Chapter 4: A Reinterpretation of the Third Chimurenga in Post-2000 Writings [72]

> *This is not the Twentieth century any more. You can't go on flogging the colonial horse. The colonial horse is dead. You've got to find yourselves new horses, new mules.* (Chinodya, 2003: p. 50)

Introduction

Underscored in the epigraph is the need for a new way of understanding the African postcolony, in which a continuous blame on the colonizer turns out to be a misreading of the 'new' sources of oppression for the majority of citizens.[73] Chinodya refers to the exhaustion of what Mbembe has termed 'the thematics of anti-imperialism' (2001: p. 263). In an interview, Mbembe says:

[72] Here I propose an understanding of the Third Chimurenga that goes beyond the 2000 land reform programme to encompass all aspects of Zimbabwean history that have come to be associated with what is popularized as 'the Zimbabwean crisis' (see Muponde, 2004: p. 176, who has also described the Third Chimurenga as 'the crisis'). ZANU PF re-configures Chimurenga as an endless struggle or as a struggle that has distinct phases in order to justify its hold on power. It has reconstructed itself as the only authentic and legitimate revolutionary party able to implement the various phases of the struggle. The naming of these phases has become an important aspect of ZANU PF's election manifestos throughout the history of the nation. I broadened the meaning on the basis that the 2000 land reform programme, at the centre of the Third Chimurenga, is a defining aspect of the crisis. My interpretation of the struggle discourse here includes the often-ignored struggle of the majority of Zimbabweans to survive the crisis - the unacknowledged subaltern struggles at various levels. The re-appropriation of the term is directed at disrupting the usual association of the word Chimurenga with fighting against the colonial enemy and trivializing all the other 'wars' that are attendant to the Third Chimurenga. A re-appropriation of the term also widens the scope of historical interpretation, breaking what Mbembe in another context termed the thinking of time 'in terms of a mechanical succession of ages' (First, Second and Third Chimurengas). (http://www.springerin.at accessed 23 March 2012)

[73] Chinodya's idea is a variation of Soyinka's statement 'The crimes that the African continent commits against her kind are a kind of a dimension and, unfortunately, of a nature that appears to constantly provoke memories of the historic wrongs inflicted on that continent by others' (1999: p. xxiv), discussed in the previous chapter.

> As far as Africa is concerned, colonialism is over. Apartheid is over too. Africans are now the free masters of their own destiny. […] Unfortunately, African criticism has been slow to awake to this new reality and its empowering possibilities. The discourse of victimization and resentment is still pervasive. In most African nativist, nationalist or Afro-Marxist discourses, history is still interpreted as an endless process of sorcery. […] Many feel the need to wear masks and to blame everything on the past. In the process, they forget to account for the self-destruction and self-inflicted injuries that our boundless passions have always incited - and continue to incite.[74]

Above, Mbembe calls for an interpretation of African contemporaneity that goes beyond the invocation of the colonial ghost to include self-reflexion. Yet, for him, any comment about Africa by an African is deployed against a Western interpretation of Africa that assigns to Africa

> a special unreality, such that the continent becomes the very figure of what is null, abolished, and, in its essence, in opposition to what is the very expression of that nothing whose special feature is to be nothing at all. (2001: p. 4)

In such circumstances, the African who writes about Africa becomes conscious of the need to write back to the centre, and is then expected to 'eradicate, validate or ignore' the Western interpretation of Africa (Mbembe, 2001: p. 4). However, most African writers on the postcolony cannot continue to worry themselves about writing back to the centre and re-inscribing the African image, they have to deal with the 'spectre of anarchy and disintegration *that is* real and threatening' and is visible in many African States (italics my own) (Williams, 1996: p. 350).

Texts selected for this chapter are Chingono's 'Minister without Portfolio', Hoba's 'Specialisation', Chinyani's 'A Land of Starving Millionaires', Chinodya's 'Queues' and Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*. They are discussed in the general context of what Mwangi has termed the 'self-reflexive' project of 'writing back to self' that is visible in the history of African literature on the postcolony (2009). Such a process in the re-imagination of

[74] http://www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/1528.html (accessed 17 October 2013).

Africa is characterized by a conscious departure from 'the tradition of 'writing back' to European colonial centre, focusing on […] local forms of oppression that are seen parallel to classical colonialism' (Mwangi, 2009: p. 1). The departure represents a challenge to the postcolonial notion of 'writing back' and is 'not blind to internal causes of the malaise within African societies' (ibid.). Writing back is a complex process in contemporary African literature as it involves responding to both colonial and postcolonial African texts. Examined here are Zimbabwean self-reflexive texts on what is popularized as the Third Chimurenga. The phrase 'Third Chimurenga' was coined between 2000 and 2005 by the then Zimbabwean Minister of Information and Publicity Jonathan Moyo to describe the state that sanctioned the violent takeover of land belonging to white Zimbabwean farmers (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya, 2011: p. 2).

Scholars from various disciplines have defined and described the Third Chimurenga. Opinions on the Third Chimurenga fall into two major opposing positions. In the first view located in what Ranger has termed 'patriotic history', the Third Chimurenga is celebrated as 'an emancipatory project with redemptive objectives […] *and* is 'a third war of liberation against neo-colonialism by Western imperialists and their allied white Zimbabwean commercial farmers' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya, 2011: p. 2). In the same context, the Third Chimurenga is understood as a sequel to the First and Second Chimurengas. The second view comes from those that question the discourse of the Third Chimurenga. These describe it in negative terms and particularly dismiss its liberatory potential. Critics suggest that it is 'an exhausted patriarchal model of nationalism' (Ndovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya, 2011: p. 2). The Third Chimurenga is also described as a 'radical anti-Western nationalist discourse' (Nyambi, 2011: p. 4), and 'has also been unusually successful in calling attention to itself as more than a moment of madness' (Muponde, 2004: p. 176). Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya argue that the Third Chimurenga nationalism is 'grotesque' in that it 'provokes both empathy and disgust' (2011: p. 3).

In a situation where officially 'all the actors within the nation's political sphere may be described as either "patriots" or "sell-outs"' (Primorac, 2006: p. 10), it follows that in official government discourse those that endorse the liberatory Third Chimurenga rhetoric are 'patriots' and those that are critical of it are deemed 'sell-outs'. Defined simply, patriotism means 'love for one's country'. The Zimbabwean version of patriotism is narrow and is defined in terms of affiliation to the ruling party ZANU PF. As a result, not belonging to

the ruling party makes one a sell-out. This is a Zimbabwean kind of patriotism and selling out; a special kind of patriotism 'which defined everyone else as a traitor' (Ranger, 2005: p. 10), where difference easily transforms into foe (Muponde, 2004: p. 176). Sites that fall into the patriotic range include the state-controlled media, what Ranger has called 'patriotic journalistic narratives', especially of ZTV and *The Sunday Mail* (2005, as cited in Nyambi, 2011: p. 3). In addition to 'patriotic journalistic narratives', there are voices of 'regime scholars […] who regurgitate the ZANU PF discourse' (Tendi, 2010, as cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya, 2011: p. 71). These include Vimbai Chivaura, Claude Mararike, Tafataona Mahoso and Isheunesu Mupepereki. Inasmuch as Tendi wants to define them as 'regime scholars', 'party ideologues' is a more appropriate descriptive term. Their discourse is not scholarship proper and cannot survive scrutiny outside ZANU PF party discourse. The official criticism (so-called 'unpatriotic' discourse) of the Third Chimurenga is located in private media (*The Standard* and *The Daily News*). What is significant for this study is that such 'patriotic' and 'non-patriotic' distinctions are also visible in literary narratives. Texts that fall into the 'patriotic writing' category include Gomo's *A Fine Madness*, Maruma's *Coming Home*, and Mtizira's *The Chimurenga Protocol*. What is termed 'patriotic writing' here is coded elsewhere as 'the popular public realm that is in contact with the domain of political discourse' (Primorac, 2007: p. 434). This chapter mainly explores how the so-called 'unpatriotic' literary texts represent and reflect on the economic, political and social realities of the Third Chimurenga. The defining aspect of the reflection is a subversion of the official government's belief that there are no problems and, where the national crisis is acknowledged, this is conceived as a creation of the West, especially the British and their ally opposition party - MDC.

A defining aspect of the Third Chimurenga is state repression. Any criticism of the government was met with brutality, instituted through the controversial Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) (Hammar, 2004). As Muchemwa argues, these two acts were nothing but 'legislative and administrative instruments designed to muzzle freedom of expression' (2007: p. 15). We tend to associate Gappah's fictional country in the 'The Sound of the Last Post','where the truth can only be spoken in the private chambers of the mind' (2009: p. 15),,with the repressive environment of the Third Chimurenga. 'The act of narration

thenbecomes an act of defiance and subversion *of the grand narratives (*Muchemwa, 2007: p. 9) (emphases added).

In *Writers in Politics,* Ngugi argues that 'a writer has no choice; whether or not he is aware of it, his works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural, ideological struggles in a society [...] every writer is a writer in politics' (1981: p. xvi).[75] In line with this argument, most Zimbabwean literary works published after 2000 reflect some aspects of the Zimbabwean economy, social realities as well as political aspects. Ngugi's crucial question on 'what and whose politics' are contained in literary texts, points to the contested phenomenon of literary 'patriots' and 'sell-outs'. Most of the artists whose works comment on one or several aspects of the Third Chimurenga, 'have also been directly associated with the opposing poles of the political divide' (Primorac, 2006: p. 10). This is mainly so because, according to ZANU PF government then, anyone who criticizes its operations becomes an 'enemy of the state', belongs to the opposition and is automatically unpatriotic. This chapter analyses selected literature of 'the crisis', with the aim of demonstrating how such narratives challenge the 'patriotic' interpretation of several aspects of the 1991-2008 crisis. The selected texts present a challenge to the inadequacies of the biased and often incomplete dominant 'patriotic' narrative of the Third Chimurenga. The texts I have selected for this chapter belong to two different genres - short story and novel, but are bound together by a common thematic focus. Selected texts focus on various defining aspects of the Third Chimurenga crisis in ways that subvert the state's official narration.

Troping a Different Zimbabwean History in 'Queues'[76]

'Queues' is one of the short stories that make up Staunton's *Laughing Now* and is a complex narration of two stories. The main story consists of a sketch of Zimbabwean history from colonial times to the present Third Chimurenga crisis. A narrative of personal interaction between Rudo and the nameless narrator parallels this story. The two stories are interwoven but they can be read separately. I intend to discuss the main narrative and then highlight the significance of the love story. A sketch of Zimbabwean history is told through

[75] Ngugi uses the pronoun 'he' here to embrace both genders and such use is 'rooted in the beginnings of the English language. *He* has lost all suggestion of maleness *in this circumstance* […] it has no pejorative connotations' (italics my own) (Strunk and White, 1979, as cited in Gastil, 1990: p. 629).

[76] A short story in Staunton's anthology *Writing Still: New Stories from Zimbabwe* (2003).

the voice of the nameless narrator. It contains minimal actions. Most of the details of the story are historical and represented chronologically. Historical aspects that come out clearly include life in Rhodesia for ordinary black people, the changes brought about by the achievement of independence in 1980, ethnic cleansing of Gukurahundi of the early 1980s, economic aspects of the 1990s, international relations in the twenty-first century, land 'invasions' and the crisis. The story begins in the mid-seventies in Rhodesia. The narrator tells the story of *Sisi*, Elizabeth's not so blissful yet meaningful life as a housemaid for white people during the colonial period. Elizabeth's occupation is one of the worst paid occupations in the world, yet she manages a decent life out of her career. The narrator's father, who is a milkman, managed to 'send three children to boarding school on his pay' (p. 43). Reference to such a past where those who were 'six times upon the universe' (p. 44) poor and yet survived is compared with the present where queues and shortages of basic commodities are a defining aspect of people's material realities. The successes that defined the early years of independence gave the nation the status of 'the bread basket' of Southern Africa. This however was short-lived. The narrator particularly refers to how 'we massacred each other [...] manufactured enemies *and* squandered resources' (p. 47). The massacres referred to are the realities of the Gukurahundi violence, an aspect of Zimbabwean history that is officially excluded in the national patriotic narrative and is subverted in the literary texts discussed in the previous chapter. The narrator's understanding of history includes such previously silenced aspects of misrule of the early 1980s. The Willowvale scandal is a good example of squandering economic resources through corruption.[77] By means of the image of a sexually inviting whore, the narrator retells the sad story of interference by the international community, especially the World Bank, and its economic solution of ESAP[78], which remained illusory. The narrator tells the reader that Zimbabwe experienced problems because she had committed crimes against the 'world'. The voice of the world is not limited to global influence, but also refers to the power structures of neo-colonialism, with the West as the dominant power, even though Zimbabwe has gained political independence. The suggested problems cannot be separated from global influence or from the nation's perceived 'stubbornness'. The voice of the

[77]This was the 'first case of infamous corruption occurred when government ministers engaged themselves in the buying and reselling of the then-famous Toyota Cressida cars in what came to be known as the 'Willowvale Scandal' (Tofa, 2013: p. 80).

[78]Economic Structural Adjustment Programme.

world in the story chronicles Zimbabwe's misconduct: 'Stop giving ex-combatants grants […] controlling prices […] grabbing the farms […] tampering with the land […] ok (sic) reimburse the white farmers that you kicked out' (p. 150).

On the other hand, Zimbabwe insisted that she could not compensate white farmers because these 'were not *her* offspring' but 'grandchildren of colonialists' and 'went on flogging the colonial horse in the 20th century' (italics my own) (ibid.). Emphasized here is the political injustice of non-compensation of white farmers. The history of colonial land grabbing is re-lived in a way that justifies non-compensation of white farmers in the Third Chimurenga. The do's and don'ts articulated here are the Washington dictates that included 'abolish monopolistic price controls'. Under conditions of monopolistic supply, in 2000-2001 there were, during inordinate rises in prices of basic essentials (Bond and Mandinyanya, 2002). However, the condemned price controls between 1998 and 2001 were generally not well-received. The world's response to Zimbabwe's perceived stubbornness was a declaration to the effect that the country be 'punished, humiliated, isolated, starved and squeezed until it accepts defeat' (p. 151). Therefore, after the thorny land business, 'we lost our friends', resulting in 'dry banks […] and we queued for cash that was not there [...] We ran out of foreign currency … there was no electricity' (p. 154). The narrator suggests that, even if the land invasions were controversially 'pro-people', they were perceived by the West as 'anti-systemic and anti-status quo' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006: p. 3) and hence Zimbabwe was punished for that. The punishment took the form of economic sanctions by the West levelled at Zimbabwe. A drought compounded the problem, and eventually there was no 'food to eat [….] No safe water to drink […] we got sick […] no nurses [….] No fuel' (p. 155). In line with Bond and Mandinyanya's position, Chinodya has also highlighted that the compensation of the ex-combatants in 1997 had a bearing on the subsequent fall into crisis (2002). It is understood that the plunge began in 1997, when Robert Mugabe and his ruling party decided to give each of the registered combatants a pension pay-out, mainly to silence the veterans' protest over the 'regime's failure to meet even their basic employment and survival needs' (Bond and Mandinyanya, 2002: p. xi). So, according to economists, the problems that Zimbabwe faced had its origins in the financial meltdown of 14 November 1997.

The suggestion that there could be other reasons for the economic crisis that Zimbabwe faced, besides the sanctions imposed by the West, is quite

useful. It illustrates that it may be an exaggeration to blame the sanctions as the exclusive source of the country's troubles. As Magaisa argues, Zimbabwe's breakdown did not happen overnight because of the sanctions. However this is not meant to detract from the fact that sanctions did have a negative impact, especially on Zimbabwe's economy.[79] To Chinodya and maybe to most writers and critics alike, the land issue had a strong bearing on the emergency and perpetuation of the Zimbabwean crisis. Central in Chinodya's concept of Zimbabwean history is how events are entwined - with sequences and connections. The rural-urban connections are redefined. The takeover of mainly rural farmland results in a serious urban crisis. The story ends in the present, in a fuel queue. The queue trope is 'emblematic of the disruption to urban normality' where people queued 'for food, cash, fuel, drinking water, transport, passports, and even for things that weren't even there' (Hammar, McGregor and Landau, 2010: p. 269). The relationship between Rudo and the narrator is fictive but illuminates the realities of the historical narrative. There is however an 'ambivalence' that has been described by Primorac as 'unsettling', in the likening 'of Zimbabwe's relationship with the wider outer world to a frustrating affair with a woman' (2005: p. 464). The relationship between Rudo and the narrator disturbs the flow of the main narrative. In a state where freedom of expression is not a right, this could be Chinodya's attempt at subtlety. In this short story, he has demonstrated that the Zimbabwean crisis is complex and goes back to the early 1980s. What is observed in the late 1990s are just consequences. He also emphasizes that the crisis is a 'reflection of the risks involved in any African attempt to defy the "disciplining" forces of globalization and neo–liberalism' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006: p. 3). At the same time, the state cannot be exonerated since it contributed to the nature of the crisis in various ways.

Of Extreme Wealth and Abject Poverty: 'A Land of Starving Millionaires'[80]

Chinyani's 'A Land of Starving Millionaires' describes the various social and economic crises attendant to the Third Chimurenga. The story can thus be read as a response to the government's denial of such impact on the citizens' material realities. The magnitude of the crisis recurs in post-2000 Zimbabwean writing and is an indication that the Third Chimurenga had a serious impact on the

[79] www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/magaisa6

[80] A short story in Staunton's *Laughing Now: New Stories from Zimbabwe* (2007).

majority of people's lives. Notable is the contrast between the scarcity of basic commodities for the majority of people and a life of abundance for the privileged class. The emphasis lies on the differences between the wealthy and the poor. The Zimbabwean world record inflation, running at 13.2 billion Zimbabwean dollars a month in late 2008, saw the cropping up of 'millionaires' and 'billionaires'. This economic crisis with ever-rising rates of inflation has its origins in what Bond and Mandinyanya (2002) view as 'the financial meltdown of 14 November 1997' when the Z$ fell from $10 to below Z$30 to the US$ over four hours of trading time' (p. xi).

It is against this background that the valueless Zimbabwe dollar is satirized in Chinyani's 'A Land of Starving Millionaires'. The story concerns Mr Usury, a millionaire who fails to provide basic life requirements for his very big family. He moves around with a bag of money, but he is disappointed when he realizes that his bag of money cannot even buy him a loaf of bread. He then resorts to collecting his debts but the debtors cannot afford to pay him back. The story ends when a red Mercedes Benz that belongs to a local Member of Parliament runs him down. Herein lies the paradox for Mr Usury, a millionaire yet starving, and eventually killed by 'the state'. The state is represented by the local Member of Parliament who runs him down. Mr Usury's millionaire status was a common status for many Zimbabweans who had valueless cash during the economic crisis. The 'big' sack carried by Mr Usury is full of 'Zimbabwe dollar' baggage. It is quite paradoxical that the millionaire 'staggered towards the long line of tuck shops, because he hadn't eaten anything but the national staple food […] air pie […] a euphemism for one long slice of nothing' (p. 38). Non-availability of basic food resulted in hunger. Such deprivation easily translates into a violation of basic human rights.

The 'millionaire' survives on usury activities. He is so desperate to collect his debts and to use that money to buy food for his large family that he 'shouts obscenities at the coffin' (ibid.) containing his debtor, showing his preparedness 'to kill a dead man for not paying' (ibid.). Mr Usury is affected by an economic crisis that is well beyond the debtor, who unfortunately is nothing but also a victim. In this world of poor and struggling millionaires, a well-fed local MP, who drives a 'blood red luxury Mercedes', eventually runs over the man, instantly killing him. Red and blood are traditionally associated with death and with fire brigades and ambulances. Here the red colour refers to the threats of disaster that befalls the underprivileged in times of a national crisis. The Member of Parliament's car 'turned the corner in the typical fashion of a well

fed politician with inexhaustible amounts of fuel to burn' (p. 42). The same class of people is evoked in many other short stories about the Zimbabwean crisis of the last decade. Here I refer to 'Minister without Portfolio', 'A Dirty Game' and 'In the Heart of the Golden Triangle'. In Chingono's 'Minister without Portfolio', the 'chef', who happens to be 'a minister without portfolio', is undoubtedly rich. Besides driving a red Mercedes Benz, he has money to look after his family and other 'small houses'.[81] The minister gives his girlfriends 'piles' of US dollars in a country where there is a serious shortage of foreign currency. In the same vein, the government official in Mandishona's 'A Dirty Game' (2007) is worried that his family cannot get visas to go to London to attend a daughter's wedding. In a country gripped by serious food shortages, those that belong to the privileged group can afford to go to London and attend weddings. While there is nothing in the shops, in Gappah's 'In the Heart of the Golden Triangle' (2009), the wives of cabinet ministers, including the first lady, do all their shopping in Johannesburg while 'their husbands promise to end food shortages' (2009: p. 17). The writers deal with 'profligacy during times of scarcity' by the government officials who, on the pretext of working for the people, are busy enriching themselves. What is exposed and attacked in these stories is the political leaders' hypocrisy - what Achebe termed 'the tendency of the leaders to materialistic wooliness and self centred pedestrianism', which translates to a practice and display of affluence (1983: p. 11). The satirized government officials in the above short stories also fit quite well in Turok's (1987) imaging of the post-independence African ruling class. This class shows alarming tendencies in manipulating state power for its own interests, using political opportunities to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority of poor citizens. This has also been described by Mbembe as one of the ways of 'appropriation of public resources and privatization of the state' where those in positions of authority grant themselves advantages and privileges (2001: p. 46).

Rethinking the Land Issue: 'Minister without Portfolio' and 'Specialization'

Chinyani's story discussed in the above subsection and the two short stories discussed here are part of short story anthology *Laughing Now: New Stories from Zimbabwe.* The stories that make up the anthology are humorous, hence

[81] 'Small house' is a phrase used in the Zimbabwean public sphere to refer to what Christiansen-Bull has termed 'un-respectable, non-married women […] compared to the main house of the married woman' (2013: p. 511).

the reference to ‘laughing’ in the title. In theorising laughter, O’Neill describes it as a ‘product of derision and self-satisfied mockery’ (1980, as cited in Colletta, 2003: p. 18). In both ‘Minister without Portfolio’ and ‘Specialization’, the reader laughs at the main characters’ foolishness. Through laughter both Hoba and Chingono deride the 2000 ‘land invasions’. It is important to note that the land question is a key aspect of the Third Chimurenga. Central to the official aims of the Third Chimurenga is ‘reclaiming land from the white commercial farmers giving it back to black Zimbabweans’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: p. 62). During the 2002 presidential elections, ZANU PF’s campaign slogan was ‘The land is the economy and the economy is the land’. Most importantly, however, the 2000 land invasions became an important literary theme. In line with the revisionary history of the 2000 land reform programme, creative writers show how the ‘invasions’ were anarchic. For instance, Hove bluntly refers to the land fast-track programme as a ‘chaotic resettlement program’ (p. 6). In Chinodya’s ‘Queues’, ‘grabbing of the farms’ is one of the factors that initiated problems for Zimbabweans in the twenty-first century. In both stories, the 2000 land invasions are subjected to comedy.

Since satire ‘tends to be concerned with public issues and with public examples of those issues’, Chingono in ‘Minister without Portfolio’ attacks a government minister’s foolishness. The minister has a girlfriend and together they are chauffer-driven to Beitbridge through a potholed road. He vows that he will make sure ‘the road is resurfaced without delay’ (p. 7). This promise is meant to impress the girlfriend, not in the national interest. The minister engages in what Mbembe has termed ‘baroque practices’ in which the ‘economy of pleasure has become inseparable from vice’ (2001: p. 128).

The minister also declares that he loves his girlfriend the same way he loves the country that he ‘fought for, *and* died for’ (italics my own) (p. 8). This trope of ‘dying fighting for liberation’ is closely associated with heroism in Zimbabwean politics. However, the minister, in ignorance, evokes the ‘dying for the nation’ concept. His declaration is a mockery of the heroism of the liberation war and a grotesque exaggeration of ‘the ideology of sacrifice’ (Raftopoulous, 1994, as cited in Kriger, 2006: p. 1165). The ‘we fought for and died for the nation’ discourse is part of the humorous incongruities and absurdities in the discourse of the war. If he had died for real, he would not be talking about his own death. What is combined in the image of the minister is what Mbembe in another context termed ‘farce cohabit*ing* with buffoonery’ (italics my own) (2001: p. 238).

On their way to Beitbridge, the minister and his girlfriend pass through a number of newly acquired farms along the road. The minister notices that most of the dwellers of these farms have done one of the following things: they have built matchbox-size houses and they are busy dancing and drinking beer while the land lays fallow. In some cases, the farms are deserted. The minister then concludes that these invaders are 'sabotaging the revolution' by derailing the land reform programme. He becomes a laughing stock at the end of the story when it is confirmed that these farms are all his. This is some kind of democratic act where hypocrisy is unmasked and 'the high-and-mighty are lampooned and spoofed' (Treiger, 1989: p. 1215). The author here creates an anti-hero and thus succeeds in subverting the 'Zimbabwean state fiction […] which is precisely the kind of hero centred narrative' (Bakhtin, 1986, as cited in Primorac, 2007: p. 437). Chingono also manages to undermine the government's claim that the opposition MDC party and its allies were derailing the land reform programme. Government officials filled their own pockets and served their own interests at the expense of the majority of the population. These are some of the 'advantages and privileges that holders of positions of authority grant themselves'. Mbembe describes such grants as one of the ways of 'appropriation of public resources and privatization of the state' in the postcolony (2001: p. 46). The irony is that the 2000 land redistribution process is articulated in state discourse as people-driven and for the people.

The land reallocation process was marred by corruption and greed. Some influential people took advantage of their position to acquire as many farms as they could, yet ironically the land invasions were meant to address multiple farm ownership among other irregularities in Zimbabwean farm ownership. As Kanengoni argues: 'Though the intentions of the monumental land allocation were noble the implementation was fraught with corruption and rampant abuse' (2003: p. 50). So, inasmuch as 'the fast track land reform was officially represented as a pinnacle of national history: the long overdue reclaiming of a key national and spiritual resource, and thus a glorious act of final decolonization' (Primorac, 2006: p. 2) was largely chaotic. The minister in Chingono's story is a prominent political figure who lives a luxurious life. Even in times of crisis, he can afford to import expensive whisky from Europe and gets many farms that remain unproductive, yet landless poor people do not get such opportunities. Hence, the Third Chimurenga cannot be the final phase of the struggle for land reclamation. There is a possibility of a Fourth Chimurenga that should be directed at correcting 'the overcorrected imbalances of land

redistribution […] where the opposition parties will have to try to reclaim land mainly settled by Zanu PF card holders […] in order to redistribute land with a sense of justice and fairness' (Primorac, 2006: p. 87). As the story about the minister without portfolio illustrates, the Third Chimurenga has created a newer version of multiple farm ownership.

Hoba's story 'Specialization' is about three newly resettled farmers, Chimoto, Baba Nina and the narrator. They violently take over Baas Kisi's farm but fail to make it productive because they lack the necessary expertise. The violence implied in the Shona name Chimoto reflects on the violent nature of the 2000 land invasions.[82] The land invasions have also been named Jambanja. Jambanja is Shona slang 'for violence or chaos used to describe the violent and chaotic farm occupations' (Muzondidya, 2007: p. 325). Underscored here is also how violence is always connected with Zimbabwean political processes.

Chimoto and other war veterans play a crucial role in invading and occupying white-owned land. According to Kriger, war veterans had a symbolic value for the ZANU PF government, through their links to the liberation war. As such, they were found useful in the Third Chimurenga. Chimoto instructs the narrator to call and inform the farm owner not to return to his farm:

> You white kaffir, don't bother showing your nigger farse here because we will do your ace meat meat with a sharp *panga*. The farm and everything on it is now ours. We, the soverin sons of the soil. (p. 71)

Chimoto's words capture the discourse of Zimbabwean nationalism. The violence of land invasions is evoked when Chimoto refers to the use of *panga* (knife) not only to inflict pain, but also to shed blood. Chimoto here uses the term 'panga' to refer to a knife, in a way that is directed at mocking him. He thinks that the English translation of the Shona word '*banga*' (knife) is '*panga*'. He thinks that translating from Shona to English is done by devoicing the initial sound of the word. Only children learning a language manipulate sounds in such a childish way. Implicit in the declaration that 'the farm and everything on it is ours' is a crystallization of the trajectories of indigenization sustained 'through an authoritarian manner that denied individuals any rights as citizens' (Mbembe,

[82] 'Chimoto' is a Shona word that means a serious conflict that borders on violent confrontation.

2001: p. 42). Through the very process of indigenization of the land, Baas Kisi loses his rights as a citizen.

Hoba's image of the war veteran is an interesting one. Chimoto, the war veteran, is illiterate, hence he confuses words. He uses 'farse' instead of 'face', and 'soverin' instead of 'sovereignty'. He does not know what these terms mean but simply borrows them from the rhetoric of politicians. In the Zimbabwean public sphere, and as confirmed in this story, lack of education and use of violence are some of the defining features of war veterans. Chimoto is a fake war veteran who 'carried a limp in the left leg where he said a bullet had entered but not come out. The limp only became visible to those who didn't know him, when he was angry, which was often, and when they were at a meeting for the war veterans' (p. 71). Chimoto uses the limp to masquerade as an ex-combatant. Here Hoba participates in the debate on the 'political constructions about Zimbabwe's war veterans that revolves around a discourse of "true" and "fake" veterans' (Kriger, 2003: p. 323).

Hoba re-imagines the fluid war-veteran identity. War veterans 'prided themselves as the country's liberators, though during the guerrilla war they'd been called terrorists by Ian Smith's government or *vanamukoma* by the fearful majority in the barren sandy reserves' (p. 71). Hoba also manages to delegitimize war veterans' claims to superiority. War veterans are associated with liberation in nationalist discourse, but from the point of view of the colonizer, they are associated with terrorism. During the liberation war, liberation fighters' operations might also have terrorized the masses. In Third Chimurenga discourse, war veterans are also associated with the violence of the land invasions. The importance of war veterans in the land invasions represents what Primorac has termed 'a sudden return into the past' (2007: p. 439). The use of 'kaffir' and 'nigger' to refer to whites highlights reverse racism and how the race 'thematic […] has undergone major shifts' in the African postcolony (Mbembe, 2002: p. 264). By means of an interesting discourse of freedom and sovereignty, Chimoto believes that in a 'free' sovereign country the owners of the land have rights to reverse the colonial process, in ways that do not respect the rights of everyone. 'Kaffir' is a racially offensive term used to refer to blacks in colonial Africa. 'Nigger' is derogatory and was used to refer to black Americans. 'Nigger' and 'kaffir' were used to undermine the humanity of the oppressed blacks in Africa and the African Diaspora and here the terms are reversed and applied to the white Zimbabwean minority. In an instance of replacing racism of the past and re-labelling, the white farmer is now a 'kaffir'

as well as a 'nigger'. 'The political repression of a single dominant and relatively homogenous ethnic group - native African - with preeminent rights over the country's land' is referred to in Chimoto's 'the soverin sons of the soil' discourse (Muzondidya, 2007: p. 325).

Unlike the productive specialization in the epigraph to the story, the threesome's specialization remains a mockery. Baba Nina is the driver of the only car they looted from the previous farm owner. Baba Nina focuses on trivial issues in real farming and spends most of the time cleaning the car and the tractors. The narrator specializes in growing maize, and has a secret that he will not divulge to his companions. He is a university graduate and, like all other university students at that time, supported the opposition political party. He conceals his past because, during the Third Chimurenga, political affiliation is a key trope. His support of the opposition entails that he is the 'enemy of the state' and, like all other enemies of the state, he should not benefit from the land reallocation process.

In their specialization model, the group ignored irrigation altogether although 'the dam was full and the irrigation equipment was lying idle' (p. 75). The new occupants lack the farming expertise needed to make full use of the previously productive farms. An interesting aspect of Hoba's short story is an emphasis on impostors. Chimoto, the nameless narrator, the traditional healer and his assistant are hypocrites. Chimoto is a fake war veteran. The narrator supported the opposition political party as a university student, yet hides his identity. The traditional healer's assistant is a former university student who cheats those that want help from the healer and we can discern complicity in the healer as well.

'Minister without Portfolio' and 'Specialization' can be read as challenges to the state's portrayal of 2000 land invasions. The use of comic satire by Chinyani and Hoba should be understood in the context of the repressive political environment where citizens have no freedom of speech. For any state, 'freedom of speech is a defining attribute' of democracy (Halliwell, 1991: p. 48). In using satire, the authors achieve two things: they offer entertainment but they are also rebellious and destabilize the confines of the undemocratic space. What they achieve confirms what Freud termed the potential of humour 'to be pleasurable as well as rebellious and aggressive' (1960, as cited in Colletta, 2003: p. 30). Unlike the 'state fiction', that is 'hero-centred narrative'[83] and whose 'protagonists are ZANU PF and Mugabe'

[83] Bakhtin, 1987, as cited in Primorac, 2007: p. 433.

(Primorac, 2007: p. 437), the above two stories focus on government officials and ZANU PF party cadres who are anti-heroes.

The Uncertainty of Hope: Reflections on a State in a Crisis

Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* is set in 2005 and most of the drama takes place in Mbare, one of the old high-density suburbs of Harare. The place and time of the events are significant to our reading of the text. The year 2005 is remembered for the government initiated Operation Clean Up, popularized as Operation Murambatsvina. The operation took place against the background of an economic crisis that had begun in the late 1990s. Setting her story in Mbare is also significant, for Mbare is popularly known for being mostly inhabited by black self-employed. Tagwira describes Mbare as the 'bedrock of the informal employment sector, the largest in the whole country' (p. 119) and as

> a high-density township that had absolutely no redeeming features to speak of. The degree of overcrowding was spectacular […] a multitude of tiny houses were stacked against one another making an intricate maze of carelessly planned streets. This housing itself was a colonial inheritance: then it had been considered suitable accommodation for blacks. (p. 52)

In Rhodesia, Mbare was a 'demarcated native suburb for blacks working in menial jobs […] and as an apartheid segregative mechanism to have blacks compartmentalized in survailable areas' (Nyambi, 2011: p. 6). By 2005, not much change was registered.

The heroine of the story, Onai, is one of the residents of Mbare who lives a difficult life against the background of Murambatsvina and the general national social and economic crises. As the reader goes through Onai's turbulent life story and that of the people around her, the various aspects of the referred crises are underscored. The story opens with Onai and her three children feeling very vulnerable and threatened as their Mbare home is invaded by thieves. The poverty of their existence is revealed early in the text as Tagwira describes their possessions. The most significant item they own is a black and white television. The husband's irresponsible behaviour is also described early in the text. It is three o'clock in the morning and Onai's husband is not yet home, making his family unnecessarily vulnerable to thieves. The domestic violence that Onai

endures throughout the text is foregrounded in the opening scene when, upon returning from his drinking spree, Gari beats her up, resulting in hospitalization.

Onai's frequent journeys to the hospital reflect on a number of aspects of the crisis in the background. During their first trip, John describes the journey as a 'misuse of hard earned petrol […] he had to wait for five days in a queue to get fifteen litres of petrol' (p. 13). This is a reference to the fuel shortages that hit the nation during the post-2000 period, which have been a literary subject for many writers but were never acknowledged in the official narrative of the period. The*Sunday Times* reported that

> Mugabe's government insists fuel supplies are adequate and claims the 'artificial shortages' are due to hoarding by traditional distributors. Deputy Energy Minister Reuben Marumahoko said the government was surprised by the shortages because 'enough fuel for daily consumption was being pumped out of Noczim's main depot in Harare'. 'There is no need to panic because the country has enough fuel.' Right now, we have called in all the distributors to find out where the fuel is going and we are still investigating,' Marumahoko told Parliament. He said the country's daily consumption of 1.9 million litres of diesel and 1.2 million litres of petrol was being released from the depot and there was no need to panic. (Sunday Times (South Africa), 6October 2002)

The position adopted by the then Deputy Energy Minister is not a personal position, but one that reflects the state's position. Robert Mugabe is on record saying that in Zimbabwe there were never fuel shortages. He invited those that believed there were fuel shortages to sleep on any Zimbabwean road and see if they were not going to be run down by moving cars. He was right because he belonged to the privileged social group that never experienced the shortages but, as a President, he was not telling the truth.

In Tagwira's text, Tom and Tapiwa belong to a privileged social (and possibly political) class and are never in short supply of anything. Their political and social identities are ambiguous. They have all the basics and can afford a number of luxuries and their businesses prosper during the crisis. Tapiwa Jongwe is a well-connected business man. His second name suggests a ZANU PF political identity. '*Jongwe*' is a Shona word for a cockerel and for a long time, a cock has been a ZANU PF party symbol. Tom is a new farmer

whose flower business always takes him to the UK. His acquisition of the new farm is shady, but the plot explains away any suspicion by showing that he used inherited money to buy the farm. Nothing stops Tom from going to Victoria Falls with his girlfriend, whilst the majority of characters in the text cannot afford such luxuries.

They hunger for all basics and queue for fuel (if ever they have the luxury of owning a car), otherwise 'most of Mbare dwellers resort to walking as a result of […] ever-increasing fares' (p. 17). Most of the infrastructure is dilapidated. Onai highlights how 'most of the tower lights were faulty' and the badly serviced road to the hospital has 'out-sized pot-holes' (p. 13). An ailing health system is represented in the story by the hospital where Onai was repeatedly admitted. The stories point towards a collapsed health system where patients are expected to wash old bandages that are subsequently recycled. 'Hospital meals are deficient and tasted as bland as they looked' (p. 35). Hospitals, like other places in the country, operate without water as a result of burst pipes. The irony is that hospitals 'detain patients until they pay the bills' (p. 50) that are far beyond what they can afford. The HIV-infected Sheila has to be on a long waiting list to get anti-retroviral drugs and dies whilst on the waiting list. A classic example of a health crisis can be found in the personal account by of one of the medical doctors:

> We had a power failure. The generator was on for about two minutes, then it crashed. […] I finished the C. section in candlelight. Nobody could find a torch. […] I missed an artery, I think and she almost bled to death, out in Recovery. Getting blood to transfuse her was another nightmare. […] we had to take her back to theatre. […] She had to have a hysterectomy. Now she has one child and no womb. (pp. 183-4)

This is an allegory of a failed state whose health structures are dysfunctional. The reliving of the crisis in the novel performs the political function to unsettle the government's grand narrative of the crisis 'by giving voice and bearing witness' (ibid.). The medical doctor in the text is fictional, but his experiences are a significant version of the failing health system during the crisis period.

Through Gari's experiences as a worker, we get a glimpse of the state of the Zimbabwean industry during the crisis period. The company he works for moves to South Africa 'because of persistent losses' (p. 35) and the workers are

not just retrenched but get unreasonable send-off packages. Gari interprets this as an insult and an 'outright threat to his manhood. For what would happen if he stopped earning a regular salary' (p. 37). There is no doubt that Onai and many others are millionaires, but just poor millionaires of twenty-first century Zimbabwe. The millions they have are a mockery of what it means to have so much money. Onai explains her condition: 'I never thought that in my lifetime I would be a millionaire. *Inini chaiye miriyoneya*! But look at me! […] I must be amongst the poorest millionaires in the world!' (pp. 55-6). The millions are not real money but bearer cheques 'introduced as a temporary measure to alleviate crippling cash shortages' (ibid.).

In post-2000 Zimbabwean fiction one finds a castigation of the official denial of the crisis. In most texts, there are references to the nature of 'news' in the state-controlled media. For Tagwira's characters, 'the official word represents just lies'. Reference is made to how official word 'has it that banks should give new farmers preferential access to foreign currency' but, as Tom alerts the reader, 'that's just something announced on the news - something that you will read in the papers. In reality, it just doesn't happen' (p. 21). News in the electronic media was meant to instil 'the master fiction *of the Third Chimurenga* into the consciousness of its people' (Primorac, 2007: p. 436) Onai does not like watching news because 'there was never anything on it that was faintly relevant to the realities of her life' (p. 54). Onai here has the capacity to show the lies in such a discourse. VaGudo particularly relates the irony in terms of price hikes - 'fuel when you get it costs up to one hundred and twenty thousand dollars per litre, though the official price is still only fifty thousand dollars' (p. 74). One of the public toilets at Mbare bus terminus was a 'small, filthy room, reeking of excrement' yet 'a discoloured notice declared that the toilets were cleaned regularly' (p. 287). Such a situational irony is reflective of the distortions prevalent in the state discourse. Distortions are characteristic of what Halbwachs termed reflections of *not just* the past *but of the present* (emphases added):

> When reflection begins to operate, when instead of letting the past recur, we reconstruct it through an effort of reasoning, what happens is that we distort the past. […] It is then reason or intelligence that chooses among the store of recollection, eliminates some of them and arranges the others according to an order

> conforming with our ideas of the moment. From this come many alterations. (1950, as cited in Coser, 1992: p. 183)

As much as the government rearranges the present Third Chimurenga and alters some of its realities, the filthy toilet reeking of excrement becomes the telling evidence of rottenness. The toilet becomes what Mbembe has described elsewhere as a pictographic sign that

> does not belong solely in the field of seeing, it also falls in that of speaking. It is in itself a figure of speech and this speech expresses not only for itself or as a mode of describing narrating and representing reality but also as a particular strategy of persuasion. (2001: p. 142)

What people see in the state of the toilet, vis-à-vis the message of the notice, is telling about reality. The inscribed notice that the toilet is cleaned regularly remains a lie. Through such verbal/dramatic irony, the author highlights the dishonesty in state discourse on the crisis of the Third Chimurenga. Thus, patriotic history represents 'obvious official lies' (Mbembe, 2001: p. 129) and is 'demonstrably untrue' (Primorac, 2007: p. 436).

The characters in Tagwira's novel exhibit certain behavioural tendencies that are a testimony of living a crisis and of efforts to survive. Particularly visible are lawlessness and corruption as survival strategies. John smuggles some groceries from South Africa and now believes that there is a thin line between 'what's legal and what is not' (p. 27). Later on, he initiates a business in smuggling illegal immigrant girls and women into South Africa. John's smuggling business is a window through which we get to see the challenges faced by many economic fugitives escaping from poverty-ridden Zimbabwe into South Africa. John and his wife are illegal moneychangers. Their business flourishes because they are connected to the Assistant Commissioner of police Mr Nzou. For Nzou, pulling deals was always a way of securing a future for his children because 'salaries were pathetic and the cost of living too high' (p. 66). Onai comments: 'we are slowly turning into a nation of thieves' (p. 51). Tapiwa buys fuel from transport operators and acknowledges that the majority now 'exist as semi-criminals […] in the sense that […] there is so much fraudulence' (p. 350). Prostitution as a survival tool is very rampant in the text. Sheila and Melody are prostitutes. For Sheila, 'as a prostitute […] she could at least die with a full

stomach' (p. 62). Melody is a university student in a relationship with a married man for financial security/gain. She believes the 'economy' forced her into 'a corner' (p. 81) and she has to trade 'her innocence for university fees and groceries' (p. 82). For some people begging is a condition of existence and remains a survival strategy, yet for others it is a personal choice. Tapiwa makes a personal choice to suffer, and the only suffering that he knows is self-inflicted. He decides to 'beg and accept public humiliation as an act of contrition', but otherwise he has everything he needs to live a comfortable life. There are real beggars but Mawaya, whose begging sprees were futile because 'nobody could afford to throw away anything that was remotely edible' (p. 57), is not one of them. Focusing on an unreal beggar remains Tagwira's way of trivializing the destitute in the urban city.

The Victim Trope in *The Uncertainty of Hope*

My analysis of *The Uncertainty of Hope* also highlights the conscious effort by Tagwira to refute the state position that the Third Chimurenga is against the neo-colonial enemy. I will demonstrate this point by discussing Onai's victim status. Onai tells us that her life has 'always been a struggle, but no single year had been as hard as 2005' (p. 85). For Tagwira, the challenges faced by Onai and those around her do not have links to their racial identities. Thus, Tagwira redefines the enemy-victim trope of the Third Chimurenga by subverting the state's interpretation of the struggle discourse of the Third Chimurenga. Identities of both the victim and the victimizer are clear in postcolonial Zimbabwe. In state discourse, the victim trope is racial, the state enemy is the former colonial master (in support of the opposition political party MDC) and the victim is the previously colonized black. As a state apologist, Gomo shows in *A Fine Madness* racial relations in the African postcolonial situation, as Ngugi avers, 'in terms of a monolithic whiteness against an equally monolithic blackness' (in an introduction to *A Fine Madness*, 2010: p. 2). Yet, in Tagwira's narrative, the enemy for ordinary Zimbabweans cannot be understood in physiological properties of race. For Onai, the enemy has two faces; she and others are victims in the political instabilities of the postcolony and her marriage is a constant source of stress. Against the backdrop of a national political and economic crisis, Onai is married to a violent, irresponsible and 'philandering husband' (p. 69). In her narration of victimhood in the context of the Third Chimurenga, Tagwira is clear that 'physical differences play a less crucial role […] it is more important to know who are the masters and who are the slaves

than whose skin is light and whose is dark' (Todorov, 1986: p. 172). Race relations are re-defined in post independence Zimbabwe. Skin colour differences are a crucial part in the black-white relations and the re-imagination of citizenship and especially land ownership. However, this is not Tagwira's focus in *The Uncertainty of Hope*. She demonstrates that gender and class, and not racial relations, are crucial in the victim trope of the Third Chimurenga. In foregrounding Onai's personal struggle, Tagwira subverts the understanding of victimhood in the power structures of the Third Chimurenga.

In theorizing victimhood, Wendell suggests that clinging to the victim status allows claims to 'innocence and moral superiority in the face of hostile forces' (1990: p. 2). Onai is a victim of institutionalized state oppression of Murambatsvina, like all other affected characters, and of Gari's hostility. She suffers doubly as a citizen of a failing state and as a woman, and in both cases she is innocent. Such representation serves to demonstrate that the oppressed citizens of the postcolonial situation and 'women's suffering […] are not within their control and […] no one could reasonably expect them to have avoided' that (Wendell, 1990: p. 15). Reading victimhood in Onai's life is a way of acknowledging her oppressed status and injustice. However, perceiving Onai just as a victim is rather problematic. It is one of the ways of consolidating her 'powerlessness and frustrating her recovery' (ibid.). A closer look at Onai's life reveals that victimhood is not a fixed identity for her. She is also a survivor. The 'survivor' interpretation 'bespeaks an orientation towards active resistance' (Wendell, 1990: p. 9). Onai lives with an abusive husband and the usual trips to hospital after every beating are symptomatic of that abuse. She finds it difficult to sleep, and subsequently develops severe a headache -'a headache was stealthily advancing behind her eyes. She saw stars and dark spots. Nausea held her on the brink of vomiting' (p. 121). The effect of violence on Onai's body has two significant dimensions - she takes in the pain that is inflicted on her body through beating, and her body gives in to emotional stress, resulting in headaches. Tagwira wants us to understand that Onai is not just a punch back. She may seem incapable of vocal resistance, but she has an amazing capacity to take in pain. Such a capacity then forces us to raise issues of responsibility and choice. She has an opportunity to report Gari to the police in order to obtain justice through the law. The doctor who always attends to her during hospitalization offers her the opportunity to do so. Yet taking a legal route is difficult for her. A passage from Frye helps us in analysing Onai's difficult situation. Frye says:

> Oppression of women is something that women do not choose […] a woman may continue to live with the man who batters her but the choice to remain is not a free one. It is a choice among evils in a severely constrained situation, and she has not chosen that situation. The oppression is something consisting of and accomplished by a network of institution and material and ideological forces […] women are not simply free to walk away from servitude at will. (1985, as cited in Wendell, 1990: p. 16)

Onai did not choose to experience violence in her marriage and yet she cannot simply walk out of the abusive relationship for two reasons. She has been conditioned to believe that she can make her marriage work and she and her children look up to Gari for economic support. She testifies that, 'Gari was not an easy man to live with. Over the years, she had worn herself out just trying to conceal proof of his violence. As a model of perseverance, nobody could have done better than she had' (p. 5). She has learnt a lesson on perseverance from her mother's marriage. The marriage was imperfect but the mother 'stayed for the sake of her children and because marriage was not something that one could just walk away from. Once you get in you stay […] no matter how hard it gets' (p. 7). Onai's resolution to stay in an abusive marriage is encouraged by Steve Makoni's song *Handiende* (I will not leave) in which 'an abused woman *vows* that she would not leave her marriage' (p. 97). Onai believes that this song relates to a common woman's position. Such a sense of community gives her the courage to hold on to her resolution to stay with Gari in spite of the abuse.

Gari is a 'philandering husband' and Onai lives in constant fear of contracting the HIV virus. She gets disturbed when she gets to know that Gari is in a relationship with Gloria:

> Any other woman but Gloria, please! By Jo'burg Lines standards, Gloria was the most infamous of prostitutes ….]. Recently one of her boyfriends had died of AIDS. The story doing rounds was that Gloria was HIV positive. [...] the threat of HIV hung over her like a hangman's noose. There was no guarantee that Gari would not force himself upon her without a condom one of these days. […] The risk of infection was now very immediate and the thought of it terrified her. (pp. 125-6)

HIV and AIDS are associated with imminent death. For Onai getting the virus means that she would leave her children without a mother. Such a threat pushes Onai into thinking about protection. She then insists on the use of condoms and especially relies on the female condom, which allows her to be in control of her sexuality and her body.

Gari as head of family is expected to fulfil his duty of taking care of the family. When he fails, Onai relies on her vending job to support the family. Ironically, she does not realize that she has some kind of economic independence in vending, even if it may seem insufficient. Katy and John blame Onai for staying in an unfulfilling relationship and they demand acts of resistance. They do so by stressing the importance of the choice of leaving Gari and walking out of the relationship. Katy and John fall into the danger of 'infantilizing' Onai, thinking of her as 'a helpless victim' of Gari's oppressive treatment. They do not seem to understand that Onai's suffering should be read in the context of the power of patriarchy. Onai does not give in to their pressure, rather she tells herself that Katy came from a different social background and class, and hence she cannot understand her situation. Onai understands that her marriage is not the best but she reads into her identity nothing but passivity. Hence, she holds on to a belief that, 'there was nothing else she […] could do. She was after all only a woman' (p. 5). There are instances when Onai believes that widowhood would give her liberation. When Gari did not come home for the second time, she

> wondered if she should check the hospitals and mortuaries. He might have come to a violent, inebriated end. For a moment, she felt horrified, covertly ashamed by the readiness with which she embraced the possibility of widowhood. In the transient moment, the darker side of her nature felt a glow of liberation. His death could not harm them. (pp. 121-2)

Gari's death would be a welcome development for Onai and her children.[84] Onai believes that his death would give them the much needed freedom and space. Yet when Gari actually dies, Onai's struggle is re-defined. The Shona domestic

[84] In the same way, though in a different context, the boy-child Nhamo's death is a welcome development that gives the girl-child Tambu an opportunity to get educated in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.

structure dictates that Onai should be inherited. Upon Gari's death, Toro (the younger brother) is appointed her guardian. When Onai defies the inheritor's orders to take his family into the family house, her struggle takes a new twist: she loses the family home to Toro, Gari's brother mandated to 'take care of the family'. In patriarchy women's oppression and choice are 'circumscribed' and to deny that 'they are harmed and weakened by social condition is to deny that they are oppressed' (Wendell, 1990: p. 17).

In spite of the fact that Tagwira wants us to appreciate the support that Onai gets from Katy in the form of genuine sisterhood, Katy remains a constant source of stress for Onai. For the most part, Katy enjoys her marriage and this always reminds Onai of what she lacks in her own marriage. In her initial response, Onai takes Gari's perspective and protects him from blame and responsibility. At this stage, she protects her husband from scornful neighbours and friends. Onai tells Katy that Gari is not to blame. She impresses upon Katy that Gari behaves the way he does because he is 'going through a difficult time at work' (p. 6). In a protective manner, she wants Katy to believe that Gari cannot be held responsible for his actions. Onai also knows that:

> Her episodic facial bruising and blackened eyes had ceased to be material for speculation because they all knew precisely what was happening. However, the cocoon of pretence that she had worn around herself had become her armour. It was one thing, which held the frail vestiges of her dignity securely in place. (p. 5)

Onai treats her abuses as a secret that needs safeguarding. Divulging her experiences would mean losing her dignity. This enforced silence relates to the general view that 'oppression reaches into women's psyches and undermines their ability and very desire to oppose it' (Wendell, 1990: p. 24). Faced by an inquisitive doctor, Onai refuses to divulge the secret of an abusive husband and lies that 'she had walked into a door while fumbling in the dark during a power cut' (p. 45) - thus being protective of her victimiser. Echoing the traditional understanding of 'the respectability of marriage versus the shame of divorce' (Christiansen-Bull, 2013: p. 518), Onai believes that:

> She did not want to be coerced into revealing things, which had the potential to destroy her marriage. She would not be able to bear the shame of being a divorced woman. How could she possibly face a

> world that despised divorcees; looked down on single mothers? Marital status was everything. […] In her whole extended family nobody had ever had a divorce. She would not let herself be the first. (p. 46)

However, later on, she gives up the perspective of the victim and becomes 'a responsible actor', and re-possesses the power to redirect her life (Wendell, 1990: p. 20). She does this with the help of other women around her. A spirit of resistance is registered in her response to attempted rape. Using her knowledge of self-defence that she learnt from a television programme, Onai protects herself from attempted rape. When she gets help from the Kushinga Women's project, her application for a house in the government Hlalani Kuhle programme is approved. Her agency is however questionable when it comes to her status at the end of the text. Even if she vows that she is 'through with men' (p. 341), the author wants us to believe in the possibility of a future relationship between Onai and Tapiwa. At the end of the text, Onai is a completely changed person: 'her afro hair had been straightened and styled to accentuate her features, making her look years younger' (p. 352). Such body semiotics signify a meaningful transformation. Tapiwa plays 'a significant role in ameliorating Onai's misery' (Muchemwa, 2010: p. 137). He offers her a job, with an attractive package. This is one of the aspects in the plot that prompted Muchemwa's reading of the text of what he termed 'the *deus ex machina* to rescue (*Onai*) from her plight since she lacks the psychological, intellectual and material wherewithal to escape from the cycle of abuse' (2010: p. 137).

Rewriting Murambatsvina

There are polarized dimensions of Murambatsvina in the Zimbabwean public sphere. The Government sanitized Murambatsvina to mean 'clean up' and 'to restore order' (Mhiripiri, 2008: p. 156). However, the UN report on the operation condemns it as a violation of basic human rights.[85] The two potentially contradictory narrations of the operation are also visible in Zimbabwe's media coverage. In *Hidden Dimensions*, Chari highlights how the 'pro-government *Sunday Mail* promoted it as a blessing in disguise or as having paid dividends by removing all illegal activities' (2008: p. 109). Yet, on the

[85] Report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Zimbabwe to Assess the Scope and Impact of Operation Murambatsvina by the UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe, Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka (2005).

other hand, the privately owned *The Standard* largely represented it 'as a bankruptcy on the part of the government […] *and* unreservedly undermined the clean up' (italics my own) (ibid.). One finds that the state used controlled media to articulate its 'literal, interpretive and implicatory denial' of the negative impact of the operation on the affected citizens (Mhiripiri, 2008: p. 152). By creating a story against the background of Operation Murambatsvina, Tagwira makes her contribution to the many interpretations of the operation. Her narrative demonstrates that the operation was a human catastrophe that left many urban dwellers, especially in Mbare, displaced, without homes or sources of income.

In *The Uncertainty of Hope,* Katy cautions Faith against being outspoken about Murambatsvina. She says '*mwanangu*, mind how you speak and take care who you utter such things to. It's not your place to be so forthcoming with open criticism' (p. 146). The mother educates the daughter on what should and should not be said in public in a repressive environment. In the Zimbabwean postcolony, subjects are forbidden from criticizing state policies, and the danger of doing so lies in the 'threats of physical pain' (Primorac, 2007: p. 436). The irony is that Tagwira's text speaks against the brutalities of Murambatsvina, even though it is not safe in the political environment to do so. The fear of victimization can be located when,on arriving in Harare for the launch party, Tagwira was concerned for her safety and proclaimed that, 'I don't get the feeling that we [Zimbabweans] are free to write anything. Writers in Zimbabwe […] have avoided depicting the current climate'.[86]In an interview, Tagwira describes her interest in writing not just fictional novels but also those that 'also deal with the truth in a manner that allows for its complexity and its multifaceted nature'.[87] In *The Uncertainty of Hope* Tagwira deals with the truth of the Zimbabwean crisis, and in this section I intend to discuss how she rewrites the story of Murambatsvina. Using contrasts, she re-imagines the two significant dimensions of Murambatsvina - the official discourse of Murambatsvina as a beneficial operation aimed at ending illegal economic activities and destroying illegal structures in all cities, and the critical reaction that condemned it. Faith and Tom (and Nzou) are juxtaposed and have antithetic views on Murambatsvina that correspond to the aforementioned dimensions.

[86] http://valerietagwira.wordpress.com/2007/09/09/bbc-africa-beyond/accessed 23/09/2013

[87] http://valerietagwira.wordpress.com/2007/09/09/the-standard/accessed 23/09/2013

Faith represents the voice of conscience and has several questions on Murambatsvina with special reference to how this affect the inhabitants of Mbare - Mbare is the only home that she knows and she is very much aware of the deprivation that characterizes life in this part of Harare. She understands that 'half of Mbare's population lives in shacks. Where would they all go? And if the markets are closed all these people would starve' (p. 22) for most Mbare inhabitants survive on vending. John and Nzou do not just have crucial information on Murambatsvina well before its implementation but they also defend it as noble. Nzou believes that 'demolitions clean up the towns and drive out criminals' (p. 72). He argues: 'The country had to be rid of the crawling mass of maggots, bent on destroying the economy. At the end of this exercise, the former 'sunshine city' status of Harare would surely be restored' (p. 135). In state discourse urbanites had becomes 'dirty', referred to as 'a mass of maggots'. Ironically, Nzou is one of the foreign currency dealers and identification of criminals in a state thriving on lawlessness then becomes problematic. However, even if the bad and the good of Murambatsvina are shown through character foils, delineations of the two-dimensional coding of Murambatsvina foreclose several interpretations.

Even if Nzou and Tom sanitize Murambatsvina in the same style that the government did in their response to the Tibaijuka UN report, the overall picture of Murambatsvina we get from the novel is bad. To discredit Murambatsvina, Tagwira highlights the irony and brutality of its implementation. Tom, Nzou and others that belong to their class have prior knowledge of the planned 'state demolitions' well before implementation but those who are eventually directly affected are the last to know. The means of informing them are ineffective and very brutal. The message is delivered by cars in motion and only a few get the full details. In some kind of ambush, the riot police then confiscate people's business goods and bulldozers destroy their 'shacks'. Tagwira describes the night of the day that the operation was launched as follows:

> That night, the Mbare population was more restless than ever. Twilight quickly turned to night, and darkness fell like a thick blanket. It brought with it a tangible sense of apprehension, an uncertainty that was as dark as oppressive as the night itself. (p. 119)

The overwhelming presence of a sense of death associated with the night of the launch alludes to the negative effects of the operation on the people's lives. The operation is violent and militarized. The tear gas canisters, the thick baton sticks, the handcuffs and the heavy presence of riot police in semi-military attire underscore the violent nature of the operation. By focusing on the victims' experiences, Tagwira highlights the negative impact of the operation and succeeds in subverting the official representation of Murambatsvina, which 'avoided focusing on its victims' (Chari, 2008: p. 111). I refer to Hondo and Onai's conditions as victims of Murambatsvina. Hondo is a war veteran and the name is a Shona name meaning war. He cannot believe that the police want to destroy his extra two rooms and lectures to them on how he fought the war. The immediate war evoked by his name is not the past Second Chimurenga, in which he participated, but the present 'war' between state agents and Mbare inhabitants. He dismisses the police as 'British puppets, and sell outs' (p. 150). In the Third Chimurenga discourse, the opposition party MDC members are British puppets who have sold out the nation to the West. Here Hondo adopts the nativism of the Third Chimurenga narrative that 'links sell outs to western identities' (Primorac, 2007: p. 442). Conversely, the state police are re-imagined as sell-outs. The state police, named British puppets, have no links with the British because they are state agents carrying out national duties. In this context, however, they have sold out in the sense that they have become enemies to not just the property owners but to everyone else whose life is negatively impacted upon by the violence of Murambatsvina. Later on, Hondo commits suicide and throws himself in front of a moving train. On the other hand, Onai is ordered to destroy her shack and the way she does it is not just representative of obedience but translates into some kind of subtle resistance. Onai's destruction of the shack becomes an act of defiance and an opportunity to deal with all her sources of stress.

> She struck with a forceful blow against all the Garis of the world and against everything that threatened her existence. She groaned and swung the axe into a higher, wide arc. […] she pressed on with the sole mission of destruction. She cried about her miserable life with Gari. She cried about the food shortages. She cried about the market that had been closed, leaving her without a livelihood. Out of the corner of an eye, she glimpsed Sheila's forlorn, hunched figure and wept for all the people who had suddenly become

> homeless. She cried about the poverty that had left her crushed and hopeless about everything that rendered her powerlessness, everything that held her in chains […]. (p. 143)

Onai is aware that her sources of stress have nothing to do with race. thus her anger is directed at Gari (patriarchy), and at the state (for failing its citizens on social responsibility). The state discourse on Murambatsvina masked such 'trauma, anxiety and resistance' that characterized Operation Murambatsvina. In highlighting Hondo, Onai and other victims' experiences of the violence, Tagwira unmasks the true effects of the operation on the affected people. Threatened by the police orders to vacate their market stalls, Mbare Musika vendors resisted eviction. 'Rocks, fruits, vegetables and other objects flew in the air as angry people hit back at the police who were assaulting them' (133). Implicit here is that the victims of the operation made efforts at resisting eviction. Maya encourages others to display solidarity in dissent. At the end of the day, 'the market place resembled a battleground as the traders were caught up in a spate of violent protests and looting' (134).

Displaced inhabitants of Mbare relocate to Tsiga grounds (a literary version of the historical Caledonia Farm), where there is no clean water, no sanitation facilities and no schools. The argument that Murambatsvina was intended for restoration of order remains a farce, for people's living conditions turned from bad to worse. Tsiga is worse than the destroyed shacks they lived in. Faith invokes such degeneration and argues; 'the shacks might not have been fit for habitation but are the holding camps and streets where they live now any better?' (160). In the novel, Murambatsvina is re-imagined as a fake kind of cleaning that leaves 'rubble and dirty […] broken furniture, and bricks and motor remained a constant symbol of the destruction of people's homes' (282).

The 'hidden dimension' of Operation Murambatsvina has been defined as the state's attempts at punishing the urbanites for voting for the opposition party in the 2002 presidential elections. In Tagwira's text, Nzou's statement that the displaced people can 'go wherever they came from […]' is in line with the hidden state aim to disperse the urban electorate. Nzou's statement above was an instruction by the police during the real Murambatsvina to those who could have indicated that they had no rural homes to go back to their countries of origin (Muzondidya, 2007: p. 335). The urbanites are identified as state enemies and hence 'retributive suffering' is inflicted on them (Primorac, 2007: p. 434). The use of the enemy-patriot dichotomy emphasizes links between sell-outs and

cities, and authentic patriots and rural areas. Sell-outs are 'associated with cities […] and are excluded from the organic unity of the authentic national space' (Primorac, 2007: p. 443). Dispersing the urbanites through Operation Murambatsvina becomes some kind of political control aimed at disturbing predictable political opposition party votes. Such a hidden agenda is captured in the literal of sense of the word Murambatsvina - rejection of filth (Muchemwa, 2010: p. 137).

To show that the government had acted with impunity and that the Murambatsvina policy was based on anger, Operation Hlalani Kuhle/ Garikai as a sequel to it then becomes an image manager and a signifier of the government's sensitivity to criticism.[88] According to Mhiripiri, focusing on Hlalani Kuhle was a government 'diversionary tactic' to 'something favourable' directed to 'offer hundreds of families new homes and to offer proper business and vending facilities' (2008: p. 156). In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, the provision of houses under the Hlalani Kuhle program is bastardized. Onai's experiences as a prospective beneficiary are quite telling. First, she has difficulties having her name entered on the waiting list, and later on she is informed that she should pay a deposit. She does not get the house at the end and the promise of redemption remains elusive.

The Uncertainty of Hope seeks to include everything read and heard about Murambatsvina's project of displacement and the attendant crises, what Muchemwa has referred to as the author's 'anxiety narrative' that extends to hover-like; the process of picking up every indicator of the post-2000 crisis. Yet from the point of view of discourse analysis, the hovering central in the making of the text is a strong point for the text because 'one characteristic of great literature is that it typically communicates a wide range of ideas simultaneously' (Gibbs, 2001: p. 77).

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be reached from this analysis. The Zimbabwean crisis of the last decade left a mark on national literature. Both the old and new writers discussed here engage with issues of the Third Chimurenga. They do so in ways that challenge the official position on the Third Chimurenga as a liberation project. 'Patriotic history' sanitizes the Third Chimurenga and associates it with triumphalism. The texts discussed here are consistent in their view of the failed nature of the state during the Third Chimurenga, and hence subvert the state

[88] This is a Shona word meaning good life.

narrative. Such subversion has two dimensions: a focus on the rural farm invasions and its connections to urban crisis. The social and political realities recreated in the discussed stories can be verified in revisionist historical narratives. In other words, the kind of history that we read from these narratives is one shaped by reality. From various angles, creative writers challenge the accuracy of the representation of the social political realities in the grand narratives. The memory articulated in the studied works invokes the Third Chimurenga reality as a crisis. Writers re-imagine the Third Chimurenga as some kind of war, not against attempts at re-colonisation by the West through the opposition party (as stated in state discourse), but as a site of struggle for basic life requirements. The enemy of the people is clearly the state, which is failing in its social mandate. With state lies in circulation, artists offer an interesting dimension and their narratives contribute to an understanding of what could have happened to Zimbabwe and Zimbabweans in the last decade.