflicted injustices.

In addition to land dispossession, that Rhodesian Christian institutions collude to dehumanise Africans is also evidenced by Sacred Heart litany of derogatory images, principal among them the ‘African dormitory’ whose presence is blamed for any sanitary blockages at the mission despite the regulated “quotas” (p. 72) limiting “admitting any African pupils and being multiracial” (p. 72) to only “dots of [them]/us” – six – (p. 63). Mlambo and Raftopoulos (2009: xxiii) submit: “[i]t is important to trace the formation of a white community unified by race and a national identity ‘founded on racialism and an idea of the nation that excluded the black majority’”. Chung (in Stoneman, 1988: 118) further argues: “Successive colonial governments practised a policy of severely curtailing educational opportunities for black children. As a result only 42% of the primary age group were at school in 1979, and less than 20 per cent of the primary school-leavers were able to find secondary places”. This justifies how only six African girls were enrolled at Sacred Heart, the objective being to cut off Africans “from access to concepts, knowledge and skills essential for development in the modern world” (Chung: Ibid). Inadvertently, Tambudzai acknowledges that African presence on the Rhodesian landscape is a threat to European privileged lives. Despite confessing to defending Christian values and “assure[i]ng [them]/you [they] are fully behind [them] (p. 73), the African girls should adhere to separate ablution facilities at Sacred Heart to avoid offending Rhodesian farmers. The same dehumanisation is further buttressed by prohibition of local languages in favour of all European languages in schools like Sacred

Heart. Prohibition of African languages confirms rejection of African presence on the Rhodesian landscape, resulting in fracturing and distortion of Rhodesian African identity. English has remained the dominant Zimbabwean official language to this day. Chung (in Stoneman, 1988: 118-132) examines post-independence complexities owing to the discriminatory policies and curricula “tied to the pre-independence mould” (Chung, in Stoneman, 1988: 125). Africans are therefore continuously terrorised by policies and systems that project them collectively as inferior to other humans. Thus, psychologically, inculcating self-hatred for a perceived inferior form of humanity – an antithesis to European rationality and supremacy – justifying continual European domination. Denied the right to being on their ancestral land, and forced to imbibe notions that “everything else about me/[being African] was incorrect” (p. 236), Dangarembga exposes how Western-based education militated against Africans’ “right to cultural development and self-expression” (Cabral, 1980: 142).

In this regard, Dangarembga’s narrative becomes protest literature, protesting against erasure of African memory and philosophy – as embedded in African languages – within the country’s education institutions. Valorisations of European-centred theories as embedded in European languages that are laden with European value systems are highly unlikely to uplift Africans to the same human level as themselves. For example, freedom fighters played a decisive role in the African cause for land restitution, yet Rhodesians view them as “terrorists” deserving extermination (p. 190-191) because they are a force antithetical to European “grand organisers, the forgers of order from chaos” (Ani, 1994: 254). Cumulatively, Rhodesian atrocities are rationalised as obligatory to maintain national order and stability by any means necessary (Baxter, 2010: 384). “Voice of Zimbabwe” broadcasting from Maputo, on the other hand, reinforces the ‘boys’/’terrorists’ commitment to dismantling white rule (p. 94) and reiterates their arduous uphill struggle in their fight for independence and majority and majority rule. Zimbabwe’s independence was therefore not given on a silver platter. That explains why Dangarembga’s narrative associates Rhodesian presence on African soil with strife,

banditry, instability and militarised take-over of indigenous land, aspects that *Harare North*²⁴ explores as major talking points undergirding post-2000 land occupations.

Sacred Heart's European images of the non-European typify what Ani (1994: 238) surmises thus: "[T]hey were the rational men ... They and their progeny would fashion a social order as only rational men would", yet, antithetical to African human progress. Ani (Ibid: 240) further argues: "This is what Europeans want the case to be, and consequently they proceed to act in such a way as to bring that condition into being". With Africans projected as infantile "boy" (p. 110/p. 114), thinking, action and control become the settlers' prerogative. This goes contrary to the African philosophy of life is that life which holds that life can only be made meaningful if every member participates fully to the best of his ability so that there is no threat to personal and societal disintegration (p' Bitek, 1986: 25). Limiting conceptions of African humanity as projected by Dangarembga cannot be trusted to effectively redress colonial injustices, including land redistribution, and establish a more just post-independence society that should prioritise human dignity above partisan minority interests. Subtly, Dangarembga's narrative critiques "rather a manifestation of loyalty [by each race] to their own society" (Ranger, 1967: 25) above greater human good.

It is ironic that Rhodesian benevolence and civilisation victimises its beneficiaries to the point of committing murders and even boasting about them (p. 190-191). Such a background could explain Dangarembga's literary contextualising of Zimbabwe's land question within its socio-historical ambience, aspects that post-independence Zimbabwe should always bear in mind in order to avoid replicating mistakes of the past.

3.1.5 Identity and sense of place: The case of Tambudzai

The absence of anchoring that Tambudzai highlights through self-introspection is an issue that requires serious reflection. Through her experiences, the narrative exposes the brutality and harsh effects of the colonial education system that brainwashed and

²⁴ *Harare North* comes immediately after *The Book of Not* in this chapter's analysis of some African writers' interpretation and reading of the post-2000 land challenges

alienated the most intellectually gifted from their African identity. The system works so subtly such that one walks freely into mental slavery, imbibing and esteeming highly alien standards and values as more liberating without consciously knowing the destructive effects against the individual and collective. Unfortunately, this system with all its oppressive apparatus, is still alive today, controlling people's mindsets and the way they conceptualise relations, African human worth and the world. It therefore comes as no surprise that Tambudzai consciously chooses to support the Rhodesians whom she thinks would never die (p. 153), against her own people's collective survival for want of economic gain that would come through academic prowess: "With this slip of paper I was to undo all the cords that bound me in the realm of non-being. ... was a Gordian sword to destroy the knots with which I was fettered" (p. 184). She believes her "possibilities were limitless in my/[her] present circumstances" (p. 82). As a good disciple of the colonial system, she harbours a false sense of security and prioritises self (p. 107) above group survival. The Rhodesian quota system obfuscates the obtaining discriminatory realities that are tailored to keep Africans as subordinates. Acknowledging Tambudzai's intellectual astuteness is tantamount to admitting Africans equal human status to their white counterparts, "a scale of struggle similar to David and Goliath" (p. 163-164). Tambudzai comes to realise the full impact of these realities when she is denied a well-deserved trophy for obtaining the best ever "O" Level results in the history of the prestigious institution. She is made to feel worthless as goalposts shift, the argument being, and "Sacred Heart undertakes to nurture well-rounded human beings" (p. 155).

To this end, the legacies of colonial education need close interrogation. This aspect tallies with the need for critical consciousness and critical self-knowledge, which is also in line with Afrocentricity which valorises self-introspection and reflection in problem solving. The fact that Tambudzai's studies in Sociology at the University of Zimbabwe do not open her mind to the forces characterising post-independence Zimbabwean society, is evidence of the fact that the colonial school syllabus was "deliberately designed in such a way as to further remove the indigenous child from his own people in order to make him efficiently promote and effectively serve the new system" (Gambahaya, 1998: 15). Unfortunately, the new dispensation did not prioritise overhauling the school curriculum

to reflect the aspirations of the newly independent nation. That is why despite holding academic qualifications, Tambudzai fails to apply her knowledge constructively to interrogate her life and her family's. For instance, she misses why her mother is disgruntled by her teaching crafts at a rural school after spending all those years with Europeans. She fails to grasp the fact that Africans were restricted to crafts and teaching in order to make them subordinate to white thinkers. She also wonders why Ntombi mixes with girls of a similar ethnic background, also missing the importance of group identity. She also misses W E B Dubois talented tenth philosophy whereby the sprinkling of them in the European tertiary institutions should be future leaders of their communities.

As Clarke (1992 in Ani, 1994: xvii) holds, Africans should exorcise themselves of Eurocentric mindsets “to regain what slavery and colonialism took away – mainly their self-confidence” (Ibid), human worth and dignity. Tambudzai's holding “prestigious education” as “the key to my/[her] future” (p. 27), compared to her sister Netsai who makes it a “woman's business ... aiming communist rifles at people like kind and gentle Sister Catherine” (p. 31), exposes the gaps in consciousness between some elites and the Rest. In the “absence of [cultural] anchoring” (p. 9), Tambudzai is petrified to identify with the African armed liberation struggle that she views as “the belly of the beast that belched war” (p. 12). To Tambudzai, fighting for her country's/land's liberation is primitive. She feels “cracked and defective, as though indispensable parts leaked” (p. 28) and she “suffered secretly a sense of inferiority that came from having been at the primitive scene/[*morari/pungwe*] (p. 28). Tambudzai's introspection supports the observation that anchoring in one's culture regulates one's response and behaviour towards the society and the world (Ngugi, 1993: 9).

Almost throughout the narrative, Tambudzai finds “[i]t was harrowing to be part of such undistinguishable humanity” (p. 211), “misfortune ... as bad as being the daughter of this woman” (p. 228), of an “unmentionable origin” (p. 231). The litany of negative images describing Tambudzai's feelings about her African origins shows the obstinate psychological imprints that encase some elites, undermining their sense of place and

belonging. If identity is understood as socialisation and being nurtured in a particular culture as discussed in Chapter Two, Dangarembga's observation that "since a lot of people live in missions and not the real world, they probably wouldn't understand" (p. 185), is pertinent towards analysing people's loyalties on issues of collective survival such as land. Tambudzai's confusion exposes the forces at play and issues at stake that post-independence curricula should address if Zimbabweans are to have critical self-knowledge and critical knowledge of their culture and history. Ngugi (1993) argues that knowing oneself and one's environment is the correct basis of absorbing the world, that there could never be only one centre from which to view the world, but that different people in the world had their culture and environment as the centre.

Disconnected from both Mai and the land that psycho-spiritually and culturally anchor one's belongingness, including nurturing and socialising one into awareness of spatial rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities, Tambudzai's sense of being becomes fractured and impaired. Ngugi (1987: 56) observes:

Education, far from giving people the confidence in their abilities and capabilities to overcome obstacles or to become masters of the laws governing external nature as human beings, tends to make them feel their inadequacies, their weaknesses and incapacities in the face of reality and their inability to do anything about the conditions governing their lives.

Tambudzai mistakenly believes: "We are living proof of the benefits that would accrue to the land if only we were made equal" (p. 152). She further exults: "We could end up with a nation of inspiring, useful, hardworking people, like the British and the Americans, and all the other Europeans who were guiding us and helping us in our struggle" (p. 103). The deceptive veneer of mental colonisation led most intellectuals to join the armed liberation and related struggles to end the African's "permanent position of inferiority as a human being" (Sithole cited in Baxter, 2010: 229). Tambudzai's perceptions of European magnanimity resonate with Harrison's "crutch" image of the white farmer in a black man's life in *Jambanja* discussed in the next chapter. That Tambudzai has been psychologically seared, with her memory externalised to a point of exhorting her own intellectual dearth couldn't have come out any clearer:

Whatever its failings previously, it was clear the convent could not be held responsible for all that took place, especially not the deeds of an offensive government that conceived of people as divisible portions (p. 152).

Subtly, the narrative challenges why Europeans should “kill” Africans to protect “their right to a beautiful land” (p. 94), yet, deny Africans a similar right to self-protection. That sanctity of human life should be premised on racial identity should never be condoned. Dangarembga exposes “the psychology of distortion which premised the significance of human worth on skin colour [that] resulted in semi-authentic existence which is contrary to life’s purpose of pursuing self-actualisation” (Chigara, 2012 a: 5). Mr Noah Shumba²⁵ raised similar concerns, though expressing shock at cronyism during land redistribution (Jack Hulley’s Chigodora Farm in Vumba, Mutare), yet dispossession and dehumanisation by other human beings galvanised support for the armed liberation struggle.

Tambudzai is aware that people are reminded everyday that they are Africans. From pre- to post-Independence Zimbabwe blacks continue being denied their “own particularity” (p. 229) as human beings – “the smallest greetings mapped and manoeuvred” (p. 216) at the white-run workplaces, showing the “indivisibility of the black struggle” (Abrahams (2000: 368). Discrimination remains so subtle that Tambudzai herself “had not been perceived as an individual person but as a lump broken from a greater one of undifferentiated flesh” (p. 207), permanently fearing that “one’s presence might cause that infamous deterioration in standards” (p. 203). The pretentious inclusion makes pain of racism sharper and more unbearable. Tambudzai admits that her life at white-run Twiss Hostel “was a life ignominious and incognito at best ... and at worst a life at the margins of it, at the centre of exclusion” (p. 209). As acknowledged elsewhere: “No-one, after all, can be [respected] whose human weight and complexity cannot be or has not been, admitted” (Baldwin, 1995: 3). That Dangarembga raises the thorny issues of

²⁵ Mr Noji, a 91 year old August 2010 interviewee, has lived through the experiences Dangarembga captures. His details of the Rhodesian system are more vivid, especially the racial impoverishment and dehumanising effects. His three hectare homestead-cum-field that he should share with five sons and eleven grandsons, remains perched on the rocky slopes of Hwangura Mt in Vumba.

identity, exclusion, deprivation and discrimination against the backdrop of the hotly contested land question could never be accidental. Hence, it is *The Book of Not*.

The realisation that ghosts from the war cannot be wished away (p. 187), especially racial inequalities of resource ownership and the economy remind Tambudzai of her derided African identity. Ironically, the Lancaster House Agreement that Tambudzai surmises as culmination of Europeans' benevolence – “a desire to develop a larger, kinder heart on the part of Europeans” (p. 198) – disregards Africans' quest for land. It did not recognise that this land has some owners. It never occurs to Tambudzai why land repossession was not prioritised at Lancaster, but private property rights instead. Despite the fact that “land had been a central issue in the liberation war” (Hanlon et al, 2013: 72), and the main point of disagreement at Lancaster (Baxter, 2010: 490), the “willing-seller, willing-buyer” clause of the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement meant that for the first ten years after independence, there were severe restrictions placed on equitable land redistribution. Land remained in the hands of the white farmers, while black Africans could only access land that had been voluntarily given up by whites. Further, the provision that an economically incapacitated “government should pay a price equal to the highest that land would have fetched on the open market in the previous five years” (MacGarry, 1996: 9) ensured that blacks remained land-starved. The Lancaster House Constitution testifies that whites' land rights remained intact. As Barclay (2010: 150) argues, the commercial white farmers “[remain] farm owners and managers. Blacks/kaffirs are labourers”. The policy continued diminishing and devaluing African human worth and their right to being. These “particular ways of seeing the world ... legitimized and perpetuated” (Eagleton, 1976: 6), and even encouraged white land domination in post-independence Zimbabwe. Traces of “psychological penetration” (Armah, 2010: 20) and psychic domination by the Rhodesians which can last entire generations, if left unchecked, is evident in Tambudzai's misreading of events.

Subtle exclusion of blacks from mainstream economy eventually inspires Tambudzai to “go to the necessary lengths” (p. 220) and fight for what was legitimately hers if she was “going to function in the new Zimbabwe” (p. 220). Ephraim (2003: xviii) observes that “in the absence of self-critique, self-knowledge is impossible; and further that without

self-knowledge, a proper understanding of one's social reality is unattainable". Tambudzai's self-discovery at the end of the narrative after deep retrospection is significant. It is this same introspection that should characterise the lives of Zimbabweans in this post-independence era. This principle acknowledges victor and not victim mentality.

However, that Dangarembga's narrative insinuates that "identity is a many-splendored thing" (Mazrui, in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 209), for which people should take responsibility. *The Book of Not* echoes Palmer (1977) that Africans were divided in their struggles for land. Some were lured into effacing themselves for materialism and status. Armah (1973) similarly writes about the *askaris* who "feel an obligation to play by the rules of the West in order to attain the status of being a 'good' or 'developing' [African]/country" (Schmidt and Garret, 2011: 427). For her contact with Europeans, Tambudzai fails to appreciate why blacks should continue living "bound ... in the realm of non-being" (p. 184) in their own country, especially after attaining independence through the armed liberation struggle. Innuendos of lack of political will and short memory – "we never remembered and grieved together" (p. 196) – make Zimbabweans culpable for the stasis. Schizophrenic life in this case appears a choice. These choices, however, "cannot be seen in total isolation from the economic and political ones" (Ngugi, 1993: xv). Tambudzai's misconceptions resonate with Fanon's (1963: 170) condition of the colonised:

When we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangements so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realise that nothing has been left to chance, and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the native that colonialism came to lighten their burden.

Dangarembga's narrative, then, takes the land debate to a higher plane. She focuses not just on ownership of small agricultural strips of land (p. 182), but on ownership of the entire Zimbabwean territory, all its natural resources as well as its subsoil wealth (Bantekas in Chigara, 2012: 124). Dangarembga projects Rhodesia embodying and symbolising white "settlement of territory, the exploitation ... of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands, often by force"

(Boehmer, 2009: 2). This exposes entrenched opposing settler and indigenous interests. These are the two forces, then, that should be characterised correctly when analysing Zimbabwean land issues. Failure to characterise these forces correctly, would lead to distorting and/or exaggerating issues, willingly or unwillingly. *The Book of Not*, then, recreates the background that contextualises land contestations in post-2000 Zimbabwe or Zimbabwe's "unfinished business" (Raftopoulos, 2003).

In exploring the land issue in the manner that she does, she challenges readers to adopt alternatives that encourage harmonious co-existence despite the well-known woes. This is literature that redeems. If liberation fighters are terrorists, Dangarembga subtly critiques the wisdom of living under definitions preferred upon Africans by outsiders. The misnomer of terrorism would "imply that the victim of colonial laws is the author of his misfortunes" (Zhuwarara, 2001: 52). Liberation, then, should go beyond mere recovery of land to educate people about the imperative to reclaim dislocated memory.

Through the alienated Tambudzai, Dangarembga exposes "the effects of a cultural bomb which is used to annihilate a people's belief in... their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (Ngugi, 1987: 3). Tambudzai's shame at associating with the "primitive scene" (p. 12), "wood-smoke, dust and sweat...[that] would disclose both [her]/my mother's presence and unmentionable origin" (p. 231), Netsai's "absent limb" (p. 232), prove that Tambudzai has serious self-concept problems. The mission and Sacred Heart insulate her from the Africans' colonially-induced poverty and multiple forms of violence. For this reason, she fails to identify reasons behind her impoverished African rural background. She blames victims of colonial deprivation and marginalisation for their victimisation. Dangarembga's "battle is less a political and more an ideological one over the values invested in the land by the opposing forces: the competitive acquisitiveness of Western capitalism and [African] communalism" (Stratton, 1986: 4).

The 2013 Zimbabwean Constitution acknowledges and emphasises that land redistribution achieved till now cannot be reversed. It is the major reason behind the

armed liberation war. However, whilst the narrative could be enlisted as literary activism in the anti-colonialist struggle that it insinuates African culpability for the sluggish land redistribution is worth noting. ZANU-PF's failure to deliver land to the people (p. 196) a few decades into independence points at dissatisfaction with commitment and the strides made towards meeting the independence promises for land. Hanlon et al (2013: 57) submit: "Land may have been at the forefront for the guerrillas and in political speeches, but the new government did not give top priority to land reform". Dangarembga's narrative fails to acknowledge the spontaneous peasant land occupations of abandoned white farms soon after the war (Hanlon et al, 2013: 59). For these reasons, it is important for Africans to have an independent critical self-knowledge, critical historical consciousness, critical cultural awareness and critical self-consciousness in order that practical measures could be adopted for attainment of greater good.

Dangarembga subtly raises the "quest for human completion" (Freire, 1972: 29) of which cultural knowledge and critical self-consciousness are indispensable components, undergirding issues of land, human worth and freedom that she revisits. Oliphant (2008: 217) emphasises that human-centredness be central in the current society's efforts to re-humanise post-independence African communities:

African culture, however denigrated,... [is] not completely vanquished.... some of its fundamental aspects...are human-centeredness,...belief in the inherent goodness of human beings, communalism and cooperativeness, caring and sharing, collective ownership...a situation-experiencing mind-set, communicativeness and a closeness to nature.

Similarly, African culture shuns minority exploitation that uses people as stepping stones. This realisation forces Tambudzai back to her rural roots, Mai and Netsai who constitute part of the *unhu*/humaneness she hankers for. Disconnected from her rural roots and the land and embedded values, Tambudzai's being and bearings appear blighted resulting in mis/identification. The narrative's reminder to Tambudzai could similarly apply to most indigenous elites:

[A]re you aware who gave birth to you? Can you tell me which stomach you came out of! Or do you think you dropped from a tree big and ripe like that! Or sprang from a well! (p. 226).

The golden principle of roots/source that Mai raises remains critical in problem-solving on issues of land. Without correctly characterising forces undermining survival interests, individually and collectively, misinformation could spell a near and present danger for all Zimbabweans. Land, if characterised to preserve only a minority section of Zimbabwe's population, would perpetuate the majority's subordination and exploitation, with majority colluding in their own demise (Rodney, 1981: 263-275). Mis/identification of the elites as culturally-superior consolidates colonial social stratification, destroying the vital cultural organic links with the rest of the populace. These are the struggles Zimbabweans should stem. Sacred Heart images of colonial legacies exposing how youths carry forward social values, policies and legacies that would enhance Zimbabwean freedoms whose nexus is the land should be noted. Youths' perceptions about their African identity and land are inculcated and shaped by educational institutions. Processes of de/colonisation should go beyond territorial repossession to include reclaiming "memory" (Ngugi, 2009) or "imaginative command" (Boehmer, 2009: 5) that educational institutions command. Dangarembga's focus on Sacred Heart, an epitome of Rhodesia, dwelling on the intellectual development of Rhodesian youth, is therefore not accidental. Educational institutions poison/nourish the roots for unified national identity/ies trans-generationally.

3.1.6 Concluding Reflections

Dangarembga subtly challenges readers to count the gains of independence, including psycho-intellectual, spiritual, environmental and economic emancipation. Promised post-war floodgates, including land redistribution come under spotlight. Like Langston Hughes' 1920s poem, "What happens to a dream deferred?" that expresses African-Americans' longing for emancipation, Dangarembga surreptitiously rationalises and re-images Africans' struggles to reclaim their land and memory. This retrospective reconstruction makes it imperative that readers should re-examine the basics that could have been forgotten in the on-going land debate.

Dangarembga's narrative replicates common public concerns in Staunton's *Mothers of the Revolution* (1990) and Msengezi and Staunton's *Women of Resilience: The Voices of Women Ex-combatants* (2000), also collating with most field findings²⁶. For a balanced perception of Zimbabwe's land question, writers should not be seen as abdicating "responsibility for understanding the complex history of land in Zimbabwe" (Cairnie, 2007: 176). As Sadomba (2011:227) puts it, "[a] full picture of Zimbabwe's 'crisis' is only clear when the struggle is analysed and its overall impact weighed". Worth noting is that the much-longed for indigenisation of land and other resources, translates into new national struggles that transcend personal or individualistic gains. Further, philosophically and from a point of principle, that Dangarembga raises the subject of recovering African memory and imaginative command at a time that indigenisation of the country's land and all other resources is raging is not coincidental. That Dangarembga reconfigures the "original land plunder" (Cairnie, 2007: 185) of the 1890s that led to subsequent "land plunders" (Cairnie, 2007: 185), exposing the "unresolved native land claims in this country" (Cairnie, 2007: 185) is worth noting. Baxter (2010: 512) reiterates:

Politically, land was at the root of the Chimurenga, just as it had been in 1896, and this potent issue had never been off the agenda since. The imbalance of land redistribution ... would keep the revolution alive and the enemy more or less unchanged.

For these reasons, Dangarembga's narrative discourages piecemeal and ahistorical approaches towards resolving complexities characterising post-2000 Zimbabwean land issues. This, however, should not absolve Zimbabweans from taking responsibility for non-delivery and mediocrity, taking the discussion to *The Uncertainty of Hope*.

²⁶ Interviewees in August 2010 in Furamera Village, Chihota, and Dema, Seke of Marondera District, Southdown in Chipinge, Chitakatira and Chigodora villages, Zimunya Communal Lands in Mutare South show general dissatisfaction at the sluggishness of land redistribution, including what they view as cronyism among the political elites. An informant, Jabulani Ndunge, bemoans that some villagers of Southdown in Chipinge still have to cross into Mozambique for farming land because they have to accommodate the macademia, coffee and tea plantations in Chipinge, mostly owned by absentee landlords and new political elites. Enia Masakure, a former employee and pack-shade grader at Jack Hulley's Chigodora Farm for more than twenty years, expressed dismay at how the local villagers remain precariously hanging on mountain slopes whilst former combatants from as far afield as Masvingo are getting pieces of land from repossessed farms in the Bvumba that falls within Region One ecological region with both prime rainfall patterns and rich soil. Locals feel sidelined despite their liberation war sacrifices. Peasants generally bemoan occupying overused unproductive land despite political independence.

3.2 *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006)

3.2.0 Summary

This book should be read against the backdrop of Zimbabwe's 2005 government-launched clean-up campaign, popularly known as Operation Murambatsvina/Operation Restore Order, and its aftermath. Through Onai and Garikai Moyo's troubled marriage, their relationship with Katy Nguni – Onai's best friend – and their families staying in Mbare, readers have a chance to explore Mbare of post-2000 Zimbabwe and the harsh pulling down of shacks in black townships, including Mbare Musika market stalls on account of the government's wish to flush out criminals and criminal activities. Home owners are forced to demolish their own shacks and unapproved extensions to their houses which structures are said to be in violation of the city by-laws. Shack dwellers scramble to the "new territory" (p. 155) in the open air at Tsiga Grounds. "There was no clean water and no sanitation at Tsiga Grounds" (p. 155). The "wretched vagrants" are rounded up by the police at the end of the week to "a holding camp on a farm just outside Harare" (p.156).

Tom and Faith vehemently disagree on the nature and violence of Operation Murambatsvina, especially how it violated people's dignity and human worth. They also argue over Tom's acquisition of what the public believes to have been Mr Johnson's, a murdered white commercial farmer's property in a prime farming area of Darwendale on the outskirts of Harare. The disagreement almost wrecks their love relationship. Tom clears the air about the farm property. He had bought it from Mr Johnson who sold it in haste to leave the country ahead of the government's compulsory land acquisition programme. Interest from 'bigwigs' during the compulsory land acquisitions, almost see Tom losing the farm. He wins it back on legal grounds with support from sympathisers on account of his late father's support for the armed liberation struggle.

In a separate development, Onai and Garikai's rocky marriage ends with Garikai's death. Onai is evicted by Toro, Garikai's younger brother, from their Mbare house, leaving her and their three children destitute. She takes them to her rural home, leaving them in her mother's care. Onai reunites with her children on securing employment as a dressmaker

and accommodation with a businessman, Tapiwa Jongwe, who lives in the ultra low density suburb of Borrowdale. Tapiwa Jongwe is a formerly self-styled Mbare vagrant, known to Onai and her children, flushed out of Mbare by Operation Murambatsvina.

3.2.1 Titling

The oxymoron title attempts to capture delusion and conflicting emotions arising from unfulfilled wartime and post-independence promises. Titling also presupposes journeying into a wasteland, or what chief protagonists would view as risks accompanying unacknowledged sacrifices. Written against the backdrop of Zimbabwe's 2005 Operation Murambatsvina/Operation Restore Order and its aftermath, the titling could be suggesting a replay of colonial violence of forced removals, but ironically, now from a black administration against its own heavily marginalised urban poor who put them into office. It also suggests undercurrents of multiple forms of violence visited upon the African psyche, partially hinting at underlying causes of internal migration in post-2000 Zimbabwe. It further hints at uncertainties of survival in the fluid environment of the post-2000 Zimbabwean economic meltdown, growing poverty, unemployment and accompanying insecurities, especially on the urban landscape. The marginalised majority's plight had been compounded by vulnerable livelihoods and exclusion arising from inaccessibility of land/resources, accommodation, jobs, basic necessities and social services in a country they fought to liberate. Titling could also allude to the controversies surrounding land redistribution amidst rumours of corruption, cronyism and other inconsistencies characterising the processes. Titling subtly encapsulates doubts pertaining to empowering the majority poor through unlocking key resources, including land.

3.2.2 Re-imagining and re-writing the urban subaltern's struggles for land and geophysical space in the post-2000 period

Whilst *The Book of Not* saliently castigates Africans' culpability for their continued domination through the ZANU-PF government's failure to unlock land and other resources for the benefit of the marginalised majority as envisioned by the liberation struggle, *The Uncertainty of Hope* boldly castigates the same government for its sidelining of the subaltern poor in accessing land and other resources. Chirisa (2006: 36)

observes that there is a huge housing backlog in the country in general, again a reflection of failure by the post-independence government to prioritise the needs of the marginalised poor, especially failure to provide land for construction of houses in urban areas. The treatment of the urban shack dwellers as vermin polluting the urban landscape, long term intentions of flashing out criminality in the cities notwithstanding, shows a government that is brutal and insensitive to the plight of its major power brokers. Government insensitivity to the plight of the marginalised and already vulnerable ranks could be surmised in Abrahams' (2000: 376) phenomenon of violence:

There is nothing noble or ennobling about oppression and exploitation; it only teaches how to oppress and exploit, just as beating only teaches how to beat, bullying how to bully, robbing how to rob. Does it matter who exploits whom if that is all there is to it? If the strong have the licence to oppress and exploit the weak; if the trans-nationals of the New World Order and their World Trade Organisation can legitimise the exploitation of the poor nations of the South...

Hondo, a liberation war fighter and a synecdoche of the poor majority's independence dreams, and the rest of urban scum, fails to distinguish between the trauma under British colonial control and that of the black-induced Operation Murambatsvina. Murambatsvina, however, is not the main thrust of this discussion. It is only significant in as far as it shows what the general masses conceived as betrayal of the aspirations of the liberation struggle that bonded the masses and their political leaders. To Hondo, Murambatsvina showed the ruling elite's "lack of respect for people who had fought in the war to liberate the country from the British" (p. 149). This paradoxical link between the wishes for space by the urban poor and the government shows the schism and ideological shift between the rulers and the poor majority, especially the urban poor. The paradoxical link shows government's failure to deliver, automatically painting the ruling elite with the same brush as the colonial settler government. In Hondo's view, the demolishers suffer from "historical amnesia" (Crush and Tevera, 2010: 23), are sell-outs and British puppets. The moral and political insinuations are damaging. As was the case before 1980, the depiction reinforces "coerced migration" of Africans and ejection from "areas of economic and social opportunity" (Potts in Crush and Tevera, 2010: 80).

Hondo's disillusionment at the ruling elite's insensitivity and betrayal comes through recanting his liberation war credentials: "I fought for this country. I said I risked my life for this country. Is this the reward that I get?" (p. 150). The liberation war song: "*Zimbabwe ndeyeropa baba! Zimbabwe ndeyeropa remadzibaba*" (p. 150)/[Zimbabwe's independence is under-written by ancestors' blood]²⁷, reminds the amnesiac purveyors of violence of the country's history. The incantation decries Operation Murambatsvina's de-linking with the on-going struggles for land, African dignity and other human rights that resonate with the vision of the liberation struggle. Further, the elite are betraying the ancestors by abdicating their responsibility to defend the interests and security of the vulnerable African majority who catapulted them into power. Failure to prioritise the marginalised majority's needs "show[s] that the results of the struggle do not measure up to the contributions that the peasants put up to or what Africans expected" (Vambe, 2006: 267).

The elite, like the colonial oppressors, are pinning their weak to the wall, contrary to the African philosophy of *humwe/oneness/ubuntu/humaneness* that centralise collective survival. Those who rule appear intoxicated with power, losing touch with the interests of the masses they lead. In Onai's imagination: "Shadows had no capacity to feel or show human pain" (p. 151). Rightly so, because in the brush with the incensed Hondo, one officer's arrogance cannot be masked: "This is not about the liberation war" (p. 150). In a layman's view, the officer's curt insult shows how far the ruling elite and their representatives have disconnected themselves from the aspirations of the ordinary people, contrary to what the nationalist liberation struggle envisioned. As Vambe (2006: 270) observes, "The paradox is that the 'big' men soon forget the contributions of 'small men'".

The masses, though militarily and materially weak, can weave their own discourses of emancipation that are rooted in the struggles of their people. Hondo throws himself at an on-coming train and dies rather than witness the room extensions to his home

²⁷ Scoones et al (2010: 76) cite interviewees using the same currency of liberation war blood for justification to enjoy land access: Land is what we fought for. Our relatives died for this land".

demolished. As was the case with the post-2000 land invasions, the liberation war fighters like Hondo put their lives on the line for the benefit of the poor majority, unlike some of their contemporary political leaders (Sadomba, 2011). The image of Tsiga Grounds as “new territory” for the townships’ vagrants is curious. It shows the yawning distancing between the urban “vermin” and their rulers, and the interests that the latter represent. Their position is invidious as it appears difficult to ascertain whose interests the political elite now defend.

However, worth noting are the limitations confronting the establishment in view of the swelling urban-born and influx of Africans in cities resulting from removal of strictures and segregation against Africans in the cities, including internal migration occasioned by the land occupations of 2000 and beyond (Potts, in Crush and Tevera, 2010: 75-80). Ironically, Tsiga Grounds is not a solution to the humanitarian crisis that Operation Murambatsvina induces, hence removal of evictees to the holding farm at the outskirts of Harare. Rhodesia’s Epworth and Chirambahuyo on the outskirts of Harare similarly harboured African refugees during the 1970s war, but have been transformed into urban townships. Similarly, Hatcliffe, White Cliffe, Harare North/Charlotte Brooke and Harare South²⁸, now constituting part of Greater Harare, are a result of peri-urban land occupations by the urban land-hungry. The issue of urban slums and land appears to be a common phenomenon across the African continent as a whole, an indication of one of the pressing problems confronting post-colonial governments in Africa.

Operation Murambatsvina evictees are said to be turned away from the rural areas by the traditional leadership (p. 211) on instruction from higher offices, further compromising their dignity and belongingness with and on the land. That the evictees seek refuge in the

²⁸ Beneficiaries of war-veterans’ initiated housing co-operatives interviewed during the researcher’s field familiarisation tours applaud Government’s land reform and redistribution for opening opportunities that allow ordinary people to access land for housing. To the north of Harare, housing co-operatives established African suburbs like Sally Mugabe Heights now Harare North, whilst to the south along the Harare-Masvingo highway Ushewokunze Housing Co-operative established Harare South, and to the western side of Harare along the Harare-Bulawayo highway others established White Cliffe Suburb. These are but a few examples among many across the country.

already over-crowded communal lands shows the desperate need for more land. Commenting on the African condition in the colonial period, which condition unfortunately has characterised post-independence African reality, Phimister (in Stoneman, 1988: 9) observes:

Thousands of poor peasants abandoned efforts to scratch a living from their miserable few acres. Some found wage-employment but most of them swelled the ranks of the landless unemployed. Such evidence as there is indicates that the proportion of people without land in so-called reserves expanded from approximately 30 per cent in the late 1950s to slightly under 50 per cent by 1978. Young people under 30 were particularly hard hit.

The Uncertainty of Hope's references to over-strained rural lands that have now become unproductive (p. 247), reiterate the need to decisively redress colonial land/resource imbalances. Potts (in Crush and Tevera, 2010: 80) links Murambatsvina evictees' plight with that of the displaced commercial farm workers during the post-2000 period, "leading to massive internal movement...as dislocated people sought replacement accommodation." Murambatsvina subtly replicates effects of 1930 Land Apportionment and 1969 Land Tenure acts, showing continual African precarious livelihoods, particularly Africans' dire need to access land. [S]quatting ...and encroaching on under-utilised commercial land" (Potts, in Crush and Tevera, 2010: 81) also partly explain Murambatsvina victims. Further disenfranchisement and forced removals are inconsistent with envisioned goals of independence casting the black political leadership in bad light. Some evictees ultimately benefitted by accessing accommodation in newly-established peri-urban suburbs, including securing livelihood opportunities through resettlement schemes, making Murambatsvina complex.

However, that the rural areas provided sanctuary for some evictees as does Onai and her children is factual, reinforcing the prevalent philosophy of home/*kumusha*/roots offering a social safety net and security index that became even sharper during the post-2000 economic downturn characterised by poverty and surging African unemployment. Some urban families received livelihood support from resettlement and communal lands, a point that Scoones et al, (2010: 185) acknowledge concerning positive outcomes of land

redistribution. A passenger on a Harare-bound bus on which Onai is travelling, though in fictional form, testifies to this reality about African life that draws from both rural and urban connections. Land in the African worldview remains an anchor, apart from the economic value that it is normally associated with. Therefore, “indigenous land rights are ... the cornerstone of indigenous wellbeing because of inextricable connection between the indigenous psyche with its ancestral land” (Bantekas in Chigara, 2012a: 123). Laureta Ngcobo’s *And They Didn’t Die* (1999) depicts similar predicaments faced by black South Africans at the enactment of the 1913 Native Land Act. Tagwira’s Harare-bound woman contends the confiscation of her maize at the road-block:

These hands...worked hard, tilling the land and planting those mealies. But now I am not allowed to use that maize to feed my children! (p. 281).

Restricted maize movement for Africans is not a new phenomenon (Ranger, 1985: 39). Hyperinflation, inadequate food supplies and need to survive characterising post-2000 Zimbabwe, saw corruption, arbitrary fines, confiscation and intimidation becoming commonplace (Scoones et al, 2010: 151-152). This reality outrightly challenges dismissing land redistribution to peasants and their exclusion from accessing land on grounds of low/poor productivity. Despite limited resources in terms of capital, inputs, expertise, mechanisation, labour and implements, Hanlon et al (2013) and Scoones et al (2010) explore livelihood benefits accruing to small-scale resettled farmers since 2000 to date. Evidence from scholars like Palmer (1977) and Ranger (1985) on the other hand, shows that the settler commercial farmers took time to record successes, government and other institutional support notwithstanding.

3.2.3 Un/acknowledged perceptual contradictions characterising land redistribution

Apart from divergent views on Murambatsvina and land, Tagwira depicts heightened perceptual differences surrounding land invasions, murdering of white commercial farmers, and prime land expropriation from 2000 and beyond. The race card used to explain disparities in accessing land and mainstream economy in *The Book of Not* can no longer hold as patronage takes precedence. Tagwira observes that the temporary shelters offered to Murambatsvina evictees at the holding farm were worse than shacks they

originally inhabited (p. 156). To Tom Sibanda, businessman and land reform beneficiary, accusations are “unfair” (p. 158). Hateful rumours surrounding the new farmer, Tom Sibanda, who is always on television (p. 277), are rife among the Mbare residents. People are not clear about the circumstances surrounding Mr Johnson’s murder at a time that his farm appears to have been expropriated by a new owner whilst his family leaves under unclear circumstances for England. Of note is that whilst *Hondo Yeminda* (land expropriation wars) could have been legitimate ideologically in view of some members of the ruling elite, murder as a means to such an end remains unacceptable as it is not only anti-life, but runs contrary to the spirit of *humwe*: “There are people out there who own farms because somebody died” (p. 161). Human life is sacred. The mixed reactions towards perceived victims during land redistribution resonate with divergent views concerning Murambatsvina. An interviewee, Mr Tapuwahama Shumba²⁹ admonishes: “*Munhu haadyiwi*/We are not cannibals.” The novel partially explores the violence characterising some land occupations and what some analysts describe as “a confiscatory redistribution of land [meant] to politically satisfy one aim of the national liberation struggle” (Vambe, 2006: 271). Thus, despite Zimbabwean land being historically volatile, generalisations of occupations distort unique history and circumstances, including political motivations. Vambe (2006: 267) observes: “This discourse marks the ideological de-linking between [perceptual issues on land among the youths] and those of some of the nationalist leaders” The perceptual differences also buttress intra-racial “[c]ompeting visions of what land was for and what land reform should be about” (Scoones et al, 2010: 22).

To Faith, Tom’s girl friend and a bonafide Mbare³⁰ resident, “It’s a gross abuse of humanity. People are now homeless and destitute. Just over a week ago, they all had roofs over their heads. They were earning a living from self-employment. They had dignity, they had self-respect” (p. 158). Faith’s voice could resonates with that of women and children who watched helplessly as bulldozers razed their “homes” to the ground and

²⁹ Mr Tapuwahama Shumba, a beneficiary of the land redistribution process at a farm in Macheke was interviewed in August 2010 during the annual Harare Agricultural Show.

³⁰Mbare is the oldest black township in Harare. Squalor and overcrowdedness have been always characteristic of general disregard for African comfort, human worth and dignity.

spent days and nights literally in the open. Promises of a house in the distant future do not ease the victims' pain. To Tom, pain is the price of radical changes brought by revolutions, including the war of liberation (p. 160). Tom's logic resonates with one arguing from a position of comfort and privilege. His voice coincides with the official voice on land redistribution. However, although Faith's concerns appear legitimate – probably representing a good cross-section of the Zimbabwean society – her voice chimes well with critics of land management and reform in the post-independence period (Baxter, 2010).

However, what remains clear is that Murambatsvina points to the authorities' failure to honour their own promise of providing housing for all by year 2000. Criticism is also justified because the government allowed these illegal structures to proliferate in the first place. That the narrative explores the trauma of homelessness from the perspective of the underdogs, including what could be perceived as the callousness of an African-led administration against its own citizens – already existing at the periphery of the margins – points towards the need for self-introspection and careful thinking through programmes before implementing them. It is ironic that the treatment that these vulnerable people suffered appears worse than the white minority population that had both legal recourse and alternative securities, yet they had been holding onto the wealth forcibly taken from blacks who were rendered landless.

Unlike some land-owners who subdivided their land for sale at exorbitant prices in order to subvert land redistribution³¹, The *Uncertainty of Hope* brings up the aspect of co-operation from some members of the white farming community on relinquishing land to the new black owners. Though such cases may be insignificant in number, these levels of co-operation from some members of the white community remain unacknowledged. Scoones et al (2010: 34-35) arguing on such co-operation during land occupations in Masvingo submit: “Away from the limelight, many new arrangements have been made –

³¹ Interviews with some residents of Pagomo Plots adjacent to Hillcrest Schools before Penhalonga around the Christmas Pass area in Mutare rural are grateful to Mr Chakonda and fellow white partners for subdividing their vast farm into plots that they sold to private developers. The Manresa and Chishawasha Hills issue cited earlier is also a product of such evasion and aversion.

involving, for example, sharing grazing resources, operating joint wildlife hunting enterprises or engaging in marketing support for new farmers”. This set-up buttresses the depiction of Tom’s peaceful acquisition of land from a white farmer through a private sale. It suggests that not all farms were violently expropriated from white farmers. Hanlon et al (2013: 150) explain how Keith Campbell ended up retaining 500 hectares of his 14 000 hectare farm after private negotiations with black land-hunters, remarking: “There is nothing worse than living next to a poor neighbor”, explaining his co-operation and assistance to new black farmers. This shift, also noted by Scoones et al (2010), has not been widely acknowledged to date.

Tom’s legal pursuit to secure title deeds for the farm also raises concerns about security of tenure surrounding post-2000 land redistribution. Cousins (cited in Scoones et al, 2010: 215) expresses reservations about the elites “who, despite their political rhetoric, are not fully committed to a more radical reconfiguration of land, livelihoods and agrarian relations”. Worth noting, then, is whether the “underprivileged” or “indistinguishable mass” (p. 349) are also to receive title deeds for security and free-hold tenure. The practice of private ownership of land, as noted elsewhere, however, remains an alien exclusionary phenomenon motivated mostly by individual self-aggrandisement as evidenced by some white farmers’ contestations against government land acquisition at the SADC Tribunal (Barclay, 2010). Whilst individual ownership of land is acceptable and desirable in the new dispensation, those who have access to such land should work productively for the good of the broader Zimbabwean society. Tom’s search for external markets for horticulture produce exemplifies need for continued external market links to sustain individual and national economic interests.

Tom highlights how his farm generated immense interest among bigwigs and other influential figures, including his insecurity as a result (p. 234). Conflicts and contestations concerning ownership of certain farms in high productive areas are apparent even outside the world of the novel. It appears that greed leads to circumventing the primary objective of land redistribution, resulting in black skins replacing the former minority farm owners. If not carefully handled, the colonial land caste system would

remain intact in this regard. The big-wigs tempered with, and grabbed mostly productive land and properties with developed infrastructure, sidelining the peasants and other ordinary members of society. Such practices keep fanning rumours of cronyism that undermines oneness/*humwe*.

The novel is commended for its candid attempt to give balanced views concerning some of the land challenges and prospects characterising post-2000 Zimbabwe. Whilst Tom celebrates getting the farm and seeing success during the four years that he has owned it, in reality productive land appears to be for those wielding political influence. Marongwe (in Hanlon *et al* 2013: 140) notes “political bias in the selection criteria” for A2 farm ownership. This development is unfortunate. It is anti-*humwe*/anti-oneness that galvanised support for the liberation struggle that birthed Zimbabwe, including the land occupations themselves. The short memory reflects human folly. Further, Tom alludes to some endemic insecurity and pervading threats against some big wigs who managed to secure land. Tom wishes for a time when people would express their views more freely. He “was damned if he was going to jeopardise his new farming venture with a few emotional opinions” (p. 139). In addition to buttressing patronage characterising land redistribution, this exposes that standing by individual convictions could be precarious, entailing some beneficiaries effacing individual identity/ies. Scoones et al (2010: 188-212) explore multiple identities, patronage, factionalism, conflicts and contests characterising land redistribution in Masvingo Province.

Challenging negative economic and monolithic views on un/productivity of redistributed land and the African farmers, the novel shows Tom making repeated trips abroad to secure market for his farm’s horticulture produce. Despite the apparent resources and labour constraints, the accruing benefits of land reform among the formerly excluded based on a 10 year case-study of resettled indigenous farmers in Masvingo Province, Scoones et al (2010: 213-214) observe:

There has been substantial investment in farm assets and infrastructure,... and agricultural production and marketing has been growing, even if variably. A wide array of livelihood activities is seen...

Accumulation from below implies that ‘the inherited agrarian structure is radically reconfigured so that much larger numbers of people begin to participate in the agricultural sector and benefit substantially from participation.

Black commercial and resettlement farmers’ commitment mostly remains unacknowledged. Bernstein (in Scoones et al 2010: v) argues: “Controversy over the Mugabe regime, not least the consequences of his ‘fast track’ land reform since 2000, too often generates more heat than light”. Similarly responding Kinsey (in Scoones et al 2010: v) argues:

Events in Zimbabwe since 2000 have been so coloured by superficial media reporting and obscured by strident political posturing that little attention has been directed to what has become of the thousands of families that received land after the occupations. Despite the unevenness of outcomes to date, they have succeeded in establishing a base for themselves as serious producers with the capacity to contribute significantly to Zimbabwe’s agricultural economy.

On a lighter note, Tom ridicules Faith his fiancé for double standards concerning Tom’s business enterprises, especially his commercial farming venture: “You want to change the world for the better, but you want me to make money so you can live in comfort while you do it” (p. 349). Ironically, this same criticism equally applies to Tom himself. Whilst he celebrates his successes as a new commercial farmer, presumptuously like all businessmen, only he receives the accolades while the labourers remain out of the picture. In *The Book of Not*, Tambudzai protests against this practice that she views as exploitative and dehumanising, forcing her to quit her employment with the advertising agency. Apparent silencing of the farm workers by both the writer and new landowners should be noted. Also, that lawyers like Faith agitate for social change is invidious. Their criticism against injustices characterising land redistribution processes offers opportunities for self-introspection, an indispensable attribute to Afrocentricity. Without critical self-examination, communities and individuals’ self-regeneration would be blighted.

Further, the silencing of farm workers’ voices in nationalist discourses appears to be characteristic of most writers of Zimbabwean literature in English. Hove’s *Bones* makes

an attempt, but only in as far as it projects the indigenous natives' ideological commitment and motivation for land restitution during of the liberation struggle. Ironically, *Bones* does not acknowledge the involvement of other labourers of African origin who are alien to Zimbabwe. Therefore, that even black-authored literature in English tends to be xenophobic is in itself worrisome. Such perspectives undermine *humwe/oneness/togetherness* and integrative approaches that should underwrite nation-building. They also reinforce the class system that potentially threatens unity of purpose among the Zimbabwean population. Perhaps, this kind of writing reflects the psychological devastation and limitation of a people's vision and creativity (Ani, 1994: 1), probably attributable to imbibed alien ideologies influencing art and other spheres of life. Silencing certain workers' voices reflects not only dehumanisation and oppression of other sections of society, but disdain and their exclusion from benefitting from the fruits of the land. This set-up is curious because of the influence that literary productions have through the academic curricula.

3.2.4 Concluding observations

Mrs Onai Moyo and Mrs Katy Nguni and their families' experiences give readers insights and conceptualisation of land on the urban landscape, with rural and resettlement lands perceived as a social safety net for the urban displaced and forcibly moved marginalised throngs of Operation Murambatsvina. Most importantly, the narrative's exploration of continual exclusion of the poor majority from spatial control offers a counter discourse to nationalist rhetoric about unlocking key resources to the marginalised African majority, an aspect that Zimbabwean post-2000 should seriously confront and address for society's greater good. Cumulatively, the criticisms that both *The Book of Not* and *The Uncertainty of Hope* offer are designed to challenge all Zimbabweans, the ruling elite in particular, to reflect and introspect about the major goals of the liberation struggle, particularly more equitable transparent redistribution of the country's major resources, especially land. Silencing of certain sections of the society in the construction of nationalist discourses on land, human worth and other human rights also makes a curious aspect in Zimbabweans' social reconstruction narratives. *Harare North*, which the chapter shortly turns to, offers its own version of Zimbabwean land invasions, their aftermaths and African identity.

3.3 Harare North (2009)

3.3.0 Summary

The narrative opens with the narrator in Brixton, having slipped through the British Immigration officers at Gatwick International Airport, alleging torture by the ruling party back home in Zimbabwe. The narrator joins his cousin Paul and wife, Sekai, before moving on to join a former classmate Shingi – nick-named the Original Native –, who is more sympathetic to his plight. Five of them share an apartment in Brixton that Alec looks after for friends who have migrated to India in search of better livelihoods. Alec charges his home-mates weekly rentals that he repatriates back to Zimbabwe. A life of scavenging helps the narrator and Shingi to secure a bed, even food at times. The narrator accidentally runs into one of his worst tormentors, MHF, who from the Goromonzi farm occupations, had forced him to flee Harare because he kept demanding a ransom of US\$ 4000.00 for protecting the narrator from arrest for his involvement in the farm invasions. Whilst the pressing need for economic and material resources for Mother's *Umbuyiso* haunts and motivates the narrator to seek economic greener pastures in London, the underlying violence associated with post-2000 farm occupations and post-traumatic experiences should not be ignored. The narrator and Shingi make forays into London looking for jobs, but only the worst menial types are available for immigrants. The narrator refuses to join the infamous BBC (British Bottoms Cleaners) on account of his dignity, yet continues depending on Shingi for sustenance. Shingi has difficulties repatriating money to her aunt-foster mother in Harare as a result. When the story ends, the narrator is at cross-roads. He abandons his now wheelchair-bound host Shingi at the station, takes Shingi's passport and social security papers in order to secure a job, raise money for Mother's *Umbuyiso* and return home.

3.3.1 Titling

Chikwava's *Harare North*'s inventiveness over its treatment of the motif of land, identity and Zimbabweans' moral responsibility for the positive transformation of the post-2000 Zimbabwean society lies in the titling after the United Kingdom's metropolitan capital, London that is Christianised Harare North. The titling subtly marks subversion and redefinition of the relationship between the metropole and the periphery in reconstruction

narratives about land. It mischievously asserts that the African “is a human being second to none” (Ramosé 2005: 5). It also emerges as part of creatively marking history, especially influx of Zimbabweans in London and critical consciousness to hold onto their African values and identity. Rajchman (1995:11) argues: “[T]he project of history is not to reify identity, but to understand its production as an on-going process of differentiation, [...] subject to redefinition, resistance and change”. Titling acknowledges the narrator-cum-writer’s refusal to be infused into a foreign identity, opting to transpose his identity and consciousness onto the new geophysical space that he now occupies – London – calling it Harare North. Psychologically and spiritually this brings London from its British geographical location and makes it a province and extension of Zimbabwe’s Harare. Impliedly, psychically, intellectually, culturally, socially and spiritually, the writer-cum-narrator refuses to subordinate his being, language and cultural identity to European social and mental systems, despite being paradoxically forced to be economically dependent on Europe. He sees and interacts with the world through African eyes and social values. Residents of Harare North, then, cannot cut the umbilical cord binding them to Harare, including socio-cultural and civic responsibilities. Subtly, titling subverts the historical link between Harare and London, including asserting the writer-cum-narrator’s ability to think victoriously against seeing the world through the eyes of the host nation. He sees himself an economic hunter/warrior in London whose proceeds should be accounted for back home in Zimbabwe. From the onset, these elements set the narrative apart in terms of indigenous Zimbabwean individual, cultural and national identities.

3.3.2 Cultural-historical memory and identification inscriptions

Harare North adopts history and cultural memory as entry points to explore trajectories of spatial awareness, and perceptions of land and identity. Historicising the Zimbabwean land question, including the armed liberation struggle, and how these impinge on indigenous individual and collective identities offers the possibility of a more unified view on shared and contested meanings, values and ownership of land as a principal material resource in the Zimbabwean post-2000 era. This could be necessitated by a desire to holistically approach the Zimbabwean perennial land contestations. “Perhaps

because of the intensity, frequency, and persistence of these challenges/[struggles], it has been more difficult for the African spirit to overcome them than it has been for other peoples who experienced similar upheavals” (Maathai, 2010: 42-43). Chikwava’s creative re-interpretation of the perennial Zimbabwean land problems, including their ripple effects in the Diaspora, explains the inclusion of *Harare North* in the current study. Further, debates that focus only on factors of productivity, efficiency and private property rights mask the real wedges that should be removed for harmonious post-independence peaceful co-existence. Using Shonglish idiolect, the narrator gives the layman’s historical version of farm occupations:

...our party’s supporters who have invade white man’s farm ... we ask him why they attack the sons and daughters of the soil, but the traitor say soil belong to the white man and that our brothers and sisters is invaders. Me I give him one small lesson in history of Zimbabwe – how in the 1890s them British fat stomachs grab our land, pegging farms by riding horse until it drop dead; that just mark only one side of the farm boundary and that where the corner peg go. But even after this, the traitor ... is still saying that the farmer buy the land. How do you say you buy land that was never sold by no one in the first place unless you like buying things that have been thief from someone? ‘What kind of style is that?’ me I ask him ... (p. 19).

Playfully, Chikwava’s *Harare North* “interrogate[s] facts found in historical narrative” (Muchemwa, 2005: 196). Chikwava humouredly captures how the current land occupations are inextricably tied to ‘rational demands of justice’ (Ramose, 1999:45) by formerly-colonised people. Chikwava’s “what kind of style” demands and reiterates moral justification behind the Zimbabwean land question. Martin and Johnson (1981: 35) submit that Cecil John Rhodes’ Pioneer Column, comprising 300 policemen and 200 ‘pioneers’, were promised title to “fifteen claims each in the goldfields and 3, 000 acres of prime freehold farmland in Mashonaland – a total of almost 1, 500, 000 acres”. Scoones et al (2010) cite individual farmers owning tens of thousands hectares while Africans remained restricted to overcrowded and overused communal lands³². African

³² It is alleged that until 2001, some foreign-based farmer owned as much as 960 000 hectares of land – the size of Belgium – in Zimbabwe. In *NewAfrican* (February 2013), Sasa discusses a similar scenario in Namibia whereby absentee landlords own tens of thousands of hectares of land that they use for holiday stints during the year.

commitment to land restitution and natural justice represented through the “green bomber³³” is thus akin to the Native American and African-Americans’ fight for reparations to this day:

The realisation of reparations is no more far-fetched than eliminating either legal enslavement or destroying the imposition of an illegal and unconstitutional so-called second-class citizenship systematically fastened to African-Americans by all American institutions during the second phase of our sojourn (Kamau, in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 438).

Chikwava’s narrative, then, could be well regarded a protest novel. He dramatises Africans’ natural right to land that colonial appropriations erased and legally dismissed as theirs. Chigara (2004; 2012b) discusses African land rights from a human-rights and natural justice perspective. Most fertile areas from which Africans were systematically driven were used by European farmers and foreign-owned companies, amassing wealth and investing most of it outside the country whilst Africans lived in abject poverty.

Chikwava’s re-dramatisation of the post-2000 Goromonzi commercial farm occupations and “one small lesson in history of Zimbabwe” (p. 19) adopts a radicalised approach to land redistribution which points to the need to reconnect Africans with their land and heritage. It queries why several years into independence Africans should be complicit in their own subjugation, especially land dispossession, serving imperialist agendas. Indirectly, Chikwava urges people to be conscious of past dealings undergirding present attitudes and relationships in their reading of post-2000 Zimbabwean land issues. It is also ironic that Africans are divided among themselves, with others defending white farmers who continue benefiting from such internal strife over land repossessions. Conversely, such in-fighting justifies whites’ continual superintending of African management of resources.

³³ Green bombers are huge green flies associated with stench, toilets and garbage dumps or places where faecal matter is abundant. Using this image for the youth militia means that they are viewed as scum or scavengers. They lack sophistication.

Chikwava's exploration of how *Umbuyiso*³⁴ determines the narrator's actions and attitudes in the narrative partially shows the spiritual significance of land in shaping African identities and defining unities trans-generationally. *Umbuyiso* determines and influences the course of events in the narrative. The narrator continuously opens and checks his suitcase inherited from his late mother, drawing in its odours. These elements set the narrative apart. *Umbuyiso*, then, symbolises a ritual that links not just the living and the dead, but also reinforces bonding between the narrator and his land. Such links have helped Africans retain their spiritual identities, including bonding their families and communities trans-generationally. This explains why the narrator-cum-protagonist ruminates about impending dislocations and cultural alienation coming with post-2000 relocation of his mother's village: "All the news of emeralds or diamonds and government wanting to take mother's village" (p. 68):

people in the village where Mother is buried have already been told that they have to prepare to be resettled any time. ... Soon Mother's grave maybe end up being dig up by some machine, get wash by rain and she bones come out in the open and get bleached by the sun just like bones of dead bird and no one is going to care (p. 74).

Removing Africans from the land, then, is to disconnect them from the soul of their existence. Palmer aptly summarises this fundamental aspect of survival that spurs Africans to defend their traditional homelands:

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

Wholesale evictions as witnessed by the post-2000 diamond-mining wave in Zimbabwe that prioritise capital gains over indigenous communalism engender conflict between the ruling elite and the ordinary majority. The movements disconnect people from their land, denying them securities embedded therein. Their sense of belonging is also constantly

³⁴ A ritual that is usually held after a year of the deceased's burial to bring back his/her alleged wandering spirit into the fold of the other ancestors. This usually applies to elderly family members whose guardianship role is expected to continue beyond the grave.

threatened, especially their spiritual and environmental connections with the land. Ironically, ordinary people in both pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe are dispossessed, displaced and forcibly removed at the will of sitting governments. The present massive displacements and forced removals are colonial history replaying itself, including the insecurities associated with involuntary movements to Harare North and the violent displacements of Operation Murambatsvina. Stavenhagen (in Rosset, Patel and Courville, 2006: 208) argue:

For most indigenous people, survival is the major challenge in a world that has systematically denied them the right to existence as such. Historically linked to the land as the source of their main livelihood, they have long struggled to gain and keep access to this precious resource that is also the essential element of their identity as distinct cultures and societies.

For the foregoing reason, Chikwava's narrator-cum-protagonist is a synecdoche of these land struggles and conflicts in the age of globalisation. The narrator-cum-protagonist refuses to be pigeonholed into foreign modes of viewing Zimbabwean land conflicts, which in itself perpetuates psycho-intellectual victim-hood. He refuses to imbibe perceptions of national inferiority continuously churned out in the foreign and international media: "On every-one of them papers... Mugabe's face is folded in two... The paper say Zimbabwe has run out of toilet paper" (p. 1). From the same image, Chikwava subtly projects hardships explaining a cocktail of reasons behind Zimbabweans' massive out-migration (Crush and Tevera, 2010). Partly, the violent psychosocial effects manifest in some people's denunciation of home as shown in the narrative through Paul and Sekai. They have become cynical about their home-country and national identity. However, mixed reactions are evident. For the narrator-cum-protagonist, the continuous adverse media bombardments engender reverse psychological effects. He becomes resolute in retaining his Zimbabwean and African identity. He argues:

You always know more than you believe in but always choose what you believe in over what you know because what you know can be so big that sometimes it is useless weapon, you cannot wield it proper and, when you try, it can get your head out of gear and stop you focusing (p. 43).

“Some memories is not meant to be pissed on any tree just because you can” (p. 159). He refuses to imbibe definitions of the African reality as consistently deposited into people’s psyches by the European electronic and print media:

Then there is this news-animal that follow your every step from Zimbabwe...- is this propaganda or what?...you lose what you believe in and have no weapon to fight with (p. 68).

The narrator interacts with and looks at the world using indigenous Zimbabwean cultural-historical eyes. Despite the media barrage against his country and alleged big-wig corrupt mining ventures (p. 89), “chas[ing] away all rural people from they villages if [t[he]y] can find emeralds or diamonds there” (p. 41), he weighs information concerning internal migrations embedded in his people’s lived experiences:

This village, Mother’s family have been here since 1947 when they was moved from fertile land in Mazoe because the land have been given as reward to some British Second World War War veteran. Now they move again? (p. 74).

Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart (2013), mentioned in Chapter Two, draw references to these displacements. Chikwava links these removals of whole villages which are not a phenomenon peculiar to post-2000 indigenous land experiences. The recurrence allegedly point towards insensitivity towards and disregard for indigenous peoples land traditions and values by both pre- and post-independence governments. Land redistribution at whatever stage may not be a panacea to poverty alleviation for the ordinary majority. Such critical historical knowledge prides Chikwava’s narrator with an African cultural centre that helps him to navigate and understand the Diaspora’s views about land and political developments back home. His resolve to stand by his identity encourages him not to “apprehend [his] reality through another group’s centre” (Mazama, 2003: 25). “By making that choice, of fighting back,... it is also extremely important to understand that the colonised is asserting his own humanity” (Mazama, 2003: 14). This assertion is particularly important for the developing world that is confronted by global systems structured to coerce people into viewing the world through the eyes of the globally influential. Ironically, one is most free, and most active, and most ingenious when they

act on the basis of their own free volition. Foreign-mediated interpretations of one's world and experiences do not offer such freedoms.

The narrator-cum-protagonist has “perspectives” (p. 174) or insights into attitudes and treatment of Zimbabweans in London, especially those alleged to be loyalists of President Mugabe like the green bombers. Ironically, it is lowly people such as these that appear to consciously preserve their derided African identity unlike the likes of Paul and Sekai who regard themselves as “culturally superior” (Rodney, 1981: 275). They metaphorically carry the village to Harare North. Tsitsi, the young rural girl who is being looked after by Aleck, “always sing them songs that she have carry from she rural hills” (p. 56). She regrets why the narrator's uncle should have facilitated his passage to the UK where he would most likely “end up becoming one of them BBCs – British Buttock Cleaners – looking after old people that poo they pants every hour” (p. 41). Commenting on conditions and trajectories of work among Zimbabwean UK emigrants, McGregor (in Crush and Tevera, 2010: 200) argues:

Although Zimbabweans working in care complained of long hours ... [t]heir quest for money was strong enough to overcome the shame of loss of status and a cultural disdain of care work, even for men.

Constraints and restrictions on entering other British job markets evidences the institutionalised myth that ‘[t]he lives of black people/[Zimbabweans]... mean very little ...beyond their utility, as cheap labour’ (Ephraim, 2003: 77). Mathema (2009: 16-40) explores reasons inducing Zimbabweans to voluntarily leave the country. Most reasons point towards falling livelihoods standards, land-related violence and scarce economic opportunities. Thus, “[b]eyond the obvious explanation of economic collapse and political turmoil, it is useful to [understand] what people themselves feel about their quality of life in [post-2000] Zimbabwe” (Tevera and Crush, 2010: 124), aspects that Chikwava partially explores. In view of Chikwava's narrative, British institutions are indeed perceived as giving temporary reprieve to some Zimbabwean migrant labourers. How sustainable these sacrifices are, including whether they offer sustainable futures for the individuals, their families and Zimbabwe is subject for another research.

Chikwava exposes the differential treatment that perceived ZANU-PF and MDC supporters receive at visa applications and entry into some Western countries, a phenomenon prevalent to date. Raftopoulos (in Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009: 218) views the West's opposition to Zimbabwe's land reform programme as the cause of the fallout. Many aspiring emigrants exploit this window. The narrator-cum-protagonist boasts of his entry into London: "Me I tell them I have been harass by them boys in dark glasses because I am youth member of the opposition party" (p. 4).

The insecurities and violations accompanying lack of ownership of land are discussed earlier under the two initial narratives. Ironically, whilst British tramps like Jane and Dave are on social welfare, no such support exists for most blacks both in Britain and back home. The comparison is unfortunate in view of the vast differences that separate British and Zimbabwean economies by close to a century of black exclusion and exploitation, with Zimbabwean resources supporting the metropole. Worth noting is that most Zimbabweans' expectations concerning land reform are still to be met. Internal forced removals and emigration appear two sides of the same coin, fragmenting individuals, families and dismembering communities. Fragmentation further reinforces disruption of linkages with the land and its traditions, including cultural-spiritual identities, a deep concern for the narrator-cum-protagonist:

I wake up in the morning thinking of Mother. You die and your spirit goes into the wilderness. One year later, your family have to do *umbuyiso* ceremony to bring your spirit back home so it can leave with other ancestor spirits. ... Me I have to go back home and organise *umbuyiso* for she (p. 16).

Mungoshi (1972: 28) observes: "Nothing is certain to hold you together than the land and a home, a family". Absence of these fundamental institutions that bond individuals with the land explains Shingi's misfortunes. "Shingi is totem-less child" (p. 11), his father, a guerrilla during the war raped Shingi's mother "and no one knows what happened to him after the war." Absence of recognisable lineage renders Shingi vulnerable: "People say he have winds/[misfortune]" (p. 75). Spiritual connectedness influences purposefulness in life and participation from a recognisable family/cultural tree. These linkages with the land foster spiritual and psychological securities that nurture positive self-esteem. In this

regard, Mbiti's (1969: 3) observation that Africans are a notoriously religious people could be misleading. Religion is an ideology that people could choose to embrace or discard at will. Yet, land and Mother's *umbuyiso* that determines the course of events in the narrative is ingrained in the indigenous people's way of life, including how they view their fortunes. In the African sense, individuals are born into, nurtured by and most likely go through their entire lives drawing from and feeding into predetermined cultural values. These practices influence perceptions of individual identities, relationships, environment and spatial awareness. Understanding such cultural conceptions of land is important when designing conservation and development programmes for African communities if programmes are people-driven and future-oriented. This includes land redistribution.

The reconstructive approach that Chikwava uses in exploring post-2000 Zimbabwean land occupations and their aftermaths, including perceptual differences on land management, identity and African *unhu*/human worth, hints at balancing between celebration and critical self-introspection.

3.3.3 Crossing borders: Identity and appropriating space

Through the deliberate erasure of London and its replacement with Harare North, Chikwava brazenly inscribes black Zimbabwean identity on the landscape of England. Re-naming London after Zimbabwe's capital city of Harare also becomes a technical way of claiming political space and repatriation of economic returns to Zimbabwe. Zimbabweans' "grinding struggle for survival" (Crush, Tevera and Chikanda, 2010: 318) and remittances by emigrants necessitate linkages between the two lands. Zimbabwean economic hunters appropriate space for themselves and stamp their presence in Britain. Their huge numbers in London also transforms the city into another section of Harare. A similar situation has been created in South Africa resulting in Johannesburg being re-named Harare South by the narrator. Labour out-migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa is not a new phenomenon. The narrator's spatial conceptualisation psychologically obliterates geophysical boundaries of states, introducing contestations over land, belongingness and remittances to Zimbabwe from Britain and South Africa. In this regard, *Harare North* is deeply satirical in its exploration of the ensuing vicissitudes of

the land invasions and people's perceptions of belonging and land and identity thereafter. Harare's connection to the Queen's land dates back to the British Empire, technically ending in 1980 as "*Last Outpost of the British Empire*" (Baxter, 2010).

The flocking of Zimbabweans to Britain driven by the economic melt-down in Zimbabwe could also be reflective of the "supreme race" and "subject race" syndrome long engendered by colonial ideology (Samkange, 1982: 26). Having been to Britain, during both the colonial and the post-colonial periods, also remains a status symbol among the broad section of the Zimbabwean society. Manheru³⁵ (November 2013) rightly argues that "Zimbabwe's conquest was an idea, a value, an ideology, which is why long after ousting the white man, we still find ourselves shackled by white ways". This remains an essential part of the Zimbabwean reality, and failure to recognise this link would deny people part of a direct way of knowing and understanding their present reality. Na'im Akbar (in Mazama, 2003: 140) also acknowledges the effects of the synthesis of the homeland and the overseas African persons in "knowledge of the make-up of the human beings themselves". Naming, thus, becomes more political than referential. The colonial heritage for all Zimbabweans in affective terms can never be erased.

Further to that, wide electronic and print media coverage of President Robert Mugabe and the country makes the Zimbabwean presence and influence in the UK foreign policy hardly irrefutable. This includes the incessant bombardments about diamond and emerald mining in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Apart from pointing at the dismal performance of Zimbabwe's economy, the media attention that London continues to give to Zimbabwe could as well warrant London being re-named Harare North, or earning itself the status of one of Harare's northern suburbs. This collapses the distance between Zimbabwe and the former colonial mother country. "It is however much more than style that [Chikwava] is after. It is remapping of the present, the conceptual [re]claiming of land (and a *national* land and space) with which [Chikwava] is concerned about" (Gunner in Darian-Smith, Gunner and Nuttall, 1996: 122). It can also be argued that Chikwava's narrative is

³⁵ In one November 2013 *The Saturday Herald*, Manheru made an analysis of colonial intellectual enslavement that sees why some sections of the Zimbabwean society feel inadequate and failing to function until they receive approval from the British.

making an economic claim for the labour investment and taxes that these African natives have contributed into the British national economy. Because of this appropriation of space, *Harare North* becomes the first Zimbabwean novel that consistently uses a cryptic English idiolect by Zimbabwean immigrants, a situation that has been mainly peculiar to use of Creole in Caribbean literature. By using corrupted English forms to suit the communication needs of this black Zimbabwean narrator, Chikwava renders the book into the oeuvre of protest literature. The very opening sentence shocks any English speaker. It brazenly challenges usage of conventional English structures: “Never mind that he manage to keep me well fed for some time, but like many immigrant on whose face fate had drive one large peg and hang tall stories...” (p. 1).

The writer’s refusal to observe English grammatical rules and idiomatic forms, opting for the local flavour of one of the African indigenous languages is an act of fighting back. It amounts to the bold assertion of Zimbabwean national identity by some emigrants in Britain. From start to finish, the writer religiously keeps to this cryptic English form, except during instances where a white man speaks. This is part of the humour, yet Chikwava is raising pertinent issues of identity, language and belonging, issues that Ngugi has persistently argued about on the subject of Black Consciousness and Africans’ naivety of keeping their cultural memory in foreigners’ granaries/languages. (Ngugi, 2009).

Through the narrator, Chikwava uses sadistic humour to explore and inscribe identities of Zimbabweans who are struggling to survive on foreign soil in an era that is fraught with innumerable contradictions. For example, Mhiripiri/MHF who was the youth militia commander at the climax of the land invasions in Goromonzi, but now an economic refugee, works in an old people’s home - “one of them BBCs”. Ironically, the same MHF attacks the narrator-cum-protagonist’s attitude as naivety about patriotism: “Even today you still have milk coming out of your nose, young man. Zimbabwe was a state of mind, not a country” (p. 183). Such damning images reflect serious attitude problems that the nation has to deal with, including indigenous interests on land. That the former commander of the ZANU-PF youth militia spear-heading land repossessions conceives

Zimbabwe's existence as abstract and imaginary exposes some cracks that Zimbabweans should confront in the tumultuous post-2000 era. Zimbabweans need "ammunition for one big battle: the battle to decide where we here in Africa are going, and what kind of society we are building" (p'Bitek, 1986: vii). The view that Zimbabwe was a state of mind, not a country could reflect self-hatred, self-rejection and a burning desire to imitate Europe. Unfortunately, Zimbabwe's economic meltdown has forced thousands to leave home for economic greener pastures: "to try doing it your own way and risk finding small success, or do it in undignified poolful way and find big success?" (p. 65). Critiquing the devastating effects of psychological alienation on the victim's psyche, Mazama (2003: 13) observes that their condition of alienation is a result of the dehumanising effects of colonialism that culminate in the victims' tragic attempt to regain their humanity by aping European standards, which tears Africans from themselves (Fanon, 1967: 254). Deprived of land which is the basis of the creation of wealth the world over, Rhodes' (cited in Samkange, 1982: 31) blueprint remains ever present: "...it must be brought home to them that in future nine tenths of them, will have to spend their lives in daily labour".

A closer examination shows that continual bombardment of negativity and degraded condition of Zimbabweans at home and abroad culminates into a mal-formed self-consciousness and self-mortification that compound people's susceptibility to manipulation and exploitation. Commenting on the psychology, condition and impact of exploitation on its victims, Birt (in Gordon, 1997: 206) observes:

[Exploitation] robs people of their identity as surely as [it] robs [them] of the fruits of their labor. [Exploitation] imposes rigid, stultifying identities on its victims. Often it imposes a deformed consciousness on the oppressed which helps to reinforce the very system...which deforms them...All [exploitation] begets alienation and total [exploitation] begets total alienation.

For this reason, they cannot transform the way they see the world and therefore they cannot transform their society, leaving them perennially on the margins. The issue of identity, therefore, could be more complex than material outlook to include socio-intellectual and cultural persuasions. Our perceptions and definitions of success determine the value and dignity that we give ourselves. Thus, with these economic

refugees swallowed into the bowls of their country's former colonial masters, issues of personal African identity, patriotism and sense of belonging haunt their psyches, but not for the narrator.

Yet, it remains human nature to fall prey to the lure of the British pound in a fast-globalising materialistic world. People do not survive on ideas alone. Rhodes (in Thomas, 1996: 130) rightly argues: "What is the use of having ideas for the benefit of mankind if you haven't the money to carry them out?". The condition of desperation for material success turns some Zimbabwean emigrants into "lapsed Africans" (p. 5) who try extremely hard to become honorary whites because European standards are in vogue. For this reason, it would be imperative to inculcate a positive self-worth by encouraging Africans to be protagonists of their own transformation using their God-given natural resources.

In the narrative, Paul and Sekai's pretentiousness is a case in point. The shame of being associated with the failed economic emancipation at home after the post-2000 land redistribution exercise haunts them in their quest for fortune. They are lured to the deaths of their own souls by the unquenchable desire of wanting to belong and be acceptable in their new world community, but only from the perspective of their former colonisers. Sekai sits on the phone in their home for hours on end spreading rumours about the situation in Zimbabwe from information she obtains from the international media.

Her behaviour is reminiscent of the general views held by some Zimbabwean immigrants. Psychological violence is unmistakable, a condition that Fanon (1991: 315) regards as the most horrible crime "committed in the hearts of man". The Zimbabwean refugee is thus pathologically torn apart and alienated from his inner being and his country. Further, Fanon (1991: 39) observes:

Having judged, condemned, abandoned his cultural forms, his language, his food habits, his sexual behaviour, his way of sitting down, of resting, of laughing, of enjoying himself, the oppressed flings himself upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man.

These conditions cannot correlate with people's idea of independence, justifying why they apportion blame to the President for the economic downturn and its ripple effects on the marginalised majority. However, it can be argued that Zimbabwe's economic misfortunes date back to ESAP³⁶ in the late 1980s. Both internal and external forces have their fair share of blame for the continual impoverishment of the African population. The resultant uprooting and erasure of memory of space, history and culture, undermines the cohesion of the social fabric that home is supposed to offer. The violence of capitalism has no regard for the poor.

Although not as graphically depicted as the uprooting of slaves in Alex Hailey's *Roots*, nor the demeaning forced search for labour on the European farms by African families in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, denial of a sense of space and ownership of land undermines the dignity of the African. Laureta Ngcobo's novel, *And They Didn't Die*, similarly explores maladies emanating from land displacements of the South African natives. Essentially, without control of the productive land, these people are forced to abandon home in search of sustenance elsewhere. From the inception of the colonial capitalist cash economy on the African soil, migration, especially of the African male, appears a characteristic phenomenon.

Thus, for the native, because home is wretched and insecure, both spiritually and materially, it creates a sense of shame, embarrassment and deprivation. Like Dangarembga's *Tambudzai* critiqued earlier, home also becomes a symbol of the emasculation of the African native. Any sense of belonging is therefore greatly shaken. With this vulnerability, the native develops resentment for home, coming up with every legitimate explanation for not being emotionally attached to "home". Blacks are therefore denied their true identity through these movements, and "home" would thus end up as an idea in the imagination.

³⁶ Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP), were initiated and recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The World Bank for economic recovery in the late 1980s. Mlambo (1996: xi) explains that people came to sarcastically refer to ESAP to mean The Eternal Suffering of the African People.

Not only are the conceptions of self-identity and community identity violated through these displacements, but the social fabric is also fragmented in the process. The disintegration that ensues and the dehumanising effects psychically seem unquantifiable at any given historical moment. “What will happen to all them family graves in Mother’s village and why is Uncle doing nothing?” (p. 75). Moyana (2000, unpublished thesis) observes that colonial humiliation, land alienation, psychological violence, and the full story of the violence of dislocation have not been fully investigated and articulated. What writers offer now are counter-narratives that appear and sound racially-biased.

However, Chikwava’s hilarious sarcasm avoids direct attack at the British. The intra-racial approach allows the narrator to freely expose the naivety of the good African. The narrative lampoons the duplicity and violence of British systems against Zimbabweans at home and in the Diaspora. White farmers and European countries pretend to be sympathetic to African land displacement victims, yet they celebrate when the same Africans have been denied visas. Chikwava explores how the British High Commission in Harare would deny some people visas because of their political “incorrectness”. Only opposition political asylum seekers enjoy British sympathy. Using the same currency, the narrator milks sympathy of the British immigration officers at Gatwick International Airport to gain entry into Britain:

Me I tell them I have been harras by them boys in dark glasses because I am youth member of the opposition party. ...but if you don’t spin them smooth jazz numbers then immigration people is never going to give you chance to even sniff first step into Queen’s land (p. 4).

The tactic of divide and rule is reminiscent of colonial use of ethnicity to divide and control the black population and their resources. Chikwava’s narrator subverts the supremacist strategies that are designed to stultify African creativity and agency by mimicking the opposition that is deemed as politically correct. In an unstoppable effort to transform his undesirable material and economic situation, the narrator satirises the

officers' arrogance and self-delusion. Both at home and in Harare North, they are duped by self-proclaimed political asylum seekers.

In spite of the rancorous humour, these subtleties help Chikwava to weave and inscribe the identity of this "original African native" as that of one who can dance in the rain. What is created to be an insurmountable hurdle in his march to achieve his ambition gives this native the opportunity to be inventive and he laughs his way through it all. He has no regrets. Similarly, his guts at the end of the novel to abandon the wheelchair-bound and crippled Shingi who is now burdensome could be viewed as morally shocking:

He's back in our house. In wheelchair. He can't talk. I feed him because now he can't even move one finger. I take him to the toilet. Again. Again. And again. I wipe the comrade's bottom so many times, shove his body around and wash his soiled pants until this turn into strong arguments for burning of food. ...But I can't stop feeding him...(p. 195)

It is not reasonably practicable that as an unemployed illegal immigrant the narrator has the means to continue sustaining Shingi and himself. The narrator is clear in his focus: "I have to wash my hands of Shingi now" (p. 204). "I have make final decision now – Shingi none of my business no more" (p. 205). Though he has a sense of guilt, it is systems and structures that should change to assume responsibility for the likes of Shingi. He too should survive. The narrator's situation remains a Sisyphean struggle: an illegal immigrant, no unemployment social benefits like fellow tramp-mates Dave and Jenny who can do their "sums right when they get paid social benefit and make sure things balance" (p. 196), he is burdened with the crippled Shingi.

Chikwava extols the survival instinct above morality. The narrator is happy that Shingi's asylum application has just been recently approved by immigration. "His passport and National Insurance number come in handy now. His mobile phone too" (p. 2). Rather than focus on the narrator's insensitivity, criticism should compel systems to transform rather than destroy individuals. The narrator celebrates that he can now fight and earn the money that he needs before going back to Zimbabwe for Mother's *Umbuyiso*. The narrator's insensitivity deflects attention away from the real issues – exclusion of the

poor from the land and mainstream economy whose backlash has engendered the dog-eat-dog philosophy that see Zimbabweans flocking to the Diaspora, further fragmenting relationships and society. The narrator's story removes all pretentiousness and shocks readers into reflecting and introspecting deeper in their critiquing of Zimbabwean land experiences. The trauma of the land invasions has not been fully articulated in their historical context. The psychological violence of land and cultural alienation is also still to be fully articulated. The narrator is able to articulate these multiple forms of violence in a hilarious way. This brings healing to a tortured psyche. People have often wondered how Zimbabweans have survived unimaginable ordeals of the post-2000 period. This narrative is an example of how the ability to stand back, look at one's plight from a distance and laugh at its grimness can bring about healing. The other sad reality, though, is that such an approach could detract people from confronting very serious challenges in their lives by adopting a fatalistic attitude to life.

3.3.4 Commissions and omissions

In exploring the vicissitudes of land occupations, Chikwava reveals that not all exploitation is a result of external machinations to dehumanise indigenous Zimbabweans. Corruption, avarice, manipulation and self-destructive strategies used by Zimbabweans against each other should not be ignored. A new culture of self-enrichment at the expense of fellow victims is evident throughout the story. Leaders championing land occupations abuse the youth militia who emerge without any land themselves. After doing the dirty work as green bombers, hounding the commercial farmers and their labour off the land, they are sidelined and persecuted for inducing violence.

Comrade Mhiripiri, commander of the green bombers/youth militia/boys of the jackal breed, also frightens the narrator into flying to the UK to raise US\$4000.00, purportedly to protect him from the police. Comrade Mhiripiri corruptly exploits loopholes in the security sector and the chaotic land redistribution process, intimidating vulnerable sons and daughters of the soil to enrich himself (p. 178-185). Aleck similarly extorts 35 pounds weekly rentals per room in an apartment that he is caretaking for Indian emigrants. The narrator extorts money from Sekai through blackmailing her for marital

misdemeanours. Corruption, then, appears an endemic characteristic that Zimbabweans should address when dealing with issues of land and identity in the Zimbabwean post-2000 dispensation.

To a critical reader, the writer thus indirectly affords the readers an opportunity to reflect on, and take stock of the post-2000 land experiences, the gains and losses at home and beyond. More importantly, emigrant Zimbabweans are socio-culturally known to be hunting in foreign lands, *vari musango* in the Shona language. Similarly, granting them hunting concessions in foreign lands, like Harare North, would not grant them natural rights enjoyed by indigenous citizens. Further, hunters should remain mindful of their socio-cultural duties and responsibilities back home. The mistaken attitude of invading Harare North in an avalanche, hoping to build permanent booths like Jesus Christ's disciples at the Mount of Transfiguration, is a misleading and dangerous thought. It would culminate in contradictions and contestations like those characterising post-2000 Zimbabwean struggles for spatial control between indigenous landowners and white farmers. Whilst hunting should be celebrated, the glamour and glitter of other people's economies should not delude Zimbabweans into thinking that foreign citizenship translates into naturalisation. They will always be treated as foreigners in those lands. This explains why they are victims of xenophobia. Further, the misleading notion and expectation that somebody should rebuild the "ruins" for them to come and enjoy during their retirement bespeaks of negligence.

In addition, that Harare North is metaphorically a jungle implies absence of socio-cultural safety networks, hence the prevalence of psycho-intellectual violence and their dog-eat-dog existence. The lineage links that Mai Musindo who "carry the spirit world with she" (p. 44), the decorum that Farayi and Shingi show to her because "she is old spirit; she presence make everyone stand still and quiet and wait for she to talk" (p. 46); and insistence on allegiance to lineage identities – "your people – where they hail from?" (p. 46) could probably be a restraint in closely-knit communities in the villages back home unlike elsewhere. It should then be every Zimbabwean's mandate to have intense soul-searching and focus on the values and country that post-2000 Zimbabweans should

defend. Dignified livelihoods are intertwined with different forms of securities, including African spirituality whose inviolable rootedness in land explains some concerns around individual, ethnic and national identities in post-independence Zimbabwe. Chikwava's inexhaustible exploration catapults this research to trajectories and conceptualisations of land and identity in selected short story collections that follow.

3.4 Conclusion

The Book of Not (2006), *The Uncertainty of Hope* (2006) and *Harare North* (2009) that constitute the major focus of this chapter, offer alternative readings to land and identity from an Afrocentric perspective. In line with the Afrocentric/African-centred frameworks, their introspective approach to the post-2000 land complexities, demonstrates the need to approach the Zimbabwean land question historically in a non-partisan manner. Partisanship to issues as complex as the land question in the post-independence phase could result in clouding aspects that should be urgently addressed for society's greater good. It is mind-boggling that post-independence land policies acknowledge and uphold legal land rights for minority settlers, yet no such rights are extended to indigenous peoples' claims to "ancestral land". The narratives' exploration of African conceptions and expectations concerning land redistribution in the post-2000 period and preferred solutions to land inequities should therefore not be taken lightly. Their trajectories partially constitute African knowledge construction about African lived land and identity experiences that the world should recognise. From an Afrocentric perspective, they provide the perceived missing link in the narration of nation and land characterising Zimbabweans' post-2000 land experiences. Writing becomes "a symbolic act ... a force field where the people's identities are either totally distorted by dominant forces or a cultural space where it is possible to recuperate an unproblematic African identity (Vambe in Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 100). The manner by which these novels explore land and identity makes the literature relevant to the Zimbabwean society for which it is intended. All three texts concur that the sluggishness in addressing the land question after independence accounts for the current instability. The writers concur that displacement from the land interferes with spiritual, material and ecological issues from an African perspective, aspects that both colonial and post-independence administrations

appear unconcerned about. Land as the hallmark of African existence, clearly defines people's unities, securities, conflicts and tensions characterising post-2000 Zimbabwe. The writers' trajectories collectively support the view that a people who disrespect their beginnings expose themselves to annihilation. This could partly explain the writers' sensitivity to the African popular struggle for land restitution as indispensable to African cultural heritage and spiritual identity, particularly in the post-independence phase.

The chapter and texts urge Zimbabweans to transcend race and self-aggrandisement for transformative and large-scale land redistribution to be achieved. It urges readers and critics alike to introspect on the values and nature of society that Zimbabweans should strive towards concerning accessibility of land, guided by the need to promote sustainable livelihoods for all Zimbabweans. The latter takes the discussion to Chapter Four, examining white-authored narratives' depictions of land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER FOUR

ZIMBABWEAN WHITE-AUTHORED FICTIONAL DEPICTIONS OF ZIMBABWE'S POST-INDEPENDENCE FARM FRONTIER

But contradictions are the very stuff of life. If there had been a little dash of contradiction among the Gadarene swine some of them might have been saved from drowning. Contradictions if well understood and managed can spark off fires of invention (Achebe, 1989: 100).

4.0 Introduction

This chapter makes an African-centred analysis of images of land and identity in Eric Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006), John Eppel's *Absent: The English Teacher* (2009), henceforth *Absent*, and *Case Closed: A Detective Story Set In Zimbabwe* (2004), henceforth *Case Closed*. The success with which these texts explicate land and its centrality in securing people's multiple livelihood needs partially informs the analysis. As observed earlier in the thesis, land in Zimbabwe remains explosive and "inescapable", as Vera (1994: 33) puts it, "The land defines our unities". Land in the African worldview is the hallmark of existence.

Land/*ivhu* in Shona can be used interchangeably with soil. In Shona *ivhu* is *musana* or backbone that carries all life. Florence Stratton (1986: 12) sums up this African understanding thus: "Land is a powerful deity in its own right, the creator of life and owner of everything that resides on its surface". This probably explains why Africans talk about land in the collective, with people themselves as *vana vevhu* (children of the soil). Rituals of birth, initiation, marriage and death, among other traditional ceremonies, bond Africans with their land and the geophysical and spiritual environments trans-generationally. To this end, land is the "metaphor of traditional values in Africa" (Zimunya, 1982: 70), making it very serious business. Therefore, from an African worldview, land goes beyond its economic value to issues of identity and human worth.

Ivhu or land belongs to God/Musikavanhu³⁷. Respective current users are therefore culturally viewed as caretakers. It is worth noting that colonial land displacements and dispossessions entailed displacing Africans from environments where they knew how best to survive. This metaphysical principle of land in the African worldview is important in the reading of land and identity within the current chapter's selected fictional narratives. Also, Africans' concern with self-preservation and self-definition would not emerge in a historical and cultural vacuum. The explosive subject of land in the post-2000 era thus read and critiqued, could influence attitude renewal. For example, land occupations that have been canonised as *jambanja* in popular Zimbabwean discourses and in some fictional narratives including *Jambanja* (2006), critique Zimbabwean lived realities. How the writers depict identity within the context of the intricacies of *jambanjas*' grim fate of land dispossession on one hand, and the prospects of land repossessions through land redistribution on the other, becomes critical in this chapter. These inextricably intertwined processes impact directly on people's livelihoods and dignity. The chapter therefore examines the writers' portrayal of land redistribution, including their perceptions of African agency in repossessing lost lands. These conceptions are critical towards Zimbabweans' self-regeneration and social transformation.

4.0.1 Locating the texts and respective writers' voices

It is undeniable that people are socialised into societies and communities whose life's outlook ultimately shapes their attitudes and choices, including how they frame experiences. Writers in this chapter are no exception. No human being can exist and belong everywhere. Moulded by, and benefitting from a system entrenched in colonial racialisation of land, it would be critical to establish white writers' language, including their concerns. The latter subtly project the values that they exalt. How these values promote sustainable livelihoods and sustainable futures for all Zimbabweans is worth noting. This includes ascertaining whether writers go beyond dramatisations of land appropriation, conflicts and mere recovery of the land, to propound transformative

³⁷ Musikavanhu is another term for Musiki/Creator. Chapter Two talks about Musikavanhu as the owner of the land and the skies among the Shona of North Eastern Zimbabwe.

systems that genuinely respect common humanity and human dignity. This is what wisdom means in the African worldview. From an Afrocentric view, “philosophy [is] a historically circumscribed quest for wisdom that puts new interpretations of the world based on past traditions in order to promote existential sustenance and political relevance” (Muhwati, 2010: 153). The motivation is quest for sustainable human and social development. The critique, thus, cannot avoid history to elucidate history. It is mindful of the politics of survival undergirding writers’ choice of images, especially depictions of the tumultuous Zimbabwean post-2000 land experiences. Land-cum-identity motifs then, “cannot effectively survive critical approaches that stress authorial depersonalisation and ...unimportance of racial history, racial community, and racial traditions” (Barksdale in Hudson-Weems, 2007: 199) without distorting identities.

Images are linguistic signposts of ingrained value-definitions. They are of necessity “linked to a people’s definition of themselves [and others] ... in time and space” (Ani, 1994 261). Images project specific desires and goals. Recurrent images and themes become signposts that help determine writers’ attitudes and cultural locations, including how intended readers should view land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

This chapter’s white-authored narratives is critical for comparative analysis of land and identity so that a synergy of perspectives can inform the process of arriving at an amicable solution to the land challenges as part of social reconstruction and enhancement of human worth across the racial divide. This is notwithstanding the fact that white farmers continued legally owning most of Zimbabwe’s productive land after independence. Pilosof (2012: 3) observes: “there has been a remarkable lack of critical engagement with the ‘voices’ of white farmers, and how they have framed the events that have transpired”. Analysing these fictional narratives’ depictions would be one way of engaging white farmers on the land issue, with a view to promote both sustainable human and social development in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Armah (1973: 204) observes:

What are we if we see nothing beyond the present, hear nothing from the ages of our flowing, and in all our existence can utter no necessary preparation of the future way?

It therefore remains to be seen to what extent these artists fulfill the role of being “the chroniclers of a people’s history, the voice of a people’s conscience, the stimulator of ideas and activity” (Chinyowa, 1994: 10). This is how communities and societies transform, regenerate and eventually grow:

In times of despair, the artist will fuse images of hope. In times of plenty and over-abundance, the artist will always portray the folly of over-eating at the expense of cultivation of other values (Hove, *Social Change Development: Number 26*: 3).

4.1 *Jambanja* (2006)

This title is an African word that Harrison appropriates, using it to give an autobiographical treatise of the violent post-2000 land occupations whereby white farmers were forcibly moved off what they had come to regard as their land. *Jambanja* as concept and practice gets closer attention later.

4.1.1 Historical background to Harrison’s *Jambanja*

Critics have interpreted the post-2000 land occupations in various ways. However, as already indicated, it cannot be disputed that there was general and genuine discontent by landless Africans about the slow pace of land reform since independence. It should also be noted that by 2000, Zimbabwe’s economy was on a downturn as evidenced by the escalating cost of living, joblessness and both human and capital flight. Politically, a new opposition party, which posed a serious challenge to the ruling party, had come into being. There was therefore pressure on the government to address the land issue if it were to bring its wartime promises to fruition and also retain the confidence of the electorate. However, the constraints imposed by the Lancaster House Agreement meant that the government could not meaningfully redress these colonial land imbalances by returning African land that was forcefully taken by white settlers. To make matters worse, most of those who were resettled after independence were subsisting on communal lands that were already overused and overcrowded (Gambahaya, 1998: 25). Faced with this dilemma, the government was not in a position to stop the war veterans-led land invasions, especially in view of the fact that the minority white farmers, who at

independence comprised only 3% of Zimbabwe's population (MacGarry, 1996: 6), owned most of the productive land. It is unfortunate that more than twenty years after independence, the minority white farmers still failed to appreciate the need to redistribute wealth, as seen from the fact that they stood firmly against the large-scale redistribution of resources, in this case, land. Some critics have suggested that the fact that land reform had not been carried out on a significant scale twenty years after a black government had come to power is an indicator of lack of political will (Sadomba, 2011: 227-228) and proper planning on its part. Some have even gone so far as to question the degree of government's commitment to land reform. Whatever the case may be, the situation as it prevailed was untenable, given that land remains a major resource of empowering the majority in a way that restores and promotes their self-worth and identity. From an African-centred perspective, land is the hallmark of existence. This is the reality against which Harrison writes the novel, *Jambanja*.

4.1.2 A synopsis

Jambanja autobiographically narrates Eric Harrison's resistance to eviction from Maioio Estate/(Maioio) in the post-2000 Zimbabwean land redistribution programme: "the storyteller is part of it too" (p. 9). Harrison/Harry's reminisces violent dispossession of Maioio by African invaders who appear extremely insensitive to his life-time investment and ownership of the land. Harry goes to great lengths to resist eviction, using his Rhodesian heritage and title deeds to the land. He ultimately loses Maioio to new black owners who are said to have strong links with the government in Harare. His loss of Maioio only comes to pass after an excruciating struggle involving the courts in Chiredzi. He argues that his claim to his Rhodesian heritage was compromised by the Lancaster House Agreement's 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' clause on land.

When Harry loses his farm, the workers have to return to their original parched rural homelands while Harry and his wife, Joan, relocate to their Harare home. Their children go overseas. By the time that Harry leaves Maioio, there is every indication of infrastructural dilapidation. The new, inexperienced and unprofessional owners fail to manage the Estate whose infrastructure and equipment Harry had wilfully left to wind

down in protest against the land redistribution exercise. The narrative draws attention to the plight of some of Harry's former labourers who now work for the new settlers, but who are not keen to look for employment elsewhere. Harry's vow to mobilise other white commercial farmers and re-strategise to repossess their lost lands, wealth and labourers concludes the story.

4.1.3 Harrison's perception of *jambanja*

In the narrative, Harrison uses the term *jambanja* to denote the violence and the often chaotic manner that accompanied the war veterans-led land occupations of the post-2000 era. The narrator views the land issue from the perspective of white farmers who were forcibly removed from their farms. The novel therefore offers an important and interesting dimension to the land reform programme.

Harrison's *Jambanja* is double-edged. It protests against land redistribution, defending Rhodesian ownership and control of land, exposing the soft underbelly of Rhodesian ideologies about Zimbabwean land. Harry dwells on the spontaneity, chaotic and local nature of land occupations that receive inconsistent reactions from government and the ruling elite. Harrison's self-exculpating and amnesiac historical approach misrepresents African lived land experiences. It legitimates his possession of land and brigandage of the African land-occupiers. He deploys images that paint post-2000 land-occupiers as dumb and ignorant, without a culture: "gutless bastards" (p. 134), "a bunch of hoodlums" (p. 132), and "ZANU-PF cannon fodder" (p. 148). In his view, "every black Zimbabwean was on a never-ending quest for mediocrity...a cultural handicap of immeasurable severity...might help explain how whole races have managed to remain backward despite contact with more advanced societies" (p. 103). Further, "[T]he local population lived a simple and arguably happy life, oblivious to the ways of the world" (p. 9). Harry's sentiments paint black Zimbabweans as incapable of conceptualising issues, also depicting them as undeserving of the land. This is despite white farmers continuing to occupy prime land, a lot of it "unutilised or underutilised, held by absentee landlords or just left derelict for speculative purposes" (Utete Commission cited in Hanlon, 2013: 41). In keeping the distinction between black and white, Harrison fails to appreciate both the

humanity and actions of his labourers in the context of the reality of their existence as a disenfranchised demographic group with a limited spectrum of choices at its disposal.

Harrison's canonisation of land redistribution as "nonsense" (p. 250) and "another statistic of Africa's woeful human rights and self-management inability" (p. 251), does not come as a surprise from one benefitting from racially-entrenched structures and systems privileging whites. In his view, removal of whites from the land is retrogression into the abyss of anarchy and disregard of human rights. The undercurrent may be interpreted as "human rights" means whites' rights, the process having been occasioned by the "short-sighted decisions made at [the 1979 Lancaster House Conference [that] is testimony to the state of the country today" (p. 67). The jargon is infused with hostility, painting land-occupiers as adversaries.

Harrison's conceptions of human rights raise serious questions to readers desiring a balanced representation of Zimbabwe's land story. He overlooks the reasons and circumstances behind the Lancaster House Agreement, his labourers' presence at Maioio, including their under-remuneration and impoverishment. That his concern about human rights and dignity in terms of land ownership totally excludes the rights and dignity of the indigenous population is problematic. Readers committed to pursuing a balanced projection of the land question in Zimbabwe are concerned by Harry's silence on wholesale stripping of the indigenous people of their title over the land by successive colonial governments through The Land Apportionment Act (1930), The Land Husbandry Act (1951) and The Land Tenure Act (1968) among other policies, transposed onto post-independence Zimbabwe through the 1980 Lancaster House Constitution's 'willing seller, willing-buyer clause'. His disregard for the need to redress past imbalances as far as land tenure is concerned appears to buttress differential black and white human worth and human rights. Harry distances himself from the millions of Zimbabweans whose experiences of hardships and social injustice can be partially traced to land systems he benefits from.

Jambanja has been popularly adopted across the racial divide to define Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform process. Scoones et al (2010: 190) submit: "*Jambanja* literally means violence or angry argument, but the term has been used in many different ways to refer to the farm invasions..." Harrison conceptualises *jambanja* as "this chaotic process" (p. 119), resonating with Matondi's (2012: xi) "mayhem", Pilosof's (2012: 44) "state sponsored lawlessness", corroborated by Alexander's (2006: 193-194) (2006: 193-194) description of the process as "a political practice that celebrated lawlessness". *Jambanja* as concept and practice reflects the complexity of the history of land ownership in Zimbabwe. However, contemporary narratives ignore colonial settlers' *jambanjas* against original inhabitants. To milk public sympathy for whites' forced removals from the farms they occupied, Harrison uses images of "mob", "screaming", and "hammering", calculated to chime in closely with the trajectory of the white farmers' "unceremonious boot[ing] off the land". The crafting paints Harry a helpless victim struggling to defend order and civilisation under threat from hordes of marauding Africans. Such a trajectory gives moral legitimacy and legal sanction against his loss of Maioio Estate to new black owners. Pilosof (2012: 150) argues: "these works have become agents in the identity politics of white farmers ... and their understanding ... of their place in independent Zimbabwe".

Outside its etymological context, Harrison's *jambanja* paints infantile thinking about land redistribution, subtly reinforcing debilitating effects of a process that has not been thought through, and also without historical basis. From the viewpoint of the landless/land-starved Africans, economic benefits as well as spirituality that is pivotal to African existence makes land a sacred resource to them. Colonial forcible removals of Africans from their land entailed disconnection from their identities, including environments in which they knew how best to survive. Harrison's depersonalised version of land occupations is far removed from these cultural underpinnings of land in the African worldview. Most vulnerable groups consciously participated in the post-2000 land occupations with a view to secure themselves environmentally, materially and psycho-spiritually.

This, however, would not discount the view that ZANU-PF found it politically expedient to canonise *jambanja* as The Third Chimurenga “to secure its power base” (Bull-Christiansen, 2004: 55). Yet, from the perspective of the landless majority, *jambanja* is of necessity linked to their struggles for land restitution as part of re-asserting their dignity that is rooted in the land, the hallmark of African existence. Sacco (in Moyo, Hellicker and Murisa, 2008: 346) argues:

Because land ownership is still based on racial grounds or political affiliation, discrimination continues in the access and ownership of land ... racial acquisition of land before 1980 constituted a violation of the rights of indigenous communities, and this violation has still to an extent not been remedied.

From the marginalised majority’s view, *jambanja* is a practical intervention against exclusionary land distribution. Commenting on the farm invasions, Sadomba (2011: 143) submits: “The occupiers selected particularly those songs whose themes were land and courage, and connected the occupation with the liberation struggle”. Unwittingly, Harrison situates the violent land occupations within the “unfinished business” (Hammer and Raftopoulos, 2003) of Zimbabwe’s armed liberation struggle. He acknowledges the continued existence of land injustices in post-2000 Zimbabwe:

Can I really blame the individual new intruders? What would I have done if I’d been born black? ... After a long war against white rule and the land he possessed, the white man still dominated the land, the mining and the wealth (p. 131).

Harrison unwittingly projects landless Africans as people who have become disillusioned and desperate about their condition of landlessness. This is a serious indictment on the ZANU-PF government that had failed to redistribute wealth more equitably, and in particular to carry out its war-time promises to return land to the black majority residing in overcrowded communal areas. The writer’s argument that “he could not afford to let the enemy [or African invaders] get his radio and compromise the whole Lowveld farmer’s network” (p. 166), including his insistence: “what is mine is mine” (p. 184), shows an uncompromising attitude that narrowly confines the land debate to defending Rhodesian interests that exclude Africans. Harrison does not appreciate that wealth, in

the form of land, needed to be redistributed to correct colonial injustices and restore dignity, self-confidence and human worth to the disenfranchised Zimbabwean majority. Viewed from this perspective, *jambanja* was necessitated by African poverty. This is not to say that all the tactics employed are morally admissible. In some cases, perhaps even the motives of *jambanja*, may not have been altogether noble. However, to its beneficiaries, that is, the landless and in some cases the homeless, *jambanja* has become a quest for reparations and social justice against the backdrop of historical disenfranchisement. To some, *jambanja* has come to denote the indigenous population's struggle to reclaim, recover and repossess 'lost lands' (Alexander, 2006). In this regard, *jambanja* is therefore a reconstruction process central to restoring mutilated African identities, dignity and self-worth. Viewed from the above perspective, *jambanja* is therefore an ethical and cultural issue. This conception is not concomitant with that of Harrison as noted earlier.

Fanon (1967: 101) rightly observes that "the mass of the country people have never ceased to think of the problem of their liberation except ... in terms of taking back the land from the foreigners", an aspect popularised to mobilise the masses and galvanise support for the 1970s armed liberation struggle and the 2000s land occupations (Lazarus, 2008). That political legitimating was most likely face-saving by a majority-elected government, particularly in light of the marginalised majority's contributions for a successful armed liberation struggle, would be undeniable (Sadomba, 2011). Lazarus (2008: 104) argues that what Zimbabweans need now are "objective and constructive ideas that could help them move forward". The writer's comments that "there is really no shortage of land ... it is the system that is wrong" (p. 185), shows insensitivity to a genuine plight shared by the majority of the country's population. Cumulatively, Harrison's stance unveils the masked self-seeking motivation behind his fictional creativity.

However, in view of the currency of colonial conquest and Rhodesian privileged heritage, it is not easy for Africans to reclaim their land using *jambanja* as reconstruction. Harrison's conception of *jambanja* would thus come as no surprise. *Jambanja* draws

from the African understanding of life itself as a struggle in which hardships should be faced and resolved as shown in African folklore. In Shona philosophy: *Hazvifambi zvakanaka, asi, ndiwo mafambiro azvo* – life is full of contradictions. Such contradictions as those characterising post-2000 land redistribution constitute the wheels of history, a point that Harrison misses.

4.1.4 Depicting post-2000 land experiences for a Rhodesian audience

Because of its political and historical background, land necessarily conflates into a racial issue as well, explaining why Harrison depicts the invasion of Maioio Estate from the perspective of one marooned, at the mercy of “extremely evil people” (p. 234) — “the insurgents” (p. 93); “the enemy camp” (p. 159) — the war of liberation replaying itself. Reinvigorating Rhodesian bush war trajectories of a white population fighting against this invisible enemy “for the preservation of *their beloved country*... (p. 70) projects a racially exclusive and protectionist attitude concerning land ownership characterising Zimbabwe's history. Harry's deliberate collapsing of the 1970s Rhodesian bush war against African “insurgents” and *jambanja*/land-occupations shows apparent tangential views between Rhodesians and Africans over land ownership. Harry's war language makes it each generation's responsibility to carry forward the struggles for land and to safeguard it as an inviolable heritage. *Yet*, the country should not remain locked in a cycle of threats and violence, especially over land. If Harry is the synecdoche of the whites, Africans are “the mob” (p. 139), “these pathetic hoodlums” (p. 191) and a “motley gang”, images reinforcing the dehumanisation that land recovery seeks to remedy. Sadly, the savage and infantile imagery perpetuates the beastly relationship between black and white, undermining and threatening possibilities of dialogue.

Saunders (p. 6-7) supports Harrison's view that the land redistribution process is a “scary threat by a disorderly rabble [...]”. The agony of the long process of unjust eviction from his farm, a farm lovingly crafted from raw untamed bush”. Emphasis on “unjust eviction” by a “disorderly rabble” after crafting “raw untamed bush”, receives corroboration from Toowoomba (in Harrison, 2006: 8). He views land redistribution as “the result of naked megalomania”. Such depictions ignore the multiple motivations behind Zimbabwean land

occupations (Scoones et al 2010: 52). The images crystallise contempt for both the land reform process and the depersonalised African characters. The images highlight white settlers as rational and enterprising grand organisers, whilst Africans are indolent and irrational. “The configuration of interests is complex and contradictory (Ibid: 236). Subtly, images deployed portray the whites’ determined will to dominate. Losing the land would entail losing power, wealth and control (Palmer, 1977) over the country, including people and its resources. Harry paints the impression that without white presence, the country would degenerate into chaos, the currency used to justify continued monopoly and rationale for not relinquishing the land. Yet, in reality it is their economic interests that matter. Ani (1994: 255) argues:

They do not recognise the order that they find in nature and in other cultures, and so they impose their own wherever they go. ... For Europeans there are no lands that belong to others. All land and space (air and water) belong to them. And as they bring ‘order’, they bring ‘peace’.

Harrison’s insistence that the country would collapse without white land/resources management: “It’s back to old Africa!” (p. 191) reinforces his conviction that “they represent the epitome of value on the scale of ‘progress’” (Ani, 1994: 246), with “old Africa” implying chaos and human retrogression. Harrison bemoans: “[W]e honkies are our own worst enemies! ... Why don’t we just leave them ... they’re the ones that started the nonsense. Let the bastards sink” (p. 250). Inferences to plunging into darkness at the white man’s departure (p. 124) reinforce Fanon’s (1967: 40) observations about colonialists’ machinations to deflate African anti-colonial struggles, particularly on issues of repossessing their land. Chennells (Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 136) surmises this as “a triumphant Rhodesian ordering of black disorder”. For Harry, “The White man’s burden”³⁸ remains as alive as it had been from the inception of colonial settlements in 1890: “If we leave, all is lost, and the country will go back to the middle ages” (p. 191). Stripped to its core, the psychological blackmail sounds tailored to discourage efforts and

³⁸ Harrison’s sentiments and logic resonates with Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden” that is often cited as the poem of the Empire. It valorises British civilising mission in the colonies and justifies subjugation of native inhabitants of the colonies. Similarly, in white farmers’ view, black Zimbabweans are ruined without the illumination that comes with white commercial farmers’ domination of the land and its peoples.

support for land redistribution that ironically marks tangible social reconstruction. The ultimate picture to a critical reader resonates with what Spivak perceives as “a kind of ‘conscientious arrogance’” (Mustafa, 2009: 392) of the white commercial farmers. This explains widespread international support Harry receives during *jambanja* (p. 251), unlike his vulnerable labourers who remain part of the chattel he lost (p. 243). The status quo remains to date. Because Africans are viewed as “bastards”, they have no right to land. Images reinforce human weight premised on race.

“Whether or not the land should have been colonised in the first place might be an interesting debating point” (Robertson, in Harrison, 2006: 265). In Rhodesians’ view, “claims that property is being taken back are dishonest and unjust” (Ibid: 264-265). The “chaotic process” (p. 119), perceived as a “destructive process of asset stripping, which served only to enrich a small number of well-connected ruling party supporters”, “declaring null and void the title deeds to land” (Ibid: 266-267), solicits a closer interrogation of land redistribution. The foreign-thrust legalism continues disregarding indigenous moral ethos of *humwe*/common humanity regarding equitable redistribution of resources to meet basic human survival needs. Harry misses this humanising approach as opposed to his money-centred assessment that dehumanises people. Land as an index of identity, among other primary concerns, therefore justifies why self-naming and self-defining are important in explicating experiences and phenomena as complex as the Zimbabwean post-2000 land occupations. Hudson-Weems (2007: 306) summarises:

[I]n the midst of this legacy of continued European domination through improper identification, African[a] people must actively reclaim their identity, beginning with self-naming and self-defining.

Harrison refuses to conceptualise land redistribution outside the confines of mayhem and terror. This speaks directly to the politics of naming and discourse manipulation. Harrison consciously adopts such trajectories in order to influence inter-racial relations and transactions with other cultures and histories of the world. This explains why Bennett (cited in Hudson-Weems, 2004: 2) places emphasis on the fact that [n]aming is too critical an act to be left in the hands of the dominant group at this stage in our history.

Harry admires the Rhodesians for their commitment to kill and sabotage (p. 206; p. 250) for their cause. They celebrate that “the new settlers have neither Water nor Cane Agreements” (p. 206), so they won’t be able to make money from the sugarcane millers. To the extent that land redistribution has hampered his progress and economic well-being, Harry remains unperturbed by the inhumanity of poverty characterising his workers’ livelihoods. He catalogues images of lack of sophistication among the adherents of land reform and gives extensive space to his forced illegal dispossession of Maioio Estate as a strategy to torpedo land reform.

4.1.5 African labourers and *Jambanja*

Ironically, whilst CFU and JAG tenaciously fight government to defend white farmers’ land interests, no one appears to stand up for the farm labour (p. 253) and the Communal Lands (TTLs) (p. 254), which are all creations of the colonial system (Ranger, 1985; Thomas, 1996). Piecemeal approaches to land redistribution, as admitted earlier, could remain seedbed to future instability. One of the unforeseen and forgotten casualties of the land reform programme were the farm-workers, who at times found themselves caught up in the violence and uncertainty that characterised the process. They often found themselves at the mercy of the white farmers on one hand, and the occupiers on the other, with some finding themselves with literally nowhere to go after the eviction of their masters from the farms (Barclay, 2010: 151). There was no guarantee that their labour would be needed or afforded by the land-occupiers or the new owners (Scoones et al 2010: 130-142). Harry depicts their vulnerable condition. Ironically, despite his claims of advocacy, he feels victorious at denying Lillian a CV, his housemaid for 20 years - painting it as her “day of judgement” (p. 242). His lack of empathy for the marginalised labour that had served and serviced Maioio for years to the success he defends shows the real Harry.

Robertson (Harrison, 2006: 268) similarly views hardships at the heels of land reform as “self-inflicted penury” for Africans’ removal of white commercial farmers from the land. Apart from typifying the relationships across race boundaries, his attitude typifies the relationship between the farm-worker and the colonial farm-owner. This unfortunately

supports the view that for white farmers bent on defending white interests, “[t]he lives of black people ... mean very little ... beyond their utility, as cheap labour” (Ephraim, 2003: 77), which is an “affront[...] to their dignity as human beings” (Gilly, in Fanon, 1989: 5). Chennells (in Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 138) argues that “[b]ehind historic identity, lurks another ‘self’ whose psychic structures and states reveal themselves symbolically through language.” Harry’s language and attitude perpetuate the horse-rider relationship about land and black labour. His blindness to having been a beneficiary of colonial land policies in pre-and post-independent Zimbabwe diminishes his advocacy role as a fighter for justice and human rights. His view of racial victimisation is “an apology on behalf of the colonial settlers who committed the crime of robbing traditional African communities of their livelihoods” (Gambahaya and Muhwati, 2010: 333). His disposition stands in contradistinction to the African philosophy of *Ubuntu/Humwe*. Yet, in recognising national interest for stability and peaceful co-existence, Inspector Shiri of Chiredzi reminds Harry that some white farmers are co-operating and helping their new partners on the land (p. 184). Such off-limelight alternatives are noted in Chapter Three.

His contempt of the 1982 government directive to have the farm-labourer wages to be more than doubled as an “unplanned expense” (p. 96), and “an indication of rocky times ahead” (p. 96) shows Harry’s disinclination to acknowledge the humanity of his workers. He also admits to getting the best out of “the gang” using trickery (p. 109). These deep-seated problems account for betrayal by some of his workers at the height of the invasions. Harry’s dehumanisation of labourers makes him exclude their testimony and views about the land, projecting his views as the only accurate record. Because of this, distortions and misrepresentations proliferate. As noted elsewhere, Lillian and others took advantage of the land occupations as any marginalised demographic group would.

Harry’s judgement of his labourers’ reality is what he projects as the African reality, making his version “more reliable than direct experience...superior to people’s own judgements about their world” (Mahoso, 2008: 167 citing Slouka, 1995: 1-3) This approach explains why Harry fails to understand either Andrea’s (“a quiet hard-working gardener who never said boo to a goose” – (p. 97) activism or Lillian’s ardent ZANU-PF

activism and dramatic alliance with the land invaders (p. 150-152). Odora Hoppers (2006: 47) rightly observes that the oppressed “not only loses his or her life space, but also his or her word. It is this fact that makes the struggle for reconstitution of the self in the African sense [...] a struggle for truth”. This struggle to recover self is further constrained by Harrison’s “monopolising the parameters for interpretation [...] by domesticating other subject positions as historically obsolete and self-defeating otherness” (Odora Hoppers, 2006: 47). As a result, psychological distortions and misrepresentations about their human worth abound. Yet, that should be Harrison’s primary concern for one writing in advocacy for the voiceless dispossessed.

Ironically, Harrison re-affirms some critics’ view that “[w]hatever existed ... in the colonised world could not be regarded as meaningful unless it was ... the European conception of reality, knowledge and truth” (Ramosé (1999: 45). Therefore, ignoring both the Africans’ voices and the historical foundation of the land occupations etched in Zimbabwe’s struggles for land, on Harrison’s part, undermines the African view that art and education should be mutually informative and emancipatory. His fictional reconstruction of land redistribution that downplays Africans’ realities as forged by their experiences and history is worth noting. Such omissions would reinforce notions of African infantile thinking as noted earlier, in which case Hove (2011: 43) observes:

At the core of this writing is the belief that blacks cannot act effectively without whites directing them (Chennels 1995: 119); it is a discourse dependent on rigid, binarised categories of race, where white is perceived as superior.

Also, in much the same way that “[s]tupid white blunders create black nationalism” (Chennels in Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 143-144) , Harry’s narrative shows that black ruling elite’s blunders could similarly alienate a good part of the population from an otherwise noble land reform process. However, the continued bludgeoning of land reform with negativity vindicates re-assertion of nation and Black Nationalism through land redistribution, a fact that Harrison does not seem to notice. This becomes acutely so in the Africans’ fight for freedom against British colonial settlerism if “[f]reedom [in its broadest sense] means the right to a name – your name, not your master’s. Most of all,

freedom is a hunger for learning and a hunger for land” (Meltzer, 1967: 161), a yearning that the country’s mostly disadvantaged demographic group has. Harry’s displaced workforce epitomises this hunger.

Chennells (Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 138) observes: “Who exactly the previous generation of blacks were servants to, or what they were before they were servants is not revealed.” Thomas (1996: 110) similarly critiquing the brutish racist settler propaganda at Cecil John Rhodes’ expansion of the British Empire in Africa observes: “No mention was made of the people who might already be living on those ‘distant plots of land’... Indeed, the existence of such people was not acknowledged.” The *jambanja* process that he perceives as “land-grab” and “illegal seizure” of Maioio should therefore come as a real shock. This anomie associated with settler capitalism that prioritises money over the Africans’ human worth is worth noting.

In view of European settlers’ doctrine of terra-nullius regarding African land and its inhabitants, Harrison’s account of the brutal affront to one who has singularly developed and owns Maioio Estate is just one side of the story, the side *reflecting only* Harry’s victimisation. Yet, it is common knowledge that African labour bolstered the white commercial farmers to produce wealth from the land. His workers’ views are not given space except when Harry wishes to expose either his diligence or the barbarism of *jambanja* (p. 188):— “This was about human dignity, and the worst to suffer were the workers” (p. 159). The superficial self-serving assessment totally ignores the “extreme psychological, physiological, and socio-cultural stress” (Tremmel, 1994: 30 cited in Gambahaya and Muhwati, 2010: 329), suffered at the initial massive displacements that *jambanja* is confronting, thereby denying these perennial victims of land displacements agency to transform their lives. Eurocentric history of Africa that is taught in schools, resonates with Harry’s reconstruction of events whereby, often perpetrators of the wrongs that dismembered the African continent and personality (Maathai, 2010: 43), are heroes with African struggles painted as anti-heroic.

Harry, the European archetype adventurer, is seeking fortune in the perceived uninhabited African territories. He boasts of Irish roots (p. 30) – “where and how his heritage came to him” (p. 31). His sentiments about taming Zimbabwean land as was the case with the establishment of Mkwazine Estates are reminiscent of the wilderness perceptions of African land portrayed in Farrell’s poem:

Rhodesia!

Thou Land of Hope, Romance, Promise boundless...

First of lands and last (cited in Moyana, 2000:96)

Harry paints Mkwazine as wild, vacant, available and uninhabited offering itself for “selected applicants’ title to their land” (p. 54). In respect of Harry’s romantic relationship with the newly-found lands, Hoppers (2006: 45) observes:

The doctrine of terra nullius meant that Africans, like their kin in the other colonised regions worldwide, did not really exist... Their lands were vacant, unpeopled. They were part of nature and since nature was to be “bound up in service and enslaved... did it not follow that ... [they] would be bound up, treated to systematic psychological, spatial, economic and all other re-orientations into the European image ‘for their own good’?”

Such a romantic picture of Zimbabwe would justify the view of the eventual “sorry history” (Toowoomba, in Harrison, 2006:8) of land redistribution that Harry projects as “madness”, squandering “an immensely promising future for all races” (Toowoomba, in Harrison, 2006:8). It is ironic that the farmers’ economic well-being subsumes that of “all races” whilst Africans poor majority remain “labour” (p. 32), “the workers” (p. 32) or “his gang” (p. 65). The promising future therefore comes out as pretext for privileged livelihoods for the few wealthy land-owners.

Harry’s sentiments of success make minimal acknowledgement of the input and the invaluable contribution of the depersonalised African workforce. His perception of their reality is that without his presence to give them sustenance, their existence is perpetually doomed. Harry sees himself as their crutch (p. 244), painting them as the worst victims of

land redistribution. Yet, ironically, Harry only acknowledges their worth as labourers at a time that he is counting his losses during his eviction from Maioio. What seemingly irks Harry is not the aggravated loss of employment by these workers, but the permanent dispossession, loss of power and heavy economic losses that he has personally suffered. Harry is also traumatised by losing the power and invincibility that the erstwhile white commercial farm epitomised on the Zimbabwean landscape: “How do you say to your labour ..., now that the heat is on, that “the Baas” is leaving” (p. 127).

The plight of the workers comes on the side-lines, a necessary inconvenience — they are only relevant for maintenance and keeping production running at the farm. “Sometimes they finished work at nine at night” (p. 109). Harrison’s feelings of sympathy are not concomitant with his attitude and treatment of the displaced labourers. He groups them into an indistinguishable subservient mass, personal possessions to be exploited, unwittingly explaining their wretched existence and the “crutch” that Harry prides himself as. Harry’s contradictory account deliberately glosses over historical details that he manipulates to further entrap and exploit the African person (Barclay, 2010: 150-151). This casts his sympathy in grey light, more so when he admits to using trickery to get maximum production and submission from the workers:

They [Harrison and Joan] kept very close to the *gang*, *always on the lookout for dissension* ... They installed a radio-gram...which helped keep minds occupied, and they felt they had a *happy gang* (p. 109).

If they are apprehensive about possible dissension, Harrison’s claims of happy farm-labourers would be questionable. He downplays their stagnation and entrapment in the tentacles of an exploitative system.

Further, the colonial blueprint on labour and race relations cited by Thomas (1996: 271) challenges Harry’s feigned sympathy for his labour: “If the whites maintain their position as the supreme race, the day will come when we shall all be thankful that we have the natives with us in their proper position” as labourers. That the latter’s destitution comes as a result of man-made depersonalisation would be arguably undeniable as further

shown through denial of land access to the African majority for exploitative purposes as enshrined in the colonial blueprint:

Every black man cannot have three acres and a cow or four morgen and a commonage right...it must be brought home to them that in future nine tenths of them will have to spend their lives in daily labour” (Rhodes cited in Samkange, 1982: 31).

That hordes of displaced people, partly constituting Harry’s workforce, come from various parts of Zimbabwe thus should not come as a surprise. The labourers move from farm to farm looking for what they would consider as bearable conditions, but most farm compounds are ugly and badly-built with workers surviving on rations. The same labourers frequently appear in the narrative as “antiheroes” trying to settle ethnic differences with their African counterparts through their different levels of allegiance and commitment to Harrison (p. 136; p. 162). Gambahaya and Muhwati (2010: 325) observe: “Displaced people... frequently appear in written literature as antiheroes or social misfits obscenely lacking agency.”

Thus, the division that is witnessed among Harrison’s workers during the Maioio eviction process is the case of recurrent history playing itself out. Harrison celebrates separatism and regionalism that keep Africans disunited, making it easy for colonial dehumanisation, exploitation and manipulation to thrive. In this regard, Fanon (1967: 74) similarly observes: “Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces it and separates them.” It is therefore not surprising that Harrison coaxes Bitros, the foreman, to remain loyal on the basis of their being both Matebele from Bulawayo. The ethnic card remains divisive in Zimbabwean politics.

Farmers create conditions that make labourers remain perpetually “dependant and unable to aspire higher than farm labouring” (Barclay, 2010: 151). Barclay (Ibid: 150) further observes: “Whites are farm owners and managers. Blacks are labourers”, “niggers and kaffirs” (Ibid: 150). The denigration of the labourers’ human worth chimes well with Harrison’s “hoodlums”, revealing the dark side of the white farming culture in

Zimbabwe. Harry is responsible for creating conditions that cripple his workers to perpetuity:

Cloud lived a simple life, doing just what he was tasked for — no more. He enjoyed his Chibuku and smoking pot- usually followed by a night of hard work with one of his three wives or anyone else 's that caught his fancy (p. 245).

It is ironic that Harry dissociates himself from the wretchedness that he engendered in the lives of his farm-labourers and places moral responsibility elsewhere: They are “now unemployed, thanks to the new land reform policies” (p. 244). It is also ironic that whilst Harry vows to commit the rest of his time to fight for what was “theirs”, not only for what “they” have lost, the African labourer remains part of the chattel he should fight to recover — “our labour as well” (p. 242). The emphasis shows that there is no “commonality of interest between farm-owners and workers in defending sanctity of [human] rights” (Worby, 2001: 502), a fact corroborated by Harry’s persistent references to “my gang”, “the workers” and, eventually “pathetic hoodlums” when they eventually fall out during land redistribution that some of the labourers embrace as an opportunity to repair crippled livelihoods.

Unlike Harry’s self-aggrandisement approach to land and accumulation of wealth, African philosophy prioritises the dignity and humanity of every person. Chiwome and Mguni (2012: 108) observe:

Afrocentric thinking places greater value on human life more than on accumulating wealth. The human being, not money, should be the supreme principle in literature that concerns itself with the welfare of Africans. In the context of African values about sharing and caring for one another, the economy grows for the benefit of the community.

This contrasts sharply with how Harry’s workers subsist at Maioio Estate that epitomises the devastating effects of colonialism.

Other major games for entertainment are also organised along ethnic lines, what Harrison refers to as “natural good-hearted rivalry” (p. 109) reminiscent of sadistic humour

derived from Negro treatment in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, thereby making it easy for the commercial farmers to control their divided workforce. Harry also uses the same principle at hiring Charles Kwindinge's legal services to challenge his eviction from Maioio. "Dirty" Harry's hands, thus, remain unsoiled as an African lawyer challenges an African government's land redistribution process defending perpetual exclusion of the marginalised black majority. This confirms African depravity in a white world — subjugated and servile. In essence, the practice devalues the Africans' capacity to act responsibly. This can be explained in terms of the legacy of colonialism as captured by Birt (in Gordon, 1997: 206) in relation to what exploitation can do to the consciousness of its victims:

[Exploitation] robs people of their identity as surely as [it] robs [them] of the fruits of their labor. [Exploitation] imposes rigid, stultifying identities on its victims. Often it imposes a deformed consciousness on the oppressed which helps to reinforce the very system ... which deforms them ... All [exploitation]

The legacy "persists and remains devastating" (Maathai, 2010: 40) as shown by Harrison's *Jambanja*'s playing out of post-2000 Zimbabwe CFU's contestation against land redistribution, disregarding African impoverishment.

Jambanja couches what some critics genuinely perceive as "inflicting new injustices", "ill-conceived", "destructive", "self-inflicted penury" (Robertson in Harrison, 2006: 267-268). These perceptions ignore historical land imbalances and social injustices of African land dispossession. Baldwin's (1963: 62) comment concerning feigned efforts to tell the true story of the horrors of the American Negro's life could also ironically reflect the post-2000 Zimbabwean land story:

... the truth about the black man, as a historical entity and as a human being, has been hidden from him, deliberately and cruelly; the power of the white world is threatened whenever a black man refuses to accept the white world's definitions. So every attempt is made to cut that black man down.

The issues of white victimisation in *Jambanja* would therefore require that insights on land redistribution be interrogated from the underbelly by examining the condition of the

underdog – the labourer. The chapter is critically aware that it is one thing to be aware of the condition of social injustice, and another to admit complicit in further marginalising the victims of an insensitive, faceless and cruel system. *Jambanja* is therefore not necessarily about Harry's unjust eviction per se, but also about the exploitation of underdogs that catapulted Harry to be the successful farmer that he was at Maioio. It also exposes white commercial farmers' disregard of black rule, especially its new policies regarding labour, for where their interests are at stake, they cannot play fair:

When independence first took place, the Commercial Farmers were horrified by the new twist in the labour relationship stipulated by the Government. ... they felt that they were no longer their own bosses and would rather leave their farms... (p. 187).

The commercial economic value and not the human value in the black population, is what concerns white commercial farmers. That his eyes are opened to "his boys" dehumanised lives by the now vulnerable life he faces is worth noting:

In a strange sad way ...[h]e looked at these poor people whom he had shared the good and the bad years for so long, *regretting that all he could offer them after all these years was a piece of paper* (emphasis mine, p. 244).

This realisation comes when it is too late. Harry claims that he was just clawing out of debt at the time of the invasions, yet, he even has an airstrip behind the house (p. 109). Despite having worked the same land productively and obtained wealth to a point of even buying themselves private aeroplanes, the farmers would not invest for their labourers' welfare. All Cloud has to show for a similar 30 year period of investing lifetime labour on Harry's Maioio Farm are two drivers' licences, class one and class three (p. 244). Over and above the wasted life, Cloud takes back to his homeland in Makoni, three wives and ten children, and AIDS that kills him within months after leaving Maioio Farm. This is in spite of Harry's admission that "[Cloud] could make a tractor talk. He was in fact, a legend" (p. 245).

Harry makes it appear as if the disparities in fortune between master and labourer are indolence-induced, further buttressing his opinion about the natives condition: "...settlers

found that the local population lived a simple and arguably happy life, oblivious to the ways of this world” (p. 9). Harry absolves himself from nurturing poverty of the mind and material poverty among his workforce, hence their present predicament. He cannot see that “poverty is an enemy of humanity” as shown in the destitution of his workers. It is his political unwillingness to defend the vulnerable in favour of protecting “inhumane economic policies that constantly place profits over people” (Boesak, 2006: 182) that has perpetuated their poverty. Lionel Cliffe (in Stoneman, 1988: 309) observes:

And although minimum wages have been forced up by government, general living conditions of farm labourers (for example, in terms of malnutrition) are often worse than in the Communal Areas.

What irks Harry, therefore, is not the plight of his workers. At the time that really mattered, he never risked investing for them. Boesak (2006: 181-182) argues that people must risk vulnerability themselves to transform the lives of the vulnerable and marginalised:

It is not just about knowing about right and wrong, it is being touched and moved by things we are normally inured to – not just the suffering of others, but their hunger for justice, the recognition of the truth that they have had their fill of injustice, humiliation and dejection.

In addition to the exploitation at the farms, the farm workers also emerge as the hardest hit group in Zimbabwe’s post-2000 land redistribution process. Harrison’s narrative reminds readers that “land control policies are necessarily about exclusion” (Munro, cited in Worby, 2001: 491), which his land narrative, including media reports, similarly portrays. Like *Jambanja*, the international press appears to mainly project white commercial farmers as the chief victims of violence and property dispossessions in the post-2000 land occupations. Yet as Worby (2001: 492) observes, “far greater suffering is borne by their workers who have little in the way of assets but everything in the way of livelihood to lose”. Their elision in the grand narrative about land reform symbolically represents their exclusion in the distribution and accessing of land and other major

natural resources, over and above being treated as expendable and disposable as a cheap source of labour.

One could argue that the feeling of sympathy that Harry talks about is not for the labourers, but in spite of themselves. This is because rendered powerless, vulnerable and dispensable, for the first time, Harry comes to understand what it means to be dispossessed through a condition not of your own making, what it means to be wretched and poor, to be homeless even, and to survive at the mercy of another human being even when you are on your own home soil.

Further to this, it is worth noting that in Rhodesian sensibility, securing the survival of wild animals takes precedence over the plight of farm labourers. “Hard-working Merly Harrison whose efforts in rescuing animals during the land invasions had brought her international fame” (p. 238), yet interestingly, no parallel efforts by the same commercial farmers to secure the livelihoods of their displaced and brutalised workers are recorded. Even when the workers are being “persecuted for being the white man’s lackey” (p. 158), no legal or political pursuits are made to salvage their livelihoods.

“Many of the other workers who did have a home to go to in the TTLs (Tribal Trust Lands) had already left, taking with them just what they could carry... their worldly belongings were in the hands of the invaders” (p. 159). But there were others without rural or any other homes to go to. With Harry fighting for lost possessions and dominance, to then believe that him and those of his ilk could be saviours to the post-2000 land furore would be self-destructive. In the African revolutionary conception of *jambanja*, it remains totally naive to believe that land inequity “can be solved in the bosom of a system founded on inequality” (Assata Shakur, 2004: xxi). It would thus be naive to expect the West to provide guidelines favourable to the poor majority’s cause over the land. *Jambanja* as the “Third Chimurenga” (Lazarus, 2008) should therefore be critiqued within the context of the socio-political realities of the initial victims of land alienation and dispossession. It was the British who reneged on the Lancaster House Agreement. The narrative subtly acknowledges these nuances.

Further, in his exposition of *jambanja*, Harrison's narrative affirms that political developments in the country appear primarily concerned with two categories of people – the white commercial farmers represented by the CFU and the African population represented by the government. Such images of exclusion project “a narrow crevice in which pious appeals to democratization [and human rights] ring hollow” (Worby, 2001: 502), including African-centred appeals to *humwe/ubuntu*.

Therefore, moral ambiguities in the trajectory of the farm labourers, land invasions and land redistribution expose some of the social and political contradictions regarding the powerless and marginalised groups. Harry observes that the MDC's voters' base in the 2000 Referendum largely depended on farmers' manipulation of their labour (p. 136), reinforcing the schisms that colonial legacy keeps manipulating concerning land. Barclay (2010: 146) observes: “Whatever had held Zimbabwe together did so no longer. Communities forced to divide along political lines and to damage themselves, would never be restored”. It is ironic that at a time when the white farmers are regrouping and mobilising to protect their livelihoods over land ownership, blacks split along class, ethnic and political party lines over the same issue.

4.1.6 Pitfalls and contradictions

Whilst it remains critical for African people to identify who they are in the scheme of experiences according to African philosophy, the same philosophy emphasises that they use history and culture to seek answers to fundamental questions about humanity. For this reason, this critique should not discount the contradictions characterising land redistribution that Harrison raises. Harrison catalogues pitfalls that delegitimise land redistribution's claims to social re-construction in order to remedy colonial injustices regarding land. Land redistribution that was meant to empower the disenfranchised majority is allegedly expediently manipulated by political elites for self-serving interests and self-aggrandisement. This is the self-inflicted penury that Harrison and his ilk deride. At the very point that whites' attitudes could have been influenced to change concerning more equitable redistribution of resources, corruption among Africans sublimate the guilt

of some whites, inculcating self-ritheousness instead. This institutionalises a system that had for so long been built to safeguard minority vested interests.

Anomalies requiring urgent attention include, “[h]anding... out ready developed farms to chosen beneficiaries (mostly ZANU-PF party members)” (p. 136); offering title deeds (p. 185) for highly productive and developed properties to the ‘chefs’, grabbing land for speculative purposes (p. 184- 185) in much the same way as their white predecessors, violence (p. 133; p. 158; p. 178; p. 191) including murder – as in the case of Martin Olds a commercial farmer (p. 122) – perpetrated during some land occupations. These are some of the realities that have characterised the land distribution exercise in Zimbabwe. These approaches to land redistribution, if unchecked, are fertile seedbed to discontentment and instability. Allegations of cronyism, avarice and corruption at the expense of the marginalised majority undermine the motivation behind land redistribution. Cumulatively, these perpetuate injustice, further eroding confidence and solidarity towards more equitable redistribution of land, ironically keeping Africans “in their place”.

Further, plundering of lucrative agricultural projects by a handful of avaricious government ministers as was the case with government-quasi-owned Kondozi Estate that destroyed ordinary people’s livelihoods, and also indiscriminate allocation of land to uninterested, inexperienced and non-resourced individuals (p. 131), reveals little commitment for meaningful social transformation for the greater majority of the country’s disenfranchised population. Appropriation of such essential programmes as land reform for self-aggrandisement on the part of the political elite, are issues that the society should confront because they undermine stability and national unity. Avarice knows no class/colour. Such proliferating tensions, controversies and conflicts over land show some challenges Zimbabwe should confront. Achebe’s (1990: 43) observation is worth noting: “We do have our own sins and blasphemies What we need to do is to look back and try and find where we went wrong”.

Harrison further catalogues the sad reality concerning land redistribution in Zimbabwe such as issues of financing by the white-owned banks, expertise-flight in large-scale commercial farming (p. 184), frequent power failures (p. 194), cell-phone farming, looting of inputs for the black market, cronyism (p. 136), dwindling external markets for the agricultural produce (p. 125; p. 132) and lack of specialised equipment - all of which undermine sustainable production on the newly-acquired farms (p. 183; p. 186). These are legitimate concerns that the Zimbabwean society, and in particular the government, should address. Without instituting the necessary checks and balances and constant monitoring, the land reform programme would be doomed in its infancy, rendering land redistribution futile. For some of these reasons, Robertson (Harrison, 2006: 268) argues:

Justice has not been served by inflicting new injustices, the economy has not been served by imposing wealth-destroying rather than wealth-creating policies and the population has not been served by trying to redress past imbalances rather than trying to generate a more balanced future.

Cumulatively, the images show that greed and corruption over land, more than being issues of race, are human weaknesses. These pitfalls, reflecting the reality on the ground, call for Zimbabweans to self-introspect and confront their own shortcomings to avoid replicating past mistakes. African teachings on life encourage people to take deep introspection in order to go forward. Stewart (2004: 3) citing Akan Sankofa philosophy observes:

It is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot [or correct where you went wrong]. Sankofa teaches us that we must go back and gather the best of what our past has to teach us, so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward.

Whilst colonial land dispossession remains one of the major causes and “determinant[s] of poverty in the country” (Sacco, in Moyo et al, 2008: 346), contradictions and in/justices generated by land redistribution should never be used as justification for a class/racial approach to resolving the land issue as projected in Harrison’s *Jambanja* and its criticism. It flies against African philosophy of *humwe* that the poor majority are continually marginalised by exclusion from land in their country. Yet, those aligned to

people occupying influential societal positions have access to land that they do not even put to full use. Further, colonial land dispossession of the African population should not be used by post-independence African leadership for poor delivery or non-performance on the economic front. Zimbabwe is no exception.

Relinquishing power and privileges, including monopoly over principal resources such as land and its human capital, would naturally be difficult. This explains Harrison's resilience and uncompromising attitude: "I can't give up until I know 100% that we are finished" (p. 189). This explains why he juxtaposes the Rhodesian "bush war" to white commercial farmers' resistance against land redistribution, couching it in war language (p. 177) in his fight to retain Maioio. Yet, on the other hand, the land occupiers seem critically aware that their African land "is a human right which must be wrested, by any means necessary, from those who would dare to withhold it without due process by law ..." (Ephraim, 2003: 157). These non-concomitant approaches to land rights pose challenges that should be nipped so that the country may not be locked in cycles of land-induced violence.

Harrison's couching land redistribution as "this time of madness" (p. 249) shows shock at the inevitable unfolding land experiences. The localised leadership, spontaneity, peasant activism and workers' involvement, even where their own interests could have been sacrificed (p. 150-p. 151), show the mounting pressure for land redistribution to satisfy a genuine existential need. Chennells' (in Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 144) logic is worth noting: "[I]f large numbers of people are mad in the same way, it is not recognised as madness". Maioio becomes an epitome of Harrison's dreaded madness. Harrison's reflections resonate with Ian Smith's "*Never in a thousand years would there be black rule*" (p. 66) and the black nationalists' fight for total power to rule the country (p. 67), confirming the tangential views over land that have been transposed onto society today. "They [whites] all knew that the price could be high, and if they lost this war they would lose everything" (p. 70), confirming their apprehension about losing grip in their converse *jambanja* against Africans.

Ironically, Africans see themselves as victims in the same manner that Harrison sees himself as a victim of black land invaders. His anger is therefore well-understood as he is reacting to *jambanja* like any victim would react. Harrison, thus, shows that nowhere has land been possessed peacefully. His critiques of post-colonial African people's resolve to take back the land show the collision course between Rhodesians and Africans over land. Harry observes:

As things were changing in the country, the Government was impatient at the rate of change ...; the Land Acquisition Act was enacted to speed up the land reform process by removing the "willing seller, willing buyer" clause (p.118).

The practicalities of implementation notwithstanding, Harrison acknowledges the mounting pressure for redistributing land. He acknowledges that land occupations have directly influenced agendas of major political parties from 2000 (p. 136) with the wealthy landed-gentry openly supporting the opposition (p. 142). Sanders, Tawoomba and Robertson's sentiments cited earlier show the white farmers' unpreparedness for the dynamic changing positions regarding land. Ironically, their entrenched ideas about their economic position in Zimbabwe, legal protection and government's indecisiveness during the initial stages made them snub dialogue with people demanding land at a crucial turning point in the country's history. Concerning such blindness, Achebe (1990: 14) observes: "Irrational hate can endanger the life of the community". This matrix appears to be the trap for both Government and the white farmers in the post-2000 land furore. Failure to accept the African reality of land deprivation and the need to redistribute the country's major resources more equitably undermines Zimbabweans' survival across the racial divide.

However people may wish to conceptualise *jambanja*, — the "shift in vocabulary" (Mustafa, 2009: 386) with a view to controlling and managing the public view of violent land occupations or as quest for natural justice — the critical question is whether it remains tenable and sustainable to continue using race-class as indexes for land access at this point in history, and still achieve *humwe*/oneness and peace in the country. That both blacks and whites need the same land for human securities should encourage people to

find amicable solutions so that they may live peacefully together on this land. “Shunt[ing] off” (p. 250) a 72 year old farmer from the land and plundering his crop without compensation or alternative land to settle on “in an economy that was sinking fast” (p. 250), is dehumanising and replicates colonial settlers’ violence of stripping Africans of their land and livestock. Yet, one has to grapple with how morally admissible it is to protect the interests of a few, at the expense of the majority, irrespective of racial, partisan or class interests. African values centralise peace, reciprocity and togetherness in order to enhance greater human progress. These issues need careful dialogue and reflection to avoid impeding successful land reform.

4.1.7 Concluding notions – *Jambanja*: Beyond Proprietorship?

Fears regarding land redistribution undoing capital development remain unfounded. “Too much has been lost, and reverting to a pre-colonial mindset – even if it were possible – would not serve contemporary African/[Zimbabwean] peoples well as they struggle to move forward” (Maathai, 2010: 182). Parochial and protectionist attitudes prejudice the securities that all people should derive from the land. Most importantly, while it is morally correct to redistribute land, Zimbabweans should find integrative home-grown solutions to the perennial land problems (Rukuni, (2007: 18). De-contextualised studies of people and events are often misleading. Similarly, Ki-Zerbo observes: “Our history is being explained by a whole series of words and concepts ...that translate — and quite often betray — realities and structures created in another linguistic and social context” (Ki-Zerbo, 1989: 8).

This exclusionary approach to land keeps the Zimbabwean society fettered to racial binary identities, undermining serious soul-searching. Pitfalls of cronyism, opaque nature of redistribution, allegedly favouring the political elite and party cadres, avarice and corruption, are seedbed of future instability. Such inconsistencies that perpetuate the very imbalances, inequities and injustices that post-2000 land redistribution seeks to rectify should be addressed. Land reform should also go beyond agricultural land to include mining (p. 131), wildlife and other natural resources in order to diversify livelihoods. Further, land redistribution should derive motivation from the desire to meet genuine

basic human needs to restore human dignity and human worth irrespective of creed/race/class/gender. The narrative shocks readers into not abdicating their social responsibility by allowing cliques to manipulate and exploit others, using land as a bait. It remains to be seen how Eppel's *Absent* treats the same subject of land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

4.2 *Absent: The English Teacher (Absent)*(2009)

4.2.1 A Synopsis

The dramatic presentation of the goring experiences that “the errant school-teacher” (p. 1) and subsequently fired English teacher, George, encounters in post-2000 Zimbabwe formulates the thrust of the narrative. George is fired for his professional misdemeanours at Bulawayo's Boys and Girls Come Out to Play Secondary School. His behaviour is regarded irreconcilable with the ethical expectations of his profession. Two acts of misdemeanour haunt George for the rest of his post-professional employment days: “the mischievous switching of portraits” (p. 16; p. 28) of Ian Douglas Smith for that of President Robert Mugabe at the official visit of the Deputy Secretary for Education and Rural Beauty Pageants, and backing into Beauticious Nyamayakanuna's brand new, custom-built Mercedes Benz which in turn crashes into a shop mall. The out-of-court settlement with Beauticious forces George to surrender his home of forty years, its entire contents, and “George's labour — for the rest of his life” (p. 28), as payment for the damages. George, now house boy, vacates his house to occupy the servants' quarters. Beauticious chops down all the indigenous trees in the garden to make way for a maize patch. George has additional responsibilities of coaching Beauticious' children in English Literature. For switching the portraits, George is also later arrested “causing alarm and despondency among the aboriginal peoples of Zimbabwe” (p. 16). He eventually dies in a cave on the outskirts of Empandeni Mission upon returning a destitute girl-child he rescues from the streets just outside their Bulawayo home.

4.2.2 Contextualising land and identity

Absent avoids dealing directly with the land dispossessions and white displacement on the commercial farms — a predictable subject with most white-authored narratives of

post-2000 Zimbabwe — choosing to dwell on the psycho-social and political effects of the violent farm-house occupations, evictions and dispossessions that were characteristic of the post-2000 indigenous land occupations. Eppel’s amnesiac memory ignores colonial land apartheid that excluded Africans from European areas whereby, legalistically, those Africans who remained there despite generations of occupying the land before European settlements becoming “squatters” (Hanlon et al, 2013: 33).

What is striking about this narrative is its biting sarcasm towards indigenous ownership and administration of the country. To a critical reader, it is clear that the author’s use of urban Bulawayo and George’s dispossession is allegorical. *Absent* is an allegory of the hotly contested issue of racial violence, black repossession of the country’s resources — principal of which is the land — as well as indigenous administration. Snippet references are made to land redistribution (p. 91; p. 128); claims to a boom in agricultural production couched in “the mother of all agricultural seasons” (p. 64; p. 91) that characterised the Reserve Bank Governor’s post-2000 indigenous commercial farmers’ mechanisation programmes; torture of the African race by the settlers (p. 80); the 1893 Ndebele War against settlers (p. 108); as well as indigenous resistance to settler rule depicted through the 1896-97 First Chimurenga and the setting up of settlers’ forts (p. 108). Reference is also made to the genocide of the Second Chimurenga summed up in the image of Ian Smith as “that monster who murdered and raped millions of black people – men, women, and children” (p. 16). Thus, the violent displacements and shifting sites of power would demand that readers/critics reconceptualise Zimbabwean racial identities, including people’s struggles for and belongingness on the land.

The narrative gratuitously satirises post-colonial “failure of national leadership” (p. 89). It lampoons the black leadership’s incompetency and perceived avarice-induced ownership of land is highlighted through “the errant school-teacher” (p. 1) and subsequently fired English teacher, George Jorge George’s encounters with the Chief Inspector at Elsinore Prison (p. 91) and his new owner, Beauticious Nyamayakanuna. The Chief Inspector, a student enrolled with Zimbabwe Open University, confesses to George that he has not read *A Grain of Wheat* for an assignment because his “farms are

taking up so much of [his] time” (p. 91). In this regard, apart from attacking multiple farm ownership by the chefs, the narrative also subtly attacks the chef syndrome that is perceived to have pervaded some tertiary institutions, undermining credibility of some chefs ‘academic qualifications.

The allegorical stripping of an exclusive white identity, bludgeoning of white authority and eradication of privileges that the farmhouse symbolised on the farm frontier is symbolised through George’s synecdoche in the narrative. If in Zimbabwean literature “often the farm is a silent and subtle miniature colonial state” (Chirere, 2004), it suffices to argue that the farmhouse is the seat of that miniature colonial state. Therefore, through hounding the white owner out of his house, the land-invaders symbolically dislodge the major undisputed landmark of the colonial state.

The “houseboy” trope and the *fanagalo*, *Chiraparapa/Chilapalapa* or kitchen kaffir that mutilated the African identity on the settler farm that Eppel transposes onto his narrative is particularly important in examining settler underpinnings in post-colonial Zimbabwe. This trajectory takes the readers into presences of race, language and history in defining spaces and identities on the Zimbabwean landscape. The violence that goes with these tropes cannot be ignored. This is why Eppel’s narrative that furtively brings in the aspect of white displacements should be critically examined.

Concomitant with property stripping are attempts at re-drawing spaces, places and social and political identities characterising post-2000 Zimbabwe. The mischievous switching of portraits of Ian Douglas Smith for that of President Robert Mugabe thus becomes a trajectory showing contestations of political power between black and white that *Absent* subtly explores. Eppel explores vicissitudes of power and leadership responsibilities that are critiqued in the context of the country’s unfolding land experiences.

4.2.3 Re-drawing Zimbabwean landscape’s trajectories of black and white

Using various literary techniques, Eppel exploits biting sarcasm and cynicism in his representations of black presence in his landscapes, whilst George who is the synecdoche

of his race is portrayed as a victim of racial hatred. An oxymoron name like Beauticious Nyamayakanuna is a good example of the deeply embedded sarcasm in Eppel's naming technique of African characters. Eppel appropriates the African naming philosophy to lampoon the moral, social, and political degeneracy he projects as endemic in post-2000 Zimbabwe. He names Beauticious' twin boys Helter and Skelter, denoting pandemonium characterising the social realities of the moment.

Beauticious, a foreign first name expropriated and corrupted from Beauty, should be metonymic of physical attractiveness and virtuousness of the bearer. The symbolic values are immediately undercut by her surname — Nyamayakanuna — that denotes predatory vice and avarice. The twin boys' sister's name is Ultimate. The names could be argued to carry sarcastic undertones that describe the ultimate destiny of the Zimbabwean society that appears uncertain. The names may also be argued to be either a reflection of Beauticious as an ignoramus, or her affectation tendencies as a member of the nouveau rich constituting the new black elite. Another name: "Boys and Girls Come Out to Play Secondary School" smirks of the plummeting education standards in the country.

Government officers' titles and portfolios can also be construed as equally derisive, for example, portfolios like the "Deputy Secretary for Education and Rural Beauty Pageants", and also the "Minister of Child Welfare, Sweets and Biscuits". Some critics may take the sarcasm in Eppel's naming as condescension that is ingrained in some whites' intolerance of African rule and African leadership's perceived self-centredness. Equally racist overtones are also embedded in "honkie", "these Rhodies are the most intolerant people on earth" (p. 79), terms that the interrogating officer uses to describe George. Either way, racial intolerance appears difficult to conceal.

The representation of Beauticious as a vulture that mercilessly descends on George, becoming George's black madam jeers at pretences of racial restitution that the novel attempts to explore. Beauticious decimates George's identity, calling him Joji and demanding that he talks to her in no other language but kitchen kaffir. The narrative becomes a replay of the decimation of African identities in colonial Zimbabwe.

Beauticious own parents' identities as the 'cook boy' and the 'housegirl' staying in the servants' quarters and using only Fanagalo or Chilapalapa when talking to whites is the racially-inscribed black identity and childhood Beauticious had known.

George is portrayed "a synecdoche" (p. 80), paying for the sins of his race: "You tortured an entire race of people" (Ibid). Though highly improbable, it is incredible that Eppel creates a white houseboy, Joji and the Fanagalo language, to reflect the vicissitudes of racial identities in post-independence Zimbabwe. Joji's use of kitchen kaffir should tally with his new identity. The newly-imposed decimated identity is also reflected in Joji's dressing, befitting of one now belonging to the backyard servants' quarters:

Gone were the powder blue safari-suits of his school-teaching days;..(Oh dear, George) Beauticious made him wear khaki shirt and shorts, the former much too small, the latter too large. His head-wear was a tasselled red fez while his footwear was white tackies (though Beauticious didn't mind if he went barefoot) (p 45).

Joji is also stripped of any claims to indigenous belongingness when Beauticious chops down all the indigenous trees he had passionately tended in his garden. This could also be a reference to the pressing problem of deforestation in formerly white-owned farms as the new black owners cut down trees to build homes and for purposes of fuel (Scoones et al, 2010: 173-176). Though some may argue that the image of George sounds highly contrived and grotesque, Eppel successfully highlights debates surrounding reverse racism which have increasingly gained prominence in Zimbabwe. The stripping of the trinkets that attached George to his family tree strips him of his putative English identity—rendered destitute, he is surely Joji.

The same is symbolically captured by his wilful burning of his identity and professional particulars. This leaves George to introspect on his human, and not white identity. The houseboy experiences expose him to the vagaries of traumatic existence that Joseph the gardenboy and those of his ilk, including Beauticious the black madam, have endured for decades because of class and racial domination. The experiences are an epiphany to

George, perhaps explaining the agape love that he later gives to the destitute child whom he rescues and eventually takes to Empandeni Mission.

Eppel uses multiple literary modes that include prose narrative; plays punctuating scenes in the prose narrative; comic relief during George's prison interrogations over trumped-up charges, George's reflections and reminiscences about school teaching days, goring houseboy life and prison expose of Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* to the Chief Inspector; and the journey motif that brings in the theme of flight when George surreptitiously takes leave of his house boy duties. These multiple literary modes accord Eppel versatility in constructing the detailed drama of George's ordeals and the various landscapes that show the shifting sites of identities on the Zimbabwean landscape. The approach also allows for quick switching of landscapes in the novel. For example, the quick switches between 43 Leander Avenue, Hillside, Bulawayo (George's "home"-cum-place of employment) and Elsinore Prison in chapters three and fourteen give the readers the goring prison scenes.

The description of Ian Douglas Smith as "that monster who murdered and raped millions of black people – men, women, and children"(p. 16) and his portrait suddenly becoming "a collector's item and worth a lot of money" (p. 17) during the first interrogation shows shifting political ideology, commoditisation of values, and gradual eradication of the nation's memory of critical moments in history. Like in Marechera's "House of Hunger the Novella", it becomes difficult to distinguish between Eppel and his narrator's voice. George's references to the Bushmen, the Khoi San and kaffirman as the "aboriginal peoples of Zimbabwe" (p. 16) are reminiscent of the Rhodesian trope of Zimbabwe as a "vacant land", open for development at the time of colonial effective occupation. Further buttressing the imperative of white civilisation on the black man's land are George's nostalgic reflections of the incompetency of the black-run municipalities:

Town Clerk' signs all over Bulawayo, all very bossy. Most of them vandalized, but many of them still yielded words of caution. George thought of Shelley's sonnet, 'Ozymandias': Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair (p. 78).

Eppel further satirises the escapism and blame-game used to explain away sultry images of negation that characterise all spheres of the black-run administration. For example, a whole minister goes to a conference in Sun City, South Africa, to “discuss which aspect of racist-colonialist-imperialism was responsible for the recent power outages” (p. 82). The late Frederick Courtney Selous, one of the pioneers of settler administration at the inception of the colony in the 1890s, is the alleged villain more than a century later. *Macbeth*’s “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (p. 83) indicates a combination of the ignominy of the new political elite and their tragic dicing with self-annihilating vices. These close references to the post-2000 Zimbabwe power shortages remain a social reality that people keep contending with, so is the vandalism of public infrastructure that the narrative laments.

Through some of these obscene and “hilarious incongruities” (Muchemwa, 2009 in Eppel, 2009: xiv), Eppel explores the vicissitudes of the old and new identities in post-independence Zimbabwe. He collapses “the distinction between the historical and the imagined”, allowing for “entertainment inventiveness” (Muchemwa, in Eppel, 2009: x) in his fictional trajectory. Eppel fuses George’s invented Elsinore Prison experiences as representations of social reality with anecdotes of selective history. References to intolerance of political opposition (MDC) (p. 14) and Simba Makoni’s contesting for presidency in the 2008 presidential elections (p. 76; p. 89) are derived from post-2000 Zimbabwe’s socio-political realities. Political intolerance characterising the 2008 general elections in particular unleashed rampant violence in the country, culminating in the GPA (Global Political Agreement) instituting the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation as an initiative to re-institute respect for human dignity and sanctity of human life. Mostly, the rural and urban high density folks bore the brunt of the violence.

However, the embellishments that Eppel adds to make the incredible happen in his fictional world end up distorting the history of post-2000 Zimbabwe that he sets out to depict and reconstruct. For example, the representation of George as “a victim of xenophobic invasion of urban properties” (Muchemwa in Eppel, 2009: xi) may not be entirely accurate when one reflects on the social realities of the period that the writer sets

out to depict. That would be the day when whites like George would bring themselves down to do menial work in the country they had previously dominated.

Whilst Eppel's narrative successfully portrays the shifting sites of power and identities through varieties of dispossession and displacement, writers should not divorce themselves from the ethical demands of their time. *Absent's* exploration of the changing fortunes of the whites in the post-2000 period is represented as rather harsh and radical. Its perceptions of black empowerment as "a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty" (Cleaver, 1992: 78) makes the Zimbabwean experience a vicious cycle of negation of humanity. That the trajectory of settler administration displaced by black rule was equally founded on "a system begun in avarice, supported in pride, and perpetuated in cruelty" is irrefutable.

The writer's ingenuity and versatility with both style and words seem to ultimately undermine his efforts to embolden society to regenerate and positively transform itself. The chief protagonist in the narrative admits that reconstruction of history should not entail decimating the reality of the people's lived social and historical experiences:

People's life stories are continually being re-created; history is continually being re-written; fact metamorphoses into fiction, fiction into fact. As the critic Raymond Williams says: Tradition is not the past, but an interpretation of the past: a selection and valuation of ancestors, rather than a neutral record (p. 93).

Therefore, by focusing just on the trauma of one white man, Eppel's narrative can be argued as highlighting the collapse of the whites' false sense of political and economic security and the erosion of their erstwhile pre-independence privileges they had come to regard as absolute. *Jambanja* depicts similar misconceptions.

However, worth noting is the connecting thread running through the white-authored fictional works of post-2000. Post-independence African leadership's incapacity to effectively stem corruption and avarice has given white-authored narratives justification to continuously downgrade African human worth. Yet, Shepherd (2006: 130) argues that

production of knowledge about Africa and Africans was designed to promote whiteness and to discourage self-confidence among black people. Ramose observes:

Reflections on the need for the authentic liberation of Africa are underlined by the thesis that whoever holds the key to the construction of knowledge today does also hold the key to power (Ramose, 1999: 46).

Eppel's sarcasm has justification from evidently deteriorating service delivery and declining livelihood standards, especially in cities where his story is set. This explains his seriousness and commitment to transforming the landscape that, unfortunately, is mired in racial controversies haunting the Zimbabwean landscape. However, *Absent's* mockery and condescension against the erstwhile perceived black indolence throughout the narrative, can be understood within the context of power and identity struggles in post-2000 Zimbabwe's racial approach to dispossession, displacements and identity construction. By denigrating the very people he wishes to correct, Eppel's style distances him and places him on a moral pedestal, which could be interpreted as promotion of white triumphal supremacist attitudes in the construction of black identities (Ephraim, 2003). Thus, some readers might miss an opportunity to seriously reflect on very pertinent issues that are raised concerning the post-2000 social and economic challenges, which reflections could help in the transformation of attitudes to transcend class, ethnic, political and race barriers in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

It is interesting to see how Eppel is concerned with the suffering of one male white prisoner, George, among hordes of other male prisoners who are black. Eppel appears not to be concerned about the generally deplorable prison conditions that dehumanise all irrespective of race. Preoccupation with protecting class and race interests explains Eppel's glossing over the Africans' struggles for access to land and other resources. These are some of the challenges that post-independence Zimbabwe should surmount.

The land and cave motifs that Eppel refer to, symbolise African people's spiritual connection with the past and future generations. In the African worldview, the land and its caves are sacred symbols that regulate and influence individual and communal relationships, especially on matters of polity and communal survival. Most colonial

discourses of African spirituality appear to disregard this connection, as evidenced by the burial of Cecil John Rhodes' remains on the Matopos (where the famous Njelele shrine is found), Allan Wilson's patrol's remains at Great Zimbabwe (Fontein, 2006). Eppel similarly appropriates whites' spiritual guardianship of the land through George's self-interment in the cave outside Empandeni Mission. It is also possible that the metamorphosised George has his Dolorosa³⁹ through the long tortuous walk from Bulawayo to Empandeni Mission to deliver the vulnerable and weak child into a new and promising life. In the same vein, the Dolorosa walk and wilful surrender of his life in the cave somewhat immortalises George the synecdoche who may be argued to have paid atonement for his race's dehumanisation of the black race. If Eppel's reading of land occupations is viewed in this light, it mocks the indigenous Zimbabwean philosophy of reparations and restitution that undergirds the spirit of *jambanja* discussed earlier. Eppel appears to insinuate that the trauma that the dispossessed and displaced commercial farmers suffer suffices as restitution for their race's violent dispossession and displacement of the indigenous peoples. Eppel seems to be experimenting with his perception of restitution in the African worldview whereby the transgressions of an individual or a generation can be visited upon the whole clan.

4.2.4 Concluding remarks on *Absent*

Arguments that Zimbabweans cannot effectively manage their own land and administrative issues could be sarcastic but require serious soul-searching. Whilst African land dispossession in both pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe cannot be morally condoned, the violent manner with which land was acquired in certain instances in the post-2000 period should also neither be condoned. Eppel's representations appear to legitimate the cycle of racial violence at the expense of social justice. For Zimbabweans to assume a liberated identity and have control of their land and intellectual space, they should rise above the imprisoning walls of bitterness that pen them in and shut other people out of development programmes that ennoble communities to transform livelihoods.

³⁹ The image refers to Jesus Christ's sacrificial carrying of the cross to the place of the skull so that He could die and redeem mankind.

Harrison and Eppel appear to insist on institutionalising racial prejudices over land using African corruption as an excuse, yet values should never be cast in stone. Further, their representations demonstrate that transforming people's attitudes on issues as critical as the land should never be left to chance. The sweetness of power and privilege that both novels expose make it clear that it is naïve to assume that those who have tasted power, irrespective of race, will peacefully relinquish the social and economic power/privileges they once enjoyed. Yet, ironically, "the meaning of freedom will fade quickly if black and white fight over something (land) that does not belong to them" (Sandile Memela, *Mail and Guardian*, April 30 to May 6 2010). These observations take us into the critique of the Zimbabwean farm frontier in Pauline Henson's *Case Closed*.

4.3 *Case Closed: A Detective Story Set in Zimbabwe (Case Closed) (2004)*

4.3.1 A Synopsis

This narrative is an enthralling detective story set in Zimbabwe involving George Shamba, a prominent black commercial farmer and successful businessman from the early 1980s. The events shift around George's farm, Mavhuradonha, and St Francis Mission outside Gweru, and Harare. The investigating duo is Detective Chief Inspector Caleb Dube and his lieutenant Sergeant Musindo. They are investigating Shamba for the mysterious murder of a senior government official, Ben Bvunza. Driving home to Gweru on a Sunday evening, the Chief Inspector discovers the body of a "best dressed man" in a storm drain at the turn-off to St Francis Mission. The circumstantial evidence overwhelmingly implicates Shamba for his business partner, Ben Bvunza's death.

Thereafter, Shamba's farm-workers give accounts of their criminal implication in the disposal of Ben Bvunza's warm corpse away from Mavhuradonha Farm using their employer's Toyota motor car. The investigating duo excavates the murky world of Mavhuradonha. At the moment that the case is about to be concluded, the investigating duo is instructed to close the case and surrender all the evidence to the Assistant Commissioner. They go on a four-week forced paid leave. The Attorney General's office

protects Shamba on account of his being a national example of black successful commercial farming.

4.3.2 Neo-colonial images of land and identity on the Zimbabwean farm frontier

Case Closed ironically allows readers to reflect on the “modern Western view of social atomism” (Bennett, 2011: 239) that the individualised space of the commercial farm represents. In George Shamba’s life as farm-owner, one sees a philosophy that is counter to the indigenous philosophy of land and life. The miniature farm frontier as represented by Shamba shows the obscenity of opulence in the midst of reeking impoverishment, a shocking post-2000 Zimbabwean reality. His individualism is shown to be the legacy of the Zimbabwean English education system that now manifests itself on the commercial farm frontier. It is also reflective of the residual effects of the colonial farm frontier – an individualism that “is part of the legacy of fragmentation in science and society and, as such, it detracts from the wholeness which is characteristic of traditional African thought” (Ramose, cited in Bennett, 2011: 239). Subtly, *Case Closed* calls for some reflection on social values and emerging perspectives on black elite land ownership and images of success in post-independence Zimbabwe.

The text exposes the affluence, comfort and security of the farmhouse that the new African landed-gentry enjoy in post- independence Zimbabwe against the insecurity, poverty and malleable existence of the compound-sheltered farm-labourers. The indigenous commercial farmer, if he follows the direction of his predecessors on the farms, “replace[s] one form of exploitation by another, more ruthless [in] form” (Abrahams, 2000: 377). The struggle on the farm frontier becomes more complex as labourers have to deal with bigoted black farm-owners like Shamba. Shamba claims not to interfere “in [his] workers’ private lives” (p. 95) on account that he is not his “brother’s keeper” (p. 95).

The socially atomised life is not only evident in Shamba, but also in the labourers who exist as individual expendable entities. The common interest that brings these workers together at Mavhuradonha Farm is poverty and the need to eke out a living. “Each person

is a distinct and independent unit, the bearer of individual rights [and entitlements] and linked to the others around it only by contract” (Bennett, 2011: 239). To this end, their lives of lack make them susceptible to “oppression, injustice and moral degradation” (Thomas, 1996: 261) as they strive to survive. Chenedza and Dembo’s fate in the Ben Bvunza murder investigation in the narrative highlights this marginalised demographic group’s temptation to be dishonest in trying to make up for monetary/material inadequacies.

Much as Mavhuradonha Farm may not be typical of all black commercial farms as Harare is not typical of Zimbabwe, it mirrors the circumscribed and “murky world” (Kangira, 2004) of dehumanised existence on the Zimbabwean indigenous-owned commercial farm. Practices, fears, attitudes, relationships, the hostile environment and atomised existence at the farm imprison its inhabitants. It would appear that the farm-owner, the farm-worker and the top government official alike, lives using values that are alien to their indigenous African cultural values in the pursuit of money and power. It becomes compelling that for meaningful transformation to take place in people’s lives at the commercial farms, a holistic approach to rehabilitating a people’s sense of human worth would be imperative.

4.3.3 Continuities: Pre- to post-independence Zimbabwean farm frontier.

Case Closed challenges the perception that all African-owned farms in post-independence Zimbabwe may have been violently acquired. Not all black-owned commercial farms are a product of “farming families [that] had been ‘Jambanja’d’ by organised bunches of drugged-up thugs paid to intimidate and humiliate [the white farmers] and ensure [their] demise” (Barker, 2007: vii). Shamba bought Mavhuradonha Farm in 1983. He could have been one among few “qualified black farmers who bought land on individual title” (MacGarry, 1994: 8), yet their existence would not change the land distribution patterns in the country.

Unlike Harrison’s farm labour in *Jambanja* that appears to be traumatised by the land invasions and the dilemma that their employer’s farm dispossession has caused them,

Shamba's farm labour is represented in what is seemingly a tranquil and stable environment. The historical and cultural significance of land in the formation of personal and social identities in these workers' lives therefore do not quickly surface. Preponderance about perceptions of identity and the farm-life is also hidden, especially in a set-up whereby the indigenous workers are seemingly satisfied with their condition and pledge unquestioning loyalty to their indigenous employer. What appears apparent is their entrapment by an institutionalised system that affords no alternative for the marginalised.

Further, as depicted in black and white-authored Zimbabwean literature in English and the indigenous languages, the farm frontier is an affront to African dignity and humanity. It remains a foreign concept according to the indigenous Zimbabwean philosophy of land. However, despite this reality, there are indigenous commercial farmers and businessmen who have embraced this alien concept of land and social relationships and made successes of themselves in that regard. Ironically, Shamba's image shows that the successes evince "a deep sense of cultural and psychological alienation" (Mazama, 2003: 13) because Shamba "flings himself upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man" (Ibid):

Dube could hardly believe his eyes. There in front of him was the English scene replicated in Zimbabwe, even to the hunting prints around the wall. If it had been a white commercial farmer they had been visiting Dube supposed he might have credited what he saw, but Shamba was as black and as African as Musindo or himself... (p. 93).

Shamba's detachment from an anticipated Africanness cannot be veiled. Images of the post-independence farm echo farm novels like Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*, Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm*, Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* and Paul Chidyausiku's *Dzasukwa Mwana Asina Hembe*. These novels almost uniformly explore the black and white psyches on the colonial farm and how the farm regime translates itself into a frontier that separates the black and white races. Whilst the farmhouse is symbolic of affluence, power and security, the labourers' compound remains the antithesis in the manner that it depicts poverty, insecurity, domination and temporariness of the labourer's stay on the farm. Their temporary stay reduces them into expendable

objects, more so when they “sold their labour to the highest bidder” (p. 100) like Freddy Ndlovu does.

Further, from the ideology of the settler colonial farm, the Zimbabwean farm as private property is personally-owned geographical space under the dominion of a single owner, whose sole purpose is creating wealth by any means necessary. The African land and its indigenous farm labour replicate the settler farm trope of the labourer as the producer of wealth, but never the partaker of the fruit of his labour. For this reason, Chirere (2004) observes:

The farm remains psychologically external to the settler’s nature... For the black farm labourer the farm is a lived irony. It is a familiar but perverted territory. Although the farm is situated in a familiar territory, it remains external to the black man’s nature because it is organised for purposes outside his indigenous philosophy. The black labourer on the farm is consistently uneasy with both the farm and the white-master.

In Henson’s narrative, the farm constitutes a closed socio-geographical frontier that gives readers snippet insights into the post-colonial farm physical spaces and psychologies. These trajectories offer more complex discourses (Chennells, 1982: 163) on the images and myths of the Zimbabwean farm. They explore the gulf between master and servant on the Zimbabwean farm, myths of authority in the now independent black-ruled nation state, myth of black savage domination, indigenous farm-owner’s subtle brutality and spiritual depravity that could be perceived as characteristic of the new landed-gentry. Henson’s focus on predatory effects of capitalism on the Zimbabwean farm is ideologically and historically significant. Intra-racial social injustice and steep intra-racial material inequalities on the Zimbabwean farm show some self-serving elite that pays lip-service to the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* that is grounded in reciprocity. The backdrop of the revolutionary propaganda and communal value of land against the antithetical capitalist economic demands make the black relationships Henson explores intriguing.

Shamba’s obsession with power, wealth and authority that is traced to the influence of the Zimbabwean English-based education — Shakespeare’s Scottish play *Macbeth* — adds a dimension that requires intrinsic investigation into the philosophy shaping perceptions of

identities in post-independence Zimbabwe, especially the school curricula. Shamba and Bvunza used literary codes in their communication. One of Shamba's coded letter to Bvunza read: "C.S.P. 1. Vii.59. V. V.20 and 415-14152089147-2091212-2515-85118-6181513-135" (p. 135). The latter part of the coded message is later interpreted to mean "Things fall apart. The centre cannot hold: Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" (p. 143) from Keats' poem. The code shows how colonisation denies Shamba an African humanity as he strives for equality that white superiority denies him. The situation remains true to many Zimbabweans striving for sophistication in order to be accommodated among whites — dislocated from the African land and themselves.

Further, the narrative could also be attributing these glaring inhuman practices to the influences of capitalism or the weaknesses for self-aggrandisement that sees Shamba implicating himself in illegal arms deals with foreign nationals. Closely coupled with the foregoing is the narrative's exploration of corruption on some Zimbabwean farms. Shamba's case exposes corruption that has become endemic in most of the country's institutions, made formidable because of its hierarchical nature. Bringing up this subject on matters pertaining to land and notions of social identities and un/belonging re-introduces thematic concerns raised much earlier in Musengezi's *The Honourable MP*, Mujajati's *Rain of my blood* and Aaron Chiundura Moyo's *Kuridza Ngoma Nedemo*.

However, as hinted elsewhere in this chapter, it would appear naive to divorce these images from the complex and indirect relations between the ideology of the world that the author represents on one hand, and the ideological world that the Zimbabwean farmer inhabits on the other hand. The narrative, thus, becomes a double-edged sword in its critique of the post-independence Zimbabwean farm. These worlds appear to be totally different from *kumusha*⁴⁰ (p. 144) where Musindo goes for psychological and spiritual replenishment after the Assistant Commissioner orders him and Detective Chief Inspector Caleb Dube to abruptly close the Shamba murder case. Freddy Ndlovu's perception of

⁴⁰ Rural home that reconnects one with psycho-spiritual security embedded in the protective communal environment.

home similarly paints an image contrastive to that of the farm which is entrenched in the dehumanising practices of profiteering from human flesh.

Reading *Case Closed*, one feels uneasiness in the unusual way that George Shamba relates with his environment and others. With the settler farm and land at the heart of the liberation struggle ideology, there is a sense in which one feels that Shamba's perception of humanity can only be regained through the wealth generated at the former settler farm. In his mind, the personalised power that the farm sphere symbolises can make him regain and re-assert what he perceives as the lost African dignity and humanity. Curiously, however, whilst African life and success have their fulcrum on family life, despite his affluence, Shamba appears to have no family. There is no reference to Shamba's family. It would appear that he is celibate. He has long-serving workers from the time of the purchase of the farm who are unquestionably loyal.

With a mentality of not being his brother's keeper, it would appear that Shamba psychologically thrives on a philosophy that he knows is external to him. It is also averse to the indigenous philosophy of *humwe* whose conception of both land and life should keep him bonded with relatives and community. Buxton's argument on the Western commerce's commoditisation of and profiteering on human flesh that heavily influenced Rhodes' perceptions about Africans (Thomas, 1996: 106) may absolve the psychologically alienated Shamba:

In the late twentieth century [or early twenty-first century Rhodes' creed that remains with us here and now] may seem patronising and offensive. It placed little or no value on African achievement and culture and assumed that the greatest gift that could be bestowed on the African was the opportunity to work, live and pray as a white man...

George Shamba's affluence and stasis at his big farm are symbolically represented through his farmhouse activities and furnishings. Activity at the farm ticks like clockwork despite there being any apparent supervision. The big meticulous farmhouse, outhouses, store-rooms and the farm generally remain unruffled. The compound-housed workers straggle to the farm office to collect their orders despite the ominous absence of the foreman Philemon Dembo and cattleman Takemore Chenedza.

Apart from the opulence of the farmhouse, Dube and Musindo “saw George Shamba as he obviously saw himself and wanted others to see him, like an English country gentleman...Dube looked...and what he remembered was in another continent... see[ing] how the landed gentry still live, just like you read about in classic English novels!” (p. 93). Further to the amazement of the duo, especially Chief Inspector Dube who recollects his visit whilst in London to “a typical country gentleman’s estate with its model farm, just as it had been for centuries” (p. 93), Shamba’s commercial farm life replicates these English scenes. His typical “English” breakfast “fit for a Squire before he went off for a day’s hunting!” (p. 93).

The huge disparity between the few wealthy farmers and the majority indigenous poor farm workers in post-2000 Zimbabwe is still very real. This is despite the propaganda of black empowerment and promises of equitable land redistribution that galvanised the masses’ support for the protracted armed liberation struggle that won Zimbabwe’s independence. *Case Closed* thus explores one major obstacle that still dogs the Zimbabwean society in their struggles for meaningful social transformation. As explored in the narrative, realities on the Zimbabwean farm raise more questions than answers. It would appear that avarice plunges the affluent indigenous farm owner like George Shamba, “the wealthy commercial farmer in Gweru” (p. 88), deeper into crime. The conditions of abject poverty for the marginalised farm workers render them susceptible to exploitation and manipulation by their filthy rich employers. For example, the cattleman Takemore Chenedza admits to the investigating duo:

Because he offered us ten thousand dollars! ...Ten thousand dollars for half an hour’s work! How the hell could I refuse that and he said it would be all right...(p. 85).

But I’m not paid to think and I’m not very good at it anyway, so I just put it out of my mind and had a good evening at the pub (p. 86).

Chenedza’s mental enslavement is evident: “I was just making sure I got paid for doing the dirty work – as usual” (p. 85), acknowledging that he is “not paid to think” (p. 86). Douglass (1969: 247) makes clear that “a [people] without [rights] is without the essential dignity of humanity.” Also, without responsibilities, the farm labourers find

themselves reduced into perpetual infants whose destiny must be decided for them by others. Baldwin (1961: 99) emphasises that “it is not a pretty thing to be a father and be ultimately dependent on the power and kindness of some other man for the well-being of your house”. Therefore, in abdicating responsibility for his actions and life, Chenedza denies himself entitlement to authentic humanity and manhood. The same could also apply to Zimbabweans for abdicating social responsibility and entrusting social transformation into the hands of the politicians alone.

Chenedza’s admission also reinforces the tragedy of silence emanating from the condition of domination: “In the culture of silence the masses are ‘mute’, that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformation of their [lives or] society” (Friere, 1972 cited in Archer and Costello, 1990: 114).

Further, it would appear that the narrative suggests that with the country inheriting and transposing the colonial agro-based capitalist economy onto the new nation state, it is most likely that the culture of silence may remain endemic. It should therefore not come as a surprise to note the stasis at the indigenous-owned Mavhuradonha Farm. Mainly coming from the background of acute poverty and capitalist training in British oriented institutions and systems, it is also curious to note whether Zimbabwe’s new landed-gentry holding the country’s major resources can resist amassing wealth at the expense of the impoverished masses.

Shamba denies that “anything two farm labourers said or did could possibly implicate” (p. 96) him. He is immune on account of being a “widely known and respected commercial farmer. [He] is on the Board of Directors of several companies and [he] has business interests all over the country and abroad... [He has] considerable influence with some very important people, including those right at the top” (p. 96) and is not just “some hick farmer’ (p. 96). It becomes worrisome that with such widely connected and influential indigenous farm owners, who at the snap of a finger can influence policy change and practice, the living and working conditions on the Zimbabwean farm in the post-2000 period remain pitiful. However, from an Afrocentric perspective, it takes one

peasant rising, like Freddy does, for there to be human progress (Fanon, 1967: 166). Yet, options that are viable to one group of workers may not be favourable to many. The costs are too high, but forced into circumstances, human beings could adopt unimaginable options. Unfortunately, people find themselves trapped. In the absence of government intervention to safeguard the welfare of the farm workers, the oppressed and exploited workers could resort to action that might be disruptive to everyone's livelihoods. Shamba's condition and circumstances replicate that of the dislodged Rhodesian commercial farm frontier that held the majority of the indigenous population to ransom in its hold of the country's prime land and the economic resources. People are products of their cultures. As argued elsewhere, it would be out of step out of step to expect black farmers to operate using principles that are opposed to the cradle of capitalism that nurtured their tastes and perceptions of humanity. These, however, are some of the problems that need to be confronted by Zimbabweans so as to avoid replication of past injustices.

Therefore, following the steps of the colonial farm frontier's images of success and power, the new landed-gentry appears not to disturb the system that nourishes their atomised existence. Because of their control of the country's major source of sustenance, their influence subtly pervades the other state institutions. As is discussed elsewhere, Shamba's acquittal of murder charges, illegal deals in arms of war, illegal foreign currency deals and illegal deals in the precious stones of the country, give an irrefutable example of the extent of their influence. It also unfortunately points to a justice system that is seriously flawed, as it is skewed in favour of the most influential members of society. If left unchecked, such developments, which run counter to efforts aimed at promoting human dignity and self-worth, can seriously undermine social cohesion and social progress in post-independence Zimbabwe.

The tragedy is that such individuals are culturally dislocated and alienated from the African social values that should be the basis of their social power and influence. Discussing the importance of African traditional religion in regulating social behaviour Bennett (2011: 236) observes:

The life of the individual is understood as participated life. The members of the tribe, clan, the family know that they live not by a life of their own but by that of the community. ... [A]bove all they know that their life is a participation in that of ancestors.

This philosophy that entwines the destiny of the individual with that of his community and solicits for individuals' allegiance to their communities is directly opposed to the capitalist individualism, thriving on exploitation of the majority by minority holders of resources. The affluent influential top government officials like Ben Bvunza who are drunk "with the wealth and privilege that was once exclusively white" (p. 127) embrace the 'modern' self-annihilating philosophy of success. Thus, the link between the top government officials and the indigenous commercial farmers make them top culprits of corruption. They connive to protect their capitalist interests. Henson's directors of Shamba Enterprises appear to explain this mysterious link. Magosvongwe's short story, "Fire Fighting", in Nyota et al (2010), similarly explores this subject of hierarchical corruption that undermines Zimbabweans' efforts to achieve sustainable socio-economic development using the country's natural resources.

The deaths of Ben Bvunza and Philemon Dembo that are both directly linked to Shamba offer readers snippets into the murky world of a Zimbabwean farm. Ironically, the narrative implicitly postulates that the official image of the indigenous-owned Zimbabwean farm is like that of the serene and successful Mavhuradonha Farm. The veneer of success, loyalty and good workmanship on the farm serve the ideological needs of the moment that advocate indigenising land-ownership, the country's mineral resources and the economy in general.

Subtly replicating the miniature colonial state that the settler farm projected, the Zimbabwean farm may be argued to be a miniature of the new nation state. Characterised by the dilemmas of existential ideologies, its privately-owned geophysical space and murky world as is the case with Mavhuradonha Farm, should remain closed to the outside world. With the Assistant Commissioner personally taking responsibility of closing the Shamba case and confiscating all gathered evidence, the narrative goes beyond the

corruption issue to touch on the pervasion of morality – “Things fall apart”. Touching Shamba means that the whole edifice crumbles and blows in the face of the administration:

Apparently, it is not considered to be in the national interest to prosecute Mr Shamba, he is – and I quote – too valuable an example of indigenous success. His prosecution would be counter-productive to the good of the nation as a whole (p. 142).

The question is, what are the indicators or markers of success and from whose point are they defined? For, as Clarke (1993: 3) argues, “no people can borrow a[n] [identity] from another and still retain their self-respect and self-confidence.” The resonating irony embedded in the justification for dropping the murder and corruption charges against the prominent Gweru farmer, Shamba, lampoons at the administration’s rhetoric and the venerated law enforcement agents for their being “barricades for the revolution” (p. 93).

The rhetoric of success based on wholesale copying of alien values takes away the hallmark of true liberation that the indigenisation of land-ownership purports to represent. It undermines “a revolutionary act of liberation ... [and] a solid ground upon which we can build economic and political power, and return to a sense of purpose and destiny” (Ani and Williams, 2003: 18). The fact that justice is portrayed as selective contradicts the very tenets of *humwe/ hunhu/Ubuntu* (Oneness as embedded in Mbiti’s conception of African humanity – *I am because we are*) upon which traditional social justice is rooted. Selective justice slaps the philosophy of *humwe* in the face.

By acquitting Shamba of murder charges, the justice system challenges the whole notion of exemplary conduct and reciprocation of relationships that should regulate the welfare of society in the new dispensation. This perversion of justice robs Shamba of an opportunity to re-discover his lost identity because he never gets “to know [himself] and the world around [him]” (Bennett, 2011: 238, citing Ramose). However, through this miscarriage of social justice, the narrative warns against the “black skin white masks”

syndrome that undermines a people's true sense of themselves. This aspect is not just characteristic of the Zimbabwean farm, but other government institutions as well.

Further, in addition to the corruption that is thriving because of the conditions created by inequality and inequitable distribution of resources, the rich keep getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The poor farm-workers continue in abject poverty, striving to eke out an existence. Freddy Ndlovu had been a casual labourer all his working life and had moved about from one commercial farm to another.

He could turn his hand to any job on a farm and this made him a very useful man to have around; Freddy knew his worth and sold his labour to the highest bidder, at the present time it was George Shamba. Almost every cent Freddy earned went back to his family in Tsholotsho and as soon as he was ready, that was where Freddy was going to (p. 100).

The psychological insecurities that the likes of Freddy have to continue to endure in a country brimming with natural resources and large tracts of land owned by the rich few are regrettable. The black-white racial dichotomy that was alleged to have “denied the blacks their true identity” (Moyana, 2000 unpublished thesis) appears to be cracking. For a long while this dichotomy has been used to ideologically explain the inequalities and disparities in the ownership and enjoyment of resources. The black-white dichotomy has been made to appear as the underlying cause of the glaring inequalities, marginalisation of the blacks and the subsequent abject poverty in spiritual and material terms.

Many African and white-authored literary narratives like Alex Haley's *Roots*, Frederick Douglass' *The Life and Narrative of Frederick Douglass*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, Charles Samupindi's *Death Throes*, Harrison's *Jambanja*, Doris Lessing's *The grass is singing*, among others, inherently show that racial oppression has been the major cause of black marginalisation. The works of Thomas (1996) and Samkange (1982) that trace the systematic manner in which Rhodes' grand colonial project worked on the African to despise himself and his African background, show the race card as a major player in shaping the psychologies of both black and white races in colonial Rhodesia.

However, colonial ideology notwithstanding, *Case Closed* appears to challenge the continued use of race as a smokescreen for the condition of oppression, exploitation and domination on the Zimbabwean farm:

When we give to racism in Africa this kind of centrality of explanation, we confirm the status of the black body as a mere item of data to be deployed in the grammar of political argument, rather than affirm it as violated humanity (Ndebele, 2009: 11).

Henson challenges continual use of racism as a crutch for people's failures in life. In respect of Freddy's taking responsibility for his life she observes: "Freddy was his own man, he did not need to bow to anyone. Respect and courtesy he understood but servility was simply not in the man's nature" (p. 101). It would appear that the narrative lampoons at the political rhetoric that fails to recognise the humanity and needs of the majority of the farm-workers who continue to languish in poverty. The post-independence indigenous empowerment ideology appears not to have transformed into "a practical and lived experience that empowers the adherents" (Magosvongwe, 2008: 78):

a man in his mid to late thirties, but he looked older. Burned deep umber by his days working out in the sun, Freddy was a small wiry man... When he smiled, which was often, Freddy's eyes disappeared into a mass of folds and wrinkles (p. 100).

The few landed-gentry who now have monopoly of land and other natural resources like Shamba continue to have unlimited and limitless opportunities to create and amass wealth⁴¹ to the point of even threatening the security of the state, and are left unscathed by the law. It is this narrative's view that much as propaganda may try, the life conditions on the Zimbabwean farm cannot be transformed outside the political, social and ideological influences that inform and shape the environment on the farms. The Shambas that threaten to ruin an otherwise noble drive to indigenise land-ownership and

⁴¹ The Herald, Wednesday 25 April 2012 carries a story about former Reserve Bank Governor, Dr Kombo Moyana embroiled in an acrimonious land dispute with new farmers at Calgary Farm in Mazowe District. Whereas the new farmers have no other farming land, Dr Moyana has subdivided the farm for sale into residential stands.

the economy thrive because of their connections with the powers that be, holding everyone ransom.

Rampant abuses of the farm-labour continues to flourish unabated because of the unchanging conditions on the Zimbabwean farm as evidenced by Freddy Ndlovu, Takemore Chenedza and Philemon Dembo's experiences at Shamba's Mavhuradonha Farm. *Jambanja* discussed earlier, similarly corroborate the fate of the farm-worker that has hardly changed three decades into Zimbabwe's independence. Like *Jambanja*, Jim Barker's *Paradise Plundered: The story of a Zimbabwean Farm* ironically unashamedly celebrates the colonial transformation of farm-labour into chattel, a condition that Henson subtly critiques. Perceptions of farm-labour as chattel have been further emboldened by the domination of the same black labour by insensitive black farm-owners — the new English Country-Squires (p. 93). Unlike the scenario on the colonial settler farm whereby labourers "deserted" and "absconded... in their droves" (Barker, 2007: 71), in the post-2000 scenario, Mavhuradonha Farm begs that African disenfranchisement, dehumanisation and "temporariness" on the land be critiqued beyond racial conquest and land alienation.

Though it may not necessarily be typical of the story of all Zimbabwean farms, anymore than Harare is typical of Zimbabwe, Cape Town typical of South Africa or London typical of England, the tragedy of Zimbabwe's Shambas is "to be so conditioned by the system as to make even our most well-considered resistance to fit within the system, both in terms of the means and of the goals" (Ndebele citing Steve Biko in *The Steve Biko Memorial Lectures*, 2009: 11). Shamba's replication of English country farm life in an environment reeking with the poverty of his farm, speaks of the "blinding sterility at the centre of" (Ibid: 10) self-centredness and the psychology of inferiority goading the black commercial farmer. This partly explains the depravity that drives Shamba to murder Bvunza, a business partner. The only time that Shamba speaks in his mother tongue was when he called out to assure the assembled farm-workers that he would return to Mavhuradonha soon despite the arrest: "*Endererai mberi nebasa...hazvina mhosva, ndichadzoka, ndichadzoka manje manje*"(p. 98). Shamba's arrest makes him realise that

he needs the sympathy of his workers. He can be equally dominated like his workers. The realisation, however, is short-lived.

His involvement with the Botswana commercial farmer Johannes du Preez who believes that the country has gone to the dogs shows Shamba's inability "to separate [their] thought from European thought, so as to visualize a future that is not dominated by Europe" (Ani 1994: 2). This is Africa's tragedy – lack of confidence in African philosophies and systems. Shamba's dealing in "the assortment of weapons...enough to start a small war" (p. 106) shows his obsession with power to the point of disregarding the price that Africa has paid in funding wars that have maimed her men, women and children (p. 104). As Ngugi (2009: 57) observes in respect of dangers of cultural domination, "it is more subtle and its effects long-lasting...fear not those who kill the body but those who kill the spirit".

The unearthing of the arms cache at Mavhuradonha Farm on 25 May coincides with Africa Day. This symbolically resonates with Africa Union's mandate to mobilise as a block to defend the broad interests of the African people across the continent. Ironically, the farm frontier as a self-contained regime poses a threat to African cohesion and stability. The Zimbabwean commercial farm has transformed itself into a neo-colonial instrument that perpetually undermines the African's quest for regaining and re-asserting trounced human worth. It remains an oppressive encasement controlled and policed through alien discourses and practices (Furusa, 2006: 2).

Using Fanonian discourse to explain this phenomenon, reflecting the degenerative effects of colonialism and capitalist materialism, Mazama (2003: 14) observes:

The problem is that many colonized people, while attempting to free themselves from colonial subjugation, remain stuck in those racist colonial categories, and thus, proclaim their blackness to themselves and the world, while ... the real issue is the liberation and building of 'man' in each of us.

For Zimbabwe's Shambas, "to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the [former colonial] *oppressor*" (Freire, 1995: 45). Thus, in the narrative's view, if the farm frontier is to go by, it would be simplistic to talk about a collective, homogenous, as well as sensitive black identity in post-independence Zimbabwe.

The continual self-hatred of the African man and woman, and their hatred for each other are rooted in the life of mutilated identities and the dependency syndrome that farm life engenders. This is ironic at a time and in a country whereby land policies are designed to empower the marginalised majority. Their mutilated individual and social identities as farm labourers condition them to a point of willingly giving themselves up to a life of exploitation and subjugation. The condition on the Zimbabwean farm would therefore call for intense critical scrutiny and reflection with a view to transforming attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of human dignity. For people to re-claim their human self-worth and their mutilated identities they should be unfettered from the psychological delusion of remaining "beings for the other" (Freire, 1995: 12).

4.3.4 Criminalisation of land through the farm frontier

From the labourers' perspective, every man is an atomised entity. For example, Chenedza admits his hatred for Dembo:

...that bastard Dembo just made me so angry! All these years he's been getting all perks and privileges; the trips outside the country, the accommodation in the main house and all the rest while I was stuck down in the compound. Yet I've worked at Mavhuradonha as long as he has, so why shouldn't I get my fair share? (p. 85)

Chirere (2004) makes interesting observations that may explain Chenedza's annoyance at being debased but never rewarded. Like in the slave narrative, Dembo's stay in the farmhouse "is invitation to closer proximity with power and civilization. In Hove's *Bones* Chisaga the cook is considered very privileged because he works in the white man's house." Similarly, in Chenedza and any labourer's eyes, Dembo partakes of the much yearned for English "civilisation" by sleeping in the farmhouse with his employer.

Yet, ironically, the reason why Dembo takes his life is because he may never have enjoyed the white man's power like Shamba, his employer and the farm owner. Dembo's position may have been a teaser of the potential power he could wield, a fact supported by his foreman position at the farm. "It is also to come close to seeing the ordinary humanity of the powerful [farm owners]/whites without being allowed to partake of that humanity", Chirere submits.

Intercepted and arrested by the police whilst coming back from one of his Shamba-engineered trips to the Botswana commercial farmer du Preez, after Bvunza's death and the disappearance of the deceased's Porsche motor car, Dembo realises his inescapable imprisoned condition.

And there, hanging suspended by a twisted grey prison blanket from the grille in the wall was Philemon Dembo; his eyes still staring at nothing and his tongue protruded and swollen. Philemon Dembo would speak no more; he had taken his own way out (p. 88).

Ironically, however, the quest for power becomes a fetish that cannibalises even the loyalist underdog at the farm. Shamba's wealth, avarice and hunger for power continue to be manifest:

Here we are going to see this man who has everything that money can buy, but he still wants more and is even prepared to kill to get it and yet these poor devils haven't even got a roof over their heads or the price of a loaf of bread (p. 91).

His unquenchable hunger for power makes him a prisoner psychologically and symbolically, his farm boxes him in. This condition makes Shamba susceptible to neo-colonial manipulation. This manifests itself in the transnational transactions and international partners that Shamba keeps open at Mavhuradonha Farm.

Mr Shamba has lots of visitors... some of them have been Portuguese and some French-speaking. ... Even Afrikaans... Mr Shamba would often take his visitors around the farm showing them the cattle and the dams and the fishing lodge (p. 104).

Like those of his ilk, du Preez is alleged to be a bitter man who “believes that Africa has gone to the dogs” (p. 114) and “something has to be done to reverse the situation” (p. 114). The farm becomes the frontier that serves these private sinister interests that threaten the security and stability of the new black nation state. “The ‘Rhodesia never dies’ trope to spread propaganda about white invincibility” (Manase, 2011: 27 citing Chennells 1982, 1991, 1995)” manifests itself subtly in the narrative.

The investigating duo unveils what they perceive as the possible link between Shamba and his foreign visitors at the farm – “precious stone in exchange for guns!”(p.103). Images flashed through Dube’s mind:

a never ending parade of horror. A tiny baby, not more than nine months old clinging to its dead mother’s breast; bewildered children with bloody limbs torn off, their great dark eyes begging for pity in a world where there seemed to be no sanity or mercy; boy soldiers, their faces masks of blind hatred as they fired into crowds of innocent civilians and the endless streams of refugees fleeing from wars they do not understand; wars led by power-hungry men who care for nothing but their own ambition (p. 103)

Land becomes criminalised in its seeming connivance with Shamba and his international partners who conceal their sinister arms deals using the farm environs and related farming activities. Shamba does not care about the propensity of death and destruction on the African continent as a result of such dealings. It is also ironic that in its efforts to ride on power gained through policies that may not have been thought-through, the government’s acquittal of Shamba appears as face-saving so as to justify black elite land ownership. Several challenges and contradictions appear to emerge from the foreboding new commercial farm as an impenetrable frontier.

In the narrative’s view, indigenisation of commercial land ownership appears to be fraught with sadism. Apart from self-centredness coupled with the materialistic new black land owners’ yearning for white civilisation, the new nation-state would appear to have no grand plan to salvage its marginalised majority, choosing to bask in the success of the few black commercial farmers. In the narrative’s view, the rape of the African

land, the exploitation and illegal deals in its minerals, as well as the exploitation and manipulation of the farm labour on the Zimbabwean commercial farm goes deeper than race. The appreciation of oppression and domination on the Zimbabwean post-independence commercial farm would therefore appear to be more complex than meets the eye.

The novel challenges the national grand narrative about colonial settlers' exploitation and cultural domination of the indigenous farm labour. Whilst the colonial settler myth also thrives on "taming" the African jungle and its African inhabitants as is shown in various Zimbabwean novels – from colonial to post-2000, *Case Closed* similarly exposes the deeply entrenched residual effects of settler colonial ideology, in addition to pitfalls of corruption on the Zimbabwean farm.

The novel "underscores the significance of land in the formation of identities, the creation and dislocation of social relationships and the crafting of social and imaginative aesthetics" (Manase 2011: 28). It is imperative that Zimbabweans should reflect, introspect and act upon the contradictions emanating from the potent land-cum-identity images characterising the post-independence farm frontier. The quest for black liberation and realistic empowerment would be unattainable as long as domination and exploitation of others, as evidenced through the post-independence farm frontier, remain intact as a system. The marginalised are always at the mercy of those who supply food and other materials for sustenance. In Freirean terms, the challenge also arises as to how dialogue can be initiated without appearing to be manipulating these victims of oppression. Thus, to discuss and interrogate the condition of the oppressed at Mavhuradonha Farm that is intricately interwoven with examining the condition of the oppressor risks being construed as propaganda. Returning to the source and excavating the root cause of these challenges and dealing with them decisively would be worth exploring. Looking deeper and searching deeper into the obtaining farm conditions offers an opportunity for the Zimbabwean society to learn from their experiences – past and present – so that people may confront the hurdles in the path to meaningful regeneration and transformation.

Further, the narrative also interrogates the commonly received notions of land as having multi-dimensional effects on notions of identity and class formation. Manase (2011: 28 citing Alexander, 2007: 183) observes:

[L]and is about identity as well as production and class formation; it is about aesthetic values and spiritual meaning, as well as being central to the construction of the institutions of state; it fires political struggles and violence alongside the literary imagination; and it is the basis for both building and breaking a host of social relationships. In all these guises, the meanings and value of the land are neither fixed nor uncontested. Land cannot be reduced to a static role in a single narrative.

In an assuming manner, the narrative challenges the above fiery notions about land, calling for intrinsic investigation into the psychological conditioning of the oppressed on the African farm in Zimbabwe's post-independence period. The farm frontier nurtures and conditions farm-owner and farm-worker into dehumanised beings. Both become victims who are erstwhile submerged in oppression—one an expendable being, and the other a prisoner blinded by avaricious accumulation of wealth. Both the oppressor and the oppressed should rise to respect the dignity and human worth of every person. Only then, could systems transform to curtail the wretched existence and obscene opulence on the farm frontier. Farm inhabitants should transform their attitudes and perceptions of humanity in order to escape fatalism that saps them both of life.

Furthermore, the tone of finality and futility encapsulated in the very title of this narrative would appear misleading. Whilst the knell of finality would render the narrative sadistic, its insistence that people should stop being beings for another cannot be ignored. Characters like Freddy challenge the notion that people can continue to be used as pawns or “things” predestined to satisfy the whims of unseen masters. Through fearlessness and purposeful existence, farm labourers have the ability and agency to transcend servility and transform their livelihoods as shown in Freddy's example (p. 101).

Therefore, in critiquing the perceptions of identity and conception of the farm-workers' consciousness, including the challenges that they need to surmount in their quest for liberation, the examination inadvertently embodies some reflection on the consciousness

of the new black landholder as well. Bemoaning the exploitation, manipulation, degradation, oppression and diminished self-efficacy of the farm-worker, as the novel appears to do, outside the violence of domination embedded in the post-independence farm frontier, amounts to tinkering on the surface of deeper problems that Zimbabweans should confront and address.

4.3. 5 Case Closed: Concluding notions

It would appear that the clear-cut notions of deprivation and oppression of the labourers and their erstwhile internalised “self-depreciation” (Freire, 1995: 45) may not necessarily be predicated on race. However, it would be invaluable to use cultural and historical memory in re-casting notions of identity. This is especially crucial at a time when the country should muster social cohesion in driving its indigenisation policies. Could Henson be using reverse psychology in bringing up all these hidden contradictions? The narrative’s lambasting of farm labourers’ amnesia and black farm-owners’ dislocation from the African philosophies of human worth and the land, would make it imperative for Africans to re-think ideology and identity.

The reverberating nuances of the indigenous-owned commercial farms and their direct link with illicit precious minerals deals involving top government officials and their cronies and the reverberating civil wars on the African continent offer a potent subject (p. 104). Avarice knows no race. Further, that the Shambas who are “too valuable an example of indigenous success” (p. 142) should keep treating everyone who has served their purpose as “expendable” (p. 140) and “[to] end in dusty death”(p. 140), challenges notions of *humwe* on issues relating to wealth creation and accumulation in post-independence Zimbabwe.

Critics would have hoped that the unique history that Africans share should anchor and inspire them to work together for a shared destiny of improved livelihoods and peaceful co-existence. Colonialism and its legacy structured African dispossession, discrimination and poverty. Like Appiah (1992: 72) observes: “for us to forget Europe is to suppress the conflicts that have shaped our identities”. The structured racial exclusion from the land

and the securities that it offers should therefore remind Zimbabweans not “to drink in all the poison of modern civilization and die from the effects of it” (Garvey, 1992: 13). Much as Zimbabwe may aspire to be absorbed into the community of nations, ironically, it is Zimbabweans who should determine their self-definition, not the du Preezes of Botswana. The Zimbabweans’ “search for, and commitment to a renewed understanding” (Boesak, 2006: 180) of their values and environment as an African people, calls for a “renewed application within the context of” (Ibid) the challenges they are grappling with.

4.6 Conclusion

The images of land and identity in the selected novel for this chapter appear to be largely exclusionary casting binaries of haves and have-nots. Despite vicissitudes of power in the neo-colonial phase, that Africans are cast as the inferior other to Europe is also apparent in all three narratives. Whilst *Jambanja* exposes that Africans have failed to handle land reform in a transparent and responsible manner, the lopsided version of history that the Rhodesian sensibility propagates ignores the hopes and aspirations of the marginalised Zimbabwean majority. In a similar vein, *Absent* lampoons African leadership’s failure to manage change on the land responsibly as evidenced in the deterioration of service delivery by local municipalities. The continuous reconstruction of history that Eppel propagates also distorts history as shown in his representation of George’s travails at the hands of a black madam. Also, the colonial farm miniature under black and foreign handlers as represented in *Case Closed*, and Freddy’s boldness to expose crime at Mavhuradonha Farm shows that change for human progress lies with the workers/peasants who have nothing to lose and everything to gain. For this reason, identities are never cast in stone, neither can land be singularly viewed in a narrative.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRACKING THE LAND TREKS IN POST-2000 ZIMBABWEAN SHORT STORIES

Happy is the traveller who is able to see the tree stumps in his way, for he can pull them up or walk around them so that they do not make him stumble (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1987:7)

5.0 Introduction

As already indicated in Chapter One, in post-2000 Zimbabwe, the land issue is a political as much as it is an economic issue. It has both international and local dimensions, dating back to the conquest of the land between the Zambezi and the Limpopo by white settlers. In as much as the land issue has received unprecedented media attention (Chari, 2010: 132), short stories in post-2000 Zimbabwe similarly give unprecedented attention to the subject. Writers' conceptions of, and perceptions about land have been as broad as societal interests. For instance, land has been viewed as an epitome of nationhood, ethnicity, cultural rootedness, betrayal, conflict, historical injustices, anarchy, crisis and unfinished business on the country's decolonisation agenda. This then makes the land issue in Zimbabwe "unfinished business" (Hammar and Raftopoulos, 2003), "unsettled land" (Alexander, 2007) and therefore "contested terrain" (Moyo et al, 2008) in the arts as much as it is across other disciplines and in real life. The short stories to be examined in this chapter therefore represent multi-dimensional constructions of the country's land historiography.

The chapter focuses on Memory Chirere's *Somewhere in This Country* (2006); Petina Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009) and Lawrence Hoba's *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009). Being a discipline that is mainly a product of social experiences, "literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society" (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1972: xv). The depictions in the mentioned short story collections are therefore useful in critiquing responses to the resettlement of the landless majority in post-2000 Zimbabwe. As Armah (2010: 33) rightly observes: "[I]t serves no purpose to focus on past harm done. The more reasonable approach is to see if the damage done by colonial

denial of African productivity ... is reversible". Through artistic images, this attitude could catapult post-2000 Zimbabwe into intrinsic self-renewal. Grundy (in Cantalupo, 1995: 144) observes:

Art in its fullest flowering celebrates and explores the full range of human emotions and responses. However, when it is yoked to a particular political programme or forced to respond to a narrow set of more or less predetermined social and political questions, it is bound to wither.

The chapter therefore critiques the short story collections' depictions of land and identity, and how these may help post-2000 Zimbabwean society's regeneration. This includes prospects for reconstituting conditions that promote social transformation. Worth noting are alternatives that liberate people from being slaves to their history by taking the society beyond political awakening and partisan political agendas in order to embolden people's efforts for renewed self-awareness. It is now common knowledge that land in post-2000 Zimbabwe has been viewed as the epicentre of Zimbabwe's problems. This chapter, therefore, is keen on examining the short story anthologies with a view of exploring the extent to which they open up physical and intellectual spaces that contribute to people's understanding of their potential, thus enabling them to take full responsibility for transforming post-2000 Zimbabwe for the general good. The short stories' tacit suggestions on practical ways to deal with Zimbabwe's seemingly interminable land frays will be noted. Keeping the majority of the population in mind, one would be keen on examining strategies that foster peace, oneness and human dignity. Moyo (in Stoneman and Bowyer-Bower, 2000: 74) sums this up as "benefit-oriented" vis-a-vis "cost-oriented" alternatives.

Whilst it is historically profound that colonialism mutilated land and sowed divisions and alienations among Africans through its destructive land policies, it is anticipated that the selected short stories challenge stereotypical and regurgitated images of land reform. The short stories in question deal with inconsistencies undermining the country's post-independence vision about land as a primary resource that should benefit those in need of it. Ngugi wa Thiongo argues that tomorrow is the harvest of what we plant today (Ngugi,

1987: 16). Hope for renewal then, could be reconstituted through the conditions that the Zimbabwean society creates for itself today.

The extent to which proffered images enrich understanding of Zimbabwe's deep-seated ideological differences over land resulting in unstable national and international relations is also worth noting. Only those short stories that directly draw readers' attention to land as the epicentre of Zimbabwe's problems are examined. In addition to exploring the nuances surrounding the multifaceted constructions of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land historiography, the chapter examines how the land metaphors in the short stories depict and reflect the diverse conceptions and constructions of identities.

5.1 *Somewhere in this country* (2006)

5.1.1 An overview

Depictions of land in Memory Chirere's *Somewhere in This Country* are drawn from the perspectives of the ordinary people and their mundane existence. The short stories to be critiqued include "Suburb", "Somewhere", "A roof to repair", "Maize", "Signs" and "Sitting carelessly". The last two stories break into the land repossessions and farm invasions phase that Hoba explores more intimately. The collection generally shows the ordinary people working with will to reconstitute their social connections and identities that have close affinity with the land. The common perspective displayed is that of land as a metaphor of life. In privileging the voices of the ordinary people, Chirere explores their anxieties, tensions and conflicts within the context of the post-2000 Zimbabwean land experiences.

Some in-depth appreciation of some of Chirere's short stories and images embedded in these stories, shows discernible influences of prominent thinkers of mainland Africa and the African Diaspora. For Chirere, Zimbabweans should constantly renew their self-efficacy in order to transform their livelihoods. Parry (2004: 37) similarly argues:

It is not the literal past, the "facts" of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language ... we must never cease renewing those images, because once we do, we fossilise.

Even if there could be pain in the night, joy comes in the morning. This positive thinking about experiences characterise Chirere's choice of images, foregrounding trajectories that can help to renew people's attitudes about their potential and creativity. For this reason, Chirere's short stories dwell on the ordinary people's continual efforts to reconnect with the land which in his view, is the genesis of life in its fullness. This is buttressed by Barclays (2010: 153), citing one of Mugabe's famous speeches :

Land comes first before all else...This is the one asset that only defines the Zimbabwean personality and demarcates sovereignty, ... an asset that has a direct bearing on the fortunes of the poor and prospects for their immediate empowerment and sustainable development.

Images embedded in Chirere's selected short stories demonstrate that for the African, the earth or land "is the home to all creation" (Feris and Moitui in Bennett, 2011: 202). Apart from land there are neither social nor spiritual connections to talk about. Land is intricately linked to the Zimbabweans social, spiritual and political identities. Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, land is the 'back' (*musana*) on which human beings and nature are carried (Hodza's *Ugo Hwamadzinza avaShona*⁴²). It gives physical space for characters to act out their lives whilst at the same time giving them sustenance for their livelihoods and ethos to guide their conduct. Chirere's stories suggest that at renewing connectivity with the land and its traditions through home-coming, resettlement and new land acquisitions, people would psychologically have renewed confidence in their human worth.

His stories view issues of illnesses, insanity and broken social relationships — including xenophobia, as manifestations of some disconnections with the land. "Keresenzia", "Beautiful children", "Watching" and "An old Man" partially reinforce this view. The stories suggest that rootedness that comes with belongingness on the land gives people assurances of psycho-social, spiritual and environmental security, thereby giving them both anchorage and the urge to carve better lives for themselves. Various, Chirere's short stories suggest that African livelihoods, identities, dignity, creativity, meaningful

⁴² In English it can be loosely translated as The Shona Peoples' Philosophy of Life.

social transformation and ultimate destinies can be regenerated mainly through the Africans' return to the source (Cabral, 1980) – the land and its unifying traditions. In a unique way, “Sitting carelessly” raises concerns about the migrant farm workers' relationships with land in the wake of exclusionary undertones embedded in conceptions of “belongingness” and “indigenous”.

5.1.2 Land, identity and renewal in *Somewhere in this Country*

The analysis focuses on Chirere's exploration of land as an allegory of renewal and how it affects identities. Not in any specific order, stories to be examined include “Suburb”; “Somewhere”; “Maize”; “A roof to repair”; “Signs” and “Sitting carelessly”, as already indicated. As in Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965), Chirere symbolically recuperates the myth of man and woman's bonding with the land and nature and the view that land is both spiritual anchor and heritage. “Somewhere” and “Maize” dramatise this peculiar aspect of Shona philosophy. “Maize” and “Watching” in which man and woman resettle on land that they now perceive as their own, show land as a signifier of restoration of harmony between man and nature. Chirere insinuates that for the African, identity was inscribed in the land and by implication, in usurping land, colonialism disrupted this identity. Colonialism's mutilation of the land and its traditions also fractured social relationships and man's relationship with the land as nature's assurance of a secure psycho-spiritual environment. The stories thus explore presuppositions “of a stable identity associated with landownership and land as a signifier of loss whose recovery would imply the recovery of an identity” (Ogude, 1999: 46).

The opening paragraphs of “Maize” show a woman “satisfied that she had come here and this beneath her feet was her land, soil. Her own virgin earth where one could dig and dig without striking rock. Here where ... one's soul crept into a hole and rested like some kind of veldt bird that develops a camouflaged nest on the ground” (p. 63). Her solitude is terminated by the arrival of a man seeking shelter from a rain storm. The man who claims to hail from Madziwa congratulates the woman for getting “this portion here... on [her] own” (p. 63). On his part, he shows lost opportunity and a yearning for owning land: “I am on my way back to Madziwa. These people say it is too late in the season to give me

acres. Ah, how I wish I had my own acres” (p. 63). Hanlon et al, (2013: 12) argue that history of commercial white farming and recent rural history combine to make farming seem an attractive way to provide for the family. This partially explains Chirere showing the satisfaction that the ordinary beneficiaries of land have with land redistribution after years of land alienation.

References to owning virgin earth where one could dig without hitting rock show aversion to colonial land policies that alienated Africans from productive land. That it is “virgin” also gives picture of land lying idle, perhaps kept for speculation purposes by the white predecessors, sharply contrasting with the overcrowded barren reserves like Madziwa. Communion with nature and pristine existence is also shown in the serenity of the environment. The story’s image of the woman’s soul resting in a hole like a veldt bird that develops a camouflaged nest in the ground buttresses this oneness with nature, implying serenity arising from re-connecting with the land.

The influx of Africans — men and women — converging on formerly alienated lands seeking new leases of life through land resettlement confirms land an issue of racial survival. Land-hunger is a common phenomenon among the ordinary Zimbabweans. As in real life, Africans, irrespective of ethnic background, are unified by their quest for land, a major factor undergirding post-2000 internal migration (Potts: 2011). New communities of people from different “places of origin and even mannerisms” (p. 63) are established, thus showing fluidity of identities in the resettlement phase. “Watching” (p. 44-46) that shows a couple freshly settled at the edge of a linear village similarly alludes to this phenomenon. Land-resettlement witnesses people discarding colonial constructions of identities that distorted the Africans’ social reality.

That “Maize” ends with the myth of creation dramatised by the romantic embrace between the resettled woman and the man from Madziwa shows Chirere legitimising the claim to land ownership. Land ownership is turned into a covenant between the Madziwa man and the newly-found woman companion. Land resettlement also reconnects people with the natural environment. That it is virgin land on which they consummate their

relationship makes it even more symbolic of the myth of creation. Land is represented as the “larger than life character which provides not only the physical context within which the lives of the other characters can be worked out, but also a force they can identify with” (Gikandi in Killam, 1984: 237).

It is worth noting that the story focuses on the joyous privilege of land ownership by an ordinary newly-settled peasant farmer in Zimbabwe. In the narrator’s own words, “it speaks about human presence and settlement” (p. 65). It also shows the bliss of ownership and creativity that come with the privilege of subjectivity in freed space(s) (Magosvongwe, 2008: 306). Despite the irregularities and contradictions characterising land redistribution in post-independence Zimbabwe, the picture that the story creates is that the lost harmony engendered by colonialism could be partially restored through land restitution. The glorious depiction ignores the uncertainties characterising newly-resettled land-ownership (Scoones et al, 2010).

“Somewhere” invites readers to re-examine the Zimbabwean concept of home and attendant psycho-spiritual and environmental securities that homeland provides. This is especially critical in the context of increased transnational migration to the Diaspora and the challenges that dislocation from the homeland — right to the point of one’s village of origin — visits upon the incumbents. Chikwava’s *Harare North* (2009) examined elsewhere in the thesis similarly deals with trauma arising from insecurities endured when people have been disconnected from the country and homeland that gives them dignity and a sacrosanct identity. Thus, the unquenchable yearning for spiritual reconnection with home mentally destabilises the old man to a point of suffering an incurable illness. Neither America’s luxurious life nor a pampered existence in the city where he is taken after the stay abroad can cure his ailment.

Only when the old man is driven back to the pastoral environment of the hills of his boyhood village does he come to be. “Olelele-e-e! Muchekawakasungabeta!”(p. 31), the old man shouts his totemic praise name hoisting himself up and gazing excitedly at the greying hills in the distance. This shows joyous peace at re-connecting with “the old

man's boyhood territory" (p. 32). Repeated exclamations of "Muchekawakasungabeta" (p. 32) which is his totemic identity speak of spiritual re-connectedness. He delights in reconnecting with the land of his ancestors, assuring him of psycho-spiritual anchor, "this panorama of hills, valleys, forests..." (p. 33). To those who are land and culturally-alienated like his escorts, this spiritual connection with the land could not be fully understood until they witnessed the mysterious recovery. "Maybe the brothers wondered less and less why a man developed fully separate from all this, since distant boyhood, would not only die to see this but actually go to it" (p. 33).

Chirere's depiction resonates with African spiritual rootedness in the land. The old man has no difficulty rediscovering himself once he reconnects with his childhood terrain and environment (Magosvongwe, 2008: 306). Mbiti (1972) suggests that 'medicine' in an African context includes curing of the mental and religious causes of illness. The old man often mentioned some hills even in sleep. "There was a need to identify these hills somewhere in this country and have him [the old man] see them as soon as possible" (p. 31). The old man's mysterious recovery could be explained in this light. The observation confirms Ndlovu's (2010: 118) argument that among Zimbabweans, especially those who feel de-personalised by the Diaspora, home is a value-laden phenomenon intricately woven with the concept of land and belonging.

"Somewhere" does not give the circumstances that create such a yearning for home as does Chikwava's *Harare North* and "Beautiful children" in this collection. For Andrusha Zhuwawo in the latter, subjection to xenophobia through vicious jeering by the Korekore boys reminds him that he is Chikunda, and a Mozambican. Undertones of derision embodied in "Moscan" accords him an inferior identity and diminished human worth. The condescension was common against Mozambican war refugees. Scorn at migrants has been a common feature among Zimbabweans dating back to the colonial times. Malawians are derisively called MaBhurandaya⁴³/Manyasarandi⁴⁴ and Mozambicans are

⁴³ This is a derisive Shona rendition of migrants believed to be originally from Blantyre, the then capital of Malawi, who flocked to Southern Rhodesia as migrant mine and farm labourers. They have no recognisable rural homes where their roots could be traced.

Moscans. They are characteristically employed for menial jobs – herdboys, field-hands, farm and mine labourers. “Beautiful children”, particularly young Andrusha, a Mozambican civil war refugee, involuntarily goes back to a country he left in early childhood and hardly knows, seeking psychological stability and belongingness. The constant reminders and jeering about his foreignness in Zimbabwe force him to flee and reconnect with his home country. It is ironic that Zimbabweans subjected to xenophobia in other Southern African countries fail to link this to ripple effects of colonial discrimination, dispossession and marginalisation.

Such could be the background to the odd behaviour of the old man in “Somewhere”. His illness could also be explained in terms of the African’s spiritual connectivity with the land/soil, especially the particular land in which he was born. Among the Shona, communion and bonding with the land is spiritually cemented through the first ritual after birth. This is symbolically enacted when the baby’s umbilical is buried and mingled with the soil within days of one’s birth soon after it dries and drops off. The ritual seals the individual’s oneness with the land, sealing their right to belonging and inheriting it. Land in this case is spiritually sacred. Thus, in spiritual terms, most ordinary Zimbabweans view their sense of belonging as a covenantal relationship with the land and the ancestors that is sealed at birth. Their spiritual and the metaphysical identities are thus intertwined with land, and by extension with nature.

To buttress the foregoing subterranean narrative in Chirere’s story, Feris and Moitui (in Bennett, 2011: 212) observe that relationships in the homestead are centred on ritual relationships among the living and their ancestors. From the domestic level, this connectivity extends to the sphere of polity where it is directed towards reinforcing the political authority of kings, chiefs and other traditional leaders. Chenjerai Hove’s *Bones* (1988) traces this aspect, linking the Second Chimurenga to the legendary Nehanda’s

⁴⁴ It is a colonial construction referring to Malawians. It originates from the Rhodesian Federation with Nyasaland, but earned itself derisive undertones because most migrant Malawians had no cultural roots in the land and spent their entire lives on the farm and mine compounds estranged from their country of origin. Most of these Malawian migrant labourers appear to have never seriously embraced formal education and could therefore not rise in social status.

prophecy about repossessing land. Nehanda's spirit is reported to have been instrumental towards re-igniting an armed struggle against colonial rule. In this regard then, among indigenous Zimbabweans, land has more serious connotations than the on-going debates about legal ownership of farming land.

It is instructive at this juncture to note that the desire to get an anchor on the land is a phenomenon getting different expressions in post-independence Zimbabwe. Land resettlement among the ordinary marginalised people is not only a country phenomenon. Manifestation in the urban centres has been acute in the post-2000 period because of the economic meltdown and its ripple effects on accommodation for the economically disenfranchised. The major difference between rural and urban resettlements appears to be that those in the countryside seem to be endorsed by the establishment on the basis that they are “a clear demonstration that the government has delayed in redistributing land” (Chari, 2010: 137, citing the President). These resettlements are viewed as the pursuit of the liberation struggle — an expression of “a struggle that cannot be corrected by the trespass law, but by the equitable and just land distribution” (Ibid).

Ironically, the self-initiated settlements by ordinary marginalised people in the urban areas suffer violence at the hands of the authorities as evidenced by the Operation Murambatsvina of 2005. The Operation casts the authorities as villains unleashing violence against a population that they have failed through their sluggishness in providing accommodation and employment opportunities in the cities and towns. As explored in Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* and Chikwava's *Harare North*, these hapless victims' trauma is heightened by the fact their squatter-status and sense of un/belongingness and disillusionment about liberation is induced by those who are supposed to be championing their cause in the post-independence. The Zimbabwean society remains divided over the perceived callousness of the ruling elite that authorised the forced removals of Operation Murambatsvina. The authorities did not provide alternative land for permanent resettlement of the victims—a tactical blunder by a leadership that alienates itself from the marginalised majority's genuine need for land for housing development.

“Suburb” appears to be a compromise between the above two extremities. Set on the fringes of the city, Suburb casts a divergent picture about the forced and violent removals of the ordinary urban-dwellers from their newly-founded havens and land. Hapless urban-dwellers become residents of a settlement/suburb of shacks and survive the wrath of Operation Murambatsvina. “Suburb” challenges the commonly peddled picture of the administration’s blind swoop at the common people’s plight of homelessness and un/belonging. Chirere’s “Suburb” appears to re-invent a narrative about settlements like White Cliff, Harare South, Sally Mugabe Heights and Hatcliffe on the outskirts of Harare that survived the swoop of Operation Murambatsvina. By naming the settlement “Suburb”, the writer tacitly endorses its safety and continued existence.

The pioneer and first inhabitant of the “Suburb” is a nameless old man who seems to be a former prominent nationalist/ex-fighter of the armed liberation struggle. “When asked, as it often occurred, from where and when he had come, he said he was ‘from all the corners’” (p. 10). An explanation to the origins of the old man is given by one “man in a cyclist’s helmet” (p. 11) to a fellow curious resident, “the waistcoats man” (p. 11) — “Everyone who is literate and who can afford papers knows the history of this country closely and must know who the old man was” (p. 11). The old man would advise hard-working fellow-dwellers to save their daily earnings. He observed that it would be easy “because there is no rent and electric bills out here” (p. 10). Symbolically, “Suburb” depicts creative survival strategies by the city’s underprivileged “squatters”. It echoes the messianic role of ex-fighters in championing the cause of the people against a neo-colonial regime in Ngugi wa Thiongos’ *Matigari* (1987).

The old man’s messianic role is confirmed when one winter morning the suburb is threatened with demolition by the authorities using bulldozers. “He had waited for this a long time now” (p. 13). The old man advances towards the bulldozers as the whole suburb watch helplessly, at the mercy of people who “have a terrible order and they will carry it out!” (p. 13). His coming face to face with the bulldozers and spreading out his arms like a green eagle in flight casts a picture reminiscent of Christ laying down his life

to redeem the world. The bulldozers halt. After his protest to the messengers of destruction, the bulldozers team, including several gunmen and workmen, wave good-bye to the suburb. The impression one gets from the story is that before legislation was, man was. In this regard, then, morality should be the guide and not the pieces of legislation that the authorities use to silence their consciences and mask violence against disenfranchised communities. That informal settlements are formalised ahead of service delivery shows that people are unstoppable in their quest for land. It also evidences sluggish planning by a government that is supposed to represent the people's interests. This is the approach used in establishing suburbs like Sally Mugabe Heights of Harare North formally falling under Goromonzi Rural District Council, as well as Harare South initiated by Herbert Ushewokunze Housing Co-operative on the outskirts of Harare along the Harare-Masvingo Highway. These suburbs now form part of Greater Harare. Initiative for settlement on the farms on the outskirts of the city did not come from the bureaucratic local authorities, but from the marginalised spear-headed by ex-combatants⁴⁵. Despite the legal and tenure uncertainties characterising such land access, such revolutionary down-up approaches over land access for the poor appears to be what Chirere advocates as a pragmatic alternative towards resolving post-2000 Zimbabwean land issues. Potts (2011: 134-138) discusses the vicissitudes of post-2000 land occupations and ownership. Despite challenges of patronage and corruption, in the event that government abdicates responsibility, ex-fighters should remain the vanguard attacking people's stagnation in poverty by creating opportunities that make resources more accessible to the marginalised (Sadomba, 2011: 230). Hanlon et al (2013: 22) submit:

Veterans have extra social and political standing, which gives them additional authority and certain privileges—although there are also accusations that some ...have abused their special standing.

⁴⁵ Sadomba (2011) decries the violence of the partnership between capitalism and the political elite in post-independence Zimbabwe. In his view, politicians hijacked land occupations, making them their revolutionary strategy to empower the marginalised majority, when in fact what they want is political legitimacy.

As Chirere insinuates, ex-fighters are not a relic as implied by *The Uncertainty of Hope* that has been discussed earlier. Rather, like Matigari the fighter who survived the bullet in the Kenyan Mau Mau struggle for land depicted in *Matigari*, the liberation war fighters' responsibility does not end with political independence. Failure to support people's initiatives and struggles to get back land and enforce delivery of other independence promises as envisioned by the anti-colonial liberation struggle is equally treacherous and self-defeating. Sadomba (2011) argues that war veterans remain the vanguard in people's struggles to repossess land in post-independence Zimbabwe, not the politicians who hijacked farm-invasion successes, making them their own brainchild so as to gain political mileage.

It is instructive to note at this juncture that ex-combatants' families, like most ordinary citizens, were not spared the ravages of land alienation, unemployment and land-hunger in post-independence Zimbabwe. In fact like Saizi, the treachery of the politicians is more acute given that some of them sacrificed their very lives to deliver the land from colonial rule: "Saizi stops working with his gold pan ... He picks up an old shovel, rests on its handle, closes his eyes and breaks into a clear beautiful bass; a wartime song about the land question and the joy of sacrificing for one's country" (p. 57). People's need for land cannot be assuaged by wartime songs and promises alone.

"A roof to repair" explores different layers of treachery about land, but also shows how self-initiative and creativity can bolster individuals' self-worth and purposefulness in life. The story straddles both colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. In reading Marwei's reflections about her now dysfunctional family, Chirere's audience is exposed to the discomfiture of an emasculated African manhood, maybe reminiscent of the country's domestication under foreign rule. First, Magasa the husband deserts Marwei and takes sanctuary in the farms because their son Saizi has left home to join the fighters:

Magasa, how can you just rise and go to the farms without telling me? ... But there is one thing you have to remember: You must not complain about the child who has joined the fighters. That might brew bad luck for him. I am his mother,

but did you see me shed tears? If I do that, he might not come back alive (p. 56).

Marwei's heartaches give readers access to images that excavate the mothers' trauma after their children quietly left home to join the anti-colonial liberation struggle. The fight to liberate the land inflicted emotional wounds among families. Land becomes an ambivalent metaphor. On one hand it promises autonomy and restored dignity as envisioned by the liberation struggle. Yet, on the other hand, the process of recovering the land fractures and destroys families. Magasa abandons Marwei for the farms, probably an expression that he cannot console the heart of a grieving wife and mother.

Symbolically, farms represent escapism: "You can go to the farms and stay there forever" (p. 56). Apart from the pain of losing Saizi to the war, Magasa cannot help to find a cure for their epileptic daughter, Faidhesi. Marwei laments: "How can I get you cured when he does not want to listen? He runs away to the farms" (p. 57). The farm in this regard typifies betrayal. The farm becomes the antithesis of African fatherhood. Magasa's escape to the farms thus could be indicative of the shame of failure in his patriarchal responsibilities. Further, that he runs away to the farms to seek refuge from family responsibility shows Magasa as culpable for the continual exploitation and domination of his family. Sanctuary at the colonial farm is at the expense of his labour, an aspect the liberation struggle is fighting to redress. Cumulatively, the farm could thus be viewed as a metaphor of cultural alienation and psychic domination.

Culturally, Magasa should be protector and provider, yet commercial farm labour that he runs to makes him effeminate. The son Saizi has taken up a role he has reneged on. Inscribed public images have been those of the African patriarch as heroic figures and not as fragile and as vulnerable as Magasa is. It is regrettable that because of a demeaned sense of manhood engendered by colonial emasculation of the African male, he cannot live with his sense of patriarchal inadequacy, including attendant indignity, an aspect intimately explored in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988). Interestingly, unlike her fugitive husband Magasa, Marwei uses the soil of the land in the art of pot-making, a creative talent that helps to take away the pain of a dysfunctional family and solitary existence after desertion by nucleus family. It is ironic that Marwei gets reassurance for her human

worth from the soil that appears to connive in undermining her wifhood and motherhood:

She sighs. Then, 'Ah, these three clay pots. Magasa, Saizi and Faidhesi. Three pimples in my life. I will not sell these three, never! I will keep them here. I want to talk to them. They will never know how I talk to them every day through the pots. It is like seeing ancestors in a dream' (p. 57).

At a spiritual level, Marwei therefore remains physically bonded with Magasa, Saizi and Faidhesi despite their physical absence. In African Traditional Religion (ATR), Marwei gets the creative spiritual energies from the ancestors. Feris and Moitui (in Bennett, 2011: 202) observe that in ATR, the minerals in the earth, the rivers, mountains and oceans are all sacred objects which the spirits use to communicate their will on one's life. After returning from the war Saizi takes to gold panning to earn a living. Therefore, Marwei looks to the earth as sacred because it is the epicentre to her creation, as inspiration and source of the clay that accord her space to show her creativity. This rootedness in nature and use of nature provides the anchor for her existence.

Another aspect of land as anchor emerging here is that in accordance with the local traditions of the land, Marwei and Magasa should not grieve to the point of shedding tears on account of Saizi's stealth departure from home to join the armed liberation struggle. Strict observance of the myth is perceived as guarantee of Saizi's safe return home after the war. Allegiance is enforced for fear of the undesirable consequences. Indirectly, Chirere expresses the firm belief among the Shona that it is the land with its traditions that protects the people from calamities. Among West African communities, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959) and *Arrow of God* (1964) show that for people to live in harmony with themselves, they should obey the natural, moral and mystical order. Behaviour to the contrary results in suffering harm. Taringa (2010: 201) similarly explores issues of social and environmental securities among the Shona as intertwined with nature, an aspect that Chirere tacitly alludes to. Intricately interwoven with Marwei's wife-mother travails are Saizi's travails of an unemployed ex-combatant.

Through Saizi, Chirere shows the plight of the ex-combatants after independence, and their hands-on efforts to survive as a disenfranchised demographic group.

Ruminating over the war in song gives strength to Saizi's "tired body and tired mind" (p. 58). His workmates taunt his liberation war credentials of Liberator and Comrade, mocking him that he moved from liberator to gold-panner and always with the law behind him. He is forced to reflect on the "days of fresh hope" (p. 58) in the independence euphoria. The scathing irony is that exploitation of mineral wealth and marginalised masses could only have changed complexion at independence. "It is not over. It has changed only. It is here with us. We only chopped its tail but its head is well" (p. 59). The systems remain intact. Unequal access to the country's major resources has been barely touched. Alluvial panning and sale of gold on the black market are illegal (Scoones et al, 2010: 175). Like the old man in "Suburb", Saizi disregards surrendering to the violence of African exclusion that perpetuates social injustices that independence promised to redress.

Through Saizi, Chirere suggests that independence could be here politically, but in practice people can only talk of "some liberated zone" (p. 58). Indirectly, inferences for the reformation of identity underlay Saizi's desire to have his parents' roof repaired, an expression of renewal. The suggestion is that local knowledge and ordinary voices sometimes provide a more challenging and power impetus to action (Zegeye, 2010: 176). Renewal comes intrinsically as an initiative of the marginalised themselves. This image sharply contrasts with that of Magasa who runs to the farms each time he is confronted with a challenge. In this case, land is both sanctuary and treacherous. Its ambivalence is variously expressed in the drama played out in Magasa's family.

Politically, as intimated in Saizi's song, the land question remains unresolved. The masses also remain excluded from benefitting directly from the wealth hidden in its bowls as shown through the illegal gold-panning mentioned earlier. Whilst the ordinary people resort to gold-panning to get temporary economic reprieve and alleviate poverty, the law inhibits them from engaging in such activities. The result is that they continue to

be excluded from mainstream economy. In Nazareth's words (2000: 32), they remain "unwitting captives of the colonial experience". For example, Saizi's gold-panners gang-leader reminds him to shut up because the song will betray them and get them rounded up. Other panners laugh good-naturedly: "Maybe Saizi thinks it is wartime again and he is in some liberated zone, asking women just to bring more food and sending the boys down to the rivers to search for obscure foot-prints in the sand" (p. 58). Despite the humorous tone, that they are fugitives on their own land is unmasked. Such a situation is a common African experience owing to continued ownership of mining claims by multinational corporations and wealthy foreigners well into the post-independence period. This is a pointer to the post-independence government's failure to dismantle colonial structures and replace them with new ones that would serve broader interests for the country's greater good.

The risks and environmental degradation notwithstanding, that the law in the post-independence era is used to inhibit citizens from exploiting the natural resources of the land could be an indicator of who the beneficiary of such resources should be. It could be indicative of the need to look at land more holistically to include the sub-soil resources. The story's sub-narrative resonates with the image of a crown without jewels – a mockery of independence. Without amending regulations for more equitable access to major resources, people remain entrenched in poverty. This reality motivated spontaneous land occupations after 2000.

In "Signs", John Hurston is fearful that the land occupiers might soon swoop down on his Heinz Estates. As many nasty things have happened on the farms in the districts, John feels his turn is not very far ahead in the future. John's wife Emma basks in some security derived from the fact that Heinz Estates could not be invaded because of its economic value to the country, it being the best in the district. Emma's position reflects that because of high productivity, "white farmers were seen as a 'protected species'" (Scoones, et al 2010: 14), disregarding Africans' survival needs. Emma's reassured attitude is understandable in light of the fact that rocking the boat through farm

occupations would fracture the country's agro-based economy. This thinking is in line with Lahiff's (in Chigara, 2012b: 111) observation:

Large landowners have shown themselves to be adept at managing the reform process to their own advantage ... A radical approach to land reform inevitably implies conflict with domestic interests (not just land owners but large capital and commercial interests as well) and, as the experience of Zimbabwe since 2000 demonstrates, runs the risk of confrontation with wider international interests — in this case with Western nations led by the UK and, to a lesser extent, with neighbouring countries such as Botswana.

Destabilising effects are partly explored from some white farm-owners autobiographical treatise: Jim Barker's *Paradise Plundered* (2007), Catherine Buckle's *African Tears* (2001) and Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006) among others.

After failing to extract information on the impending invasion of Heinz Estates from his trusted employee Marimo, John Hurston drives to Turnbull's farm but finds Turnbull in a cloud of glee on account of his son who was getting married in England 'The Old Country' (p. 72). Turnbull teases Hurston's fearful apprehension: "You all right? A Scotsman, trembling?" (p. 72). Inferences of invincibility of Scotsman rooted in England 'The Old Country' silently express the farmers' superior but settler status. Connectivity with England symbolises racial superiority, including security assurances during the troubled times of land take-overs. In the story, their un-belongingness with the locals is depicted through the separation of the farms from the villages by the Mupfurudzi River. Chirere re-dramatizes the antagonistic nature of the two worlds using Mupfurudzi River to exclude either race from each other's world, values and belief systems, including vision about the land.

Alluding to the impending farm invasion, Marimo asks John whether the gunshots the villagers had heard the night before were shots of a "goodbye hunt" (p. 72). Marimo plays a pun with "goodbye hunt" to be that for the "old season baas" instead of for kudu which "was too early in the season" (p. 72). He means "goodbye" to Heinz Estates. John wonders at the nature the invasion would take:

Would they sing and dance and flood onto his farm Svosve and Masembura style? True, they could still count their ancestral graves on his farm. Would they come? Would they? And if they did? If ...

John is aware that he is settled on usurped land whose memories are still fresh on the villagers' psyches. That they could still count their ancestral graves on his farm together with references to "Svosve and Masembura style"⁴⁶ shows that his family's presence on the farm is linked to white post-World War Two farm settlements. The Svosve invasions were spearheaded by Chief Svosve in protest against the government's delay to give back their ancestral alienated lands. The lands had been appropriated as recently as 1945 as bonuses to whites who had fought and triumphed over Nazi German in the Second World War. Locals had not been similarly rewarded. Instead, they suffered double tragedy. By fighting for the Queen of England, they guaranteed foreign rule that fostered further losing their land, including forced removals to make way for a fresh wave of white farmers (Sacco in Moyo et al, 2008). *Harare North* discussed earlier similarly makes reference to the ingrained psycho-spiritual damage and cultural dislocations arising from post-World War Two land dispossessions and forced removals. Chirere's depiction shows the farmers' knowledge about these damages but self-seeking economic interests persuaded them to remain on some of these lands. Marimo reinforces the reminder by telling John:

From what Mutero said about all this and about your pa and grandpa, then, I think there is ... there was an unfinished story, baas. ... There were Cat and Mouse games between your people and us, Mutero's people since the end of the wars of the Germans (p. 74).

The "Cat and Mouse" metaphor tells of endemic mistrust and the unfinished business over land. Belated efforts to re-establish old links with some village elder Old Mutero, who now is late, as a likely means to solicit advocacy for Heinz, John defends white

⁴⁶ The reference concerns the first farm invasions by Svosve villagers, Marondera District, in early 2000 who repossessed farms they had been displaced from as recent as 1947 to create new farms for whites who had fought on behalf of the British Crown against Germans in the Second World War. These peasant-led occupations opened the floodgates of War-veterans led farm invasions under the late excombatant and medical doctor Chenjerai Hunzvi

commercial farmers stance over land using the washed-out argument of land productive use:

Grandpa came here from the wars and you know very well that they gave him and others this side of the river because you folks here could not work this heavy clay in summer. You get it? (p. 74).

John's defence echoes B. N. Floyd's 1952 analysis in "Land Apportionment in Rhodesia" whereby white possession of land in the fertile regions of the country is defended on account of the indigenous men's unproductive use of the land:

The indigenous farmer, equipped only with a primitive short-handled hoe, found red-earth soils difficult to work and, despite their greater fertility, avoided using them (cited in Moyana, 2000: 58).

John's allusion to African indolence resonates with Floyd's view, unwittingly projecting racialisation of land. Ironically, the same argument has now ricocheted and has been used as justification for the post-2000 land occupations. That the story ends with John praying for a peaceful night shows Chirere's allusion to the violent war path of land occupations dubbed *Jambanja*/Third Chimurenga:

This time they are quite clear, he thought. Don't they sing in a mob to announce their arrival, even in broad daylight? 'Better', he said to himself, plain better. They are real men and women coming to reclaim all this. And, if I, John Hurston, the man on the other side, can't wait patiently for that day ...? Or, do I have to wait ... wait? (p. 75).

Worth noting is that John acknowledges culpability for the impending violence if he waits for the invaders' arrival. Chirere sows doubt in John Hurston concerning his moral justification to hold on to the land⁴⁷. The racialisation subterranean narrative of

⁴⁷ In an interview on 28th August 2010 at the National Art Gallery, Harare, with writer and artist, former Airforce of Zimbabwe commodore, author of *A Fine Madness* (2010), Mashingaidze Gomo expresses the view that it is the duty of the contemporary black Zimbabwean writers to sow doubt in their white compatriots and other land contenders in order to initiate dialogue.

indigenous land dispossession and forced removals that John acknowledges psychologically disarm him, giving the indigenous population legitimate claim to the farmlands they are now repossessing. Mlambo (2010) similarly explores racialisation of land in post-2000 as having its basis in racialisation of land in Rhodesia's land apportionment.

Whilst "Signs" uses racialisation of land as the basis for ejecting white commercial farmers off the land, "Sitting carelessly" brings up the intricacies of an exclusionary approach to land redistribution, particularly in respect of migrant workers of African descent. It reiterates the expendable status of the farm labourer, an appendage to the farm owner who is eschewed by both the farmer and former employer, and also by the land invaders at the height of the post-2000 land occupations. Much as it is true that intrinsically motivated land occupations bring renewal among the formerly disenfranchised African communities, the same renewal process further disenfranchises migrant workers: "Boys, the farm is taken. I go. You go too" (p. 76). The former employer sees no value in them. He literally drops them unaided as he drives off the farm. This leaves them in no man's land — identities indefinable, especially alien migrants who appear excluded from benefiting from land redistribution processes on the basis of nationality or country of origin. Xenophobic approaches to land redistribution among black Zimbabweans undermine the vision to empower the marginalised masses irrespective of ethnicity, gender or origin.

"Sitting carelessly" critiques the indiscriminate nature of land take-overs that see the double victimisation of farm labourers, especially those that come from beyond Zimbabwe's borders. At the time of land take-overs they were forced to leave ripening maize fields, but had no means to rectify this anomaly. Apart from losing employment and crops, they also lose the only home they had ever known, further ripping their fractured identities. Pempani mulls over this:

Where will I go if you take the farm? You will take farm and baas goes, driving in his car, but where will I go?' Cleanly, like that. 'My father's father and my father came to this country from across the Zambezi. Black men like you. Black, like

two combined midnights. See, my father worked here. My mother worked here. They are buried here. Their folks too: Alione, Chintengo, Anusa, Nyanje, Machazi, Mpinga, Zabron, Banda, Musa ... (p. 76).

Their plight resonates with uprootment and forced removals of indigenous Zimbabweans by colonial administrations. Chirere depicts this by projecting how the new land-occupiers viciously displace non-indigenous Africans despite claims to Zimbabwean belongingness on the basis of generations of forebears who are buried at Pempani's evicted baas's farm — "Laughing at a man who has nowhere to go and admitting it" (p. 76). Chirere makes Pempani's predicament tragic. Despite family generations' investment of labour on the white-owned farm, he cannot claim a portion of the farm and cannot claim to belong, neither do occupiers appreciate their human needs. These contradictions surrounding the post-2000 land invasions need urgent redress. They are a grim reminder of issues still unexplored, that is, the plight of the migrant farm labourers. They typify how badly exclusionary land policies disenfranchise those already at the margins, aspects that post-independence administrations should confront.

Ironically, Chirere paints the migrant labourers themselves as culpable in their exclusion at the time of land redistribution. Chirere appears oblivious to complexities characterising labour migration. He lays blame on the legacies of forebears' wilful uprootment from their mother-countries to be white farmers' possessions. Once the farmer is evicted, there should therefore be no further legitimacy for their continued presence on the farm. Despite intermarriages with local women, the migrants stuck to the farms instead of establishing homes among their spouses' people. Pempani cannot live among his wife's people. They laugh at his accent (p. 78), a reminder about his alien origins. At eviction, Pempani finds it psychically impossible to go and settle with his family in Murehwa among his in-laws. He could hear the villagers in Murehwa "laughing rudely and provocatively at a son-in-law from farms ... A man who can't go back home across the Zambezi" (p. 78). This image resonates with endemic condescension against non-indigenous migrant labourers⁴⁸. Mashiri (2005: 32) observes that this "serves to indicate

⁴⁸ Mahachi-Harper's (2013) *Footprints in the Mists of Time* takes up and explores this ugly characteristic exposing the problematic identities of migrant labourers in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe over

contempt, or disregard for them, to defend the socio-cultural status quo, for ridiculing in-group members, for propaganda and discrimination and exclusion". Chirere depicts black Zimbabweans who have no empathy for their African compatriots who are victims of forced colonial labour migration. Zimbabweans themselves in pre- and post-independence continue flooding South Africa as economic refugees. The post-independence era has witnessed serious brain-drain and out-migration by Zimbabweans escaping debilitating livelihoods at home (Crush and Tevera, 2010). In the story under discussion, Pempani's predicament, as highlighted elsewhere, is that apart from being harangued by xenophobic comments among his in-laws, he also has no direct links with the country he is expected to go back to and call home:

Home. Where is home? Across the river where grandpa came from? Home can't be where I know no river, valley, hill, stone ... Where I haven't dug the soil to sow a seed (p. 78).

In Pempani's view, communion and belongingness with the land is covenanted through working the land, making man one with nature as argued elsewhere. This bond has been negated in the migrant labourer's life. Land as metaphor of economic refuge away from home-country becomes parasitic. Pempani reflects on how his father confided in Anusa and Alione that he could not have gone back home across the Zambezi without anything to show for his years' absence across the river (p. 78). This is a tacit attack on colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe's continual exploitation of extra-territorial African labour on farms and mines.

Chirere's focus on Pempani's victimhood shows the powerlessness of the migrant farm labourer because of his disconnectedness with the local values about land. Land remains an ambivalent metaphor of exclusion and inclusion. This aspect has given rise to opposition of land reform by migrant labourers because the process has made them destitute. Sadomba (in Hellicker et al, 2008) shows that even in instances where they have been instrumental in the forced removals of their former white farmers off the land, they are excluded during post-eviction land allocations. Such complex factors could

four generations at Patchway Valley Mine in Kadoma. This has been a common theme in pre- and post-independence Shona novels.

partially explain the lure towards opposition politics that appears to assure them of what they perceive to be some form of security in view of land policies that exclude people of other nationalities/ethnicities. White farmers exploit this anomaly to keep the labour force within their ambit. Barclay (2010) similarly discusses how the exclusionary approach to land redistribution has polarised the African population in Zimbabwe. The estranged farm labour cannot identify with land redistribution for survival reasons. Chirere insinuates that the farm labourers' issue should never be left to chance. Their condition is complex and needs thinking through. Scoones et al (2010: 211) argue:

Highly essentialised, narrow and exclusionary versions of citizenship/[identities] have been imposed in the name of nationalist politics ... Yet, ... such narrow forms of nationalism and extreme forms of exclusion may actually have opened up new ... sites of conflict.

Such complexities could explain why Chirere highlights the plight of this demographic group. He opens the story dramatising the plight of the farm-labourer evictees thus:

It cannot be a dream. This is an ant dragging a straw of dry grass into a neatly hewn hole in the soil. He squints in order to see it clearly ... Aghast, he looks up in the sky and the image is up there as well. The ant dragging a straw of dry grass into a hole in the sky. In the soil of the sky? Can that be a dream? (p. 76)

The image of the ant going into a neatly hewn hole tells of Pempani's plight. Even the smallest and defenceless creatures like ants have homes. Now surviving on vending, Pempani is even more vulnerable. It appears as if the land has chewed and spat him out — not employed, homeless, violently separated from wife and children with an uncertain future. The ant-image shows readers and social critics that creatures of the wild are better-placed than the evicted farm labourer. The sanctuary image is reinforced when Pempani cuts his thumb whilst carving wood for sale at a Kariba roadside and goes to the local clinic for medical help. The nurse insists on getting his identity: Name is Pempani. Surname is Pempani. She demands to know where Pempani comes from. This reminds him of his un-belongingness:

One must come from a place! Place! People, place every time! But how to say it when you are from Acton Farm? And you can't be from there now because

everybody says that it was taken. 'By the road, I come from a place by the road,' is all what you say? (p. 77)

Individuals' personal identity on its own does not give psycho-social security. Community and belongingness that come with attachment to land help to affirm people's identity and human worth. This means that people's identities are inseparable from the land they occupy. Insecurities engendered by violent Zimbabwean post-2000 land occupations and displacements have accentuated this psychological need. As argued elsewhere, it would appear that Chirere's position on renewal and transformation is that people should become the change that they want to be. With governments that may have forgotten their mandate, including who they are and where they should go in terms of safeguarding the country's heritage, especially meeting the majority's basic spatial needs, people could be forced to do the unimaginable. This is particularly so when governments fail to adequately respond to people's plights. The story ends with Pempani going back to Acton Farm to claim his portion of the earth:

Rise early in the morning on this deserted farm and apportion yourself the old clay cotton field and place across it...When they come to settle people, we will talk.

Sowing the seeds, one pip into one hole, on this designated farm. Pempani heard sounds. They yelled when they saw him ... He moves forward and offers his hand. The leading official stretches his, too and two black palms meet (p. 79).

The ending is promising although reports concerning displaced farm labourers remain inconsistent. In the story, sowing seed symbolises communion with land and nature that has been Pempani's desire. This symbolic gesture gives him hope and a sense of belonging in that he is sowing seed on a plot he is convinced he now owns. The handshake between Pempani and the leading official assures the latter of the official's open-mindedness, raising his hopes to explain his presence at the deserted designated farm. Pempani's resolve to be counted among the new settlers brings the difference and change he wishes to have in his life — a Zimbabwean citizen eking out a living on some land that he owns, assuring him of belongingness with and among other Zimbabweans.

Pempani's determined refusal to be a casualty of land reform, but a beneficiary, unlocks his future. The initiative rests with him and not with central administration.

Also worth noting is that whilst Chirere alludes to looting of commercial farmers' harvest by the invaders, he leaves this aspect to readers' imagination as he focuses more on Pempani's state of homelessness and uprootedness from the land, belonging nowhere. Chirere focuses more on how land occupations benefit the ordinary people, how they re-connect with land and its ownership as a principal resource. Chirere's image of Pempani scavenging for a living by the road side whilst erstwhile evicted farmers continue going to holiday resorts like Kariba shows whites having alternative sources to sustain livelihoods unlike their labourers who depend entirely on land for survival. These disparities give intriguing readings into the post-2000 land narrative. That Chirere ends the story on an optimistic note tells of his attitude on how artistic images are tailored to inspire hope, interestingly projecting how victims can transcend their plight into becoming victors. This indirectly instills society's hope for self- regeneration.

5.1.3 Chirere's land-cum-identity trajectories: Conclusion

Chirere's choice of images of land in post-independence Zimbabwe could be hinged on Fanon's view that no one can purport to be supporting the liberation struggle when they are distancing themselves from it. Fanon (1967: 189) argues: "No one can truly wish for the spread of African culture if he does not give practical support to the creation of the conditions necessary to the existence of that culture". Such perceptions about liberating African physical spaces for the ordinary people could explain images of renewal and remembering social relationships that Chirere uses. Also worth noting is that Chirere shies away from dwelling on a single-trek theory of land, exploring Africans/man's divergent interconnectedness with the land. These should not be ignored when looking into the Zimbabwean post-2000 land narrative. Debates at intellectual forums appear to have excluded the ordinary person's perspective. Chirere excavates the multiple facets of land — social, spiritual, environmental, psychic, relational and cultural — and related challenges on man's identities using the circumscribed worlds of the characters' lives. Readers then distil for themselves the plethora of uses land has in the Africans' lives.

This approach offers a broader appreciation of land in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The optimism of “Sitting Carelessly” that concludes the assessment of Chirere’s collection, moves the research’s attention to focus on other emerging views concerning Zimbabwe’s post-2000 land historiography in Petina Gappah’s *An Elegy for Easterly*.

5.2 *An Elegy for Easterly* (2009)

5.2.1 An overview

In *An Elegy for Easterly* (*An Elegy*), Western-based perceptions of artistic creativity and aesthetics appear to influence both Gappah’s choice of subject and writing technique. Perceptions about land and African relations with the land appear to be steeped more in the urbanites’ experiences. Yet, “Zimbabwe’s independence struggle was led by people with a rural background” (Hanlon et al, 2013: 12). Land resonates in the short stories through the relentless references to the liberation struggle. It also stands out as the hallmark of the people’s defiance against Western hegemony over Zimbabwe. Impliedly then, loyalty to and deviation from the original vision of the liberation struggle, become the standard by which commitment to decolonisation and reconstituting of a collective African identity can be evaluated. Thus, despite their overriding sarcastic picture of colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe, Gappah’s short stories draw readers into retrospection and introspection about struggles for land and liberation in the post-independence period. The collection’s allegories of the post-colonial help to produce new ways of seeing Zimbabwe’s land historiography, new ways of ‘reading’ the world (Ogude, 1999: 44).

Gappah doubts serious commitment to decolonisation through people-oriented land reform in post-2000 Zimbabwe. She explores the gap between outward manifestations of loyalty to the anti-imperialist struggles shown through rhetoric about the liberation struggle and the private pursuits that have their source in colonisation. Constant references to the liberation struggle in a good number of the stories — “At the Sound of the Last Post”; “The Mupandawana dancing champion”; “The maid from Lalapanzi” and “Aunt Juliana’s Indian” — historicize the land issue. It is worth noting that these stories acknowledge people’s desire for land resulting from historical injustices.

Yet, ironically, the same stories show how the political elite ride on historical imbalances to consolidate personal economic and political power agendas. Such contradictions and self-destructive practices about land in postcolonial Zimbabwe are worth noting. Her short stories variously critique duty and responsibility anew. They explore politicians' failure to deliver the liberation promises — particularly land and continued exploitation of the workers and peasants— and the people's silence about these issues. She tacitly views the inconsistencies and injustices as penetrating evil that undermine the communal ethos of the liberation struggle thereby delegitimising land reform as part of the decolonisation process.

Gappah's concern therefore would appear to go beyond aesthetics to embrace a broader political agenda of social criticism. She sees her functional role as an artist as that of exploring the grey areas that the general public could be uncomfortable to openly talk about. This appears to coincide with Ngugi wa Thiongo's artistic vision. Ngugi argues: "Let our pens be the voices of the people. Let our pens give voices to the silent" (1983: 69). Such a vision appears to be the impetus behind *An Elegy for Easterly*.

5.2.2 Gappah's land trajectories and silent injustices: An assessment

Gappah uses the liberation struggle in her stories to give Zimbabweans a national identity and to legitimise their claims to the land. Imaginings about promises of land restitution that the liberation struggle envisioned and used to garner support from the masses become the yardsticks of liberation. Identities and metaphors of land in post-independence Zimbabwe conversely show the extent to which their aspirations to have an anchor on their land have been achieved. On issues concerning land as the primary means for existence and alleviating poverty, the stories keenly explore the extent to which colonial land imbalances have been dealt with by the nationalists who are also the ruling elite. Gappah would like her intended audience to believe that the colonial becomes a metaphor for the postcolonial. In her view, despite the rhetoric about the liberation struggle and rhetoric that defies the former colonisers, benefits of political independence, especially land, are still to reach the Zimbabwean majority.

For Gappah, it is ironic that people appear to be complacent with and basking in the history of the liberation struggle without questioning the tangible gains in the aftermath of independence as well as the subsequent land occupations euphemistically referred to as the Third Chimurenga. This would appear to portray a nation drugged with amnesia — “an amnesiac nation” (p. 17). “At the Sound of the Last Post” (Last Post), “An Elegy for Easterly” (Elegy) and “The Mupandawana Dancing Champion”(MDC), for example, expose the insensitivity of the political elite over land access and how the public are silently excluded from benefiting from it despite collective proclamations about consolidating the gains of the liberation. The exploitation of the marginalised masses would appear to be exacerbated by their blind faith in black political leadership.

Through the reflections of the deceased hero’s widow during the burial ceremony at the national shrine at Warren Hills (p. 20), Gappah in “Last Post” explores the gap between the political leadership’s pronouncements about the liberation struggle and their private personal pursuits. “The shrine is where they lay the gallant sons who fought in the liberation struggle” (p. 20). Ironically, though in mourning, Esther the widow cannot hide her sarcasm about the credentials used to decide national hero status. Allusions to family honour, talk of personal triumph (p. 22), honour to the deceased’s region thereby quelling the “restive tribe” (p. 23) and stilling the fires over the President’s successor (p. 23) are some of the factors that give the deceased a national hero status. Tacitly, through Esther, Gappah reinvents the role of the Politburo as that of rubber-stamping the President’s wishes and political views. “Only those who had not disagreed with the President at the time of their deaths become heroes” (p. 20). Esther’s husband’s hero credentials are that “he consolidated the gains of the liberation struggle by devotedly introducing the President by his full totem name” (p. 21). Further, “his main contribution to nation-building was to unite the nation in gossip over his five scandals” (p. 21). He also “stamped his patriotism on his children before leaving them with [ominous] names that could mean nothing to the intended recipient of the messages, to the white man who chose to live in ignorance of native tongues” (p. 11). He is buried with full military honour for his gallantry. Corruption takes different dimensions, implying advocacy to change the system.

In Esther's view, and that of the writer, gallantry has been subverted by the self-seeking ambitions and insensitivity of the ruling elites. The shrine's symbolism of struggle and sacrifice to decolonise the country and land stands in mockery. The cynicism displayed here delegitimises the credentials of those purporting to be fighting alongside the people to decolonise the country. Ironically, the colonial attraction of the liberation struggle becomes its rejection in the post-2000 period. Those laid at the national shrine would not have been motivated by their love for humanity and their land, but by love for power, greed, regionalism and ethnicity. The reconstruction of post-2000 Zimbabwean land narrative seeks a redefinition of patriotism. Magosvongwe's "Retired Patriots, Right?" (Mbire, 2011: 111), similarly raises a related concern. Yet, making Esther's departed husband a synecdoche of all the heroes buried at the national shrine would be equally misleading.

In public view, burial ceremonies at the national shrine symbolically reconnect the nation with its land and history. "We must move forward today and strive ahead in togetherness, in harmony, in unity and in solidarity to consolidate the gains of our liberation struggle" (p. 6), the President urges the masses, consolidating nationhood and a shared vision. Yet, Gappah insinuates, such burial ceremonies afford the political elite opportunities to consolidate their power and control over the people. The widow observes that: "These are ceremonies that give life to the ruling party's dream of perpetual rule" (p. 19). This is the voice of one disillusioned.

Even among themselves, the supporters of the struggles to decolonise the country are motivated by ambivalent interests. Such contradictions could explain the shifting loyalties concerning the liberation struggle vision for land restitution witnessed in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The identity of liberation war heroes becomes even more problematic, especially if legitimacy banks on ethnicity and the President's patronage. Such agendas undermine the national spirit of the revolution that the shrine represents. The ceremonies themselves become a farce. As Gappah rightly insinuates, such farcical displays symbolise betrayal of nationhood and manipulation of the masses. In essence, Gappah's

caricature of heroism in post-2000 Zimbabwe seems targeted at both the political leadership and her perceived amnesiac nation that they lead.

In Esther's view, the masses are duped into gathering to fulfil the President's wish for a national hero's burial that should coincide with the annual commemoration of Heroes Day. The deceased's wish to be buried in the village soils of his birth among his ancestors, where he had wished his sons to be buried after him, was overturned at the conclusion of a bargain between the Cabinet and the deceased's widow. Esther says she is bribed into silence after striking a deal that restores ownership of her late husband's invaded farm "registered in title deeds in [her] name. ... [including] an uncontested seat in the new Senate" (p. 23). Land and power give her surety in a country where she is a foreigner. If readers are to go by this example, which might not be typical, such an approach to land acquisition defeats the principle of more equitable land redistribution.

The husband's eldest son Rwauya⁴⁹ also wants the same farm that his father had taken over from Kennington. He contends that he is entitled to the farm because his "father died for this country. That farm is [his] birthright" (p. 14), mimicking Dzvairo's poem "Birthright" (in Kadhani and Zimunya, 1981: 13). Esther's apprehension and Rwauya's report of the invasion of his late father's farm also show that, family politics notwithstanding, any foreigner irrespective of race appears to be a target for exclusion from the land. Land in the post-independence, especially the post-2000 land invasions phase, is double-barrelled. It is a symbol of political power on one hand, and a symbol of conflict within the black population. The land-hero conundrum gives new readings into post-independence conflicts and struggles (Sadomba, 2011).

Unlike the impression that Gappah gives of the masses being manipulated and remaining excluded from land through patronage, cronyism and elitism, despite their liberation war sacrifices, after conducting field surveys, Hanlon et al (2013: 91) submit: "We estimate

⁴⁹ Rwauya means 'death has come'. Muchagura is the other son's name which means 'you shall repent'. The third son is Muchakundwa which means 'you shall be defeated'. All three names are prophetic of the white man's fate in Zimbabwe. Naming is a principal strategy in power discourses and spiritual beliefs among most indigenous African communities.

that less than 5% of new farmers with under 10% of the land are cronies”. They further argue:

Just as in the colonial era the white regime gave land as rewards to its supporters, the independence government has done the same thing. Indeed, politics in most countries (including Europe and the United States) has a certain amount of patronage, rewarding key supporters of winning political parties (Hanlon et al, 2013: 90).

The new wave of farm invasions that Esther mentions shows the persistent need for more equitable land redistribution. Like the politicians she lambasts, Esther exploits her late husband’s death to secure power and land for herself. Her disenchantment concerning one man’s perpetual rule (p. 18) during her husband’s burial ceremony shows that hers is equally a theatrical display.

Whilst Gappah explores corruption in the land redistribution and land acquisition processes, the selective approach to land reform that the story renders could be read as manipulation of information to suit her ideological interests. Esther’s recollections during the burial ceremony draw attention to her person as one in mourning. Reflections about the Willowgate Car Scandal that sucked in the President’s late first wife resulting in a suicide of a government minister now buried behind the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the national shrine (p. 16) subtly blames the person of the President. The general build-up of the story shows a writer expressing personal distaste and frustration at one perceived to be an unsuccessful leader in the post-independence decolonisation process envisioned by the liberation struggle. Esther’s satirical and inflammatory language that concludes the burial ceremony of her national hero husband buttresses this parody:

Only official truth matters, only that truth will be handed down through the history books for the children to learn. ...Warren Hills is the national shrine in a land presided over by the wisest of rulers. The land is one of plenty with happy citizens. The injustices of the past have been redressed to consolidate the gains of the liberation struggle. And in that happy land, I will be a new farmer and senator (p. 24).

Innuendos embedded in “only official truth” suggest suppression of public opinion which aspect remains characteristic of citadels of power. Being a political schemer herself, this

also ironically undermines the credibility of her narrative. Her mocking references to a “happy land” and “happy citizens” at a time that inflation had gone beyond the trillion trillion mark and only those deemed as correctly politically-connected getting some land casts an amnesiac nation. The masses’ silence gives an illusion of both tacit approval and unquestioned authority. The scathing cynicism cannot be hidden. In essence, Gappah may not be merely concerned with the aesthetics of her style of writing, but instigating discomfiture with the status quo among Zimbabweans.

That the crowds are gathered at the national shrine at Warren Hills burying an alleged gallant patriot “in the August heat, singing songs from a war that they were not allowed to forget” (p. 5) casts undertones of psychological domination from the writer’s perspective. The allusion to subjection of the masses to war memories at every burial ceremony is double-pronged. Gappah’s sarcasm could be emanating from her incomplete knowledge about the symbolism of burial, especially at the National Shrine, and the importance it derives among most indigenous Zimbabwean cultural traditions. Burial at the national shrine solemnises the land’s/country’s independence that is inscribed in blood. Further, belonging with and bound to the land is cyclic, sealed by rituals at birth, marriage, ending with interment into the very land. For ex-fighters’ their interment at the National Shrine covenants their responsibility as guardians of the land.

The President’s words: “We must move forward today and strive ahead in togetherness, in harmony, in unity and in solidarity to consolidate the gains of the liberation struggle” (p. 6), paints an image of nationhood despite Gappah’s cynicism being intended for the audience to doubt the President’s sincerity. The collective pronoun “we” is ambiguous, painting a picture of a shared vision with the masses whilst it may be referring to the ruling clique. Gappah also humourously gives additional titles to the President who is Commander of the Armed Forces and now “Defier of Imperialism, and... Orator at the Funerals of Dead Heroes” (p. 5). Gappah casts a phony image of the President. Adding “defier of imperialism” and “orator at the funerals of dead” to the President’s official titles deflates his image as a fighter against imperialism. The title of “orator at the funerals of the dead” especially distances him from those he should be identifying with,

especially at the country's loss of committed fighters against colonialism, African land dispossession and dehumanisation. Gappah's title casts the President as one who takes advantage of the sombre funeral ceremonials to sharpen his public speaking skills.

That Esther the widow can predict the themes and the rhythm of the President's speech during the burial ceremony also confirms a rehearsed theatrical display that Gappah smirks at: "theme number one, the liberation struggle" (p.7). Reducing his role to a theatrical performance casts a grotesque picture. This undermines both his commitment and the communal ethos of the liberation struggle. In Gappah's view, the dramatic performances distance the President from the unifying spirit of the struggle and "the sense of community that colonialism fractured" (Ogude, 1999: 134). Would he then be the wisest ruler in the land of plenty that Esther claims him to be at the end of her account? Such contradictory innuendos are worth noting.

Gappah's images suggest that in post-2000 Zimbabwe, the political elite pay lip-service to struggles for more equitable distribution of resources. Opportunism and self-interest appear to have pervaded the highest political echelons. This becomes the country's undoing. Indirectly, the political leadership who are supposed to be championing the fight against imperialism manipulates the liberation struggle to pursue private economic and political agendas. This undermines the decolonisation process, perpetuating conditions, contradictions and problems that marginalize the majority. As previously stated, talk about the heroic national liberation struggle becomes a sham. Gappah mocks at the discourse of power and the people's silence, making them complicit in the social evils that their land should dislodge. The profound issue she raises is that by allowing their leaders to laud themselves over them, people in post-independence Zimbabwe are complicit in their own exploitation.

Further, in Gappah's view incessant references to the former colonisers are calculated to deflect criticism against failure to deliver the liberation promises. The major among these promises is restoring the people's dignity through repossessing the land and having control over the major economic resources. Emphatic reminders about the country's

sovereignty, to Blair⁵⁰ and Bush⁵¹ who are not present at the burial, that “this country will never, a trillion trillion times never, be a colony again” (p. 7), is designed to emphasise the country’s self-rule. It also reconstitutes communal responsibility in the fight against imperialism. The colony stands for trampling people’s values, autonomy and dignity. Read alongside the liberation struggle and the President’s call to consolidate the gains of the liberation struggle, the land issue is understood as the major cause of the fall-out between Zimbabwe and her former colonial masters. Chari (2010:144) citing Chigora (2006: 67) observes the conflict between Zimbabwe and Britain as a conflict of values contending:

There is need for Western countries especially Britain and the United States to desist from championing human rights, rule of law and governance especially narrowly defining these terms in terms of their own national interest. This will result in conflict of values between nations leading to antagonism and consequent decline of relations.

Missing the issue of conflicting values over land and human rights abuses that see people commemorating the liberation struggle through heroes’ burial ceremonies, the narrative views calls of sovereignty as masking the political elite’s corruption, greed and deceit that are equally a betrayal to themselves as to the nation. The masses’ psychological submission to the machinations of the political elite that Gappah depicts paints a misconception that the black majority are not yet agents of history. The view contradicts the liberation struggle and the farm invasions that form the basis of Gappah’s social criticism. Though rhetoric alone would not reconstitute an emancipated identity unlike land restitution, critics like Fanon (1967), Mazama (2003), Ephraim (2003), Ngugi wa Thiongo (2003) and Armah (2010) among others, are emphatic on the need for cultural re-awakening and critical self-knowledge, of which political consciousness is a precursor.

⁵⁰ The British Prime Minister who came after Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher whose government had agreed to pay compensation for land to Zimbabwean white commercial farmers after their farms had been acquired by Government for resettlement and land redistribution. Tony Blair reneged on the commitments made by the preceding government.

⁵¹ The American president who was Britain’s closest and most committed ally in the anti-land reform drive in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The Anglo-American companies dominate the agro-based economy and mining industry of Zimbabwe.

Gappah seemingly misses the import of the declaration that the country can never be a colony again. Their limitations notwithstanding, farm invasions and land dispossessions of white farmers like Kennington that Esther mentions, offer an example of defiance against continued Western hegemony in the post-2000 period. It also means removal of the century-old settler privileges and monopoly over land. Further, a fresh wave of farm invasions, now targeting black-owned farms that the story mentions also shows the unending struggles for land and direct involvement of the masses that Gappah perceives to be docile. Invasion of black-owned farms by black youths shows that the struggle to dislodge monopoly over land by a minority clique remains as real today as it was during colonial rule. The counter farm invasions indicate continued land conflicts (Scoones et al, 2010: 198-200).

Land therefore represents some compelling unfinished business in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The inference that only the President's intervention can stop the counter farm invasions, though intended to cast the autocratic control that the President is perceived to have over the country, undercuts the power that the common people wield. The dramatic land occupations that the suffering masses spearhead are a practical response to what they perceive as delayed access to land by their government (Sadomba, 2011). Relationships between the land, the liberation struggle, various social backgrounds and different war time exposure and experiences (Sadomba, 2011: 8), explain the complexity of the post-2000 land narrative. Nevertheless, Gappah's criticism shows some dangers inherent in a "singular approach" (Ndebele, 2009: 12) to the post-2000 malaise.

Because of what some analysts view as "a single track theory which seeks to explain [Zimbabwe's] underdevelopment only in terms of centre as a block exploiting the periphery, [Gappah] fails to grasp the specific character of capitalist development in [Zimbabwe]" (Ogude, 1999: 42). The single track theory characterising her perception of people and events undercuts the success of the liberation struggle and the farm invasions that she brings up. The masses may not be as docile as painted and it could be an understatement that they have completely abdicated their social responsibility. Anecdotal representations could also be ahistorical (Sadomba, 2011: 227), thereby distorting

perceptions and experiences. Conflict over land in both colonial and post-independence Zimbabwe remains a real challenge, making land both a metaphor of struggle and the physical space for political and social contest. By implication, the solution to social conflict is only possible when land is shared more equitably to secure people's livelihoods as envisioned by the liberation struggle.

In this regard, then, her sadistic humour notwithstanding, Gappah's trajectories show that "literary criticism is ultimately a branch of social criticism" (Chinweizu, et al 1983:303). As the story severally repeats, land is at the heart of the liberation struggle, and people cannot be duped. Any deviation would be deemed as anti-*humwe*, and collaboration with the neo-colonial forces.

"Aunt Juliana's Indian" that recasts readers' minds to the 1978-79 ill-fated Internal Settlement between the Ian Smith regime and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, similarly paints disenchantment with an independence that denies people ownership of the land. The double-barrelled name — Zimbabwe-Rhodesia — implies that the country and land remain under Rhodesian control. Universal suffrage and majority rule that give people in the townships electricity for the first time and more schools but still deprives the Africans of their land is a mockery and therefore insincere. "This is not true independence. They want to bribe us into voting to forever be second-class citizens" (p. 188). The armed liberation struggle continued until the Lancaster House Agreement that saw guerrillas laying down arms and taking part in the 1980 general elections (p. 189). Peoples' vision of independence was that Africans would get autonomy and control of the country and whites and Indians would return to their countries if they were so afraid of Africans (p. 189). "Aunt Juliana's Indian" shows that in the common people's view, "Blackness signifies one's organic links with Africa, an authentic Zimbabwean identity and an entitlement to the land, while whiteness [or Indian] becomes synonymous with Europe, foreignness and an absence of rights to own land in Zimbabwe" (Manase, 2011: 32).

In Aunt Juliana's view, in addition to exclusive African land ownership and autonomy, Independence also entails *gutsaruzhinji*⁵² (p. 190), also echoed in "The maid from Lalapanzi" (p. 164). "There would be no servants and masters, no oppression because everyone would be the same" (p. 190) and workers would earn higher wages for their labour. In her view and by implication the common people's, independence would mean eradication of social classes that kept society into strata of oppressor and oppressed or a social clique imposing itself against the will of the majority.

The ordinary people view Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's invitation for people to turn swords into ploughshares and reaching out a hand of friendship to the whites so that black and white could build a new country (p. 193) as antithetical to the liberation struggle objectives on land. Aunt Juliana shows that from the common people's perspective, reconciliation would entail compromising the war ideals about land restitution. From the onset of Independence, some people are not confident about an alliance with former oppressors (p. 191; p. 193). The earlier Lancaster House Agreement "between the guerrillas, and the old white government and the new black and white government" (p.189) similarly confirms underlying suspicions of betrayal over the land issue (Muzondidya in Mlambo and Raftopoulos, 2009). An alliance of nationalists, settlers and international capital meant giving the people a crown without jewels (Mandaza, in Bekker et al 2001). Read alongside "Last post", "Aunt Juliana's Indian" reiterates the undermining of the liberation struggle's vision about land restitution and emancipation of the masses by the ruling elite. The fresh wave of farm invasions in "Last Post" shows that the people are restive because of the unsettled land issue.

"Midnight at the Hotel California" explores corruption about land. Its representation of land developments impliedly casts the white commercial farmers as the messiahs of the country's agricultural sector. Despite Government efforts to resuscitate the collapsed agricultural sector through input and machinery support schemes, the beneficiaries dispose of these at the black market. A good number of the new farmers, like Mr Mafa in

⁵² Valuing of people's human worth, labour, dignity by giving everyone equal opportunity and access to the country's land and resources.

the story who works at the courts, are unsuitable candidates for farming because they spend a greater part of their time at their places of formal employment. Gappah critiques the emerging philosophy and practice of long distance farming that is jeopardising a quick recovery of the agricultural sector.

In addition, she exposes abuse of Government input support schemes for the new indigenous commercial farmers in the “new Zimbabwe where everyone is a criminal” (p. 258). The euphemism of everyone being a criminal gives an unfortunate identity:

There are these new farmers who get fuel at give-away bottom dollar everything-must-go preferential government prices. The government will throw anything at the new farmers to make them produce: cheap fuel, free tractors, free seed, free fertiliser — even free labourers; they were using prisoners on farms at one time. Pity they can't throw a bit of free motivation because the thing is that the new farmers is that they don't use the cheap fuel for their free tractors; instead, they sell both tractors and fuel to people like me [who in turn sell it to the] vast majority of the unconnected ... on the black market (p. 257-8).

Whilst the Government has gone out of its way to address practical issues such as machinery, inputs, fertilizers and labour in some cases, the goals of land reform have been smothered by lack of expertise in managing the new farms as well as absence of political will to monitor use of the distributed inputs by the Government. Land reform is undermined because as shown in this story, land is not being put to productive use. Revolutionary ideological orientation should not be limited to taking over land and input distribution schemes alone. Not everyone is committed to successful farming. Others could be opportunists/criminals looking for ways to make quick money with neither commitment to nor foresight about the long term objectives of land reform. The dimension of government commitment to harness human power to monitor productivity on the redistributed farms may help to encourage productivity on the commercial farms and help fulfil the land reform vision of making Africans controllers of land and producers of their own wealth.

In “Elegy” and “MDC” respectively, independence does not usher in any comfort or economic gains for the workers and peasants. The two stories represent a sharp contrast

to expressions of *gutsaruzhinji* in the “Aunt Juliana’s Indian” account of independence. Both stories expose state violence against the landless urban poor and peasants who in Fanonian terms (Fanon, 1967: 85-118) are the most exploited group. The stories show that economic deprivation in post-independence Zimbabwe leaves peasants and workers extremely vulnerable. People are forced to turn to the land — for self-settlement to secure accommodation in the urban areas, and in the rural areas, to till their overused unproductive fields for sustenance.

“MDC”’s Mdhara Vitalis returns home to Mupandawana “retiring to answer the call of the land” (p. 116). In his view, losing one’s job means “you can plough your fields”(p. 116) despite the poor soils, changing climate and inability to get inputs. Innuendos of sarcasm at the country’s new land policies that are widely criticised for turning everyone into a farmer emerge. The picture created insinuates that people are forced to turn to the land against their will. It would appear that people have not embraced the elite’s views about the Africans’ return to the land despite their organic links with the African soil. The point that Gappah downplays is that Mupandawana is barren, and the land conditions have not changed since the colonial times.

However, despite this set-up, Chari (2010: 136) cites Ndlela (2005: 84) who observes that it has been noted that communal farmers have been producing over 70% of Zimbabwe’s staple maize. He further argues that whilst white farmers have contributed immensely towards economy through the production of cash crops such as tobacco, the role of the black communal farmer should not be undervalued. Gappah’s tacit assertion that the black communal farmer could be averse to working the land may be partially true. Chari and Ndlela’s observation confirms reports of restraint against peasants’ bulk production of maize that saw Rhodesia introducing and implementing the Maize Control Act in 1951 to protect white commercial farmers against competition (Ranger, 1985). Lauretta Ngcobo’s *And They Didn’t Die* (1999) similarly dramatises the violence of African land dispossession and displacements in some parts of South Africa to protect white interests. Such evidence undermines the attack on the indigenisation land drive masked in the image of Mdhara Vitalis whose land fortunes have not changed thirty years into

independence. Concerns about government's failure to give land to the ordinary people that Mdhara Vitalis reveals have been severally highlighted previously.

On the other hand, this is not to say that some peasants as typified in the Mupandawana dwellers are not psychologically ill-prepared to till the land. Gappah's fears may not be completely unfounded. As represented in the story, the peasants of Mupandawana are especially ill-equipped to replace displaced white commercial farmers because they are not capacitated. These negative perceptions contradict the ill-resourced resettled peasant farmers' productivity despite their glaring capital, labour and input problems (Scoones et al, 2010). Gappah's underlying narrative is that not everyone is for land reform and tilling the land. Mutilation of the land has psychologically conditioned people to depend on formal employment. Gappah's sarcasm at the indigenisation land drive is further deepened by references to the Chibero Agricultural College trained teacher, Jeremiah, whom the narrator lampoons for turning his back on the land to teach Mupandawana children the theory of farming. The narrator observes that given an eighth of a chance, the same children "would sooner choose the lowliest messenger jobs in the cities than a life of tilling the land" (p. 116). Here, Gappah exposes some glaring loopholes in the practicability of the indigenous land drive. More preparatory work had to be undertaken.

In essence, the writer cannot hide her loathing of the new land drive. Unwittingly, the story buttresses the psychological damage dealt to the African concerning the land and who the farmers should be. Yet, if Africans are averse to farming it may not be out of a conscious choice. Colonialism crammed them into infertile reserves in climatic regions that were often prone to poor rainfall and drought-prone (Ranger, 1967; Moyana, 2000; Chigwedere, 2001). The 1930 Land Apportionment Act, 1951 Land Husbandry Act and 1969 Land Tenure Act among others (Samkange, 1982; Moyana, 2000) give evidence to this effect. Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975/1981) and "The setting sun and the rolling" in *Coming of the Dry Season* (1972/1991) would give dramatic pictures of the patterns and effects of such colonial land and population demographic inequalities. The barren lands occupied by the Africans entailed equally barren prospects, particularly

for the young. The conditions naturally engendered hatred for tilling the land and inculcated a yearning for white-collar jobs in the cities.

With the white-collar-job mentality deeply ingrained subconsciously after almost a century of psychological domination, land mutilation and militating conditions, critics and policy-makers could be deluding themselves to think that the delayed dramatic land policy changes and reverse psychology can produce instant results. The cynicism about giving land to Africans that is prevalent mainly among the elite in post-independence Zimbabwe, would therefore not be surprising to a critical reader. Ironies embedded in the narrative undercutting land indigenisation show the prevalent contradictions. For example, the Governor's attack against detractors of the land reform programme, though humourously given, could be double-edged. It could be read as confirmation of history, or as criticism against ill-timed land reform or both:

What business does a ruling party MP have in promoting the opposition, the puppets, those led by tea boys, the detractors who do not understand that the land is the economy and the economy is the land and that the country will never be a colony again, those who seek to reverse the consolidation of the gains of our liberation struggle (p. 126).

Instead of drawing intended ire from some critical readers, criticisms against ill-timed post-2000 land policies could inculcate doubt. Land issues are best appreciated within the country's broader historical context. This observation notwithstanding, most people are more concerned about immediate gains as opposed to Africans' ultimate destiny and survival. A hungry people remains ungovernable, however lucrative promises for a decent future may sound.

The issue of the country's never being a colony again that gets trillion trillion times emphasis from the President in "Last Post" that is parroted by the Governor in this story becomes ludicrous to urbanites leading wretched lives. The joke about the country "becoming Zhim-Zhim-Zimbabwe because the ruling party had sold out the country to the Chinese" (p. 115) thus shows sarcasm about the country's claims of defiance against imperialism. It lampoons the regime's self-contradictions shown in the leadership's

narrow perceptions of imperialism when they are mortgaging the country by rendering it into the Chinese economic ambit. The joke of *Zhim-Zhim-Zimbabwe* thus indicts the country's Look East Policy that subtly substitutes economic domination by one country with another.

Zhim-Zhim-Zimbabwe derides the Chinese merchandise flooding the country which the public refer to as *Zhing-Zhongs* because they are cheap in prices and quality and are also easily breakable. *Zhim-Zhim-Zimbabwe* could also be the writer's way of showing disenchantment with importing Chinese technology that could be ill-suited for Zimbabwe's land reform and economic transformation needs. This could be more so in the context that China helped Zimbabwe in the Second Chimurenga (liberation struggle) and is also helping Zimbabwe with agricultural equipment in Zimbabwe's infamous Third Chimurenga of land redistribution. *Zhim-Zhim-Zimbabwe* could also be symbolic of the fragility of the land itself which some critics view as being "in the interregnum" (Vambe, 2010: 93-116).

Further, Gappah's displeasure could be emanating from perceptions resonating with the country's colonial history that spread propaganda against communist China. Gappah casts China's continual support for ZANU-PF governments in bad light. Chinese support is widely perceived to make Zimbabwe defiant against her former colonial masters. This comes especially in the wake of the post-2000 economic melt-down culminating from the Western-imposed sanctions against the country, a punitive reaction against the post-2000 white-owned farm invasions.

Implicitly, Gappah's view is that China's complicity with ZANU-PF has prolonged the life of a regime that has inflicted economic problems on its country and the majority of its citizens. The punitive effects of America's 2001 Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) that is also a direct response to the post-2000 land invasions (Raftopoulos in Mlambo and Raftopoulos, 2009) are felt more acutely by the public. Gappah takes this latter issue up in "My cousin-sister Rambanai". In these stories, Zimbabwe becomes symbolic of the land that dehumanises its own citizens.

Mupandawana⁵³ that gives the setting of the story is also metonymic of the post-colonial country and its urban centres. Its image of a growing urban centre promises limitless opportunities for everyone, replicating the colonial myth of the city. Mupandawana is “one of the biggest growth points in the country, but the only real growth is in the number of people waiting to buy coffins, and the lengthening line of youngsters waiting to board the Wabuda Wanatsa⁵⁴ buses ... to Harare” (p. 114). As observed earlier, Gappah appears to downplay the barrenness of Mupandawana and the barren prospects for the youths to accentuate the failures of the government to deliver independence promises. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, some analysts would view the obvious prejudices in Gappah’s art as subordination to propaganda. A veiled agenda, and not unfulfilled promises for land and empowering the ordinary people, could be the impetus behind her representations. This is buttressed by the writer’s failure to acknowledge that Mupandawana’s crippling environment “is a colonial construct and that the infertile land signifies land alienation and attendant problems” (Ndlovu, 2010: 120).

In the narrator’s view, the people of Mupandawana’s lives prove his “theory that life is one big jest at the expense of humanity” (p. 115). The rural less experienced youths are displaced at their jobs by the laid off urban-skilled and experienced workers like Mdhara Vitalis. Through Mdhara Vitalis, the story caricatures the country’s post-2000 economic meltdown and continual worker exploitation by the country’s bourgeoisie. For his thirty years’ labour investment in one of the city’s companies, he is pensioned off at three pairs of tight-fitting shoes. Whilst Mdhara Vitalis returns to Mupandawana to take refuge in the village’s fields, the youths leave for the city to seek fortune. In failing to open the physical and economic spaces in post-independence the land betrays the ordinary people, fails to alleviate poverty and renders the masses to a vicious circle of poverty. The story’s reiteration of the peasant-workers country-city dichotomy exposes the quintessential irony of the exploited African and his relatedness with the land. Names like Mupandawana and Wabuda Wanatsa are indicative of lives of uncertainty and perpetual

⁵³ It means “I can only give if I first get something for myself”. It is a dog-eat-dog set up whereby only the fittest survive.

⁵⁴ It means “by leaving the growth point you save yourself”.

insecurity on the rural landscape. The gloomy pictures render the liberation struggle and its sacrifices futile.

In “Elegy”, asymmetrical Easterly Farm settlements show the post-independence government’s insensitivity towards the plight of its vulnerable citizens. The first arrivants at Easterly were victims of the government’s drive to clean the “townships to make Harare pristine for the three-day visit of the Queen of England” (p. 31). This is despite repeated vows that Zimbabwe will never be a colony again. The government “allow[ed] them temporary structures, and promise[d] them real walls and doors, windows and toilets” (p. 32). Long after the Queen’s visit, many more hapless dwellers including Martha Mupengo⁵⁵ joined Easterly. That they settle at the fringes of the City is symbolic of their position of un/belongingness in a country they esteem as home. The snide jokes about life at Easterly could also be telling of the general lives of hardships in post-2000 Zimbabwe: “Before the President was elected, the Zimbabwe ruins were a prehistoric monument in Masvingo Province. Now Zimbabwe ruins extend to the whole country” (p. 33). The sarcasm comes from one deeply disillusioned.

“The winter of the birth of Martha’s child was a winter of broken promises”(p 42). Winter is symbolic of cold and death. For Easterly Farm dwellers, instead of the government meeting its promise of giving decent accommodation, it violently removes them by demolishing their shacks using bulldozers. The land that had given them promises of shelter and hopes for dignified existence spits them out violently. Easterly Farm becomes symbolic of betrayal, continual suffering and unfulfilled promises. It is the land of unfulfilled dreams of emancipation and lives of indignity. In some analysts’ view, as is the case with the writer, it is representative of the state of the whole country. In the narrative’s view:

The formal workers of Easterly Farm were a small number: the country had become a nation of small traders. They were blessed to have four countries bordering them: ...They had become a nation of traders (p. 34-35).

⁵⁵ Mupengo means lunatic; someone who is mentally unstable.

It is ironic that as Radio Zimbabwe assures its citizens of comfort during the current winter and turns the audience's attention to "You and Your Farm" programme, the dwellers of Easterly Farm face forced-state-driven removals from the land they have come to view as their own. This exacerbates their squatter status in the post-independence period. The squatters express concern at the demolitions of other similarly placed structures and dwellings like Porta Farm⁵⁶, Union Avenue flea market, Mupedzanhamo⁵⁷ and Siyaso⁵⁸. Their shared fate is shown as irreversible. The undefined land approaches in the post-colonial have "led to the creation of restless, dislocated and fugitive as well as distorted identities (Manase, 2011: 33) on the Zimbabwean landscape generally.

That the demolitions target the lifeline of mostly the poor citizens shows how the post-colonial government fails to fulfil independence promises to uplift the lives of the formerly exploited subaltern. Promises of land for resettlement, improved accommodation in the towns and better wages appear to be quashed. "You and Your Farm" programme on Radio Zimbabwe mocks the Easterly Farm squatters. It leaves critical readers wanting to establish the farm-owners that the radio addresses. This further reinforces the City as an image of disinterestedness and alienation from the common people.

The City's unleashing of violence against the hapless dwellers shows that the administrators deal with challenges in terms of statistics and procedures— never real human beings. Desperate to restore and maintain its sunshine city status, the City unleashes violence against the victims of colonial and post-colonial accommodation shambles and exploitation. The evictees' plight is double-pronged because they are squatters in their country under an administration that they put into power after winning

⁵⁶ A farm between Norton and Harare along the Bulawayo Road where all Harare's street children and squatters of Mbare were dumped by the Government as part of Queen Elizabeth's state visit in the early 1990s.

⁵⁷ It is a popular common people's market at the outskirts of the City just before getting to Mbare, the oldest black township in Harare. The name means "to solve all your problems", or "to end your troubles". It is known for selling African traditional wares and imported second hand clothing mostly from European countries.

⁵⁸ It is an open market just outside the City close to Mbare renowned for indigenous entrepreneurship in an assortment of hardware goods, roofing materials, carpentry products and car parts.

the liberation struggle against minority settler rule. Exclusion from accessing land has created further dislocating effects in the lives of the evictees. “Aunt Juliana’s Indian” critiqued earlier shows the people’s Independence vision of restoring people’s dignity through their reconnection with the land. Betrayal of the people’s expectations is evident. The story insinuates the difficulty in establishing where the ruling elite’s loyalty lies. In view of the representations in this story, then, quashing promises of urban land resettlement for the ordinary citizens shows that there is a very thin thread between patriot and traitor in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

“My cousin-sister Rambanai” similarly explores lives of unfulfilled dreams at home and abroad. “There is no way that I can go back to the States”, [Rambanai] blurted. “I was there illegally. They will not let me back in, I overstayed my visitor’s visa” (p. 223). For banishment from America, her passport gets a corresponding endorsement: “*May not be granted leave to enter* stamped like angry welts on a face” (p. 224). Having imbibed the psychology of dependency on Western countries for confirmation of the African’s humanity and human worth, Rambanai keeps chiming the American Dream and its offer of limitless opportunities to everyone. This shows her inability to grasp the full extent of America’s ZDERA and its ripple effects on the country’s economy and its citizens. She also exhibits a superficial understanding of the American Dream in the context of America’s capitalist socio-economic systems. Her pretentiousness shows that she lives in the imaginary, explaining her shock at the lowered standards at Harare’s Ximex Mall now stocked with only “that *awful* crap from China ... no restaurants, nothing” (p. 222). The land reform initiative has jeopardised the country’s international relations rendering its citizens vulnerable to the debilitating effects of sanctions. As a result, people make an exodus out of the country as economic refugees in the Diaspora. People can do anything to get some imagined economic reprieve especially in the United Kingdom. Fractured identities become an inescapable phenomenon as people flee the country for what they believe to be better opportunities elsewhere:

I gave up teaching and Jimmy engineering to be in England, where the curse of the green passport condemned us to work in the unlit corners of England’s health

care system, in care homes where we took out the frustrations of our existence by visiting little cruelties on geriatric patients (p. 234).

Away from their “father’s house” (Appiah, 1992) whose economic woes has forced them to economic nomadism, “educated Zimbabweans have suffered alienation both at home and in the [Diaspora] (Ndlovu, 2010: 124). Matilda’s exasperation at the predicament of un/belonging that leaves them vulnerable to indignity through “under-employment and downward occupational mobility” (Ibid, p. 125) is apparent. Post-independence Zimbabwe is shown to be dehumanising its citizens at home and abroad. The educated elite whose dignity had been believed to be guaranteed by their education have not been spared, forcing them to share a life of scavenging like most Zimbabweans who are soft targets of discrimination and exploitation abroad. “The negotiated settlement” echoes similar disenchantment about education: “The girls she teaches are not interested. And who can blame them? How will Eliot and Pinter and Golding get them a fast buck? What guarantees do Achebe and Marechera and Dangarembga offer?” (p. 250). In Gappah’s view, independence is blighted by politicians’ failure to deliver on the liberation struggle promises and the people’s silence about it.

“The maid from Lalapanzi” reiterates stories of sexual abuse of female ex-combatants at the war front as well as after independence and their alleged unmarriageable status as used goods (p. 171). The land whose autonomy they fought for ironically takes away their own autonomy as liberated citizens. The liberation struggle for land restitution to Africans created discourses of silence and festering psychological and emotional wounds among female combatants resulting in fragmented identities. *Women of Resilience* (2000) explores these exclusions and insecurities more closely. The maid, Sissy Blandina’s accounts of war experiences to her employer’s children also suggest that the liberation struggle should become part of family myths so that the country’s legendary history of heroic struggles for land and autonomy may be inscribed in the psyches of the young generations. War names and war songs are given as one effective strategy (p. 164-166). Such approaches would also ensure a shared trans-generational vision about the country and its struggles for land.

Ironically, “The golden triangle” plush images of suburban lives led by some black elite families in post-2000 Zimbabwe sharply contrast with the lives of destitution led by the silent majority explored in the other stories. Although Gappah appears to be using a single trek theory in her appreciation of the land debate in post-2000 Zimbabwe making it difficult for her to be modest in her critique, her short stories tacitly draw readers’ attention to what she believes to be penetrating evil that would undermine the liberation struggle vision of decolonisation. The subtle forms of post-colonial fractured identities emanating from the political elite’s reneging at the people-driven rallying vision of the liberation struggle partially show her disillusionment. Land metaphors in most of her short stories explore real on-going challenges that sharply contrast with life in “The golden triangle” where the elite has settled among foreign ambassadors shows how post-colonial Zimbabwe could be viewed as two countries in one — one for the elite and the other for the rest of the citizens. Disparities have been sharpened more acutely by the indiscriminate ravages of punitive sanctions against the country for its land reform policies. This further entrenches Gappah’s views against what she perceives as failed leadership.

5.2.3 Gappah’s trajectories: Concluding observations

Land metaphors in Gappah’s short stories explore specific relations to the country and the post-2000 political-economic meltdown and its aftermath. Her post-2000 depictions of land that appear to be more personalised, grotesque and satirical adopt a journalistic anecdotal approach that is understandable within the context of the emotive nature of Zimbabwean land occupations and the collapse of the economy coming at their heels. Some writers are emotionally-involved as witnesses to the developments. Gappah satirises political leadership’s use of people’s vision of the liberation struggle as a means to accumulating resources, including land, and consolidating their political power. Gappah shows land as an explicitly economic and political tool that can be manipulated for personal aggrandisement whilst the unsuspecting masses are hoodwinked into believing that the liberation goal bonds them with their leaders. Problems of squatters and shack-dwellers emanate from hollow promises for land. In Gappah’s view, manipulation undermines the foundation of the liberation struggle that unified people in

the common struggle against colonialism. The aim was for people to be unified and determined in the fight against settler rule. Manipulation by opportunistic leaders erodes the people's confidence in their leaders. Competing visions of what land is for in post-2000 Zimbabwe play out. Gappah's depictions that mostly focus on the political elite appear to ventilate political discontent occasioned by economic hardships and political instability emanating from the post-2000 farm invasions and land occupations. The sum total of her stories shows that in her view, renewal of leadership, and not land reform, holds the key for post-2000 Zimbabweans' regeneration. Gappah's cynicism turns the analysis to Lawrence Hoba's *The Trek and Other Stories*.

5.3 *The Trek and Other Stories* (2009)

5.3.1 An overview

Like Chirere's short stories, narratives in *The Trek and Other Stories* (*The Trek*) are drawn from the common people's impoverished lives and their *ad hoc* land invasions. The people view land invasions as a strategy for consolidating the gains of the liberation struggle. The collection explores possibilities of change and renewal from the perspectives of the marginalised ordinary people. Such an approach shifts from the dependency syndrome inculcated by colonialism that is seen ruining people's lives in *An Elegy*. The exploration of the land invasions and their aftermath from the point of view of the people at the margins privileges readers with an unofficial and unmediated narrative of part of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform historiography. In Fanonian terms, Hove's depiction of land invasions could be viewed as a "literature of combat" in the sense that "it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence as a nation..." (Fanon, 1967: 193). It shows the people's determination to fight neo-colonialism through action, for, from their viewpoint, redeeming the land means reconstituting their lost identity.

Hoba's *The Trek and Other Stories* offers insights into the ambivalences of land reform using the voices of the new settlers as beneficiaries of the post-2000 land reform. It excavates their joys, pleasures and anxieties about land reform — real and imagined. Hoba's anthology adopts an inward-looking technique to critique views and perceptions about land reform using the settlers' own experiences on the farms. Drawing from the

settlers' experiences, the writer gets an opportunity to take readers into the world of the new settlements owned and managed by the settlers themselves. Critique ranges from the revolutionary perceptions of land reform encapsulated as counter-discourse to the 1890 Pioneer Column that sealed effective occupation. This parallel is particularly significant in the re-construction of the country's land history in the post-colonial phase within the broader decolonisation context.

The narratives are significant in the manner that they can be likened to Fanon's views on national literature that is revolutionary — a literature of combat (Fanon, 1967: 193). Hoba captures the revolutionary spirit of land reform through the ordinary people's voices in "Maria's independence" and "The Trek" stories as well as "Specialisation". The incumbents' determination in the face of what analysts could view as lack of foresight undercuts what others could view as a precautionary approach to land redistribution. Such an approach draws Hoba's perceived audience to re-interpret the land narrative from the perspective of the people who are part of the redistribution exercise, directly confronting its challenges and seeking pragmatic alternatives in the face of what could be viewed as insurmountable challenges. The art of subversion gives a different complexion to how challenges of the post-2000 land process could be viewed.

With "The first trek — the Pioneers" (Pioneers) and "The third trek — Resettling" (Resettling) opening and closing the anthology respectively, the writer cunningly whips readers into sharing his views on land reform. Using the child's narrative in "The Trek" stories also gives a veneer of innocence and sincerity regarding the images and metaphors projected about land reform. Further, that other short stories like "Maria's independence", "The travelling preacher" and "Specialisation" specifically dwell on the economic-social trappings and what the ordinary beneficiaries view as impediments to a successful land reform give the critique some precision. Stories have been selected on the basis of their responses to general concerns about the on-going land reform and its impact on the country's and individuals' socio-economic stability. The selected short stories above that are believed to be representative of the writer's views formulate the thrust of the critique.

5.3.2 Tracking the treks of the Third Chimurenga: Impact on identities

From the outset, it is worth noting that Hoba's literary creativity explores what he views as lessons that can be drawn from the divergent experiences of land redistribution and the "highly political and potentially disruptive nature of land reform" (Lahif in Chigara, 2012b: 111). The lessons could forestall further damage engendered by ad hoc land allocations and occupations. Further, the stories could also broaden people's perceptions and views on the country's land historiography.

Titling three of the short stories "The first trek — the Pioneers" (Pioneers), "The second trek — going home" (Home) and "The third trek — Resettling" (Resettling) chronologically locates the literary text in the realm of historical criticism, conquest and forced removals as at inception of colonial settlements in Rhodesia. "The Trek" metaphor gives readers sense of historical tracking of land take-overs using reverse psychology. Scoones et al (2010: 186) rightly observe: "The new resettlements are regarded ... as places of economic opportunity, much in the same way as urban areas and off-farm employment once were". The metaphor of "the trek" then, subverts the Great Trek of the Pioneer Column that established first colonial settlements at Effective Occupation. Appropriating the same metaphor of the trek appears to justify the settlers' wilderness experiences in their search for land and fortune, the same philosophy underlying settler occupation of Zimbabwe. Satirically, the writer validates anti-imperialist ideology and the political argument that the settlers' farm-occupations are action directed at undoing the legacy of the initial Trek. Titling confirms the people's resolve to practically reverse colonial land alienation that the government appears to have delayed redressing. "Maria's Independence" confirms the latter observation, challenging the gradualist approach to land redistribution in favour of a more radical "war of movement" (Ogude, 1999: 7). Thus, titling presages the combative character of the take-overs.

On the other hand, titles like "Resettling" and "Specialisation" could be showing that ideology of national land repossession should "not be a shackle. Nor should it be the end. The end should be man ultimately freed from fear, suspicion and parochial attitudes: free to develop and realise his full creative potential" (Ngugi, 1972: 24). Ability to reflect on

limitations and admit failure allows the writer's characters to have critical self-knowledge, thereby creating space that inspires new resolve to overcome challenges. The narrator in "Specialisation" observes: "Maybe specialisation could work after all, if only we could find someone with the right skills to join us" (p. 19). The new farmers' acceptance of the traditional concept of *mushandirapamwe*⁵⁹ in which everyone worked together doing what they knew best (p. 16) shows a refusal to be caged by labour problems and give up on their dream to productively work the land they had taken over. This would help the farmers circumvent labour challenges in the wake of desertion by former labourers.

The stories are double-edged. They capture reality in its complexity. Whilst they offer the post-2000 vision about land repossession, they also expose the weaknesses that undercut the principle of land reform. For example, through the veiled innocence and sincerity of the voice of a child narrator in "Pioneers", the writer exposes the futility of *ad hoc* occupations. The child narrator attacks the notion of posturing farming. His father views occupation of formerly white-owned commercial farms and their ownership as new status symbols:

A metal board leans against the plough, 'Mr B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24' is crudely scribbled in white paint. I had never known *baba* wanted to be a commercial farmer (p. 2).

The child narrator's innocence is evident in his ignorance of the underlying historical facts about land alienation and land repossessions that could explain his father's sudden interest. Hoba provides source of such impetus in "God's will" where the narrator observes:

FOR MOST, THE FARMS WERE THE PLACES people went to escape the poverty that had haunted their existence in the town locations and sandy reserves. ... some briefly succeeded in their emancipation, pouncing upon the wealth left by white farmers who were fleeing the war vets sent to drive them out (p. 43).

⁵⁹ It means pooling labour and human resources for the collective good. Pooling labour is a common approach to helping out with labour problems associated with agricultural activities like planting, weeding and harvesting among peasant farmers. Villagers converge at the needy farmer's fields upon invitation on a set day and hammer at the task.

However, the picture of Mr B J Magudu as Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24 when he has no means to productively work the new farm shows that dreams of status without substance could never guarantee a successful land reform programme. The child narrator shows that the only credentials baba has to support his newly-found land is the self-proclaimed title scribbled on the metal board. The only evident implements to be used on the newly-occupied sugar cane estate are an old ox-drawn scotch cart, a plough and two hoes to be aided by an ox and a calving cow. Further, Magudu is an indolent fellow who spends all his time beer-hunting whilst the wife, *mhama*, does all the fieldwork: “*mhama*’s hoe is worn from use, *baba*’s is still new and clean. The inscription ‘Master Farmer’ is still visible” (p. 2). Hoba uses the child narrator’s voice to lampoon at some new settlers, and by extension government’s unpreparedness for a programme as critical as land redistribution. If Magudu is the archetype settler peasant farmer, then government should be culpable for the glaring failure of land reform Hoba shows in this story. Further, government’s ill-preparedness and incapacity could also be evidenced by the peasants’ self-allocations of land on government-acquired farms. Former freedom fighters and the ordinary land-hungry people organised themselves and occupied farms because the resources of the country remained in the hands of a minority clique whilst exploitation of the marginalized majority continued unabated (Tafara in Harold-Barry, 2004: 43-45). Such a background explains the explosive nature of the land invasions that Hoba depicts, an observation buttressed by Sadomba (2011).

Ad hoc occupations by land pioneers like Mr B. J. Magudu could never be envisioned as suitable replacements for displaced white commercial farmers, rendering the latter as indispensable for a sustainable agricultural economy in post-independence Zimbabwe. Hoba’s satiric use of pioneer image is worth noting. It could just be referring to these occupiers as harbingers of serious-minded farmers who would come after the first generation of land occupiers that displace the white farmers. This satiric projection of pioneers of the first trek from the writer bespeaks of a programme doomed from the onset:

One day he had come home after he had been away for several weeks and told *mhama* that he had got a sugar cane farm, together with the farmhouse, that had

been acquired by the government. ...he never works in the fields. The farm will be *mhama's* to run.

“The second trek — going home” (Home), exposes the desertion of new farmers by former labour-force characterising the new farming landscape. “Only *Sekuru* didn’t go. ... *Mhama* says he is from a faraway country called Malawi” (p. 27). The child narrator does not understand why *Sekuru* could not get his own farm like *baba*, indirectly lambasting the exclusionary approach to land redistribution that has been explored earlier in the chapter. That *mhama* blames *Sekuru* for the plantation’s non-productivity does not come as a surprise to a critical reader: “because he liked *murungu* too much that he doesn’t want us to become rich and is using medicine to make our sugar-cane fail to grow” (p. 28). The issue of loyalty as a factor could not be debated given that gallivanting Magudu and his injured wife, *mhama*, cannot pay *Sekuru*, who is working single-handedly, for his labour. It is public knowledge that sour relations between former white-owned labour-force and the new farmers remain characteristic, because with no production on the land, the new farmers cannot pay their work-force.

Interestingly, the absence of agricultural machinery, inputs and adequate water notwithstanding, somebody should take the blame. Even the child narrator could tell that escapism would not change the reality of the facts on the ground:

If we had money, maybe the engines would now be working and we would have enough water to irrigate the fields. There might even be fertiliser. That’s what *sekuru* told me the crops needed to grow (p. 29).

Hoba brings up the chef-syndrome perceived to be endemic in the land allocation process as explored previously in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. Child narrator’s family is evicted by armed riot police to make way for a chef who takes over the farm. The child narrator thinks they are being evicted on account of their poverty. He observes that even *sekuru* works diligently because a rich farmer has taken over the farm. Upon exiting the farm gate when returning home, the child narrator would have wanted to pull down the metal board with “Mr B J Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24” and throw it far away. Hoba uses the metal board as a symbol of unfulfilled dreams — mockery for

failure. Yet, without dreaming, there would be no transformation of individuals and their communities, including establishment of colonies like Rhodesia.

Through the child narrator, Hoba also exposes that non-availability of public facilities like schools at the farms has hampered general growth and psycho-social security of young children. It is public knowledge that white commercial farmers provided for their children's education by sending them to private schools, something that Magudu cannot afford. Hoba alludes to lack of foresight on the part of the land invaders and government that has not provided public amenities at the farms as a major handicap in the land reform process. General empowerment and development of children on newly-established farming communities have been severely undermined as the children remain marooned.

As hinted elsewhere, "Resettlement" shows Magudu's family back at their homestead in the village — home where in their impoverished state they belong. Though the return could be appreciated in its broader economic context, Hoba raises doubts about whether peasants were the intended beneficiaries of land reform from the start (Lipton, 2009). The child narrator observes: "I don't know whether he/[baba]will accept that the farm is no longer ours" (p. 48). Facts show that without capital and labour peasants' holding of commercial farms mocks the principle of empowering disenfranchised families and communities. Their continuation on the land without producing as shown earlier in "Home" intensifies the country's economic and food insecurities that are dependent on commercial agricultural-production.

The child narrator also raises pertinent issues concerning shifts in perceptions of morality emanating from attitudes engendered by involvement in land invasions. In the child's view, it would appear as if gaining control over land entails eschewing the Bible. The picture paints the Bible as a pacifying tool that blinds people to their right to autonomy (p. 51), echoing philosophy peddled about missionaries complicit in African land dispossession and general disempowerment as depicted elsewhere on cultural and land alienation in Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*. Hoba's images saliently and silently

confirm arguments now considered public knowledge in Africans' accounts of whites' land appropriation.

The child's innocence embedded in "Also, the farms have made *mhama* bad, and there is no priest to make her good" (p.48), shows perceived shift in moral standards. The land movement has given her confidence to defend the land/physical space that she stands on as her anchor. When the village headman tells her that they could not repossess their homestead and fields because he had sold them she stands her ground. The fact that no one ever claimed the fields afterwards indicates how even local custodians of culture and tradition have been corrupted by the land reform process. That the custodians of communally-owned land in trust for the ancestors and future generations (Bourdillon, 1992; Mararike, 2003) now view land as a disposable commodity testifies of continual erosion of values that kept African communities bonded. Hoba exposes shifts in land values and traditions that appear to be endemic in the post-2000 period, threatening community cohesion.

Hoba's child narrator shows that the disruptive effects of land reform are sharply felt in the ensuing shortages in the country. The magnitude of general shortages psychologically traumatises the children. The child narrator remarks: "I don't know how big a country is, but our village and farm are all big. How can she say that something bigger than all the villages and farms has no paraffin?" (p.50) Worth noting is that people were resilient as shown from the tone of the narrator. Further, that the occupations and counter-occupations offered opportunities for renewal for some families is evidenced by *mhama's* renovation of the home, making it the best in the village.

Hoba's depiction of *mhama* also confirms women's role in securing family livelihoods and food security that heightened in the land occupations period. The depiction of *mhama* buttresses the need for women to have land in their own right. This has become imperative particularly in the face of increasing women-headed households heightened by economic nomadism and other social challenges like HIV/AIDS that have incapacitated families. Brown (in Bowyer-Bower and Stonemann, 2000: 171) observes that the need

perceived by many Zimbabwean women is for independent access to land. She further argues that with this change, education for men is vital. To be faced with a community of newly-empowered women is not an attractive prospect and could result in even further polarisation of attitudes as men feel a threat to their positions of power. Hoba explores this aspect of threatened masculinities and emancipated womanhood and possible polarisation in “Maria’s Independence” in which the men farm-invaders concur that Maria “is too much of a woman” (p. 5).

“Maria’s independence” exposes land in post-2000 Zimbabwe as an embodiment of hidden differences among the masses invading farms. “But even in our oneness, we were divided” (p. 5). Hoba’s narrator’s dramatic opening gives the story a combative tone telling of how the masses descended on the war veterans, pushing them onto the farms. The picture shows absence of both leadership and a grand plan on how land could be handled at the time. Peasants are represented as the revolutionary force behind the post-2000 land take-overs. The image also confirms the myth that the post-2000 land occupations are mass-initiated and mass-driven:

THE MASSES,
With clenched fists
Swept us onto the farms

There we all met. With neither hoe, tractor, plough, seed nor cow. The vast grasslands crowded our skyscraper-clouded minds and the endless *mopani* forests dimmed any memories we had of the barren sandy reserves we had left behind. Awe filled our hearts at the sight of the many wild animals we’d heard of only in folktales or seen on the old New Geographic programmes re-run countless times by the debt-ridden state television (p. 4).

As with this researcher’s field visits, Hoba confirms people’s hunger for land. The masses’ spontaneous farm invasions reinforce the possibilities of revolt in order to bring revolutionary transformation within society by dramatically resolving the land question. Further, the image of the masses spear-heading farm invasions confirms Fanon’s theory of the masses being the decisive force behind decolonisation, a fact that is also observed

by Hanlon et al (2013) and Scoones et al (2010) in their studies of post-2000 land occupations initiated mostly by ordinary people in Zimbabwe.

Land as a polity issue tied to ancestry also comes through: “For, after many years of independent bondage, we sprang to the ancestors’ beckoning to return to the land, their land, our land” (p. 4). “Independent bondage” confirms the issue of formal self-rule that denies people control over the land and its resources. For Africans, African land is ancestral heritage remains an irrevocable aspect of history. The trebled reference to “the land, their land, our land” reinforces the narrator’s conviction, and by extension the writer’s as well, couched in the collective possessive — “our land”. Hoba’s approach to the land struggles gets impetus from Fanon (1967: 232) who suggests that the [formerly] colonised man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening up the future. Past displacements unlock farm take-overs and displacements that redress present land incongruities. This liberates both physical and mental spaces.

Stylistic rhetoric that the writer uses to tie up the current land occupations as a polity issue comes through the immediate poetic references to the armed liberation struggles of the First Chimurenga and Second Chimurenga: “Lost through the barrel, Won through the barrel” (p. 4). Hoba strengthens the perception of furthering the liberation struggles through land decolonisation:

For on the farms we had rekindled the old spirits. We started holding all night pungwes, as in the liberation struggle. This was the third revolution and had to be treated as such if we were to fully understand what it was all about (p. 5).

Hoba indirectly affirms the notion that not everyone understood why they got entangled in land invasions. Hove (2011) argues that the land invasions’ connections with the liberation struggle are calculated to give legitimacy to the occupiers’ actions as continuation of anti-imperialist struggles, when in essence these occupiers are stragglers and not the strugglers that they claim to be. Whilst Hove’s perceptions trivialise the historical aspect of struggles to control land, Hoba’s narrative buttresses the inviolable

links between displacements at settler conquest and land dispossessions with the post-2000 violent land repossessions.

As observed elsewhere, bullying of the little persons and preferential allocation to chiefs keeps undermining the land reform process: “Sometimes, we would arrive at a farm, only to be told that someone more important had already taken it, and we had to move on” (p.4). The new culture of self-seeking acquisition of land at the expense of public good critiqued in Gappah’s “Last Post” is shown to be the major undoing to a shared vision on land in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Earlier creative works in Shona like Aaron Chiundura Moyo’s Shona play *Kuridza ngoma nedemo [wakagara papfumo*⁶⁰*]* (1985) that was published long before the farm invasions warn against such a wanton approach to land redistribution. On the other hand, the picture that comes through is that chiefs come in to remove the masses who have done the groundwork because there are no social structures to contain social injustices.

Apart from fanning corruption, the exclusionary approach to land allocations using social status as the defining criterion is bound to sow divisions among the African communities and further perpetuate social instability over land which, ironically, has been the rallying factor against anti-imperialist liberation struggles. Gappah’s references to fresh waves of farm invasions against the political elites mentioned earlier reinforce this sinister aspect to land reform. Like Chirere and Gappah, Hoba shows the intertwined nature of land and identity in post-colonial Zimbabwe after demystification of racialisation of land. Further, the story brings a dialogic relationship between its historical milieu that reflects the unfolding social processes and emerging perspectives on land historiography.

That land invasions left most families dysfunctional is an important factor that “Maria’s independence” exposes. Families break up when men left their wives behind either “in the cities or sandy reserves, unsure of when someone with more power would come to chase them off the land and tell them to look for more unclaimed land” (p. 6). “The

⁶⁰ It literally means playing the drum using an axe whilst one is seated on a spearhead. Metaphorically, it means courting one’s destruction/doom.

travelling preacher” follows this aspect closely showing how the social fabric disintegrates leaving moral decay on the newly-established communities. Without a farm owner on the ground, there is no hierarchical authority and individuals become sluggish. A new habit as that of Magudu’s beer-hunting sets in. Therefore, rather than empowering people to improve themselves, farm occupations engender a *laissez faire* attitude towards work and commitment to the institution of family. These concerns are worth noting as they have the potential to undermine the social fabric and human worth.

The narrator laments environmental degradation because of the rampant cutting of trees and hunting down of game: “We had unknowingly become the bad custodians of our ancestors’ wealth” (p. 6). The farms turn out not to be the paradise that the invaders had imagined them to be. That Hoba explores these fissures in the post-2000 land narrative that others could view as satirical, could be indicative of his commitment to raising the national consciousness through educational awareness about challenges on the newly-settled farms. The stories keep society informed so that stakeholders could make conscious choices on matters relating to land reform. That the story ends with government sending agricultural officers to inspect and train newly-established farmers on how “to farm years after they took over land” (p. 7) shows government’s renewed commitment to see the new farmers becoming generators and masters of their own wealth. This is a reality yet to be fully realised in post-2000 Zimbabwe (Hanlon et al, 2013; Scoones, 2010).

“Specialisation” calls for introspection on why fully equipped farms at take-overs have not been productive. Hoba observes that no one had thought about life after the rush (p. 14). At the time of occupation everyone had “wanted to take the closest entry into and onto the farms to grab the juiciest piece of ancestral soil they could find” (p. 14). The sarcasm concerning lack of foresight in the narrator’s voice is unmistakable. Further, scorn over wanton burning of forests comes out strongly:

Everywhere...skeletons of charred trees standing where forests had not yet been cleared...Traditional habits die hard, even when you haven’t tilled for a century ...But we could never be charged with destroying forests with fire — it was a

cultural practice. And there had always been grass-burning even before we took over the farms (p. 14).

Courage to laugh at their own mistakes and faults as does Hoba's mockery conversely solicits willingness to learn from the perceived subjects of cynical attack. This notion challenges perceptions that Hoba's intention is to disgrace the new farmers. Bringing the farmers face to face with their destructive habits could help them see for themselves and curtail practices that would ruin their newly-acquired lands. Chimoto's mimicry of former white farmers reinforces the idea of self-criticism and ability to laugh at oneself: "You white kaffir, don't bother showing your nigger farse...The farm and everything on it is now ours. We, the soverin sons of the soil" (p. 15). It is curious to note that "soverin sons of the soil" are failing to productively work the land they liberated. Common sense finally tells them that apart from hard work, communal approach with everyone bringing in their specialised skills is what would inject new life into the farm. Sense of community affirms both identity and productivity that are hinged on the land. People invest their best talents on the land for collective good and action is reciprocal. Hoba insinuates that isolated specialisation undermines the liberation communal ethos and blights renewal on the farms.

Hoba's style that attempts a catalogue of causes of land occupations, reasons for unproductivity on the settled farms, effects on cultural insitutions and possible solutions to challenges relating to land shows a commitment towards land reform that is benefit-oriented for the public good. Whilst he appears disconcerted with an unsystematic approach to land redistribution, his criticism becomes soft-padded because he appears to identify with the characters repossessing and re-moulding identities and structures on the land.

5.4 Conclusion

Chirere, Gappah and Hoba's perceptions of land and identity, though divergent, ultimately fall under social criticism. Chirere attempts to embrace Africans' holistic existence and how identities are intertwined with land and nature. Gappah, who adopts a single theory approach to land in post-2000 Zimbabwe, appears more imprisoned by

disillusionment than offering alternatives. Her fatalistic trajectories stultify society's efforts to regenerate itself. Hoba's satirical technique lays bare pitfalls and possible solutions to challenges relating to land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe without drawing the public's ire. His rejection of official romantic images of land reform in favour of proliferating possibilities of failure, indicate down-to-earth images in the absence of careful planning, expertise, theoretical knowledge about commercial farming, inputs, and funding from the state and financial institutions. Trajectories show that the land reform process may not succeed without taking thorough stock of realities on the ground. With critical self-examination, constant reflection, self-introspection and willingness to learn from mistakes of the past and present, the land reform process may achieve its originally intended objectives.

That the short stories are double-edged is incontestable. They insinuate that meaningful change lies with the people who, in *An Elegy*, stand to be betrayed by the political elite owing to a self-seeking consciousness that appears endemic in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The stories also expose the problems and contradictions emanating from *ad hoc* land redistribution. Lack of foresight, as well as lack of systematic planning during the land invasions that the stories expose, insinuate that long-term benefits of land redistribution are delayed by these shortcomings. Apparent lack of foresight concerning possibilities of corruption, inadequate expertise, cronyism, avarice and abuse of input support schemes at the implementation stage, further jeopardises envisioned empowerment of the marginalised majority.

The divergent images of land that the short story collections offer, thus, could help Zimbabweans to reconsider future possibilities and avoid replication of past mistakes that inadvertently perpetuate systems that dehumanise other sections of society. The post-independence path of decolonisation through land redistribution requires thinking through and commitment from all stakeholders.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: WHEN EVERYTHING HAS BEEN SAID AND DONE

The end should be man ultimately freed from fear, suspicion and parochial attitudes: free to develop and realise his full creative potential (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1972: 24)

6.0 Introduction

The study set out to critically analyse how Zimbabwean literary voices across the racial divide explore the land-identity conundrum as depicted in selected Zimbabwean-authored fictional narratives published between 2000 and 2010. The period 2000-2010 is viewed as a watershed in Zimbabwean history because of Africans' radicalised approach to the country's century-old land question. The period and land redistribution processes that have generated immense controversy locally, regionally and internationally are canonised as *jambanja* across the racial divide. In its Afrocentric examination of writers' fictional trajectories, the study interrogated the writers' sensitivity to the marginalised majority's plight and dire need for land, including their commitment to change oppressive and unjust land systems. The latter entails dealing with oppressive structures and attitudes that impede a sustainable future for all Zimbabweans through more equitable land redistribution as envisioned in Zimbabwe's armed liberation struggle. In the African worldview, writers and art have a critical role to play in raising people's consciousness about injustices in order to promote sustainable human and social development. To this end, artists are deemed the philosophers of their communities who are looked upon to suggest practicable solutions that uphold human worth and human dignity of every person for greater human progress. With regards to Zimbabweans' land issues, artists are expected to expose the foibles of institutionalised unjust land inequities that benefit minority cliques at the expense of the marginalised majority. Their trajectories are supposed to influence society to change attitudes and perceptions of human worth so that oppressive structures and systems may be transformed.

6.0.1 Land-cum-identity in Zimbabwean Literature in English

Research on land in Zimbabwean Literature in English appears to have shied away from using integrative approaches. For this reason, research on the Zimbabwean land question

in literature appears paternalistic, thereby entrenching racial binaries that undermine dialogue on a sensitive subject that affects every Zimbabwean, directly or indirectly. The current study has therefore used Afrocentricity because of its integrative approaches towards problem-solving. Such integrative approaches strive towards holism in problem-solving with a view to promoting oneness through dialogue so that a synergy of ideas could be drawn from most stakeholders and engender ownership of processes like land redistribution. The study on land and identity in this research is not about race, creed, class or skin colour, but advocacy to change attitudes and systems that dehumanise people. It is about adopting lenses that view all Zimbabweans as human beings that require securities embedded in the land. This is aptly captured by Mutasa (1985: 37-38) when he says:

We are not fighting the war so that whites will become second class citizens ... we are not fighting against the colour white... We are fighting the war...so that we can have land to till.

Further, in the African worldview, land is not just an economic resource. It embraces the material and metaphysical elements constituting Africans perceptions of themselves, including relationships with others and the environment trans-generationally. The African-centred approaches that the study used situate both the texts and their criticism within their respective cultural, historical, political, intellectual and social matrixes which afford readers opportunities to appreciate land and identity as lived and experienced among most Zimbabweans. Studying Zimbabwean land experiences and cultural attitudes outside the history of colonial dispossessions and apartheid land approaches runs the danger of giving fragmented and distorted pictures of the Zimbabwean land realities. Fictional narratives have been used because as art, they partly memorialise Zimbabweans' collective memory about lived experiences, anxiety and expectations about Zimbabweans' lives now and in the future. People's struggles for land, are depicted as partly constituting struggles for social change and social justice.

The land issue in Zimbabwe was one of the major reasons for the war of liberation. The need for land reform to correct colonial imbalances therefore cannot be doubted. Further, that the new government at independence did not address this matter urgently and

adequately cannot be overemphasised. From an African-centred perspective, land and identity are inseparable. Identity touches on issues of belongingness, self-efficacy, humans' collective stewardship to other humans, stewardship to the environment, "human closeness" (Bennett, 2011: 241), values and traditions, rites of passage, the interplay between spiritual and physical security, and communion with the spirit world. It also includes worldviews, race, nationality, national/family heritage, shifting social roles and responsibilities according to given situations, institutions and communities. Equally critical are shared experiences of settler colonial dispossession and cultural domination, class, political affiliation, struggles for land and liberation and human dignity, including advocacy for the common cause for social justice, among other views.

6.1 General observations and findings

The Zimbabweans' post-2000 unprecedented radical stance over land redistribution that has particularly witnessed prodigious literary creativity and its criticism shows the conflicts and contestations over land openly playing out. To this end, post-2000 fictional narratives responding to the land question have become a site of intense struggle between Africa and the Rest. The study revealed that the Zimbabwean land question and its impact on human identities, human worth, and livelihoods patterns is more complex and riddled with controversies than meets the eye. Writers focusing on land in post-2000 Zimbabwe fall into two broad categories along race lines. The first category comprises, those who are in support of land redistribution, citing social justice in view of colonial land dispossessions. Black-authored narratives examined in this study fall in this category. The second category of writers, who are coincidentally white, blame land redistribution for the deepening economic decline and polarisation characterising relations in the country and internationally. This reality itself is an indication that the land question remains a sensitive issue, which has the potential of tearing the nation apart if not handled with utmost care. This explains why approaches in the study of the fictional narratives strive for integration and promotion of significance of human worth, for society's greater good.

6.1.1 Black-authored narratives' views on land and identity in Zimbabwe's post-independence era

Generally, the writers show that the Zimbabwean issues of land and identity are not easy to deal with. Though these writers are of the view that land redistribution was long overdue, they reflect on the complexities, dynamics and difficulties characterising the processes. Their trajectories generally resonate with the goals of the armed liberation struggle that galvanised the marginalised majority in the fight for land, freedom from settler domination, and social justice in order to uphold human dignity and human worth across the Zimbabwean society. The writers also observe correctly that for the Africans, land dispossession was not only material/physical, but also spiritual, psychological and intellectual, resulting in distorting and fracturing identities. In their perspective, institutionalised land dispossession meant destruction of indigenous peoples' dignity, self-worth and identity, including their livelihoods and destiny.

These writers are commended for exploring themes like land that are deemed too sensitive to explore at this crucial time in the country's unfolding history. The writers generally concur that abating, condoning and inducing conditions that do not nurture life, for whatever reason, is anti-life/anti-African/anti-*humwe*. If colonialism is denounced for its expropriation of Zimbabweans' natural resources – primary of which is land – and excluding indigenous Zimbabweans and other marginalised Africans from enjoying the same, it entails that continued holding of land by minority cliques at the expense of the marginalised majority continues dehumanising both the victims and the perpetrators of injustice. It remains unjust and immoral for minority cliques to continue excluding other Zimbabweans, for whatever reason, from enjoying benefits deriving from independence. In the Afrocentric view of life, human worth can never be differential. All human life is sacred and should be protected at all costs.

With pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe having minority cliques in control of the land, and therefore mainstream economy, the temptation to amass wealth at the expense of the marginalised majority remains apparent. The marginalised majority generally anticipated and believed their realities to radically change at attainment of political

independence, especially by indigenising land-ownership. For example, Dangarembga's juxtaposition of the pulsating streets at independence in *The Book of Not* and the flight of whites from the country, show this dire need for social justice through more equitable land redistribution. This explains the writers' concern about the government's sluggishness to deliver land to the people in a transparent and more equitable manner as embedded in the independence promises for land restitution. In doing this, the writers are reflecting on the aspects that the Zimbabwean government should strive towards in order to meet the people's expectations. For consistent renewal and progress, every society should reflect and introspect.

Traditionally, leadership meant carrying responsibility to guarantee sustenance of whole communities. For this reason, writers advocate that systems should change so that the lowest and most vulnerable members in the Zimbabwean society gain access to land and are protected. The wretched livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups reflect the level of human progress and social development in Zimbabwe, including leadership's sensitivity to people's genuine need for land and their commitment to transform unjust systems and practices. Prevalence of corruption, insensitivity towards the plight of the poor, especially their exclusion from accessing the country's major resources such as land, reflect the morality of those at the top who generally disregard the needs of the people they lead. Land redistribution was envisaged to empower the marginalised majority, but successful reform appears to be impeded by self-serving practices of opportunistic leadership. At the very point that white commercial farmers' attitudes could have been influenced regarding more equitable redistribution of resources, unfortunately, corruption among Africans diverts attention from the real issue of making the land more accessible to all Zimbabweans.

Resonating with the selected writers' vision, recently published research (Hanlon et al, 2013; Scoones et al 2010) shows widespread transformation of livelihoods among resettled families. As shown in the narratives, monopoly land-holding by minority cliques and their cronies institutionalises a system that had for so long been built to safeguard minority vested interests. Therefore there is need to change attitudes and systems that

dehumanise others. Differential human worth and subordination of others' need for the securities embedded in the land create divisions and violence that undermine efforts to find amicable solutions to problems. Unfortunately, without the requisite change in attitudes and practice, the result is a strife-ridden society. As shown in all the writers' fictional narratives, especially Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*, the cost is too high.

Afrocentricity that underpins the current study advocates consistent self-introspection in order to bring about meaningful social transformation. This explains why the study focussed on and exposed writers' disregard of post-independence leadership's lip-service to struggles for more equitable distribution of resources. This becomes the country's undoing and, unfortunately, the poor are further marginalised. Amnesiac attitudes concerning land as the major rallying point before and after independence explains why Zimbabwean post-independence leadership has not been able to radically overhaul land inequalities that post-independence black administrations should address. Like-minded African-centred literary gurus like Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Armah deal heavy blows on opportunistic post-independence political leadership and the comprador bourgeoisie. Ironically, inaction and fatalism similarly condone practices that further impede more equitable redistribution of major resources such as land and make Zimbabweans culpable in their own oppression, manipulation and exploitation. This is the light in which these writers' depictions should be read.

Post-independence leadership has not dealt with land redistribution swiftly and effectively because they themselves have become beneficiaries of clique monopoly. As highlighted by Gappah's *An Elegy for Easterly*, human nature is susceptible to forgetfulness on pressures that do not directly affect them. However, Gappah's personal attacks and sardonic trajectories risk un/wittingly masking and trivialising aspects and forces that Zimbabweans should isolate and confront. African folklore, like the Biblical parables, does it subtly without direct attack on individual personalities. It prioritises society's need to address human foibles, rather than confrontation, in order to promote self-introspection and oneness for greater human good. Human nature naturally digs in,

and is self-defensive, if confrontational approaches were adopted towards resolving conflicts and problems.

As these black-authored narratives show, it is important for Zimbabweans to understand that the struggle for more equitable redistribution of land is won at the level of theory, attitudes, outlook, including literary images used to suggest practicable problem-solving approaches. Zimbabweans can mine for solutions from African philosophies that chime well with the Zimbabwean environment so that Zimbabweans may not be left beholden to cultural centres other than their own. Some centres are prone to distorting Zimbabweans' lived land realities for ulterior purposes. Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* gives a good example. Literary creativity should then entail critically-examining processes like land redistribution, learning from present processes and realities, including past monopolies to avoid replicating mistakes of the past, and making "unnecessary efforts and sacrifices" (Cabral, 1979: 50). Writers' contempt for the big-wigs-chef-syndrome, cronyism and violent land expropriation exemplifies activism, including disdain for and discomfort with opaque and partisan redistribution of the country's major resources. This shift from partisan national politics buttresses that land should not be treated as a racial or class issue, but moral one. The disparate livelihoods and backwardness of the country's economy are partially accounted for by skewed redistribution of the country's major resources, further entrenching conditions and problems that marginalise the majority. This appears a common phenomenon that post-independence Africa should confront (Achebe, 1989; Cabral, 1979: 53-55). All the narratives variously complement each other on the issue.

Coincidentally, African indigenes' identities are intricately interwoven with African land, including the historical experiences of slavery, colonial conquest, foreign domination and foibles of post-independence African administrations. Land and identity then, go beyond ephemeral crass materialism. This explains why precarious livelihoods in Zimbabwe's post-2000 land occupations' aftermaths, have been attributed to the country's political leadership, although other forces also have their fair share. Hordes of Zimbabweans were forced some to subordinate their national and ethnic identities, including their human

worth and dignity, in search of economic reprieve in the Diaspora. The government and society should therefore acquaint themselves and deal with the controversies generated by the post-2000 land redistribution process. This is regardless of the notion that as poor blacks, the majority may not be adequately capacitated to work the land in ways that may generate great wealth instantly. The majority should be wary of opportunistic politicians who ride on people's genuine need for land. Like their white predecessors before them, they have realised that land is the hen that lays the golden egg. This explains why they have consciously persuaded themselves to hoard and hold onto the land at whatever cost in order to wield economic, political and material power. As previously stated, reference to the heroic national liberation struggle becomes a sham. Unwittingly, such practices accentuate the need to expeditiously redistribute land as a major resource, aspects that these writers explore differently reflecting the lived realities in a Zimbabwean context. The reality of land-based injustices and contradictions make the narratives and their criticism relevant to post-2000 Zimbabweans' socio-economic and political realities, with land redistribution appearing an inevitable strategy to re-establish and restore the human worth across the society.

Further, as the writers show, continued abject poverty among the vast majority are manmade, nurtured mostly by continual inequitable distribution of land, corruption, greed, and general disregard for human dignity and human worth. Whilst complexities are traceable to colonial practices, structures and values that centralised individual crass materialism, corruption and exploitative tendencies among some Zimbabwean land-owners exacerbate the need for the authorities to legislate and institute measures that centralise human dignity and human worth above excessive capital gain. Without rigorous reforms and political will to institute mechanisms that monitor progress, the injustices that dehumanised other sections of society would be perpetual, aspects that the post-independence administrations should not allow to continue.

The marginalised majority's continual exclusion from accessing land has led them to unilaterally occupy land in order that the liberation goals to restore human dignity and social justice could be achieved. Therefore, as the fictional narratives cumulatively

reflect, a Zimbabwean peace written in silence, poverty, landlessness and dependency flies in the face of the people's spirit of struggle, and is therefore not sustainable. Yet, alienated from their naturally-given heritage, the excluded marginalised majority builds the affluence of the minority ruling cliques. Such continual dispossession abates robbing the vulnerable majority of their natural right to life, implicitly rendering African-led post-independence administrations culpable in the dehumanisation of those that gave them political power.

More equitable land redistribution is viewed as the first major step towards alleviating poverty among the marginalised majority. The narratives demonstrate that the marginalised majority, who ironically are mostly Africans, are exploited and manipulated materially, psychologically and intellectually because they have no control over land. As admitted elsewhere, the writers challenge the post-independence administrations to effectively address this glaring anomaly so that social justice can be achieved, for greater human progress. This explains why writers preoccupy themselves with trajectories that depict and highlight the gap between the people-centred independence promises and Zimbabwe's capitalist-based economy that continuously marginalises the country's greater marginalised majority. Writers view land primarily from a communal basis – our land – advocating collective survival interests. This is not to say that Zimbabweans totally despise private ownership of farms. It is exclusionary redistribution that compromises the stability/security of the country and survival of the majority that should be addressed. Peaceful co-existence can be nurtured and defended if the post-independence society redistributed land in a transparent manner that upholds oneness/*humwe* by recognising and centralising human worth, human dignity and reciprocity. This is how, in the African worldview, communal and collective rather than minority survival is ensured. The decolonisation agenda that post-independence administrations should address then, revolves around rectifying land imbalances so that human relationships could be corrected.

Similarly, rectifying land imbalances could also help society to re-think and reshape the colonially-fractured and fragmented male-female relationships. Fragmentation of land

and relationships resulted in decimation and abuses that many readers might have come to regard as the African norm. Yet, the converse could actually be true. Attitudes that show women as appendages to their male-folks are anti-African. Post-2000 gender-neutral land invasions project this dire need survival. The fight for land is a fight for survival, individually and collectively. In the African worldview, women, like the land and earth that nurtures life, are the fulcrum or pivotal centre upon which families and communities are anchored. Views that see prospects of empowering women leading to further polarisation concerning male-female relationships because men might feel threatened reflect little knowledge about Africans' quest for social justice in terms of accessing principal resources. Perceived antagonistic views about women's accessing land could be either ignorant, or amnesiac about African traditional values embedded in the very land, the liberation war losses, including women's direct participation in the armed liberation struggle, of whom the legendary Nehanda remains the synecdoche of sacrifice and Zimbabwean nationalism. HIV/AIDS losses, widowhood, orphanhood, and intra- and extra-territorial migration – not in itself a new phenomenon– have also seen many women-headed families striving to access land because they should survive like any other. In the African worldview, man and woman have always been viewed as equally human (Gyekye, 2003), and therefore complementary, not competitors, aspects that these writers expose.

True to African philosophy and spirit behind art, these authors collectively challenge readers to revisit and introspect on the land question from all angles so that people can raise their own consciousness and critical self-knowledge. The latter helps Zimbabweans to effectively deal with land from a position of critical socio-cultural and historical knowledge instead of any other partisan interests. This explains why these black-authored narratives use the armed liberation struggle as a reference point concerning the land question, including people's aspirations for expeditious land redistribution in Zimbabwe's post-independence period. Such a vision also partly explains why some of their trajectories, like Gappah, Hoba and Tagwira's for example, do not romanticise the African characters and communities when it comes to dealing with land. They expose the folly of corruption, individualism, ape-manship, cronyism and destruction of the natural

environment, encouraging transparent participation that would ensure that the dignity and human worth of all human beings is recognised and defended. Their trajectories challenge Zimbabweans to have critical awareness about subtle forces at play so that society may amicably and effectively address land and identity issues. Blacks should rise above race to confront attitudes and human foibles that defend exploitative systems that diminish human worth, ending up destroying morality and social fabric that guarantee social cohesion.

These African writers make an important observation that land in the post-2000 period goes beyond ownership, parochial partisan interests and racial identities. In their collective view, social justice moves away from the authority of the law in legal terms to “conventional morality” (Kahari, 2009: 27). Morality is viewed in terms of how practices prioritise, defend and provide for basic human needs in order to uphold human worth and human dignity. For example, Gappah, Hoba and Tagwira depict how insensitive leadership, avarice, inadequate and poor planning, indolence and multiple farm-ownership, undermine sustainable human and social development. Equally problematic are lack of capital, lack of expertise and general pursuit of self-interests by the landed-minority cliques. That the writers’ views resonate with the principles of social justice and respect for human dignity and human worth remains undeniable. Only introspective self-criticism, particularly in view of the noble values of land redistribution, would engender intrinsic regeneration and genuine efforts to empower the marginalised majority by instituting measures that would make it easy for them to access land. The latter subtly reinstates human worth and human dignity.

6.1.2 White-authored narratives’ views concerning land and identity in post-independence Zimbabwe

White-authored narratives generally view land mainly as an economic resource as a means to wield economic/political power, and psycho-socio-intellectual control. The latter in turn influences perceptions of human worth. As the authors project, insistent use of the *terra nullius* doctrine entrenches polarisation along racial lines. The doctrine disregards the original inhabitants’ land systems and traditions, favouring and transposing

alien ones that prioritise minority self-aggrandisement at the expense of other human securities. Such attitudes and approaches accentuate domination, exploitation, manipulation and exclusion of Africans who happen to be the majority. As a result, white land-owners have crafted systems that have benefited them over the years. That they see nothing wrong with African condition of mediocrity and impoverishment shows their general disregard for African human worth and dignity. Harrison's *Jambanja* makes a classic example. This makes them partly culpable for creating conditions that nurtured the current instability in the country. Conditions are so tailored to allow land-owners to have perpetual control over the lives of this impoverished group. This explains why the white writers view the majority of the indigenous population as expendable labour, in addition to looking down upon them as cheap cannon fodder that can be expediently manipulated by systems and politicians.

As shown by Eppel and Harrison's narratives, some land-owners had cut ties with their homelands. Overhauling the land distribution patterns, as was the case in the post-2000 period, leaves most of them with no other home. This situation partly justifies their determination to resist change. It is also humanly difficult to relinquish privileges without resistance. The prevalent mentality of white supremacy and black inferiority as evidenced by mismanagement of the *ad hoc* land redistribution process and its ripple effects continues being used to justify inequitable distribution of land and African impoverishment. The writers' trajectories focus on and balloon negativity to torpedo any possibilities of change.

Also noteworthy is the fact that because of the writers' conceptions of differential human worth, their narratives see nothing wrong with land-owners maximising profits without passing down the benefits to their labourers whom they regard as possessions. In the narratives, as well as in reality, this makes their cries about human rights abuses hollow, thereby giving excuse to self-seeking political leadership to loot and plunder major resources at the expense of the marginalised majority. Continued defence of unjust systems that institutionalise discrimination and differential human worth predicated on race and class shows a certain kind of arrogance that many Zimbabweans should

introspect about. More equitable redistribution of land as a human right to life, decent livelihoods and geophysical space, should become every society's priority.

As indicated in Henson's *Case Closed*, the land-owners' principle of economic surplus and determining how the proceeds from the land are used, exclude livelihoods of the labourer who is viewed naturally as having no capacity to think, reason, see the injustices surrounding him/her, judge or even dream about better lives in the future whereby they would have control over the land and its resources. This resonates with the original colonial blueprint concerning land and labour that fragment, fracture and distort African potential, human worth and human dignity. As Césaire (1959: 155) observes, "Under good colonisation, the coloniser is the creator of cultural values. And the colonised is the consumer". This philosophy explains why the white-authored narratives advocate amnesia about social injustices, hammering the need for economic productivity instead. , It is no wonder Baldwin, (1995: 157) argues: "The white man prefers to keep the Black man at a certain human remove because it is easier for him thus to preserve his simplicity and avoid being called to account for crimes committed by his forefathers". Yet, without land, liberation remains hollow.

Narratives that portray whites only as marooned victims of violent land dispossessions and displacements, distort historical realities. This entrenches prevalent racial polarisation over land. Deliberate politicising of minority interests to retain monopoly over land above national security and stability as Harrison and Eppel do, lock the country in a cycle of violence. Internal strife is detrimental to all Zimbabweans' long-term interests. Whilst the current study acknowledges white fictional narratives' contributions concerning controversies and malpractices surrounding land redistribution, it is imperative that creativity and re-imagining should rise above patronising attitudes and be broad-based so that Zimbabweans may avoid replicating past mistakes, for greater human good. Selective memorialising of historical land developments impede rather than expedite the much-needed change in land accessibility. Violence, clothed in whatever language, for whatever reasons, locks Zimbabwe in a cycle of instability that undermines peace and oneness. Despite rationale and justifications from whatever quarter, human

rights' abuses, especially through land seizures, hoarding and exclusions, dehumanise people. For example, Eppel's *Absent* makes a satirical depiction that challenges readers to introspect on post-independence management of land displacements. Exclusion undermines commonality of interests and oneness that all Zimbabweans should strive towards for a more stable society.

Resonating with reality, narratives in this study prove that contestations over land reform have been more vociferous where it has been perceived as a strategy for decolonisation, avarice, self-aggrandisement, as well as an empowering process mainly for the marginalised African majority. However land redistribution could be construed, wealth-creating policies in post-independence Zimbabwe should be all-embracing. Purviews that are partisan further entrench attitudes about land-cum-identity and human dignity along class/racial lines. This polarises society. The black-white binary over land should be carefully trodden for society's greater good.

6.2 African philosophy: Literature and land reviewed

The Shona philosophy of *humwe* that is founded on the principle of collective bargaining and participation in problem-solving, especially over land-related challenges, accedes searching for wisdom and actuating decisions using approaches that foster human dignity, human worth, peaceful co-existence and greater social cohesion. In the West African concept of the Sankofa spirit, "it is not taboo to go back to fetch what you forgot". In the same spirit, "we must go back in order to move forward (Stewart, 2004: 3). The process requires critical self-examination and introspection so that focus and undertakings become clearer. That the narratives collectively deconstruct and demystify problems and contradictions bedevilling land redistribution in Zimbabwe's post-independence phase from their own experiences as Zimbabweans is highly commendable. Their trajectories expose some pitfalls that Zimbabweans should address. They situate the Zimbabwean land and identity issues within their socio-historical matrix in order to suggest practicable approaches. In collectively showing that the Zimbabwean land question remains a "definitive political" (Bernstein, 2004: 221) struggle entangled with struggles to reassert human worth, human dignity and collective survival, authors challenge Zimbabweans to address the problem in a manner that goes beyond partisanship and self-aggrandisement.

In Bernstein's (2004: 220) words: "The land question in Zimbabwe is entangled with struggle for democracy". Bernstein's observation resonates with this study's integrative approach that centralises *humwe*/oneness so that Zimbabweans could hold constructive dialogue centralising human dignity and human worth in the distribution of land. This integrative approach could help ensure that basic land needs of all Zimbabweans are guaranteed.

If approaches on land redistribution were to focus on collective survival, oneness and peaceful co-existence founded on the African philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu/humwe*, the Zimbabwean land question would be viewed differently. Focus would shift to the moral aspects of social justice, human dignity and stewardship of both wo/man and the environment by wo/man. Meeting basic human land needs ensures that humans are at the centre. This makes the African-centred approaches more appealing, sustainable and practicable. In Afrocentric approaches that the current study adopts, there is a place for all at the rendezvous of knowledge (Aime Cesaire, 1995). Monopoly of knowledge and resources such as land is both self-defeating and self-annihilating. It would also remain indefensible that a country envied for the highest literacy rate in Africa produces writers that wholly rely on approaches birthed/incubated and nurtured in philosophies that thrive on fragmenting, dominating, exploiting, manipulating, demeaning, decimating and dehumanising other human beings. Zimbabweans should rise up and confront systems/structures/practices that are anti-*humwe*/anti-life.

As Asante (1998:22) rightly observes: "[D]efinitions of phenomena are inseparable from individual and group interests". This entails that Zimbabweans' failure to define phenomena from the vantage point of their existential location leads to their submitting to definitions tangential to Zimbabweans' collective survival interests. It would thus be easier to appreciate land in Zimbabwean Literature if read in light of Nobles' (1985:107) definition of power as "the ability to define reality and have other people respond to your definition as if it were their own". This is how humans have successfully defended their survival interests down the ages. Problems mostly arise when some humans accord themselves the right to self-define when others are denied a similar right.

6.3 Reflections and undertakings

The research concludes by placing the fictional analyses of land and identity within the framework of African philosophy of wisdom, premised on defending principles and approaches that strive to achieve greater human good and sustainable human progress. Writers therefore become more relevant if guided by mores that defend common humanity like *humwe* does. As evident in some of the narratives examined in this study, their interventions where there is conflict and uncertainty should suggest resolutions that promote greater human good in terms of what is at stake. Such approaches resonate with the Afrocentric view of art. In the context of representations of land and identity against the backdrop of violent land-occupations in post-independence Zimbabwe, the writers become the wise men. Their contributions, if included in the country's education system through the school curriculum and tertiary education, have the potential to influence society's perceptions about strategies that could promote conceptions about human worth, including prospects for self-actualisation and contribution within the broad spectrum of society.

It would be therefore self-defeating for Zimbabweans across the racial divide to allow alien interests as embedded in nomenclature, models, theories and ideals to be used wholesale in resolving problems surrounding Zimbabwean land injustices, including manipulation of migrant labourers as explored in *Jambanja* and *Case Closed*. Labour migration is not a phenomenon peculiar to only post-2000 Zimbabwe. However, flight, as explored in *Harare North*, may offer temporary reprieve to land problems. Migrant Zimbabweans are subjected to xenophobia and heightened exploitation. Silence by the generality of the population concerning post-2000 land injustices unfortunately entrenches systems and practices that continue dehumanising people, contrary to the envisioned goals of the armed liberation struggle. Silence, like flight, lands Zimbabweans into unsustainable losses —materially, morally and psycho-spiritually. As Zimbabweans' labour and intellectual expertise build other countries' economies, Zimbabwe's declines, making the country a dormitory town of bigger economies. The current study, then, advocates that Zimbabweans critically re-educate themselves about their socio-economic and political realities, including limitations of disconnecting from homeland for short-

term reprieve. Gappah's "My cousin sister Rambanai" and Chikwava's *Harare North*, explore lives of most Zimbabwean migrants in the Diaspora who are reduced to black chattel status. This interface needs further exploration in future literary-based studies of land and identity.

Gappah and Hoba's narratives' prodigious negative images concerning post-2000 land redistribution processes appear to lampoon Zimbabwean majority's efforts to access land. Their trajectories, however, reflect poor planning and unprofessionalism in the manner that land redistribution as a process has been managed. Their concerns should challenge post-independence administration to move expeditiously, adopt and monitor strategies that are sensitive to the marginalised majority's need for land. This is in line with Afrocentricity which essentialises critical self-examination of processes and critical self-knowledge in order to successfully confront and possibly tame challenges to promote greater human good. From an African-centred view, an unexamined life is not worth living. This is how African-authored narratives redeem themselves, showing stumps that should be uprooted. Hoba's narratives that are misconstrued as anti-land reform are viewed in the same African spirit of self-criticism and self-examination based in the land traditions of *jakwara*⁶¹ or *nhimbe*⁶² upon which *humwe* is based. The ability to stand back, reflect and retrospect would enable rather than disable. Therefore, what others may read as an underlying anti-African voice, can be understood to be corrective/constructive rather than destructive. In this regard the proliferation of the negative scenarios he offers is designed to shock the Zimbabwean society with real multiple scenarios characterising land redistribution, which people should be prepared to confront. An artificial knowledge of both Afrocentricity and satire would miss this critical tool steeped in African land traditions and foundational values. Respective African-centred discourses that nurture *humwe* should be accorded their social space in order for them to continue flowering.

⁶¹ This is a traditional practice whereby communities or families come together during planting, weeding and harvesting to collectively help the weak, infirm and those overwhelmed by agricultural farming labour demands. Usually participants at these labour gatherings chide, criticise, lampoon and jeer at those members present at the function with impunity. This poetic licence is similarly what writers as artists should enjoy because their contributions would be viewed as constructive criticism rather than confrontational and destructive.

⁶² The term and concept is a synonym of *jakwara* and *humwe*, deriving significance in building social relationships based on the principle of reciprocity for collective and common good.

However, this is not to say that writers themselves might not conflate discourses to serve other personal motives. To their advantage, African-authored writings could be likened to African nationalist and liberation struggle tactics/strategies during the anti-colonial struggles that saw Africans using art and theatre to raise the masses' consciousness about their socio-political reality. Such strategies are common in African folklore. Outsiders to Africans' reality and traditions may miss Gappah and Hoba's narratives' double-edged status, misconstruing their satire and sarcasm as anti-people's aspirations for accessing land through transparent land redistribution in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Further, a monolithic view of Afrocentricity as glorification of African agency in feats such as land redistribution might also see satirical representations of the realities and pitfalls as lampooning of land redistribution. Yet, land reform in Zimbabwe's post-2000 period can only be meaningful if considerations like funding, transparency, adequate agricultural expertise and labour, availability of markets and infrastructure development were prioritised. Equally significant are considerations for human worth and human dignity. Zimbabweans should see beyond the claptrap that heaps all the blame of an unsuccessful land reform programme on capitalism and imperialism. Abrahams (2000: 375) rightly affirms why the African philosophy of land remains polarised to perspectives that limit land to economic aggrandisement, an aspect that Zimbabweans should guard against for greater social cohesion:

For Africans...land will always be more special than for most other people: land is their life, given by God in trust to sustain tribe and community... It mothers all who depend on it for life, how can anyone see it in terms of exclusive ownership?

Abrahams' view resonates with field surveys⁶³ that show that ordinary people talk about their land/soil, children of the soil and struggles for land restoration as the basis of secure livelihoods, African dignity and human worth, heritage and trans-generational connectedness. These concerns reflect the African-authored narratives' preoccupation with more equitable land redistribution. In concurrence with the same narratives, land

⁶³ Although the research draws from literary images, it is also cognizant of the lived experiences and people's expectations on the ground. This is critical because the fictional narratives themselves draw heavily from the society and communities in which they are set. They are not disconnected artistic entities.

redistribution in the post-2000 era should be appreciated more as poor-people-driven, rather than political opportunism. This aspect is hotly contested by some critics who perceive these writers' voices' conflation with the official voice on land reform as too coincidental. Yet, ironically, the poor majority's socio-economic reality makes it irrefutable that colonialism and its legacy systematically deprive Africans of the most essential requirements for living (Cabral, 1979: 20). This explains why all the writers go beyond the ideals of land redistribution to expose Zimbabweans' culpability for the continued exclusion, exploitation and manipulation of the marginalised majority. Narratives cumulatively expose the vices and short-sightedness of self-centred materialism that has, in real life, entrapped influential figures in society. Writers' acknowledgement of these pitfalls concerning people's aspirations for land redeems the Afrocentric vision of their art and its criticism. Achebe (1990: 43) argues:

We do have our own sins and blasphemies recorded against our name. ... It is too late in the day to get worked up about it or to blame others, much as they deserve such blame and condemnation. What we need to do is to look back and try and find out where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us.

The blame-game concerning post-independence land inequities further entrenches unjust systems. In line with the Afrocentric view of art acknowledged above, writers' task is that of re-educating their communities. Achebe (Ibid: 45) enjoins:

The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. ... For he is, after all ... the sensitive point of his community.

The reality of land redistribution in post-independence Zimbabwe is therefore determined and guided by Zimbabwe's peculiar cultural and historical realities. For this reason, most people believe that liberation war heroes from 1893 to the 1970s armed liberation struggle will not forgive those who betray the struggle for land restitution (Sadomba, 2011). However, while critical historical knowledge is important, preoccupation with past wounds and scars saps opportunities for creative thinking and societal renewal. The Zimbabwean society would benefit more from writers' trajectories that transcend racial identities, victimisation and victimhood. People should not remain enslaved by their hurts and disappointments. Land access predicated on differential human worth in terms of

blackness or whiteness, ethnicity, gender, political correctness, cronyism or economic and political power, is anti-life, anti-African and anti-*humwe*/anti-togetherness. It promotes violence. Violence for whatever reason, similarly perpetuates both the cycle of dehumanisation, and differential human worth.

This research hopes that *humwe* – premised on oneness, peace, reciprocity and togetherness – that primarily concerns itself with the significance of human worth and human dignity would bring the desired amicable resolution to Zimbabwe’s land issue. The realisation that indigenous Zimbabweans and others need land in order to survive should compel writers to be more creative and use trajectories that encourage Zimbabweans to prioritise human worth above all other interests. Re-education that indigenises outlook, grounded in oneness and peace that *humwe* centralises, is won at the level of consciousness. The latter should therefore not be left to chance. This would help Zimbabweans to conceptualise phenomena from an African outlook so that they may appreciate, inter-alia, intra- and inter-relationships from an informative African cultural centre with a view to isolating critical forces that are at play, and avert ill-informed conclusions and solutions. Similarly, self-hate and racial condescension would hardly make Zimbabweans flower. As Achebe (1989: 99) rightly observes: “Society is an extension of the individual. The most we can hope to do with a problematic individual psyche is to re-form it”. Therefore, vitriol against an “amnesiac nation”, including dehumanisation of Africans as “hoodlums” and politicians’ “cannon fodder” alike, estranges audiences from even well-meaning initiatives envisaged to help Zimbabweans transform perceptions, policies and practices about land in the post-2000 period.

6.4 Conclusion

Whilst the current research acknowledges that Zimbabwe’s post-2000 land redistribution is multi-dimensional impinging on individuals, families and communities differently, Zimbabweans would fare better if they were to be guided by respect for each other’s human worth. This promotes their society’s greater good:

In many ways we are the earth and its caretakers. Land and access to land are fundamental to our identity, who we are, what we will ultimately become, how we develop ourselves, what we can control and the freedom(s) we can have. If we stand on borrowed land, our intellectual space also becomes borrowed” (Tapuwahama Shumba, unpublished paper. 2005).

That the study subjects the selected fictional narratives across the racial divide to dialogue on the contentious subject of land and identity in Zimbabwe’s post-2000 period makes a major landmark in encouraging adoption of integrative approaches in the development of mainstream Zimbabwean Literature in English. This is partly how common ground and oneness could be achieved through literature.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Interview with Mr Aaron Chindura Moyo Zimbabwe-German Society, 27th August 2010, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Mrs Magosvongwe: Mr Moyo, I am glad I find you well. It has been quite a while since we last met. I am conducting a research on how artists view land and identity in post-2000 Zimbabwe. What is your take on the subject?

Mr A. C. Moyo: Madam, *mauya zvakanaka. Vanyori tine basa guru panyaya iyi. Sei ndichidaro? Basa redu harigumiri mumabhuku, rinoenda kuvanhu, rinoumba pfungwa dzevana muzvikoro kana nemunyika zvakare. Saka, nyaya yamasimudza yakaoma Amai.* (Madam, I thank you for probing that subject. As writers, we have a mammoth task, especially in the context of our country at this point in history. Our ideas go beyond the book to penetrate society through the school system. That is why I feel that your subject is far too big.)

Mrs Magosvongwe: *Maita basa VaMoyo. Ndakafarira mitambo yenyu inoti Kuridza Ngoma nedemo (1985) naPane Nyaya (2006) inobata nyaya yevhu iyi yadai kunetsa. Chinyi chaizvo chamunoona chinofanira kugadziriswa panyaya yevhu?* (Thank you Mr Moyo. I have enjoyed reading your plays *Kuridza Ngoma nedemo* (1985) and *Pane Nyaya* (2006) in particular because of their direct references to land in post-independence Zimbabwe. What do you see as the major issues that Zimbabwean writers should address?)

Mr A. C. Moyo: *Amai, sekureva kwandamboita nyaya iyi yakaoma. Mukatarisa nhasi dambudziko rabva pataive muma80s hondo ichangoprea. Vanhu vedu vaida ivhu, vamwe vakatopinda mumapurazi anga asiyiwa nevarungu, asi hurumende yakadzinga vanhu ichiti havangazvigoveri ivhu pachavo, kunyanya pachizivano ngekuti zvaikurudzira uori. Mukatarisa pari nhasi, Amai, zvacho zvairambwa ndiyo yatove tsoro yanyonganisa zvinhu.* (Madam, as I mentioned earlier, this is a difficult subject. Land has shifted. Independence euphoria witnessed ordinary people allocating themselves land on vacated commercial farms. The government said their movement onto the vacant land was illegal and evicted them. Occupiers were accused of corruption and cronyism. But, look at what is happening today! The very practices that were condemned! These are some of the issues that Zimbabwean writers should tackle without throwing away the baby with the bath-water).

Mrs Magosvongwe: *VaMoyo, kana muchiti ndiyo tsoro yacho munorevei? (Mr Moyo, what do you mean when you refer to unfair dealings?)*

Mr A. C. Moyo: *Amai, ngatitaurirane chokwadi. Pane Nyaya anoburitsa wani macell-phone farmer, njuga nemari mumapurazi iwaya etukomana twemabriefcase utwu. Anoburitsawo mapurazi akawanda ari mumaoko evashoma ivava, asi handipo pane nyaya yangu. (Let's be honest, Madam. My play Pane Nyaya touches on cell-phone farmers, briefcase instant trillionaires dealing in forex at the farms, including multiple farm ownership. But that is not my story).*

Mrs Magosvongwe: *Kana muchiti handipo pane nyaya yenyu munorevei VaMoyo? (What do you mean when you say that is not your concern Mr Moyo?)*

Mr. A. C. Moyo: *Nyaya iri pakuti revolution haiperi zuva rimwe Amai. Vanotora mapurazi hobho hobho ivava vari kuita zvakanaka pakutorera varungu ivhu richiendawo mumaoko evatema. Zvakanaka izvozvo. Chikamu chinotevera, ndiwo mapurazi achachigoverwawo jekerereka kuvanhu. Hondo yevhu haiperi iyi Amai. (My focus is on land struggles as revolutions. What you should appreciate is that revolutions are not one day events. They are processes spread over time. Those who are taking land from the white commercial farmers are fighting a noble cause. Yes, there are multiple farm owners. Let them take the land back. These are the initial stages of the revolution. The next phase will see redistribution of this very land these cronies are hoarding for themselves. Land struggles should be ongoing until land is redistributed more equitably).*

Mrs Magosvongwe: *Ndatenda nekugoverana neni maonero enyu VaMoyo. Basa rangu marirerutsa zvikuru. (I thank you for sharing your views with me Mr Moyo. Your insights are quite beneficial).*

Appendix B: Interview with Mr Memory Chirere, Department of English, University of Zimbabwe, August 2010

Mrs Magosvongwe: Mr Chirere, thank you for affording me your precious time. I am carrying a research on land and identity in post-2000 fictional writings in English. One of my primary texts is your collection of short stories, *Somewhere in this country*. I would like you to shed some light on some stories that deal with my subject.

Mr M. Chirere: I like your guts Mrs Magosvongwe. How do you expect me to be a critic of my own stories? What you are doing is like asking a parent to choose one he views as his/her most favourite child.

Mrs Magosvongwe: Alright Mr Chirere. I find the Old Man in “Somewhere” very odd. Why do you depict him in that manner?

Mr M. Chirere: My focus is very deliberate. Our childhood neighbourhoods, the physical geography of the vleis, plains, mountains, rivers, valleys, and even the skies above our heads as I grew up in my home village shaped me into the Memory behind “Somewhere”. It is very easy to connect mentally and psychologically and be yourself in the environment that you know best.

Mrs Magosvongwe: That is smart. You have pre-empted my next question that links land and home. As a writer, Sir, what do you think are the gaps that you should address?

Mr M. Chirere: I am concerned that as Africans, we should seriously address issues about home. Look at my short story, “Sitting carelessly”. Pempani has no home. Even ants have homes. How can someone whose background can be traced to four generations on a commercial farm be said to have no home? What are the real problems? I think as writers it is our responsibility to explore some of these sensitive issues.

Mrs Magosvongwe: I am not clear what you mean Mr Chirere. I am not clear whose responsibility it should be to give your migrant Pempani land to develop a home. I am sure you are aware that by its very nature, commercial farming as business cannot be seen parcelling out the very land that should produce and transform it into people's permanent homes. After several generations, do you think there could still be a commercial farm to talk about?

Mr M. Chirere: That is the issue. How and why should land fail to accommodate those who have tended it for years? Which other home do these farm-dwellers know?

Mrs Magosvongwe: Those are some of the questions I thought you would clarify on. With the on-going land occupations, how do you think this issue could be tackled?

Mr M. Chirere: Let me answer by asking you a question. Zimbabwe has so much land. And we are a small population. Are you suggesting it is someone's responsibility to go out there and beg everyone to make good of the moment? Our problem in the majority of cases is that we want ready-made answers to problems. *Hazvinaki mazuwa ese, asi ndiwo mafambiro azvo* – Life is full of contradictions. These are the wheels of history.

Mrs Magosvongwe: You also have “A roof to repair”, I suppose? And those “Signs” again? How does land come into all this?

Mr M. Chirere: Yes, yes, let me say we have a roof to repair. These are the contradictions that make history that I am referring to. Look at the armed liberation struggle that gave us independence. What was the cause? Who fought the war? Now look at the beneficiaries of independence. Look closely at the current scenario in Zimbabwe. Why should our people have doubts concerning having their land back? Some of our people are a funny lot.

Mrs Magosvongwe: Why? I seem to have missed you there.

Mr M. Chirere: A few years from now, some of us will be cursed by our children why we missed the opportunity to freely get back the land. We are the only country in Africa that has taken this bold stance concerning repossessing and redistributing land. But, it is up to individuals, not the government, to take advantage of the opportunity. This is what I am trying to say in “Maize” and “Signs”. *Upenyu ngehwekutorwira tete* – Life is a struggle to be tamed, just like accessing land.

Mrs Magosvongwe: I wish I could broadcast this interview. I find your ideas very interesting Mr Chirere. I enjoyed your question-answer responses. I think we need a bigger literature-based study on your farm-dwellers in future. I thank you for shedding light on how you draw inspiration from the world around to write on land and identity. I will come back for “The Presidential Goggles”.

Appendix C: Interview with octogenarian Mr Noah Noji and Mr Tapuwahama Shumba, Chigodora Village, Mutare South, Zimbabwe

Mrs Magosvongwe: Greetings respectable people. I am a student carrying out a research on how our writers have dealt with land and identity in the post-2000 period. I would be grateful to have some of your views. Baba, I understand you are a teacher by training. What are your views concerning how Zimbabwean writers have depicted land in their writings? For example, I notice that people in this area appear to jealously hold onto their old homes and are dangerously cultivating the hill slopes.

Mr Tapuwahama Shumba: Some of our writers dream and write what they read in the papers. Your observation is true. We surely need land to decongest, but we are guided by our local Chief in this area. Negotiations are underway with the higher offices so that everyone won't rush like animals and grab whatever piece of land they can.

Mr Noah Noji: Is that the point, *mwana*? People should not fool themselves and take land that they cannot work productively. See for yourself the damage that has been done to that farm across the stream. All that the new occupiers do is to fight over leadership, seed, fertiliser and this *murungu*'s farm house. They chased him away two years back, yet he fought with us during the struggle.

Mrs Magosvongwe: My issue is not that Baba.

Mr Noah Noji: But our writers come from us, don't they? Don't they write about our experiences? These children ruling today don't know what our concerns really are. What we want is the comfort that we fought for. Everyone, not what we see in these areas. He-e combatant should get land first, combatant this, combatant that! And just see what the combatant does to our local leaders. Very stubborn. Very disrespectful. Some should be insane. They behave as if there are no elders where they come from. This independence has made them drunk.

Mr Tapuwahama Shumba: Like how they are hounding some of the farmers off the land, it is unbelievable. Human worth is the same. If you cut my veins what oozes from there? Blood. If you did the same to Jack, what happens? What colour is Jack's blood? And that of the Mozambican, Malawian and Scottish? The same. Munhu haadyiwi. We are not cannibals. *Huku, mombe kana mbudzi ukauraya tinodya. Uko munhu?*

Mrs Magosvongwe: You are quite right Sir, but my issue is how writers are recording and depicting these experiences.

Mr Tapuwahama Shumba: I hear you. It's just that everyone has lost patience with this soil issue. Even the white farmers themselves, how did they think this would end?

Mr Noah Noji: Listen carefully young man. Land means more than meets your eye. It needs thinking through. If you do things haphazardly like what's happening now, only chaos and chaos and chaos will result. Our elders planned land distribution carefully. Under one chief. How can you have everyone allocating land? (The old man was almost in tears, shaking his head).

Mrs Magosvongwe: Thank you Baba for the reminder. I will remember that when I record my findings. I wish we could have more time. We could look at how the writers have captured these developments. Is there any one Zimbabwean writer who has written on land whom you know?

Mr Tapuwahama Shumba: Not quite. We mostly read the journalists stuff.

Mrs Magosvongwe: Thank you for your time.