

Land and racial domination in Zimbabwe: An African-centred critical analysis of selected post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored novels

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Abstract

The article makes an African-centred analysis selected post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored novels that narrativise the land experiences in the country. The African-led land occupations of white-owned commercial farms in Zimbabwe from the late 1990s have necessitated the study and revisiting of the land question in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). The process that has been defended by the Government as part of the necessary land redistribution exercise to rectify colonial land injustices shows that the land question is as potent now as it was at the inception of colonial settlements. Zimbabwe's land history has remained consistently contentious because land is the life-blood of the people's livelihoods, black and white. For this reason, the process and aftermath of the occupations have rocked racial relations in the country and internationally. The controversies arising from the land occupations have culminated in the socio-economic and political instability of the country, and threaten to spill into and destabilise the SADC countries as well. It is against this backdrop that the article makes an African-centred analysis of selected post-2000 Zimbabwean-authored novels that variously respond to Zimbabwean land issues characterising the tumultuous post-2000 period. The view presented here is that literature defines the epicentre of the struggle of ideas, that partially but significantly, define what Zimbabwe is, including how and where she wants to go. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006); Eric Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006); John Eppel's *Absent: The English Teacher* (2009) and Mashingaidze Gomo's *A Fine Madness* (2010) are analysed in this light. The African-centred approach utilised in this chapter is significant in locating both texts and authors within the background that informs their fictional representations. The extent to which texts successfully balance their explorations of land and racial identity and help to influence society to rise above parochial partisan approaches, and encourage people to confront some of Zimbabwe's land challenges would be worth noting.

Introduction and background

This article opens by making the assertion that facts are crude, and facts are stubborn. From a human rights perspective, who has the mandate to fight for the Africans' right to land as a right to life as well as a basic human right like any other rights? Should rights to land be viewed differently from any other human rights? In dealing with discourses of land, it is important to first establish

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who has come onto whose land. When driving away someone who has come onto my premises or land, am I invading my premises? Would it be reasonable to allow an invader to eat my heritage because he has might and legal title deriving from alien crafted instruments that pay little regard to African values and traditions? Such distinctions are important in order to avert distortions surrounding the Zimbabwean post-2000 discourses on land.

Worth noting from the outset is the fact that Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, is “the last outpost of the British Empire” (Baxter, 2010). Also, “Zimbabwe’s independence came after a bitter war with the colonial government, a great sacrifice ... so that the country could attain independence from a foreign government (Lazarus, 2008, p. 63). Further, the indigenous Zimbabweans’ fight for land is fight against the colonial settlers’ entrenched systems and all its allies, including the World Order upon which the colonial system was sanctioned and established, “a scale of struggle similar to David and Goliath” (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 163-164). People would rarely give up power and privileges without resistance, especially privileges deriving from land ownership. Further, “no one anywhere in the world owns land absolutely” (Palmer, 1977, p. 16). Systems of land tenure and allocation of land into privately-owned property and communally-owned tribal trust lands from which African peasants could be removed at will by the Government are a colonial legacy designed to enhance and protect the white settlers’ privileges and economic interests at the expense of the indigenous marginalised majority population. This came as a result of the so-called conquest by the British South Africa Company after the 1893 Anglo-Ndebele war and the 1896-97 Shona-Ndebele war against British occupation that translated into sacred ownership of land by the minority settler population, without any title from the original inhabitants. Ironically, the re-transference of land into indigenous ownership at independence in 1980 could not be similarly effected in respect of both the sacrosanct human rights and private property rights that the minority settler commercial farmers hold.

Thus, from an African-centred perspective, landlessness and land deprivation remain the kingpins of colonially structured poverty of the indigenous population. The principle has its legal basis in the July 1894 Cape Colony Glen Grey Act instigated by Cecil John Rhodes, that has remained the blueprint for inter-racial and material relations between Africans and Europeans, with the Africans proscribed as labourers and whites as land owners (Thomas, 1996). Worth noting is that the Glen Grey Act finds justification in the currency of the day. The 1888 Berlin Conference doctrine of terra nullius justified parcelling out Africa among the European powers for their respective imperial expansion at the expense of indigenous Africans. Surprisingly, rampant contemporary discourses and doctrines of human rights do not seem to recognise Africans’ right to reclaim and repossess lands lost through colonial occupations and unprecedented forced removals of Africans from their traditional areas. “Whatever justification advanced in earlier days for refusing to recognize the rights and interests in land of the indigenous inhabitants of settled colonies, an unjust and discriminatory doctrine of that kind can no longer be accepted” (Chigara, 2012b, p. 206). Chigara (2012b, p. i) rightly observes that “only human-rights inspired policies that respond to the call for social justice by acknowledging both the current and underlying contexts of the disputes, and also to the developmental aspirations of these [previously marginalised and land-short indigenous inhabitants] hold the most potential to resolve these disputes”.

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The corollary of racial domination of land by whites was material disempowerment and widespread disenfranchisement and impoverishment of the majority of the African population. The ripple effects are still with us and remain untenable to this day. In Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia, land apartheid was reinforced by the enactment of the racist and exclusionary land instruments including 1930 Land Apportionment Act, 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act, 1951 Maize Control Act (Ranger, 1985), 1969 Land Tenure Act, and the “willing seller, willing buyer” clause on land in the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement that ended the protracted armed liberation struggle against the Rhodesian regime. Like the South African Land Act of 1913 and the 1936 Native Land and Trust Act (Daymond in Ngcobo, 1999, p. 262), these laws evidently limited Africans’ access to their land, severely undermining their livelihoods, thereby leading them into pauperisation. These legal instruments did not recognise that this land has original owners. If Africans fight to drive away invaders, would they then be invading, grabbing, seizing and illegally occupying their land?

Admittedly, “the imposition of settler rule [and emergent patterns of land accessibility] ... dramatically changed the relations of production and land ownership, and led to the emergence of new social and economic forces” (Mlambo and Raftopoulos, 2009, p. xviii). Palmer (1990, p. 178) observes that the Rhodesians Land Tenure Act of 1969 was “something of a Magna Carta guaranteeing the preservation of their way of life against encroachment from black hordes” or natives. Natives, according to the 1898 Southern Rhodesia Order in Council “means any person not of European decent who is a native of South Africa, or of Central Africa ... [falling under the control of Native Commissioners] guided by native law so far as that law is not repugnant to natural justice or morality” (Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, 2013, p. 32). Whilst it is not clear what “natural justice” means, it echoes 18th Century England Social Darwinism theory of survival of the fittest. Thus, making it clear that might justifies racial land domination in pre-independence Zimbabwe, an aspect that post-2000 peasant-led land occupations and repossessions subtly challenge.

Further, the exclusionary and discriminatory legal instruments in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe continue making land the single unifying factor across the racial divide. Among the Africans land remains the single factor mobilising support for the armed liberation struggles since 1890 to the newly-dubbed Third Chimurenga, or hondo yevhu in the Shona language of Zimbabwe. Though morally indefensible, the colonial land injustices governing both land access and race relations in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe continue destabilising the Zimbabwean society, threatening to spill over into the Southern African region. The peasant-led land repossessions and the controversies they generated show the long-standing grievances over the Zimbabwean land question. The European Union’s “targeted sanctions” (Raftopoulos, 2009, p. 218) imposed against Harare between 2002 and 2008, and the 2001 US Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) (Raftopoulos, 2009, p. 218) that was also imposed in support of the Commercial Farmers Union’s (CFU) protest against Government’s land acquisition and redistribution process similarly project these deep-seated grievances.

International support for Ian Campbell's lawsuit against the Zimbabwean Government at the Windhoek-based SADC tribunal (Barclay, 2010, p. 150), similarly show the unabated land grievances. Yet, Zimbabwe's post-independence land redistribution has benefitted upwards of 240 000 African families and households or more than 1.5 million people (Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, 2013, p. 83). Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart (2013, p. 83) observe that land redistribution "targeted not only poor people, but wealthy people willing to venture into commercial farming", "finally addressing a century of colonial domination" (ibid). These tangible benefits of land redistribution would subtly suggest that people reconsider their interpretations of democracy and human rights in the Zimbabwean context. Similarly calling for scrutiny would be terms like land acquisition, land invasion, land grabbing, illegal land occupations, land appropriation, land displacement, squatters, land tenants and land reform vis-à-vis land alienation, land indigenisation, land repossession, land imbalances, land injustices, land restitution and land reclamation characterising discourses on the Zimbabwean land issues of the post-2000 period. It should be acknowledged that the land question in Zimbabwe has two forces that should be characterised correctly. Failure to correctly characterise the two forces would lead to misrepresentation and distortion of issues, willingly or unwillingly. To argue that there is a "clash" (Huntington (2000) over land in Zimbabwe would be gross misrepresentation. A clash happens in a contest that takes place on neutral ground or in no man's land, like in a football or any other sporting match whereby contestants' conduct is adjudicated impartially using the same rules. The word "clash" misrepresents reality if used when invaders give themselves legitimacy to occupy and own other people's rightful homes. Following this argument, there appears to be partial and partisan according of democratic, property and human rights in view of the Zimbabwean land issues. Racism as wilful discrimination by European settlers and their sympathisers against the indigenous population from owning their land remains apparent. Yet, indigenous Zimbabweans have no other land. They are vana vevhu in the Shona language of Zimbabwe, loosely translated "children of the soil", fighting for their land and not for commercial farms. The latter are privately-owned encasements which were instituted by European settlers for Africans' exclusion, profiteering and exploitation of land using the terra nullius doctrine.

Citing the Australian's "accession to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", Chigara (2012b, p. 207) rightfully advocates land reform in post-2000 Zimbabwe on the basis of the values of African common law and international standards that European occupation then, and exclusionary practice now, flagrantly disregards. Chigara (2012b, p. 207) argues:

A common law doctrine founded on unjust discrimination in the enjoyment of civil and political rights demands reconsideration. It is contrary both to international standards and to the fundamental values of our common law to entrench a discriminatory rule which, because of the supposed position on the scale of social organisation of the indigenous inhabitants of a settled colony, denies them a right to occupy their traditional lands.

Among the indigenous African population, "the land and its resources belong to the community, every full member of this community has an inalienable right to a reasonable share according to his/[her] requirements (Palmer, 1977, p. 17),

ironically echoing the Biblical principle: “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm, 24:1). This is the basis upon which the African principle of humwe (Chigara, 2004)/ubuntu/togetherness/oneness or common heritage of land is founded. This principle is in pursuit of protection and provision of decent livelihoods and psycho-socio-spiritual and material securities for all those inhabiting the land. Supporting this distinguishing characteristic of the pre-colonial African communities’ land tenure – that European settlers and their sympathisers choose to ignore – Chigara (2004, p. 77) observes:

Pre-colonial SADC communities’ relationship to their physical environment: land, rivers, wildlife, etc – was summed up in the philosophy of common heritage – humwe, according to which every member of the tribal group and larger community was presumed to hold an inherent right not only to earn a living off, but also to be supported in that effort by his kinsmen. This common heritage view of the physical environment humwe persists among the Southern Africans to this day.

In light of this principle, land among the indigenous African population evokes myriad questions relating to human rights abuses, and social injustices rooted in colonial subjugation and forcible land dispossession and displacements. Whilst some critics and interest groups might use sugar-coated language in order to either mask or distort the facts about Zimbabweans’ land challenges, historical facts remain indelible.

Thus, solutions to Zimbabwean land challenges should never be divorced from the original source of the problems, beginning with the boundaries and identity stuck with the indigenous African population who were conceived as Rhodes’ personal property at Rhodesian colonial occupation, squatters or tenants should they insist on retaining their traditional but newly-acquired colonial land. This is in spite of their being indigenous to the African continent whom the settlers found and systematically pushed off the land using legal machinations mentioned elsewhere in this discussion. However, despite their systematic exclusion, that they are indigenous to Africa justifies their claim to African land as a God-given heritage, a claim that they can make nowhere else on the globe, unlike other peoples.

The Africans’ struggles derive motivation from the indigenous population’s determination to restore the colonially destabilised cultural and social institutions, principal of which was custodianship over land that was traditionally controlled by traditional leaders in accordance with the indigenous cultural institutions (Kahari, 2009, p.2). Urgency to bring some sense of finality to the land issue appears to have been heightened by the racial and political aspects that land assumed in the February 2000 Referendum, with foreign-sponsored NGOs and predominantly white Commercial Farmers Union openly opposing land reform (Raftopoulos, 2009, p. 210; Sadomba, 2011). This further deepened polarisation and racial tension. In view of most Africans, history testifies that landlessness is a corollary of settler racism. “According to the man on the helm ... Redistribution of land was long overdue and welcome by the local people, it had to go to the people by whatever means... (Lazarus, 2008, p. 110). Raftopoulos (2009, p. 212) characterises the land occupations thus: As some analysts have noted, these occupations occurred within the context of both long-standing and more recent complexities of the land question, such as struggles within areas

of peasant farming, the effects of rural-urban migration, the livelihood crisis of urban households, and the displacement and eviction effects of agricultural export production and eco-tourism during the structural adjustment period.

However, Government's slow pace and failure to deliver land to the masses more than two decades into independence was construed as mockery to the sacrifices that the disenfranchised masses made during the armed liberation struggle (Sadomba, 2011). This "unfinished business" (Hammar and Raftopoulos, 2003) partially accounts for the rampant 2000 land occupations (Sadomba, 2011) that Government had to legitimate. For this reason, the process and aftermath of the occupations have rocked racial relations within the country and internationally. Society has been deeply polarized since. Assessments of outcomes of the occupations are on-going.

Why use fictional narratives in examining Zimbabwean land issues

The vicissitudes of land occupations resulted in transformation that has myriad implications on the Zimbabweans' cultural, social, economic and political landscapes across the racial divide. The controversies arising from what Africans generally perceive as land reclamation and restitution have culminated in the socio-economic and political instability of the country, and threaten to spill into, and destabilise the SADC countries as well. Writers and artists across the racial divide explore land redistribution as a major landmark in Zimbabweans' post-2000 experiences, including "how the process of identification played out in Zimbabwe" (Pilossof, 2012, p. 7). The transformation also gave rise to some new kind of post-colonial writing allowing for re-drawing of identities and examining racial tensions characterising the post-2000 period. That the selected writers deal with the unfolding and contentious subject of land in Zimbabwe's post-2000 period, makes a major landmark in the development of post-colonial Zimbabwean Literature in English. Zimbabwean land issues have their basis in indelible historical facts that the fictional writers and their narratives draw from and use as contexts in physical and time-frame terms. These settings, then, directly feed into what could be viewed as historicity of fiction that partially projects and represents the values, dreams and desired future about land that the Zimbabwean society should fight for and defend. The view presented here is that literature is the epicentre of the struggle of ideas that partially, but significantly, define what Zimbabwe is, including how and where she wants to go, particularly on an issue as pertinent as land that undergirds the basic human right to life and sustainable human development. The latter two have both remained perennial challenges concerning Africans because of the unresolved land question. The fictional narratives, then, constitute an entry point that explores dominant ideas that would find their way into society, influencing not only attitudes, but policies that would shape the country's destiny as was the case under colonial rule and subsequent post-independence African Government whereby the Lancaster House Agreement Constitution had decreed Africans to govern without the land. Yet, the majority of Africans in Zimbabwe had fought for land since 1893. Thus, fictional narratives constitute a major entry point into the consciousness of the society over land.

For the foregoing reasons, it is important to establish the selected writers' perceptions about land, what and how they envision as the amicable resolution to Zimbabweans' century-old land question. The analysis is guided by the *humwe* principle underpinning African common law on land cited elsewhere, and also

the UNDP definition of sustainable human development which is “a process of expanding people’s choices by enabling them to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives”, also “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations [across the racial divide] to meet their own needs” (Kanyenze, Kondo and Martens, 2006, p.21).

Further, in examining the fictional trajectories on how potent the land issue remains to this day, African philosophy advocates that the present should be interrogated against the backdrop of the historical facts and events that constitute the past as a foundation upon which principles are based and drawn, again giving a prerequisite for determining the future. This is particularly pertinent when examining the challenges and verisimilitudes of power shifts necessitated by land repossessions, occupations and displacements that the selected fictional narratives in this article explore. In this regard, the philosophy advocates critical knowledge of history, critical self-knowledge (Ephraim, 2003) and self-introspection so that Zimbabweans would participate in problem-solving and become agents of their own transformation, including regenerating their respective communities and society (Asante, 2007). Using Achebe’s (1990) rightful adage undergirding the African philosophy of causality and effect, without establishing how and where the rains began to beat them, Zimbabweans, and indeed the broader human society, would always use fire-fighting approaches, instead of using holistic strategies towards achieving lasting solutions to the land challenges bedevilling Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. Going by Ephraim’s (2003, p.416) exhortation, “this philosophy must be lived, and not merely be memorised like one in a mesmeric trance”. Viewed thus, these fictional narratives become an interface of fiction and real life experiences that this article is concerned about.

As part of social memory about post-independence land redistribution, and creative interpretation of human experiences in the post-2000 period, the selected fictional narratives constitute part of the nation’s unfolding social history, and are therefore worth interrogating. Citing Chiwome (1998 p. 17) on Zimbabwean fictional narratives about the armed liberation struggle, Chiwome and Mguni (2012) argue that literature that seriously participates in nation building should not just celebrate the joys of the moment. It should critically review the past and clearly bring out the pains and destructive side where writers are taking account of the gains and losses made in that particular historical account. For want of genuine transformation, oneness and sustainable human development, the same approach should be similarly applied to fictional trajectories focusing on Zimbabwean land issues in the post-2000 phase. The foregoing observations take the article into some analyses of the hidden dimensions behind Zimbabwean land issues using the selected fictional narratives.

Hidden Dimensions behind Zimbabwean Land Issues: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *The Book of Not* (2006), Eric Harrison’s *Jambanja* (2006); John Eppel’s *Absent: The English Teacher* (2009) and Mashingaidze Gomo’s *A Fine Madness* (2010).

Masking and masquerading has been used over the ages by humanity to deceive society and achieve self-aggrandisement goals. Historical facts and truth relating to Zimbabwean land issues continue to be distorted and contorted

by minority cliques in their transactions so that they may derive economic and social benefits, the continual prejudicing, defrauding and marginalising of the poor majority notwithstanding. How the selected fictional narratives explore these issues would be critical in determining an amicable resolution to the land challenges. This is particularly important in view of the masquerade to civilise Africans at initial settler occupations that witnessed African massive land disposessions and displacements. How far contemporary calls for democracy and respect for universal human rights could be divorced from the original machinations that robbed Africans of their land and subduing them to servile existence under white domination would be worth examining in these selected texts. How these writers and their fictional narratives appreciate, isolate and discuss land outside the original colonial settlers' ideology of rule by capital, if at all, would allow the texts to offer fresh insights into the contentious African peasant-led land repossessions that intensified from 2000 and beyond.

- Do these writers know whose cause and which ideology they are peddling, and whose interests they are defending in view of the legacy of racial domination of land in Zimbabwe?
- Where and how do the perennially marginalised indigenous majority come into their schemes – masked or brazen?
- Would their suggested choices encourage and uphold collective stewardship of land in the common interest for humanity's greater good like the African principle of *humwe* does?
- In their trajectories of land in post-2000 Zimbabwe, how far would the proffered ideology of universal democracy distance itself from or collude with universal human rights, in view of hidden agendas of capitalism in the neo-colonial phase?
- Would these fictional trajectories of Zimbabwean land restore the indigenous majority's century-old fleeced land rights?

These questions, among others, take us into the discussion of hidden dimensions behind the Zimbabwean land issues that these novels explore.

Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*, a sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, was published against the backdrop of the post-2000 peasant-led land occupations of so-called "white land" (Hanlon, Manjengwa & Smart, 2013, p. 1), challenging readers and Zimbabweans to retrospect, re-think and re-image Zimbabwean land within its historical truth from the perspectives of the underdogs. "Re-living the Second Chimurenga" (Chung, 2006), including the brutalities and collective punishment the ordinary blacks suffered during the armed liberation struggle against white minority rule and its racial hold on land, coupled with its deployment of all state machinery against a perceived infantile servile African population emblazoned in the boy-image trajectories, Dangarembga challenges us all to re-evaluate the strides that Zimbabweans have made to redistribute land and its subsisting resources since attaining independence. The greater part of the narrative detailing the Rhodesians' atrocities against the Africans (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 110; p.173; p.190-191) for aiding and abetting terrorists' cause and "identify[ing] with the aims and objectives of the struggle" (Baxter, 2010, p. 382), shows land assuming the lineament of a living personality as in Dambudzo Marechera's "Pledging my soul" and the omnipresence of an all-pervading deity suggested in Vera's *Without a name* – land defines all our unities. If independence has not delivered this same land to the indigenous poor majority, would political democracy – as was the case with the Lancaster House

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Agreement – not be bed-mates with white capitalism (Sadomba, 2011) then? The streets pulsed at Independence with feverish passion like the ecstasy of procreation. Those who were not in the streets were equally passionately packing their existences into containers as the election results were posted. As those who lived off the land but did not have it, had known for months that Mr Mugabe's ZANU-PF, which had fought for fertile soil, was to win a landslide victory ... (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 196).

Failure to take stoke concerning the strides made towards meeting the genuine need for more equitable land redistribution in Zimbabwe's post-independence would be negation of civil responsibility on the part of all Zimbabweans. For most marginalised Africans, independence should have translated into immediate empowerment through redistribution of the fertile land, especially given the evident abandoned farms with landlords and their families safely tucked away in England, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and elsewhere outside Zimbabwe (Dangarembga, 2006, p.197).

Tambudzai's retrospection about African experiences in pre- and post-independence Zimbabwe underscore trauma of segregation and racism, especially in a country bursting with natural resources that only a minority clique privileges itself to own and enjoy. This scenario justifiably leads to the conclusion that African poverty and deprivation is systematically orchestrated and structured, emanating from exclusion from mainstream economy. Until recently, the latter, including land policies, was structured to safeguard Rhodesian interests as evidenced by exclusionary policies undergirding white-run institutions. At the prestigious Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart (Sacred Heart) in Umtali where Tambudzai is privileged to enrol, there are only six African girls confined to the African dormitory and she does her "A" Level science studies by proxy because as a black Rhodesian, she cannot attend classes with the white girls at the adequately-resourced Umtali Boys High. At the white-run advertising agency in Harare where she is eventually employed as a sign writer, "all the workers on the floor were white so that everything had to be thought out, the smallest greetings mapped and manoeuvred" (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 216). Also for her race, her award-winning advertisement copy winning honours for the company "was not good enough; under someone else's name, it was" (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 236), so she could therefore not meet the client. The blighted images partially couch indigenous Zimbabweans' unfulfilled independence dreams, primary of which is land domination that would in turn translate into resources management as evident in the finely-orchestrated Rhodesian systems.

If Tambudzai's example of the elite is to go by, whereby Europe remains the yardstick of success and Africans "feel an obligation to play to the rules of the West in order to attain the status of being a 'good' or 'developing' country" (Schmidt and Garret, 2011, p. 427), stopping people from putting their names to what in the end belonged to Zimbabweans (Dangarembga, 2006: 220), including land, would be but a chimera. Henrik Clarke argues that Europe destroyed civilisations and cultures through conquest of the mind (Clarke in Ani, 1994, p.1). This can be similarly applied to the Zimbabweans' tragedy that could be closely linked to the European-based education. As a result, the instigated alienation created intra-racial tensions between most educated elites and the ordinary Zimbabweans who are worst hit by the colonial apartheid land policies

and class system. The legacy sends Zimbabwean educated elites – the so-called technocrats – grovelling for Europe’s approval for solutions to the land and economic challenges bedevilling the country. Ironically, this results in what Mazama (2003, p.4) observes to be Africans’ “agree[ing] to footnote status in the *White Man’s Book*”. Yet, as Fanon observes, Africans should find solutions to their problems in Africa, not just for their own sake, but for the rest of humanity as well: “We today can do everything, so long as we don’t imitate Europe, so long as we are not obsessed by the desire to catch up with Europe” (Fanon, 1967, p.251-252).

Like Tambudzai, the educated elite strive in vain to distinguish their individual persons from “undifferentiated flesh” (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 207), soldering themselves into scenarios they reluctantly found themselves in (Dangarembga, 2006, p.209) yet, living “a life ignominious and incognito at best, ... and at worst a life at the margins of it, at the centre of exclusion” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.209). For these reasons, “imperialism and colonialism will not die easily” (Clarke, in Ani, 1994, p. 1). With technocrats at the political helm failing to realise that they can have an independent vision and be wilfully creative in order to have systems serving their own interests, with a future not dominated by outsiders, then, post-colonial Zimbabwe “poses the challenge of self-transformation” (Sadomba, 2011, p. 230) and African conception of self-liberation. With an education system that sees students often “cram[ing] their way” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.26) to the top, it would not be surprising that, like the protagonist Tambudzai who is paralysed at heart by the African armed liberation struggle, some educated elites have difficulties appreciating their right to being on their God-given ancestral land, including the “right to cultural development and self-expression” (Cabral (1980:142) for fear of forfeiting favours from the erstwhile developed Western world. Like Tambudzai in the novel, some elites work to undermine and demonise African-led struggles for more equitable redistribution of the country’s major resources like the land, subscribing to the notions that “everything else about me/[being African] was/[is] incorrect” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.236). Dangarembga then, critiques the relevance of Western-based education/theories in African struggles for collective survival. Thus far then, Dangarembga’s narrative subtly wages ideological struggles for African dignity and significant human worth through urging her audience to critically consider reclaiming and restoring land ownership to the marginalised majority, using pragmatic tools favourable for the unique Zimbabwean situation.

The “lower[ing] of the Union Jack and [the] raising [of] the Zimbabwe flag at the Independence celebrations” (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 198) that should have caused “a great blimp in the course of history” (Ibid), should not just symbolise a political solution to what whites hold as “primarily a civil conflict between Rhodesians” (Baxter, 2010, p. 383) whereby some whites were “killed so uselessly” (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 206). The outcome of independence should never be divest from the process and vision of the struggle which can only be celebrated after repossessing, redistributing and restoring “fertile soil” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.196) into indigenous hands, so that they could empower themselves – “Could we fail to raise fine crops if it rains? ... We are expert at farming. And the land now we are getting it! (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 200). Like independence, land would never be handed back to Africans on a silver platter. The motto “Rhodesians never die” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.153) should be reason enough for Zimbabweans not to be complacent with political independence that does not transform people’s livelihoods and giving people’ access to major economic resources, principal of which is land.

In as much as Rhodesians deploy all media machinery against a just cause for restorative and social justice, almost to the point of genocide – “we were told approvingly. The terrorists were buried!” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.191) – the historic Zimbabwean cause for land should never be rendered to amnesia. Ironically, then, ZDERA and the EU sanctions against Harare is history playing itself out against Africans’ struggle for their land. Africans remain “the munts they kill” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.186), “receptacle[s] of contempt like the gardeners, maids, cook boys and terrorists” (Dangarembga, 2006, p. 114). However, that European “households were hauled into aeroplanes headed for the shortly-to-be-superior standards in South Africa, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand” (Dangarembga, 2006, p.197), confirms that unlike the indigenous Zimbabweans, Europeans have other lands they can call home.

The close affinity between colonial history and issues of land and African development as represented by Dangarembga would compel many a reader to re-think, re-learn and re-configure Zimbabweans’ perennial struggles and socio-political relationships that have been frayed over land redistribution, particularly in the post-2000 period. Thus *The Book of Not* challenges not only the ZANU-PF regime’s delay to deliver land to the marginalised majority, but also its legitimacy if it reneges on its liberation struggle promises and mandate to indigenise land ownership. Undergirding the narrative, then, are subtle pertinent questions:

- How much can Africans do for themselves after independence?
- How much does Europe understand concerning Africans’ relationship with the land and their struggles for the same?
- And if they do, why should they insist on illegally holding onto the land that was grabbed, seized and appropriated through colonial chicanery?

Some such inconsistencies and contradictions are partly explained in Harrison’s autobiographical rendition of his illegal and forcible dispossession of Maioio Estates, Chiredzi District in the novel *Jambanja* (2006). Harrison confirms Rhodesians’ tenacious fight against the indigenous Zimbabweans during the Second Chimurenga and during the land occupations period, including their resistance to Government’s post-independence minimum wage policies that they considered anathema, and their resilient fight against Government land acquisition for redistribution. Harrison’s account unashamedly disregards the human worth of the indigenous Zimbabweans, especially their natural entitlement to land as the backbone of secure and comfortable livelihoods. In the predominantly white Commercial Farmers Union’s view, their being the breadbasket of Africa (Harrison, 2006, p. 96) is more a capital venture than uplifting the livelihoods of their African labourers whose compulsory wage increment in 1982 was viewed a “new unplanned expense” (Harrison, 2006, p. 96), “an indication of rocky times ahead” (Ibid) “created by a mad regime” (Harrison, 2006, p. 256) against which they are determined for the rest of their lives (Harrison, 2006, p. 243). Baxter’s observation concerning the white settlers’ general disregard of the Shona presence on the land could equally apply to most whites’ general disregard for Africans’ quest for more equitable land redistribution in the post-independence period. Baxter (2010, p.82) observes: “The Mashona might have been ghosts on the landscape for all the thought that was given to their view of current events”. For any correct-thinking African to believe in white commercial farmers’ co-operation to redistribute land would

therefore not only be self-deceiving, but suicidal. They have vested interests, and “control of land [as the] key mechanism in ensuring European political and economic dominance over Africans (Palmer, 1977, p. 45) for almost a century in Zimbabwe.

True to Fanon’s (1990, p. 73) observation, “the settler’s work is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the native”. This is shown by both Dangarembga and Harrison’s infantile and pejorative images that whites use to describe indigenous Zimbabweans. Back to back, Dangarembga’s boy images translate into Harrison’s “my boys”, “the gang” and “my labour” before the land occupations, to “gutless bastards” (Harrison, 2006, p. 134), “a bunch of hoodlums” (Harrison, 2006, p. 132), “the mob” and “rubble” and “ZANU-PF cannon fodder” (Harrison, 2006, p. 148), with the country itself sinking into the abyss of old Africa’s chaos (Harrison, 2006, p. 250-251) at the height of the land redistribution process and its aftermath. This image absolves Harrison from the warped consciousness that Africans are content with a life of mediocrity. He argues: “[T]he local population lived a simple and arguably happy life, oblivious to the ways of the world” (Harrison, 2006, p. 9). Harrison fails to appreciate the humanity, aspirations and actions of his labourers in the context of their reality as a disenfranchised and vulnerable demographic group subjected to a frugal existence owing to the limited spectrum of choices thrust at them.

Thus, his claims to fight for trampled human rights in post-2000 Zimbabwe using lawyers for Justice for Agriculture (JAG) that the Commercial Farmers Union engage, turn out to be for assuaging some wounded egos. That Harrison groups these same labourers with the capital, chattel and agricultural produce that he has lost speaks to the human worth and human weight he accords these depersonalised and dehumanised group of human species: “We have just begun a new chapter, and will dedicate the rest of our lives to fighting for what was ours ... not only for what we have lost, but for our labour as well” (Harrison, 2006, p. 243). The calculated philanthropic narrative full of distortions concerning the will of the wage labourers he abuses for periods upwards of thirty years like Cloud whom he deems to have been a legend at Maioio Estate, should instead induce shame and not victimhood as purported by the majority of commercial farmers who are driven by insatiable desire to accumulate capital. Harrison’s failure to understand that the plight of the labourers is a result of inhuman treatment, manipulation and exploitation, shows how much capital has numbed the commercial farmers’ humane feelings for other human beings. Armah (1973, p. 204) rightly 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?

That in his philanthropist masquerade he cannot perceive land redistribution as an opportunity that his labour should embrace to transform themselves like Ambrose and Lillian who grab the process for probable emancipation, shows how the Zimbabwean land issues have been manipulated and exaggerated to paddle self-aggrandisement agendas. “By denying Lillian a CV, Harry had just condemned her to a very bleak future ... not without his reference. Her day of judgement had come” (Harrison, 2006, p. 242). Such vindictiveness and spite against displaced farm labourers who are trying to grab opportunities for empowerment during the land redistribution process remain veiled in most accounts. Un/wittingly, such imaginative writing significantly dismisses the marginalised African labourers’

right to fight for land, including the right to eke out a living for themselves not beholden to the goodwill of some self-styled philanthropists.

Further, Harrison's insistence that the Lancaster House Agreement 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' clause on land compromised his Rhodesian heritage shows little importance that he attaches to African dignity and land restitution. His attitude explains the negative rendition that he ascribes to the land redistribution process that was originally envisaged to redress colonial land imbalances and injustices with a view to achieving social justice in post-independence Zimbabwe. That land redistribution is "nonsense" (Harrison, 2006, p.250), "this chaotic process" (Harrison, 2006, p.119) and "another statistic of Africa's woeful human rights and self-management inability" (Harrison, 2006, p.251), that resonates with Matondi's (2012, p. xi) "mayhem" and Pilosof's (2012: 44) "state sponsored lawlessness" would therefore not come as a surprise. Baldwin (1995, p. 31) rightly observes: "We 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". Harrison's account and attitude shown through both his and the CFU's tenacious legal fight against Government over land redistribution using NGOs like Justice for Agriculture (JAG), Southern African Commercial Farmers Alliance (SACFA), Agri-Africa and Dutch Courts (Harrison, 2006, p. 254) clearly testify that, from the writer's perspective, most white commercial farmers are averse to the idea that wealth, in the form of land, should be redistributed to correct colonial injustices, achieve social justice and restore human dignity, self-confidence and significant human worth, especially among the marginalised underdogs, within the broader Zimbabwean society. It could then be rightly read that "human rights" mean whites' rights. In Harrison's view then: "You cannot make the poor rich by making the rich poorer"(Harrison, 2006, p.184). John Eppel's *Absent: The English Teacher* (2009) that narrates George Joji George's plight of property stripping in suburban Bulawayo in the post-farmhouse stripping phase on the commercial farms is similarly calculated to milk sympathy, especially from the international community. Of interest is Eppel's gross misrepresentation that whites were stripped of their urban houses by some indolent and avarice-driven regime. Worth noting is the disgruntlement at uplifting Africans into property owners in urban settlements. Eppel's satirical representation echoes the falling standards at independence in Zimbabwe, hence the need that the white man should be the Africans' perpetual mentor and think-tank. The satirical trajectories, however, do not fall far from the depreciating, and in some cases, absent service delivery in the African-run local authorities. Nevertheless, without laughing at their own folly, it would be difficult for African leadership to take responsibility, transform their attitudes and regenerate their communities.

Like Harrison, Eppel writes back to the official establishment and its sympathisers protesting against the land redistribution process that he views as a barbaric crusade against white settlers. Nomenclature in knowledge construction as shown in both their titling belittles land redistribution. Ironically, the marginalised African majority view the same process as a landmark towards decolonisation. Thus, Hudson-Weems (2004) and Asante (1998, p.22) rightly observe that definitions of phenomena and experience are crafted to suit and protect group interests. Therefore, it would be suicidal for Zimbabweans to subordinate the post-2000 revolutionary land experiences, including challenges and contradictions, to

definitions ascribed and crafted by those whose interests are obviously tangential to the ultimate desired Zimbabwean goals for restoring human worth and human dignity through more equitable redistribution of land and other major resources for a more just society and sustainable human development.

Further, Harrison and the CFU's demonisation of Zimbabwean post-2000 revolutionary land redistribution is not surprising if power is understood as 'the ability to define reality and have other people respond to your definition as if it were their own' (Nobles, 1985, p.107). Despite Harrison admitting that "many had been employed for years on the commercial farms and no longer have normal access to the Communal Lands (TTLs)" (Harrison, 2006, p. 253-p. 254), most white commercial farmers see no need for this group to benefit from the land redistribution programme. Harrison vows that "no Western country in this world would want to invest here as things stand" (Harrison, 2006, p. 255). The vitriol, veiled as quest for order and human rights, enables the perpetuation of the imperialist agenda, especially disinherit African of their land. Thus, materially, intellectually and ideologically dispossessed, "lives of black people ... [would continually] mean very little ... beyond their utility, as cheap labour' (Ephraim, 2003, p. 77), a scenario that a good number ironically subscribe to. Harrison and Eppel's amnesia of Africans' massive dispossessions, displacements and removals, and the colonial legacy on African structured under-development "is dangerous for logical social conclusions" (Du Bois, 1996, p. vii).

Conclusion

The chapter concludes with nuggets from Mashingaidze Gomo's *A Fine Madness* (2010) that offers correctional trajectories concerning land issues in post-2000 Zimbabwe. A former Zimbabwe Air-force commando who fought imperial looting of DRC's mineral wealth in the late 1990s, Gomo writes from the perspective of the African survivor of white settlers' brutal dehumanisation and massacres. This is in spite of colonial settlers and their progeny's claims to establishing order on mainland Africa whereby among most communities

no one actually owned the land. The land was there, there was plenty of it and like the game in the veld, the fruits of the wild or the air they breathed was common property of all. To the settlers, on the other hand, private ownership was as fundamental as Christianity ... [resulting in the indigenous population] easily absorbed as squatters in a European system of land tenure (Baxter, 2010, p.83).

Because whites as settlers on foreign soil continue disregarding the African principle that "[a] visitor to a strange land must be humble enough not to choose the highest ground to build his home" (Vera, 1993, p. 11), Zimbabweans cannot fold their hands forever. Gomo argues that "Africans must not allow their legends to be dwarfed into ragamuffin villains in Eurocentric literature" (Gomo, 2010, p. 25). He lambasts hollow white duplicity that coerces Africans into wretched existence and depersonalisation, as well as extracting and externalising Africa's resources. Gomo (2010, p. 27) advocates that the history of African resistance to European conquest and prejudice should not be left to myth and ephemeral folktale alone, but should be subjected to purposeful study that dissects social issues, baring them to candid and brutal scrutiny in a literary form. This would immunize black children, especially Zimbabwean foreign-educated elites, against Eurocentric propaganda that hypnotises them into prejudice against themselves, culminating

into subversion of history and dominance by foreign countries. In critiquing “savagepeace” (Gomo, 2010, p. 44) arising from Africans’ submissive coalescence and surrender of their right to land and its resources, Gomo (2010, p. 47-48) succinctly observes:

Whose hands would be greased by anti-people Rhodesian barbarians to struggle against their own people ... to run around the world telling a hostile and indifferent international European community that that for which African ancestors were killed by Europeans is not important? ... Who would agitate for a surrogate democracy in which the power of the ballot is compromised by poverty and the duress of invented sanctions and violence?

Gomo’s views clearly spell out that the land question remains potent in defining the human worth, human dignity and livelihoods of Africans, in addition to exposing why Zimbabweans continue falling out with the West. Raftopoulos (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2009, p. 218) admits that

the response of Western governments to the human rights abuses accompanying the land occupations was to impose a series of what were called ‘targeted sanctions’ against selected individuals in the Mugabe regime. ... Meanwhile, the MDC, the labour movement and other civil society groups working on democratisation and human rights received both political and financial support from Western governments and donor agencies.

As observed earlier in both Harrison and Eppel’s accounts of the trauma of land disposessions, that human rights abuses are differential depending on race is incontestible. Concerning Zimbabwean-authored land narratives, then, it is critical to understand and examine the cultural centres from which they are constructed. These centres undergird both the social mentalities and interests that should be defended.

In conclusion, “that the independent review and construction of knowledge [about Africa by Africans] in the light of the unfolding African experience – [as is the case with Zimbabwean unfolding land experiences] – is not only a vital goal but ... also an act of liberation” (Ramose, 1999, p. 36) that should be embraced in pursuit of humwe/oneness/togetherness and sustainable human development, which principles always invite people to participate in deciding their destiny. Further, partisan definitions of human worth and human rights distort not only perceptions of human dignity, but also principles upon which resources, especially land, should be distributed and made accessible to the majority of the Zimbabwean population.

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