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'Visions of land in the poetry of Chenjerai Hove and Musaemura Zimunya"

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION - Mapping the Terrain

Zimbabwean literature, like most modern African literature, has to be understood within the context of the continent's history. This is a history that has largely been shaped by the infamous "unfortunate handshake" with Europe – colonialism. In Zimbabwe and most of Southern Africa, this has been a history marked by violence at the centre of which was contestation over land. This research aims to critically examine the centrality of land and the seemingly contradictory visions of land in the poetry of Musaemura Zimunya and Chenjerai Hove. A number of studies clearly confirm this centrality of land. According to Graham (2009: 2) Zimbabwe's history and that of most of Southern Africa is "indelibly marked by monumental processes of dispossession and alienation". In the case of Zimbabwe, the violence can be traced back to British colonialism which officially conquered the "land" in 1890 and began massive reorganisation of African life and terrain through force and various pieces of legislation such as Land Apportionment Act, Land Husbandry Act, Land Tenure Act and others leading to the creation of Tribal Trust Lands/Reserves, commercial farms, towns and cities. It was this dispossession, re-organisation and disruption that led to the struggle(s) for the lost lands whose narratives have been deployed by nationalism in the grand scheme of state-making in Zimbabwe. So, in narrating the story of the nation in Zimbabwe, one is basically narrating the violence or conflict over the land whose peak moments have been recorded in history as the First Chimurenga (1890s), the Second Chimurenga (1970s) and the Third Chimurenga (2000-2003 Land Reform). It is this land driven narrative that has dominated and shaped Zimbabwean Literature and continues to do

so. These dispossessions, contestations, the violence and all the struggles (Chimurengas) over land epitomise the contradictions and contending visions of land. Muponde (2004: 1) also reaffirms this centrality of land in Zimbabwean literature:

> The literature of Zimbabwe is inexorably bound to the violence of the history and land that engendered it. The land itself is not only a geographical entity, but the very text of the Zimbabwean history. It drips with blood, entombs bones of both colonial settler and Mbuya Nehanda's children. It is suffused with memory. This memory is often imaged as, and transcribed in, the body. The body assumes the lineaments of a living personality.

While these comments by Muponde soon after the 2000 land reform may seem hyperbolic, they try to capture the mood and emotions associated with land in Zimbabwe. These are sentiments prompted by real events on the ground which saw the eviction of close to 4000 white commercial farmers from land which was promptly distributed to new black farmers. While the exercise was not as bloody as the earlier Chimurenga wars of 1896 and 1970s, what is beyond doubt is that the exercise shattered one vision of land while giving birth to another or even others. The effects triggered by the suddenness and scale of reorganization of the Zimbabwean landscape continue to dog the nation and a region watching with trepidation. This was an exercise of monumental proportions whose effects reverberated far and wide especially in a region with countries still to resolve their own land problems. It is the nature of land to

excite emotions, imagined and real, that lends credence to what may sound as extremist or hyperbolic views. In fact, the story of the land has silenced or even trivialised other compelling stories on and about Zimbabwe. Thus Zimbabwean literature and history, says Muponde (2004: 1), have been "defined restrictively about land". In other words, land is the common thread that connects the various facets of the plot of the Zimbabwean story. However, one discerns gaps and silences in terms of examining possibility of what I see as an alternative reading of land. In other words, while there is consensus on the centrality of land which is borne out through literary expression, this has created what amounts to a choreographed vision or visions of land with little attempt to accommodate peripheral visions that challenge this official choreography. It is only in the individual and "collective" or "national" response to or interaction with the land that one sees contradictions or what amounts to fractured and contested vision(s) of land. It is in this respect that some of Yvonne Vera's works will be roped in. In my view, her treatment of land in a text like *Without a Name* offers fresh visions of land in Zimbabwean literature.

The research also explores why the land is viewed with "demarcations" or "boundaries" of "country" and "city" focusing on the perceived tension or conflictual relationship between the two. Aspects of postcolonial theory, especially Homi Bhabha's notions of boundaries and space will inform the study. While land indeed appears central in shaping literary representations, the poetry of Zimunya and Hove bears testimony to its complexities as the two poets simultaneously confirm and deny the existence of boundaries on the land. More significantly, in

spite of the centrality of land in Zimbabwean literature and African literature, this is only largely evident in fictional narratives. In other words, there seems to be little comprehensive study of representation of land in Zimbabwean poetry.

It is within this context that Musaemura Zimunya's and Chenjerai Hove's poetry should be read. This is a context in which land is a paradox. It may be a dominant trope but one which evokes a concoction of feelings and visions. The paradox is that the two poets seem to be searching for order and meaning from the land with fantasies of a return to and escape from a source which seems to fail to live up to expectations. In short, Zimunya's and Hove's poetry signal a paradox and some ambivalence towards land.

The gaps and silences which emerge while exploring the paradoxical nature of land, especially with respect to Zimbabwean poetry, clearly make this study a worth-while exercise. The dispossession, its impact and the ensuing struggles for repossession dominate both historical and literary narratives but with scanty regard to poetry. In other words, there is need to investigate the representation of land in Zimbabwean poetry.

This dominance of fictional narratives and the apparent "neglect" of poetry is glaringly evident in Zimbabwean literature in English and African literature in general. One of the few critical appraisals of Zimunya's poetry is that of Mutsvairo (1991), which however does not go far or

deep enough in interrogating the issues. Where he explores some of the poems examined by this study, the analysis is predictable and silent on some of the problematics acknowledged by this study. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the extent to which the "centrality" of the subject of land and its related issues continue to occupy a special place in the hearts and minds of African people across the continent. This preoccupation with the land and landscape in the continent's literature is also observed by Ogude: "The convergence of land, fiction and the struggle for nationhood remains one of the most powerful defining features of modern literary traditions".[1] It is not a surprise therefore that there is a preponderance of texts on land or landscape in Zimbabwe and Africa in general.

One of the most comprehensive studies on land and literature in Zimbabwe is that carried out by Graham. He begins by defining land. To him,

> As a sign of the nation, 'the land' represents a teeming multiplicity of landscapes, symbolic and social as well as geographical: mountains, hills, river valleys, forests, savannah, farmland, farms, homesteads, villages squatter camps and townships - the list goes on.[2]

He then moves on to examine how various Zimbabwean writers handle the issue in their works. In spite of its wide- ranging nature, Graham's book only explores visions of land in fictional narratives. In other words, one notable feature about Graham's study is that it makes no

attempt to include the genre of poetry. So, this will be the first point of departure. Nevertheless, his observations provide significant insights that one cannot afford to ignore in a project of this nature. Some of his pertinent views serve, not only to "elaborate, but problematise these structures of feeling, felt across the region". More importantly, concerning Zimbabwean fiction, he notes that "recurring motifs include migration between town and country… and an abiding sense that 'the land' – in this case, the underdeveloped Tribal Trust Areas - exist solely in the past of the modern, colonial nation".[3]

So, Graham captures the birth and growth of particular visions of land in Zimbabwean fiction where the landscape has been torn into two – town and country. What Graham's study fails to do, in addition to the silences on representations of land in poetry, is to emphasise the relationship between colonialism and the evolution of contending visions. These are some of the gaps and silences that this study seeks to address, informed and guided, to a large extent, by the sociological approach and postcolonial theory.

Muponde[4] makes some thought – provoking claims about the land, some of which require close scrutiny. Like many others, he views the land through nationalistic lenses as the "determinant" of "historical sensibility" and as something that "united us in the past and still unites us in the present in our ongoing anti- colonial, socio-economic, struggles". By saying this, Muponde betrays the impact of history in shaping ideas or thought processes. His identity as a Zimbabwean at this particular stage in history is clearly influenced by his and the nation's

subjection to colonialism. In this case, Zimbabwe or Zimbabweanness constitutes a global, all-inclusive vision of land which Muponde feels to be part of. This no doubt is a claim that recent events associated with the land reform in Zimbabwe continue to show little respect. The postcolonial condition of the modern Zimbabwean nation indeed illustrates what Graham has aptly called "the relation between land and nationalism". It is this relation that seems to influence the evolution of what I have termed choreographed visions of land which in essence are visions that aid nationalism or have been co-opted by it in an attempt to craft a single vision of land in defining the postcolony. In short, land has been deployed as a legitimating instrument of nationalism. The struggles, wars, violence and upheavals that have been associated with the land in the past and in recent history clearly demonstrate, however, that far from uniting the people in "in the past" and "in the present" or the future, the land has been and continues to be a source of division and conflict.

At the same time, Muponde also compartmentalizes the land, with the "city" depicted as the symbol of "colonial scourge, the black man's uprootment and maroonage", while proclaiming that the demarcation between country and a city is a "fiction". These are clearly contradictory visions of land, which in my view, still need interrogation.

Hofmeyr and a number of writers seem to harbour no illusions about the compartmentalisation of land. To Hofmeyr[5], boundaries on the land are real, and thus, to her, the "wire" or the "fence" is the concrete symbol of a land that is no longer "one". In other words, boundaries in

the form of fences are a constant reminder of inclusion or exclusion from the land. This inclusion or exclusion is in essence a confirmation of contending visions of land. Chan and Primorac[6] seem to concur with this view of land as they examine what they see as the difficulties of traversing the land and the right to leave it in Zimbabwean writing. However, the question to be posed here is: where does one go when he or she "leaves" the landscape? The difficulties of traversing the land and the attempts to leave it also draw attention to the competing visions and the ultimate discovery of the land's limitations. This in my view has to be read within the broad context of postcoloniality in which Zimunya and Hove are immersed.

To Vambe[7], poetry should be read as an allegory to reveal "new ways of seeing history, new ways of reading the world". There has not been much of scholarship in this area as poetry has been largely a "neglected" area in Zimbabwean literature. If one takes Vambe's route, it means debunking some of the myths associated with the nationalist vision of land which have been embraced by or in fictional narratives. One wonders, however, whether it is possible then to "read" Zimbabwean poetry or the "land" differently, especially in the light of Dan Wylie's claim about poetry and the landscape that "It is not only the baboon which is 'voiceless' here, without speech or home: it is the poet-in-the-landscape"[8]. Wylie also tries to deploy what he calls "ecologically-oriented criticism" through which he seems to give precedence to the landscape, not man. Hence he delves into fairly recent events in modern Zimbabwe:

Robert Mugabe's tragically botched 2000-2003 land reform drive… is a salutary reminder that, above and beyond

> politics and putative reversals of historical abuses, the natural ecologies undergird all our human activities, and will, in some form, outlast us all[9]

Wylie's view that the baboon or the animal and the poet are "voiceless" appears to be an indictment of the choreographed nationalist vision of land. To this end, Wylie is exhorting the poet to look at the land with fresh eyes. But in doing so, Wylie appears to be making an attempt to also peddle a particular vision of land which is rooted in the past. To some extent, this seems to concur with Ronald Blaber's[10] view that there is always a "tension between what the land was, what it had always been and man's efforts to make it ordinary". He reinforces this by quoting from one of Naipaul's characters: " 'basically, we all love the country. But we would like it to be in our own image. And many of us are suffering for our own fantasies' ". This resonates with the poetry of Hove and Zimunya.

In my view, one of the most illuminating critiques is Skurski and Coronil's analysis of the "role of the country and city" model in the articulation of a nationalist project". They question the notion of "country" and "city" with the two supposed to represent "backwardness" and "modernity" respectively in the post-colony:

> Since both country and city are located in the "country", or the global hinterland of the metropolitan centres, they are subsumed, within an internationally inclusive category of backwardness and coloured

by the hostile meanings associated with the colonized.[11]

This no doubt is a compelling view that problematizes the poetry of the selected poets and the research as a whole.

While issues of dispossession and struggles for restitution are outside the scope of this study, it will be inevitable to occasionally refer to them since they have played a huge role in shaping people's perceptions of land. It is in this respect inevitable to refer to some postcolonial theories. This will entail some examination, though briefly, of how some of the colonial land policies have shaped and continue to shape the visions of land in modern Zimbabwe. Jocelyn Alexander (2006: 1) tries to trace the evolution of the land issue in Zimbabwe. To her, just like many historians and political commentators, the starting point or the beginning of the history of land in Zimbabwe is the advent of colonialism. Such an approach is understandable as it restricts itself to explaining events unleashed by the advent of colonialism. Alexander's approach uses the often cited metaphor of the "unsettled land" in an attempt to re-read the land in Zimbabwe. To her, the metaphor of the unsettled land

conjures settler fantasies of an empty, unproductive land, ripe for exploitation. It encompasses the harsh disruptions of colonial conquest, eviction and agrarian intervention. In the territory that was to become Southern Rhodesia, the violence of military subjugation was followed by the displacements of territorial

> segregation. Half of the country's agricultural land, and much of the most fertile, was designated for European occupation, while Africans were forced into reserves. Once there, policies of agricultural and social 'development' ensured that they had to move and move again…in the 1950s, many were denied land in the reserves altogether, a measure that vastly expanded the burgeoning ranks of African nationalism. Land was central once again in provoking the brutal conflict of the liberation war, and in ultimately bringing about the demise of the settler state

Here, Alexander is dealing with real history, that is, showing how history has shaped the Zimbabwean terrain. In my view, the significance of Alexander's observations is that she tries to show how attempts to transform "fantasies" of land are played out on the ground. It is my contention here that history gives birth to peculiar "visions" or "fantasies" of land and that these "visions" and "fantasies" in turn give birth to a particular concrete reality or history that are then signified or concretised by simple strands of "wire" or "fence" across the landscape but with a real functional or symbolic purpose. What Alexander does here is to summarise the history of land in Zimbabwe, which is largely a critique of colonialism in Zimbabwe. Buried in her critique is what I see as the source of Zimunya's and Hove's visions of land, which is history. This is the same source that fictional narratives have tapped from. What is ironical in this case is that the poets' "visions" of land are spawned by the colonial settlers' "visions" or "fantasies" of land. So, history is a source of Zimunya's and Hove's visions of land.

One important factor that seems to receive little attention in the Zimbabwean situation is that of land and race. There is little doubt that most of the colonial land policies, including the empty land argument, were driven by sentiments of racial superiority. Besides the obvious economic factor, the racial bigotry also hugely influences the crafting of laws like the Land Apportionment Act, The Land Husbandry Act of and the Land Tenure Act:

> Of the colonial legislation on land ownership and tenure, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, which segregated land on racial lines, and the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 followed in 1969 by the Land Tenure Act, which consolidated this segregation, were the most pernicious in alloying the colonial project of land expropriation to the economic and political subjugation of the rural black majority.
>
> (Graham, 2009: 28)

These land Acts helped to concretise "fantasies" or "visions" of a particular race. More importantly, as will be demonstrated later in the study, this process contradicted the black man's own fantasies and aspirations, and then gave birth to new fantasies and visions of land. It is again mainly in fictional narratives that these visions, imaginings and fantasies are captured and dramatized thus making a case for land and poetry in Zimbabwe. The concrete reality created by racially driven colonial policies is segregated land and a segregated society. The land and country were now divided according to race in terms of land ownership. At the same time, colonialism also gave birth to country and city on the land. These were also marked by racial

divisions. Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain (1975)* gives graphic descriptions of how white fantasies or visions of land have shaped, disfigured or transformed the landscape:

> The sudden transition from the rolling ranches of Hampshire Estates, with their tall dry grass and the fertile soil under that grass, into the scorched nothing - between-here-and-the-horizon white lands of Manyene Tribal Trust Land, with the inevitable tattered scarecrow waving a silent dirge in an empty field, makes a funeral intrusion into the bus.
>
> (p39)

One wonders then whether this is still one land, one world or land, or a world irrevocably demarcated and compartmentalised. Mungoshi's protagonist, Lucifer, is definitely depicted as a man who sees a land divided into different worlds with his land or home, which is the Tribal Trust Land (the African Reserve), being the one he is completely alienated from. To him, this land which is supposed to be home, is marked by "Dust, dust, dust" (p39). So, Lucifer unequivocally rejects this land in a poem he pens in the depth of despair:

> Home…
>
> Aftermath of an invisible war
>
> A heap of dust and rubble
>
> White immobile heat on the sweltering land

Home…

The sharp-nosed vulture

already smells carrion-

...

Home…?

Home sweet home?

muffled thuds

of soft earth

on dead wood

on the nailed despair within

Home…

(p52-53)

So, this is how Mungoshi depicts how colonial visions of land have changed the landscape. Clearly, to the blacks, the colonial vision of land is dystopian and a disfigurement. The juxtaposition of the “rolling ranches of Hampshire Estates” and the “scorched” “white lands of Manyene Tribal Trust Land” create an illusion of two antagonistic worlds but at the same time demonstrate that the “demarcations” or ‘boundaries” represent the reality of colonial dispossession.

If colonial policies complicate the landscape with the creation of reserves or Tribal Trust Lands for blacks and large-scale commercial farms for whites, the landscape is further complicated by the creation of the colonial city. Like the rural landscape, the cityscape is a product of colonial fantasies and visions. More importantly, the city also appears to have its own boundaries and demarcations which are racially motivated.

In Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) one sees the land through the eyes of a particular type of African. What emerges is an image of a fractured black community struggling to come to terms with the realisation that land cannot keep them together. So there are now competing versions of what land represents. In the same vein, one also sees contradictory visions of land in the white community in Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1989). The novel shows how the whites battle to tame the African landscape. Land is seen from an economic point of view with some making it, while others like Dick and Mary Turner, are destroyed by it. Competing visions of land are also at centre stage in Alex LaGuma's *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979) where land is demarcated, criss-crossed and fought over. Even though the dominant issue is the loss of land and the erection of "boundaries" on the land along racial lines, the movement of individuals such as Shilling Murile and Mma-Tau across the lands challenges the notion of demarcation or boundaries. However, one wonders whether the reality of the boundaries can be called a "fiction" when the Hlangeni people are evicted from their ancestral lands and dumped on a barren wasteland: "This was no land for ploughing and sowing: it was not even good enough to be buried in" (p1). To the Afrikaners, God and religion are even

deployed in crafting and justifying their particular vision of land as demonstrated by the Dominee Visser in his sermon:

> In the purity of our blood also lies the guarantee of our honourable mission. It is the duty of all of us to unshakeably keep to our aim, spiritual and earthly, which is to secure for our children their God-given land and soil on this earth. Holding to this aim is the only means of acquiring forgiveness of sins of the past, of purifying the blood again, in the name of God and our nation. Just as our forefathers had to do battle against the heathen for their lives and for the soil in which we live today, so also now and in the future, life will not grant our people new soil as a favour, but only as it is won through the power of the victorious word of God.
>
> (p106)

One of the most memorable examples in the always evolving conflict of visions of land in Africa is dramatised in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (2008):

> They want a piece of land to build their shrine,' said Uchendu to his peers when they consulted among themselves. 'We shall give them a piece of land.' He paused and there was a murmur of surprise and disagreement. 'Let us give them a portion of the Evil Forest. They boast about victory over death. Let us give them a real battlefield in which to show their victory.' They laughed and agreed, and sent for the

> missionaries, whom they had asked to leave them for a while so that they might 'whisper together'. They offered them as much of the Evil Forest as they cared to take. And to their amazement the missionaries thanked them and burst into song.(p119)

Achebe shows how different visions of land have been shaped by very different cultures. To the inhabitants of Mbanta, Evil Forest is not just a worthless piece of land but giving it to the foreigners is a sign not only of the low esteem in which they hold their culture but their total rejection of everything they represent. In fact, Evil Forest is supposed to represent a death sentence - it is land for the dead. So, the land that is Evil Forest becomes a real battleground of cultures vying for supremacy.

The foregoing clearly shows the centrality and dominance of land in fictional narratives. History appears to be shaping and influencing the imagination and writing but what emerges from the fictional narratives is ambiguity or different and contending visions of land which are brought about by "tension between history and writing".[12]The ambiguity or different visions of land in fictional writing demonstrate that it (the writing) does not always "provide an accurate reflection (or: imitation) of the world outside"[13]. This is an important issue to consider later in this study in reading the poetry of Chenjerai Hove and Musaemura Zimunya.

Before turning to Hove and Zimunya who are the focus of this study, however, it is necessary to first look at Zimbabwean poetry in general and its relation to land. It is important from the onset to recall Dan Wylie's largely valid observation that Zimbabwean "Poetry remains a relatively neglected area of study"[14]. Flora Veit-Wild (1993: 249) says Zimbabwean poetry in English was a "a new stream of writing" which began in the late 1960s and "emanated from school and literary magazines, or developed in the loneliness of exile or of a rural school". She goes on to identify what she calls three major directions in the development of Zimbabwean poetry: "there is the poetry of self-assertion, the search for roots" and the "rediscovery of the past". Just like in fictional narratives, the relationship between land and history features in poetry as is demonstrated by the poetry of Tafataona Mahoso, Dambudzo Marechera, Roland Mhasvi, Kizito Muchemwa, Eddison Zvobgo and others, but again with little critical attention. In his anthology aptly titled Footprints *About the Bantustan* (1989) Tafataona Mahoso betrays how land has shaped the "structures of feeling" in Zimbabwe. In the title poem "Footprints About the Bantustan" the poet shows how colonial fantasies or visions of land created a new reality on the African landscape while at the same time giving birth to the African's own "dreams", "fantasies" or "visions" of the denied landscape:

> Vultures hover around this reserve,
>
> Announcing the latest failures.
>
> About this Bantustan abounds
>
> a history the settler is bound

to deny. Mothers, around this shred

of history left over by whitemen

from the Great Apportionment of

Nineteen Thirteen and Nineteen

Thirty, rain teases tender crops,

...

of dust and drizzle, the combination

of ravaging hunger and rage. It is

Zimbabwe, Nineteen Sixty Nine and Muroti.

Nothing grows here but dreams and memory

(P5)

Mahoso's intention is no doubt to ridicule and indict the colonial vision with a brutal attack on the conditions in the African reserves. Phrases like "Great Apportionment", "Nineteen Thirteen", "Nineteen Thirty" and "Nineteen Sixty Nine" are important historical sign posts in the history of land in South Africa and Zimbabwe to demonstrate how history is directing the pen in this context. This is heightened by the alliteration and the diction which create bleak images of barrenness and death. The Muroti reserve, a

colonial creation, is land that is a “shred / of history”, a dust bowl of “ravaging hunger and rage” where “vultures hover around” ominously.

In “Dawn 1984”, a poem written during Zimbabwe’s transition from colonialism, Roland Mhasvi (1992) shows how land excites the imagination. Using images inspired by the land, he examines what one may call the new nation’s “structures of feeling”. Land induces hope and despair which are engaged in a fierce struggle for supremacy. The land is initially filled with despair:

> The darkening gloom spreads over the prostrate land
>
> Over the barren wastes of a sickening mind
>
> Rocky sentinels stand watch over the sleeping sands,
>
> Whilst blasted wastelands churn and heave
>
> Rocking in the shadows and lee ways
>
> Of a forgotten dream
>
> (p1)

The poet is trying to capture the impact of colonial rule on Africans. In the depths of despair, the African “memory”, “dream” or vision of his own land is almost a “forgotten dream”. The

"prostrate land" is likened to a bed-ridden or concussed body felled and dazed by colonial injustice. However, hope seems to triumph over despair with the freeing of the land or the coming of independence as:

> The land begins to pulse and beat
>
> Washed in the glowing promise of a new dawn.
>
> Slowly, the shattered scene begins to integrate
>
> The land a spread of golden dreams. (p1-2)

The just freed land is further called "the garden" while the white supremacist ideas which had disfigured the landscape by carving out bantustans and "whites only" swathes of prime land are called the "flowers of yesterday" and the "weeds of tomorrow". Written during the early years of independence, the years of hope and euphoria, one sees how the young nation seemed to naively pin its hopes on its "land". This is a vision in which land is the "master narrative"[15]. One wonders whether the reality in the postcolony would be able to sustain this vision. Dambudzo Marechera also envisions the land in human terms in his poem " Pledging My Soul" where the land is seen as a "potential sex partner"[16]:

> When I was a boy

I climbed onto your granite breasts,

smooth and round...

Shall I not kneel to kiss the grains of your sand

To rise naked before you- a bowl of incense?

This is one of those rare and unusual moments when Marechera is enchanted by the nationalist vision of land.

In "Tourists", Kizito Muchemwa[17] critiques the whiteman's vision of the African land. To the whiteman, the land is a "wilderness", an "aggressive landscape of alienness" with "no familiar hills". It is a land on which they try to imprint their own vision by planting "jacarandas and pines". In this instance, Muchemwa is also making spirited effort to supplant the colonial vision with his own. The assumption here is that destroying one vision will regenerate that which colonialism originally destroyed. Like Lucifer in Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* who fails to fit in his rural landscape, they are "tourists" with little or no affinity to the land. On the other hand, prompted by the bitterness from the loss of land and the search for restitution, Zvobgo's persona in "My Roulette"[18] feels so strongly about this same land that his sense of manhood, courage and patriotism overwhelm him. In this case, the Zimbabwean landscape is transformed into a "bullring" or a battlefield where the "matador" who is the colonial victim is an "amateur" whose fight for his land is a Russian roulette as he is dwarfed and outgunned by "Goliath", the

colonial regime. In spite of this apparent mismatch, the land conjures up images or visions of heroism and martyrdom which spur him into battle:

> Now, I'd only opt
>
> For the safety of the grave, never
>
> The safety of the slave.

Hove and Zimunya write within this context created by colonialism which point to ambivalent and competing visions of land.

In this study there will be close analysis of each poet's work focusing on poems that, in my view, are representative of the poet's vision(s) of land or landscape. There will be juxtapositions in terms of images or style and theme(s) in order to get to a clear idea of how each of the poets handles the issue of land/landscape. It will be unavoidable to occasionally resort to a sociological approach in examining the work of the selected poets. In their overview of post-independence Zimbabwean poetry, Kizito Muchemwa and Musaemura Zimunya (2008) attempt to establish patterns in Zimbabwean poetry through stylistic and thematic features but observe that these are so varied as to complicate the broader picture as there are "connections, disconnections and reconnections". Nevertheless, they concede that land is a dominant "trope associated with spatial mapping and ideological contestation in both colonial and postcolonial

Zimbabwe". In this regard, there will be an attempt to problematize the discussion by deploying aspects of postcolonial theory to inform the research. In doing so, one is mindful of the view that postcolonial theory itself remains problematic. For Russel Jacoby (1995), it is a theory that is "all over the map…The field is inchoate and can move in a number of directions". This line is taken up by Stephen Slemon (1995) who also takes note of the ambivalences and contradictions in postcolonial theory. Nevertheless, Fredric Jameson (1986)'s idea of Third World literature as national allegory will be extremely useful in this study especially in attempting new or alternative readings of the land or the poetry of Zimunya and Hove. In other words, their works can be read as poetry that mirrors the nation or the national condition.

In studying Zimbabwean literature Flora Veit-Wild (1993) calls for the adoption of the sociological approach which has been popularised by Abiola Irele (1981: 34) who says

> A more fruitful kind of approach is that which attempts to correlate the work to the social background to see how the author's intention and attitude issue out of the wider social context of his art in the first place and, more important still, to get an understanding of the way each writer or each group of writers captures a moment of the historical consciousness of society.

This is one of the approaches this study is employing in examining the poetry of Zimunya and Hove in relation to land. According to Veit-Wild, Irele's concept is particularly relevant to Zimbabwean literature as it allows one to consider the influence of social and political factors

on this literature and how it responds to the ensuing conditions and experiences. It is my contention that a sociological approach and postcolonial theory present powerful tools for the interrogation of poets like Zimunya and Hove whose lives and world view are inextricably linked to Zimbabwe's history. Adam and Tiffin (1990: vii) identify some of the salient features of postcolonial theory that make it significantly informative in examining the poetry of Hove and Zimunya. Postcolonial writing is

> grounded in those societies whose subjectivity has been constituted in part by the subordinating power of European colonialism - that is writing from countries or regions which were formerly colonies of Europe.

More importantly, postcolonialism is regarded as a set of

> discursive practices, prominent among which is resistance to colonialism, colonialist ideologies, and their contemporary forms and subjectificatory legacy. The nature and function of this resistance form a central problematic of the discourse.

Clearly this goes a long way in understanding the source and direction of the poetry of Hove and Zimunya. Placing the two poets in a postcolonial context, coupled with a constant awareness of this fact enables one to appreciate more meaningfully the issues and style. Wisker (2000: 7) argues that this consciousness or "knowledge of cultural context" , or, "more broadly,

knowing where writers are located psychologically, politically, culturally, historically" is "crucial" in order to "avoid cultural imperialism".

Like Adam and Tiffin who see postcolonialism as a "set of discursive practices", Quayson (2000: 11) argues that postcolonialism is not "merely a chronological marker but an epistemological one; it focalizes a constellation of issues integral to the formation of a global order after empire". Clearly then, one cannot divorce Zimunya and Hove from the land's historical experiences. This experience results in what Wisker (7) has termed

> the post-colonial 'imaginary' (the way we and others see the world, how it appears in our imaginations, which influence our thoughts and actions), and the discourses available to us, mesh with our experiences as readers, students and teachers.

One therefore sees a complementarity between the sociological and postcolonial approaches, which becomes significant in examining the two poets. However, postcolonialism problematizes the poetry of Hove and Zimunya in a much more significant way which is directly linked to the problematic nature of the theory itself. One aspect of postcolonialism particularly relevant in critiquing the two poets is that the theory challenges and collapses the boundaries, binaries or differences erected by colonialism and global imperialism in general. The implication of this is that by painting images of a land divided between town and country, with the latter representing the "pure" African past, the two poets again are in fact promoting the same

binarisms that postcolonialism is challenging. According to Loomba (1998: 12) “it is more helpful to think of post-colonialism not just as literally coming after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestations of colonial domination and the legacy of colonialism”. If this line of argument is pursued, it becomes clear that Hove and Zimunya are in no way promoting a nuanced resistance to domination as their poetry gets implicated and trapped in the binary systems created by colonialism itself.

On the other hand, by insisting on erasing differences or insisting on what Loomba (13) calls “multiple histories and fragmentation” postcolonial theory runs the risk of erasing the past represented by the old binaries of coloniser/colonised. Hall (1996: 242) points out that it is this aspect of colonial theory that Ella Shohat criticises as it makes it “politically ambivalent because it blurs the clear-cut distinctions between the colonisers and the colonised”. More significantly, Hall highlights what in my view is the strongest charge against postcolonialism which is that it “dissolves the politics of resistance”. It appears this criticism is based on the premise that resistance can only take place where there is a clear enemy or opposition. In this case, the notion of enemy or opposition is only realised in binary terms. Applied to Hove and Zimunya, the critics of postcolonialism see the poets as unequivocal critics of colonialism who bring out into the open the two camps symbolised by the divided land. Clearly, doing so seems to simply promote the old master narratives of nationalism which centralise and locate the land in the past with only one enemy, colonialism. At the same time one is tempted to agree with Hall (247) on the need to “re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation,

destined to trouble the here/there cultural binaries forever". This highlights the limitations of a vision of a land divided into two which this project grapples with.

This study will be limited to the poetry of Musaemura Zimunya and Chenjerai Hove. The main challenge is that literary primary sources capturing the recent monumental changes that have drastically altered the Zimbabwean terrain remain sparse. The historical processes on the ground seem to have completely outpaced the literary imaginative processes. The research will be restricted to three anthologies: Zimunya's *Thought Tracks* and *Country Dawns and City Lights*, and Hove's *Red Hills of Home*.

This research makes an attempt at "reading" the land or landscape in the context of the modern Zimbabwean nation. Poetry has received little attention in Zimbabwean literature as primary and secondary sources have tended to focus on fictional narratives. One of the arguments the report persistently makes is that the poets' up-bringing in colonial Rhodesia shaped their thought processes and consequently their writing which is a response to the violent changes wrought by colonialism on the landscape. The study will explore the centrality of land in the poetry of the two poets. More importantly, the study will argue that there are contradictions and ambivalences in the treatment of land by Hove and Zimunya. The study will also argue that these contradictions and ambivalences in the treatment of land by the poets mirror the fits and starts of a nation emerging from a colonial dispensation into the uncertainties of independence.

The report is divided into three chapters. Chapter 2 is the major part of the report. It examines in detail each poet's vision or visions of the land focusing on contradictions and ambivalences. After interrogating Zimunya's vision(s), the chapter then turns onto Hove. Notions of the city, boundaries, flight and exile are also touched on in this chapter. The third chapter, which also serves as the conclusion, highlights the findings of the study while briefly commenting on its significance in post-independence Zimbabwe.

NOTES

1. James Ogude, "Review of James Graham's Land and Nationalism in Fictions From Southern Africa" in *Scrutiny 2. Issues in Southern Africa*, 15(2) 2010 p7

2.Graham, J. *Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa*. New York :Routledge p14

3. ibid p33

4. Muponde p 10-11

5. Isabel Hofmeyr, "Nterata/ The Wire :Fences, Boundaries, Orality, Literacy" in *International Annual of History*,1990 p 70

6. Stephen Chan and Ranka Primorac, "The Imagination of Land and the Reality of Seizure: Zimbabwe's Complex Reinventions" in *Journal of International Affairs*, 57(2) 2004

7. Vambe, V.2004. *African Oral Story-telling and the Zimbabwean Novel in English*. Pretoria: Unisa p5

8. Dan Wylie, " 'Mind Has Montains' : Poetry and Ecology in Eastern Zimbabwe" in Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac (eds) 2005. *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*. Harare: Weaver Press p15

9. ibid p148

10. Ronald Blabber, " This Piece of Earth: V.S Naipaul's A Bend in the River" in Peggy Nightingale (ed) 1986. *A Sense of Place*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press p63

11. Julie Skurski and Fernando Coronil, "Country and City in a Postcolonial Landscape: Double Discourse and the Politics of Truth" in Dworkin, D.L and Roman, L.G (eds) 1993. *Views Beyond the Border Country: Raymond Williams and Cultural Politics*. New York p232

12. see James Graham(2009:9-10)

13. Ranka Primorac in James Graham

14. Dan Wylie in Muponde and Primorac

15. James Graham p98

16.See Memory Chirere's "Zimbabwean literature and Land" on mazwi.net/essays/Zimbabwean-literature-and-land.

17. In anthology *And Now the Poets Speak* p17

18. ibid p51

CHAPTER 2: Contradictory and Ambivalent Images of Land?

Land is a major concern in the poetry of Musaemura Zimunya and Chenjerai Hove. While there is predictability in terms of how they link the land to the past and to colonialism, this chapter aims to explore the ambiguities or contradictions in their visions of land. Flora Weit-Wild (1993: 7) identifies what she calls the three generations of Zimbabwean writers. She categorises the writers in terms of when they were born and argues that these groupings or generations should form the "basis" for the "analysis" of their literature:

> Generation 1: 1917-1939 (year of birth)
>
> Generation 2: 1940-1959
>
> Generation 3: 1960 and later

Veit-Wild adds that the "term 'generation' is applied to a group defined by a common background of social, political and educational experience which may find a specific expression in the literary works of this group". In line with her divisions, Veit-Wild places Hove and Zimunya in Generation 2 because they were born between 1940 and 1959.

The two poets have been writing from the 1960s, in the case of Zimunya, 1970s in Hove's case, right through to the post-independence period. Each one of them boasts of a number of poetry anthologies. Zimunya's collections include *Kingfisher, Jikinya and Other Poems* (1982), *Country Dawns and City Lights* (1985*), Thought-Tracks* (1982) and others, while Hove has published *Up in Arms* (1982), *Red Hills of Home* (1985), *Blind Moon* (2004) and others. Although most of the poems were published after independence, a good number of them are preoccupied with the colonial impact on the African or issues whose roots can be traced back to that period. In fact, some of the poems by both Zimunya and Hove which are in the above collections, had appeared earlier in the anthology *And Now the Poets Speak* (1981). Published soon after the country's independence, this is strong evidence that some of the poems in this collection were written before independence. This means that the poetry of these two poets covers both the colonial and the post-independence period. This again highlights the significance of a theoretical framework informed by the sociological and postcolonial approach.

While there is validity in Weit-Wild's attempt at generational categorisation, one of the weaknesses is that it is the year of birth, not the specific historical social conditions emphasised. In this study historical context is used to refer to the social, political and economic conditions ushered in by the advent of colonialism. What her approach misses or fails to highlight is that it is the historical context or the colonial induced conditions in which these writers grow up that shape their sensibilities. In the case of Zimunya, Hove and others of their generation, they were part of the small percentage of blacks who went through colonial

education in Rhodesia. Though this education created a sense of alienation in them, it did not close their eyes to colonial injustice all around them. They witnessed the dislocation of their people and the poverty in the reserves which the colonial governments designated as home. The irony of colonial education is that although it was designed as an instrument of control, it provided agency to the backs by unwittingly exposing them to ideas that enabled them to debunk colonial myths.

Highlighting the historical context will help bring to light the effects of the colonial policies and how Africans (including writers) responded to them. Since this study adopts a sociological and postcolonial framework, the argument here is that the social, political and economic conditions in which these writers are born, grow up and practise their craft in should not be glossed over as they constitute a huge determining factor in shaping their world view. It is mainly by doing so that one can meaningfully appreciate the poetry of Hove and Zimunya in relation to the trope of land. Both poets deal with, not only the pain of colonial dispossession, exploitation and oppression in general, but also with the disfigurement that is witnessed on the landscape. In so doing, says Mthatiwa (2011: 144), they also "reveal their conceptions of rural and city life in Zimbabwe". It is probably glossing over this important factor of historical context that leads Veit-Wild (1993: 2) to make the contentious claim that

> By 1990, after the first decade of independence, there was still not much homogeneity in Zimbabwean writing; one cannot speak of a clear-cut , distinctively Zimbabwean identity. There are certain common themes – the war of liberation in retrospect has been one major preoccupation in the 1980s - but

> approaches, styles and outlooks differ greatly, as do the ways in which writers try to come to terms with their past and present. Hence it is not surprising that no "classic" has emerged, no piece of literature that would have expressed, summarised and defined a Zimbabwean identity

So, Weit-Wild seems to miss the link between modern Zimbabwean identity and colonialism, and, the centrality of land in this link. This is unlike Muponde (2000: 3) who observes that "the issue of land finds artistic expression in most of our literature although it is treated in various ways and for different purposes from poet to poet" and that it is the "determinant of our historical sensibility as a people, a central sensibility in that it united us in the past and in the present in our on-going anticolonial, socio-economic struggles".

2.1 Zimunya: One World or Two?

As has already been noted, Zimunya grew up at the height of feverish changes in the country brought about by the advent of colonialism. Educated and a witness to, but a victim of the injustice of colonial policies, his poetry reflects the traumatic experience of growing up in colonial Rhodesia. Through his treatment of land one can discern Zimunya's "structure of feeling", after Williams, as it were. In this case, this is the poet's sensibility as a postcolonial subject and writer. He uses poetry as an instrument for the recovery of the battered African identity. To Zimunya, part of this recovery process is the rejection of the world or landscape

that colonialism has created. So, he endeavours to create his own world, the rural world, albeit in words. Muponde (2000: 11) expresses admiration and appreciation of Zimunya's artistic skill in this respect:

> The rural world in Zimunya's poetry is about the beautiful and fragile, children, flowers, love and freedom. It is a grand canvas depicting pastoral innocence and serenity. It is an animated landscape that explodes with colour and sound. There is dialogue, an intimate one , between man and landscape which shows the parallel vibrations of landscape and history, of phenomena and passions, of atmosphere and emotion

However, understanding this "creation" or "vision" of Zimunya requires situating the poet in the colonial and postcolonial socio-political and economic upheavals. Amanda Hammar (2003: 133) observes that this was a time when the Zimbabwean landscape was being reorganised into farms, reserves and cities:

> Colonial local government in rural areas dates back to the Matabeleland Order in council of 1884 which created the first reserves for Africans , in Shangani and Gwai, ushering in nine decades of rule marked by highly racialised spatial, economic, social and political divides between blacks and whites(and overlaid through time with class, gender and ethnic differences)

Obviously, these were changes that turned African life upside down. The entrenchment of colonialism, whose reality were the changes on the landscape, gave birth to, among other things, a deep yearning, or longing for, or visions, of a gone-by past. This yearning for the past seems to have been so intense among the so called Generation 2 group of writers to which Zimunya belongs. They were educated but felt frustrated by the lack of opportunity for blacks in colonial Rhodesia. Like Lucipher in Charles Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*, they had an extreme sense of alienation. In other words, because of their colonial education, they felt out of place or were now misfits in the African community. In the words of Weit-Wild (1993: 153):

> The elite of this generation, having struggled to achieve academic degrees and some standing in society, saw all their aspirations frustrated. They retreated into inner or outer exile and became that "lost generation" who expressed in their writing feelings of anger, despair and pessimism.

So, their plight was a result of their education which had hewn them from their African society by creating an "alien" sensibility in them which was supposed to reject the African world view. The paradox was that although colonialism had deliberately hewn them from their African community, it never intended to create "Europeans" out of them or to accept them as equals. Their education or the creation of their class was a deliberate strategy in the grand scheme of colonialism's indirect rule. This particular aim of colonial education was famously enunciated by Thomas Babington Macaulay on 2 February 1835 in his minute on Indian education:

> it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, … a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.[1]

This no doubt was widely observed and replicated across the British Empire to which Rhodesia belonged. So, Zimunya and other victims of colonial education felt rejected by both black and white communities. They now felt they belonged to neither landscape. This largely explains the ''anger, despair and pessimism" in their writing. More importantly, this sense of alienation triggers a deep sense of loss which in turn triggers a search for the true self and the true African landscape. So, by rejecting the landscape which is the African reserve, the educated Africans were not really turning their backs on "home" per se but British colonialism. This is an important dimension in trying to understand, not only the reaction of African writers like Hove and Zimunya, but African response to colonialism in general. Since the land that made up the reserves was a product of colonialism, it became a symbol of that which the African loathed – colonialism itself. So, rejecting colonial reserves was equal to rejecting colonialism.

However, the question which needs to be addressed in this respect is why, in spite of almost similar up -bringing in colonial Rhodesia, there is contradictory and ambivalent treatment of the land. Some writers like Tafataona Mahoso indict the colonial project through bleak unequivocal

images of the landscape in the reserves as seen in the poem “Footprints about the Bantustan” where “vultures hover” and “ravaging hunger and rage” sweep across the landscape. However, Zimunya takes a different approach. His poetry does not dwell on the rural landscape created by colonialism but he strives to create a vision of that which the black man has lost and longs for. So he goes back to the past or ‘history” in an attempt to create a vision of the lost African land. It is this vision that he crafts in the anthology *Thought Tracks* (1982) through poems like “Mountain Mist”, “My Home”, “I like them” and “Children’s Rain Song”. In “I Like Them” (*Thought Tracks* p4) Zimunya’s feelings for his rural landscape are unambiguous. It is a landscape that is “beautiful”, “animated” and “explodes with colour and sound”[2]:

I like the Chevrolet mountains

lying still below the vivid blue of the sky-

with wheels of boulders

and axles of earth

and windows of stone-

tearing its way towards the sound

The poet’s feelings for his rural home are accentuated by the repetition of the evocative childlike innocent love of the words “I like” throughout the poem. One indeed sees the “bald head” of the northern mountain that “shines with summer’s water patches”, the mountain in

the west “lying below the vivid blue sky” or the “eastern mountains/ leaning closely together”. The poet paints a pristine world uncontaminated by the intrusion of colonialism. It is as if Zimunya closes his eyes and refuses to acknowledge the existence of a concrete reality – the world that has been created by colonialism. He has created his own world to rival and contest the colonial imposition which is the reserve. Thus, to him, the mountains of his land are a “merry go-round/ whose pivot is my soul”. To Muponde, “what the poet is attempting here is an immortalisation of the visual beauty” or “awesome splendour” of his landscape[3]. One has to note the tinge of irony in that in spite of his attempt to turn his back on colonialism and its creation(s), the power of colonial intrusion is such that even Zimunya’s images have been tainted as betrayed by the “axles” and “Chevrolet mountains”.

The same serene landscape is painted by Zimunya in “Mountain Mist” which relies on visual and tactile imagery to create a world that seems to be so far removed from the death lands in Mungoshi’s “Home” in *Waiting for the Rain* or Mahoso’s “Bantustan”. Thus his mountain is a “green carpet” of “tranquility” and gentle “mist”. Again, one sees the poet striving to create a landscape different from the one invented by colonialism. His is an attempt to create a land of unspoilt beauty, a kind of Garden of Eden on the African terrain. In “My Home” his words literally become a paint brush which effortlessly paints a vision of a landscape of:

> billows of mountains capped with the surf of transient mists,
>
> whale-like woolly objects slumber,
>
> crowns of bulky trees sway

and tilt, tilt

and sway

in the grace of breathing breezes. [4]

Again Zimunya seems to go to great length to project the grandeur of his rural landscape which he insists is his home. He says it is not just about the "great green ridges" but this landscape is shelter from the "storms of the world". However, at this point one begins to wonder why there is such insistence on the "beauty" of the landscape. Other questions that one is forced to ask are whether this landscape or cherished world is really still in existence, and also, what it is that prompts the poet's musings. Indeed the images of the slumbering woolly mountains that "sway", "tilt, tilt" and "sway" almost lull one to sleep and forget the concrete world that the poet is striving to push to the back of the mind or erase from history.

In other words, Zimunya's vision contradicts the reality of colonial injustice which creates the dry, dusty and barren reserves that Mahoso and Mungoshi bring out in the open without beating about the bush. This makes one realise that Zimunya's world is one of make believe, a fantasy. If this is the case, can one really say that Zimunya is "attempting an immortalisation of the visual beauty"?

There is evidence, however, that the poet is aware of the existing reality that colonialism has created on the African landscape. If this is the case one wonders at the reason for the creation of the grandeur that even he himself momentarily calls an "encompassing pretence" in "I Like Them" (*Thought-Tracks* p4). It appears Zimunya's intention is to deliberately create a fantasy or vision(s) that seem to romanticise the rural world in order to highlight loss and injustice on the land. So, Zimunya is not just "wallowing in the creation of idylls"[5] or burying his head in the sand in the face of colonial disfigurement of the African landscape. In "My Home", signs emerge that Zimunya's world is in fact a contrived fantasy or vision:

> Where is my home
>
> In the heart of the storms of the world?
>
> Is this my home?[6]

Here one begins to sense the doubt and pain in Zimunya's persona. There is a deep sense of loss and disbelief. What seems to jolt him from his reverie is the reality staring him in the face - terra firma. It is a reality that refuses to be wished away. Clearly then, Zimunya's vision is a longing and search for that which colonialism has mangled. The landscape has been transformed beyond recognition or in his case, disfigured so grotesquely that he cannot believe anymore that this land is still home. He has to reassure himself that it is still home. So, he gropes and fumbles around the landscape for reassurance. The search takes him to the rock that is The Great Zimbabwe monument jutting up from the nation's past. To him, this

monument concretises his home and the hope is that it will bring some stability to his tortured soul:

I want to worship Stone

because it is Silence

I want to worship Rock

so, hallowed be its silence

...

And behold these stones,

the visible end of silence,

and when I lie in my grave

when the epitaph is forgotten

Stone and Bone will speak

(from "Zimbabwe" *Thought-Tracks* p 99-100)

While the rock on the landscape may be a symbol of strength or endurance and even portray a semblance of immortality to Zimunya at such a moment of his life, Kizito Muchemwa sees this outcrop on the landscape as nothing but a rusty, abandoned relic. So the same landscape continues to evoke contradictory feelings. Even Zimunya himself occasionally and unconsciously

jolts himself back to reality to reveal a resigned acceptance of this reality - a disfigured landscape. This betrays part of the rifts and silences in Zimunya's work - the myth that the land can offer comfort and consolation.

What is puzzling, however, is Zimunya's persistence to continue to look backwards, not into the future, for comfort and consolation. At the same time there seems to be a resigned acceptance of this disfigured landscape:

Never mind sister

this is our home

houses full of smoke

and pendent soot

full of odour of life

It is as if Zimunya is urging one to make do with what is there or what colonialism has created. This is contrary to Mahoso's and Mungoshi's outright rejection of the colonial-made landscape that they liken to a dead landscape. This is one of the main reasons why Muponde (2000: 14) turns on Zimunya with a vigorous attack on his approach:

> His is a desperate remedy. It is an attempt at rationalising change. He is not quite successful in this task as there are streaks of despair and fatalistic logic in his acceptance of change and life's truths. We can almost read the futile insistence , this refusal to despair, and yet acknowledgement of the irrevocable movement of time and events in Zimunya's poetry

However, one has to acknowledge that Zimunya is painfully aware of, though fleetingly, and is not blind to the disfigurement and hardships of rural life all around him. There is noticeable pain and despair in "No Songs" (*Thought-Tracks* p9). The landscape has been so disfigured that even nature itself has been silenced:

> No songs of cicadas-
>
> Only a sighing silence
>
> …
>
> No whistle of a bird,
>
> no flutter nor flap

This is the actual landscape; one of deathly silence. Even the forests are dead as if colonialism has created its own "evil forest" where the trees have "brown fingers" and are "without leaves". Zimunya reinforces this awareness of the true picture of the landscape in "Hunger Valley", which is the African reserve, with the unequivocal title that echoes the "dust and

rubble" and the omnipresence of suffering and death in *Waiting for the Rain* and *Footprints About the Bantustan*. In this valley of hunger "the spirit lies prostrate", "hungry, unquenched". Death abounds here as "one lean paw pressed on an Ancestor's chest / and a scathing tongue across his bleeding nose"[7]. Here, Zimunya uncharacteristically seems to surpass even Mahoso's morbid despair as these are haunting images of a world where death threatens the living and the supposedly immortal ancestors. If one juxtaposes this death valley which is "Hunger Valley'' with "Valley of Mawewe"[8], then one begins to appreciate Zimunya's approach. He juxtaposes the colonial vision of land with his own which represents what is supposed to be the true African world. Thus in "Valley of Mawewe" Zimunya tries to highlight the beauty and harmony between man and nature:

> As day came, Mawewe was the joy of Zimbabwe
>
> and the earth flourished and exalted creation;
>
> the cows mooed unto the mountains and bellowing bulls
>
> rebellowed;
>
> there were heard bleating sheep and crowing cocks
>
> and bones of the hills and the mountains
>
> and the suns in the leaves lived in Mawewe (p94)

In this case, Mthatiwa [9] sees Zimunya's intention as to capture "the Edenic quality of life for the human residents of Mawewe", while Muponde's view is that "Zimunya is concerned with absorbing the splendour of a dying experience" and "yearning for the restoration of a world once lived, but exiled into the grey distances of time"[10]. Both Mthatiwa and Muponde do not fail to grasp Zimunya's vision of his preferred world. But, what should be highlighted is that Zimunya's technique is to juxtapose visions in order to accentuate the other. In other words, Zimunya indirectly juxtaposes the past and the present in order to highlight colonial injustice (the present) and what it has destroyed (the past). It is this aspect of his poetry that is often missed by his critics. He tries to shed light on his approach in his introduction to the anthology *Thought Tracks* (1982) where he says his intention was to counter what he calls "an unusually dramatic sense of alienation and neurosis" in Zimbabwean literature at that time, that is, the colonial period. In an interview with Flora Wild (1988) he emphasises his intention[11]. So the pristine, serene and "edenic" world that Zimunya creates is part of a deliberate strategy to heighten the ravages of colonial injustice on the African environment.

Clearly, there are serious rifts and silences in the representation of land in Zimbabwean literature which in my view warrant investigation. While on the surface land is the common denominator that screams across the writers' pages, hidden under the loud nationalistic voices of poets like Tafataona Mahoso are the contradictory visions which are yet to be fully acknowledged and investigated. In my view, the image of a nation united by a common vision of land is a myth. If there is any pattern that clearly emerges from Zimbabwean poetry, it is the

lack of consistency in the depiction of land. If there is any pattern at all, it is a pattern of ambivalences and contradictions.

While Zimunya espouses his own vision of land by journeying back into what is supposed to be the unspoilt colonial past to counteract the colonial vision which is the reality created by various laws of dispossession, there is another dimension or vision taking shape – the city. It is at this point that the contentious notion of ''demarcations" or 'boundaries' on the landscape begins to slowly come to the fore. Nevertheless, even before the emergence of the colonial city colonial policies like the 1930 Land Act, Land Husbandry Act and others which divided land along racial lines did not just create an impression or illusion of divisions. As noted by Hofmeyr, the colonial fence, wire or "nterata" did put up boundaries on the land though these were not always acknowledged or respected but were frequently contested and breached. Dividing up the land along racial lines should be seen as part of colonialism's attempts to erect boundaries or demarcations on the land. Colonialism envisioned land with clear race-based boundaries which though contested were rigorously enforced. So, says Alexander (2006: 8),

> there was constant movement of people and chiefs as they were evicted from farm to farm and into reserves, or worked under the 'domestic government' of white farmers, or travelled to towns and mines in search of jobs

The notion of “boundaries” or “demarcations” is further complicated by the birth of the city which drastically alters the African landscape. As will be seen later in this section, the city has its own racial “boundaries” and “demarcations” that colonialism struggles to enforce and maintain. The question to be explored is whether the notion of “country” and “city” really creates different worlds with boundaries or demarcations that one has to cross or it still remains one landscape. In the case of Zimunya a fitting entry point should be the poem “Roads II” (*Thought-Tracks* p64). It is in this poem that one quickly realises that the image of a landscape clothed in “innocence and serenity”, a landscape where there is a “dialogue, an intimate one, between man and landscape” is nothing but a pipe dream or just a longing for a world that is no more. Zimunya uses a powerful mind-etching metaphor to capture the landscape’s disfigurement in progress. The symbol of a road that rudely and savagely cuts across the land brings to life and immediacy the violent changes that are witnessed and experienced by its inhabitants:

The road pythoned

its way through the land,

bulldozing its way,

slicing mountain sides

and carving passages.

Devouring jungle,

demolishing villages,

eating up kraals,

chiefs, witchdoctors,

sheep, goats and hens

…

swallowing and swallowing

hungrily, always hungry

While the road is supposed to symbolise freedom, flight, change or adventure, it is something else to the inhabitants of the rural landscape. It brings death and destruction to their doorstep. It is given serpentine qualities to heighten its unstoppable capacity to swallow the peace and calm of the rural landscape. The road, its creators and its alien users are cast as callous and insensitive beings who belong to the "other'' world, which is probably the city where the road is going to. This comes out when "A stray girl / with a baby on her back" is "laid flat / on the tarmac" but the "missus" who is the driver of the killer car only "cried shame / over the remnants of her car". The "missus" and the car, like the road, are alien to the rural landscape and belong to another landscape elsewhere. So, the symbol of the road betrays the poet's feelings. To him the land has literally been torn apart. More importantly, the road creates the impression of a land now divided into dichotomous worlds, that is, the rural world and the "other" where the road inexorably snakes to. One wonders, however, whether the road is a barrier, an intrusion or the means through which one can traverse the land from one world

(rural) to another (city). Although the road may create fantasies of flight or escape, the persona is clueless as to the nature of the destination of the road. In other words, the changes on the landscape seem to be beyond the comprehension of the rural inhabitants at this moment. They are ill-prepared for the coming change. This does not augur well at all and foreshadows worse things to afflict the landscape.

Though Zimunya declares that the intention of his poetry was to counter the "unusually dramatic sense of alienation and neurosis" in Zimbabwean literature, at this point his poetry seems to do little in that direction because of a pervasive sense of doom and gloom confronting the rural landscape in "Roads II". This vision of a land under threat from unprecedented changes is also the subject of "Ifulaimachina" (*Thought-Tracks* p22-23). Here, the Ifulaimachina or aeroplane becomes the symbol of the intrusive change which announces its arrival with little or no respect for the serenity of the rural landscape. Its arrival is the "roaring" and "thundering" noise in the sky. The rural world, represented by the old man tries to come to terms with this sudden disruption threatening his world. The poet places the old man and the aeroplane side by side in order to bring to clarity the dichotomous nature of the worlds they represent. By juxtaposing the old man and the aeroplane, Zimunya is also juxtaposing the visions of land represented by each of them. One is a vision of an old, dying landscape that can only react "slowly, surprised / like a semi-colon" to search the sky for the source of the disruption with "squinting eyes" which connote incomprehension. The other is so fast and violent that even the "sand was vibrating / under the feet". The poet tries to project a picture of a landscape shaken and torn apart by contestation. The old man's vision of peace and continuity is confronted by

the haughty, stubborn, violent and potentially all-consuming vision of the white man. Nevertheless, to his credit, the old man is able to pin-point the source of the intrusion even though he may be ill-equipped to face it:

> These men of the white skin,
>
> even puffing in the face of God
>
> I swear through Chaminuka,
>
> they will finish us all off
>
> (p23)

Still, the ifulaimachina represents a so formidable challenge to the African landscape that its future is gravely uncertain. This is why the old man is justifiably worried and is "full of fears for his precious seeds: / sons, and multiplying grandchildren". The land which is the African world is at risk.

So, the road and aeroplane are portents of the existence of a rival world elsewhere, but now not so far away. This vision of a landscape now divided into potentially antagonistic worlds, is concretised in "Kisimiso" (*Thought Tracks* p18-19) which is a bastardisation of "Christmas". "Kisimiso" gives the impression that the other world has now reached the doorstep of the rural world or that it is the "road" that has taken the rural world to the "new" world". Here, the Christmas holiday brings together a family at the rural home. The sons and daughters who had

breached the boundaries and taken to the road return “home” to the “country”. The poem shows that it is not just the land that is undergoing immense change, but the people also. The son who had journeyed from one part of the landscape to another returns at “Kisimiso” (Christmas) now speaking the “stupefying S’kuz apo toungue” or urban slang. In fact, he is not the only one travelling across the landscape: a daughter who had also left home comes back at Christmas, and, like the brother, she goes to great length to impress people and fool them into believing that she is doing well in the other world. So, an impression has now emerged that the land has been compartmentalised into little “worlds” now dotted across the landscape. One wonders, however, whether the emergence of these “worlds” means there are also boundaries that divide the land into these entities and whether the boundaries are reconcilable.

What is abundantly evident in “Kisimiso” is that the rural landscape is not immune to the changes that are coming from the other side thereby vindicating the old man in “Ifulaimachina” who fears for the future of his progeny or his entire world. It appears it is not just the African language that is being mangled but all aspects of the African world. What is frightening about the coming change is that the land is terribly ill-equipped to understand and withstand such an onslaught as shown by the superficiality of those who have travelled across the landscape:

A sister, latest to arrive, from Gutu

blue-painted eye-lids, false eye-lashes, red lips

bangles gritting in her hands

with a European hair-wig above an Ambi-proof face

she covers her thighs with a towel when she sits

(as for the family will always believe she is a

dress-maker in Ft Vic); the rest of the family, mum

and dad, are happy to admire the latest from town.

(p18)

Cultural disfigurement is captured in the disfigurement of the body. The sister's naïve imitation of what she has seen but not understood in her travels reminds one of the parroting that Wole Soyinka satirises in *The Lion and the Jewel*[12]. Clearly, Zimunya fears for his cultural landscape which is undergoing disfigurement. So, Zimunya sees a land divided. His is now irretrievably a shattered vision.

Charles Mungoshi also explores this notion of change and conflict between country and city in his poem "Letter to a Son"[13]. In this poem a mother in the country mourns her son who left for the city and never returned. The rural landscape is endowed with life-giving qualities represented by concrete details from the rural world:

Now the pumpkin is ripe.

We are only a few days

from this year's first mealie cob.

The cows are giving us lots of milk.

In this case, Mungoshi's approach appears similar to that of Zimunya of deliberately creating a fantasy world on the African landscape as an antithesis to colonial disfigurement. However, by presenting such a vision Mungoshi is clearly contradicting himself as this is a vision that is at variance with the bleak, sun-blasted wasteland that he juxtaposes with the lush white estates in *Waiting for the Rain*. Can the dead, sun-blasted lands of the reserve suddenly be life-giving with the "pumpkin", "mealie cob" and "lots of milk"?

In spite of this impression of a landscape of plenty, one is still able to glean some evidence betraying the true state of the landscape. The poem shows that the landscape's ability to give life and hold things together is tenuous and slowly slipping away. In fact, like Zimunya's "Kisimiso', "A Letter to a Son" shows that there is movement across the landscape as the young abandon the rural landscape to seek "fortune" elsewhere. There are a number of questions that crop up here. First, one wonders why there is such movement from the rural landscape, and secondly, where those moving across the landscape are going to. The poem does two important things: it allows one to get a glimpse of the real condition of life on the rural landscape and also opens a chink for one to take a peek at the other landscape which is the

destination for those fleeing from the reserves. The evidence that emerges to contradict the image of plenty at the beginning of Mungoshi's "A Letter to a Son" is that the "pumpkin", "mealie cob" and the "milk" are in fact barely enough to send children to school or to pay hospital bills. In other words, the message in this instance seems to be that the land cannot be relied on.

It is this and visions of a better land or life elsewhere causing the migration across the landscape. At the same time, the fact that some of those leaving the rural land seem to be vanishing as if they have been swallowed (as shown by the son who never returned like Reverend Stephen Khumalo's son and relatives in *Cry, the Beloved Country)* could be a sign of the predatory nature of life on the "other" side. In fact, the criminal brother and prostitute sister in Zimunya's "Kisimiso" illustrate the harshness of life on that other side.

So, the picture that is slowly but surely emerging especially from Zimunya's poetry is that of a landscape that has been compartmentalised. The source of this division has also been identified as the race-driven colonial policies. These policies trigger visions of what has been lost or what the land used to be like and this is implicitly juxtaposed with what it has really become. It has also been noted that Zimunya does not hide where his heart lies – the uncorrupted pre-colonial past. Zimunya creates his fantasy world in order to bring into focus the dystopian nature of the colonial landscape.

If there are any doubts that Zimunya sees the landscape as compartmentalised or divided into country and city, these doubts are quashed by the short (8 lines only) but evocative "Old Granny" which in many ways introduces one to the cityscape:

A little freezing spider,

legs and arms gathered in her chest,

rocking with flu and bronchitis,

I saw old granny lost at Harare Market,

It was past nine of the night when I saw Old Granny,

an old dusty crumpled spider,

a torn see-through blanket

was her web and home.

(*Thought Tracks* p59)

The poem gives a glimpse of the condition of those who are no longer on the rural landscape. Zimunya creates the impression that leaving the countryside is akin to going to hell to the African. The poet paints a picture of an abandoned and pathetic human figure who has almost

reached the end of the line or more appropriately, the edge of the land. This compact poem seems to prepare the reader for worse things to come.

However, at this point one notices what appears to be reluctance by Zimunya to really engage with the socio-political condition that has created this kind of landscape. What is further puzzling is that this poet has not really revealed the true conditions in the country or the reserve. It appears he is dismissive of the reserve and completely turns its back on it. It is as if to him the reserve has ceased to exist and therefore he focuses on attempting to bring to life his own vision of the countryside. What is even more puzzling is Zimunya's persistence in his attempt to concretise his vision of a rural world of untold splendour and grandeur. As has been noted this is a vision at variance with the "dust and rubble" in the barren reserve rejected by Mungoshi's Lucipher in *Waiting for the Rain*.

In "Let me go"[14] Zimunya creates the impression that his preferred rural world does exist but is under threat. So he wants to return to his rural home to experience this world of 'wonder' one more time before it vanishes. He wants to go back "to the eastern mountains" to breathe "the last of ancient sunsets" and "the last ancient breeze". Clearly Zimunya implies that his world still exists but its days are numbered. Hence, he is in a hurry to go back home: "let me pack my rucksack and catch the bus/ to the east". The question is, however, why he had abandoned such a paradise if indeed it really exists. The "rucksack" and the "bus" mentioned in the poem are strong pointers that the persona had journeyed to other parts of the land. By insisting that

his world is not a fantasy Zimunya seems to be contradicting the historical facts on the ground that Tafataona Mahoso (1985) so graphically brings to life in ‘’Footprints About the Bantustan” where the African reserve is unambiguously cast as is – a barren colonial creation.

2.1 HOVE : Land and Pain

Like Zimunya, some of Hove’s poetry is also preoccupied with land. Born in the 1950s, Hove falls within what Weit-Wild (1993) has called Generation 2 of Zimbabwean writers. As already noted, he and others of his generation grew up at the height of colonialism in Rhodesia. Like Zimunya, he also witnesses the colonial relocation of Africans and his writing predictably sympathises with the victimised. More importantly, Hove does not generalise but personalises individual pain so intensely to drive home the impact of colonialism. So his poetry in *Red Hills of Home* (1985) greatly reflects the emotional scars from the colonial encounter. In an interview with the poet, Wild (1988: 37) points out to him that most of his poems “mention ‘fear’, ‘hate’ and ‘suffering’ again and again as the predominant aspect”. Hove concurs:

> most of the poems are about suffering. Suffering reduces us to ourselves, to real humanity, you become a real human being, not a pretentious one, you get to know what it is to be human. Because when you suffer, you confront yourself and look at what is worth leaving for and what is not. So you begin to understand life much more

In the case of Hove, the pain and suffering are largely expressed through the land. By doing so he is largely reflecting the detrimental impact of colonialism on the African and his landscape. In my view, this is contrary to Veit-Wild's view that

> Although Hove belongs to the second generation of Zimbabwean writers, he does not reflect in his writing the experiences of his generation, the process of deracination which they underwent as children. He ignores the fundamental crisis of the 1970s to which writers like Mungoshi and Dambudzo Marechera have given expression(1993: 318).

The poems in the anthology *Red Hills of Home* are testimony to the pain and suffering on the colonial and postcolonial terrain(s).

Like Zimunya, Hove is also preoccupied with the condition of the landscape and its inhabitants. It is the title poem "Red Hills of Home" that gives an unequivocal portrayal of the ravages of colonialism on the rural landscape. Like Zimunya, he also has visions of the past but unlike him, he makes little attempt to transport himself back to the past or to recreate it. He makes it clear that his are only memories that are long gone. He briefly recalls the pristine landscape of the past in order to put into focus the disfigurement before him:

> father grew up here

tuning his heart

to the sound of the owl from the moist green hills,

beyond, the eagle swam in the air

while mother - ant dragged an unknown victim to a hole

printed on the familiar unreceding earth.

(p 1)

In a style slightly similar to that of Zimunya, Hove also creates a past pulsating with life and harmony. However, unlike Zimunya he does not lose himself day-dreaming or fantasising. He quickly returns to the reality that colonialism has presented the African. It is a reality he cannot pretend does not exist:

The green hills of home died,

Red hills cut the sky

and the nearby sooty homes of peasants

live under the teeth of the roaring bulldozer.

(p 1)

In this case Hove presents an image of a brutalised land which smells of death:

Red hills have come

with wounds whose pus

suffocates the peasant.

(ibid)

One outstanding feature of Hove's poetry is that he does not make a veiled or indirect reference to colonialism. Neither does he implicitly blame it for the condition of his land. His is a direct attack. In fact, the poem "Red hills of home'' can be read as a critique of the colonial project in Rhodesia. It unmasks the exploitative motive which is represented by the cacophonous "roaring bulldozer" and the land's men who die "underground" in the white man's mines. It is not just the physical landscape and its human resources that are being exterminated but the cultural landscape also: "Dying too are the songs / of the seasons that father once sang" (p1).

So, Hove does not harbour any illusions about his land. He does not shy away from reality: "The green hills of home died" and they have been replaced by the "Red hills". The poem contains morbid images of a land hounded by death and destruction which are heightened by more than suggestive words: "wounds", "pus", "burial", "blood', "malnourished bones", "hunger-laden lands" and others. The land has been so disfigured that

If father rose from the dead

he would surely not know

the very ant-hill embracing his blood

buried with the umbilical cord.

(p2)

Hove's images of land, therefore, directly contradict Zimunya's.

However, there are moments when, just like Zimunya, Hove also creates the impression of a land divided into two entities especially when he shows the death and destruction on the land inducing fantasies of escape:

Red hills and the smell of exile

Exile breathing over our shoulder

in a race that looks desperate.

Red hills, and the pulse of exile

telling us this is home no more.

(p2)

Clearly, there is an unmistakable urge to abandon this ravaged land, and, doing so implies the existence of a better one elsewhere. This is unlike Zimunya who still insists: “never mind sister/ this is our home” in the poem “My home” (*Thought Tracks* p13).

However, the land in Hove’s poetry occasionally arouses ambivalent feelings as there is a tinge of hope conveyed by the belief that there is a chance, though slim, that from this same land may sprout some life. This is seen in “Beneath the Mound” where

> lies the meek mighty seed
>
> that carries me
>
> beyond the season.
>
> (*Red Hills of Home* p13)

But, in the same poem this miniscule trace of hope is crushed by the foreboding sense of death and gloom evoked by the mournful line “the fields lie asleep” and the grim “mounds” dotted across the land which suggest wide-spread desolation and death. Hove sustains this feeling of a land enveloped by gloom in “Decline” (p17) where

> Now the butterflies shy away

from dreary flowers of self,

and bees smell no nectar here.

Even the sucking worm retreats

The picture of a land of pain and desolation jars one's visual sense and overall mood in "The fallen leaf" (P16):

Naked tree waving,

where is the leaf

that canopied your joy?

In this instance, Hove seems to validate Zimunya's accusations that Zimbabwean literature was "too pessimistic in the sense that it was not resourceful enough to see the depth of the resilience of the people", "was too defeatist"[15] and was characterised by a "sense of alienation and neurosis"[15]. This is an accusation that Hove seems to vindicate with a sustained attack of the rural landscape in "You will forget"(p3) which focuses on the hardship of life in the reserves which is a life of "child birth without a nurse", "thirst", "bare feet" and "cracked dusty lips". It is as if Hove is reminding Zimunya of his exile-induced amnesia which leads to romanticisation :

You will forget

the wailing in the valley

of women losing a husband in the mines.

You will forget

the rough handshake of coarse palms

full of teary sorrow at the funeral.

Nevertheless, there are still traces of ambivalence in Hove's relationship with the rural land when he wistfully recalls the "warm soil turned by the plough" and "the voice of the season talking to the oxen"(p4).

Muponde uses the poem "Red hills of home"(p1) to judge Hove's attitude to the land and then goes on to claim that "Hove has spiritual attachment to this land of his birth which he watches hopelessly being eroded by both colonial forces and over-use". This attachment, in my view, is greatly outweighed or nullified by the desire and decision to abandon home which to Hove is now a complete wasteland. One wonders whether flight or abandonment can solve the African's problem.

2.2 Zimunya, Hove and the City

Clearly, there are contradictions and ambivalences with regard to each poet's relationship with the land. There seems to be conflict of visions, conflict that is noticed within each poet and between visions held by different poets. Again, the question remains as to why this is so given that the poets experience fairly similar or the same socio-political conditions. A fact that one notices in Zimunya's poetry is that the land is now compartmentalised, divided or demarcated. This is given prominence by the poet's endeavour to create an idyllic rural landscape that is distinct from what the white man is attempting to super-impose on the African landscape. This image of compartmentalisation or demarcation is further highlighted by the notion of flight from the rural landscape and back to it as seen in "Let me go". In "Roads II" the road literally comes alive splitting the land apart as it inexorably wriggles through the land to what is still a mysterious destination to the black man. It is through this image that Zimunya alludes to the emergence of the city on the African landscape. This is a phenomenon that becomes a reality in his anthology *Country Dawns and City Lights*. This is an unequivocal title that paints images of a landscape torn apart creating two antagonistic worlds – "country" and "city".

In examining Zimunya's conception of boundaries and cityscape, the starting point should be history. It is history which to a large extent helps to inform the artist's imaginative process. Colonialism demarcates the land along racial lines creating different "worlds". As has been noted by Alexander (2006: 1) : "Half of the country's agricultural land, and much of the most

fertile, was designated for European occupation, while Africans were forced into reserves". So the notion of boundaries or demarcations on African land cannot be meaningfully explained outside the context of colonialism. It is colonialism that gives birth to the city on the African landscape. Pike (1981: ix) examines the image of the city in Western literature and culture and identifies its "powerful" and "problematic" nature. More importantly, Pike argues that "The real city may furnish the material for the literary myth, but it is not a myth by itself; mythic value is imputed to it". Lehan (1998: 29) seems to concur with this: "Textualising the city creates its own reality, becomes a way of seeing the city – but such textuality cannot substitute for the pavement and buildings, for the physical city".

Mthatiwa (2011: 158) makes a fairly detailed attempt to trace the origin, growth and impact of the city :

> cities have engaged the imagination of many people in Africa and beyond since their very beginning. While some people see the city as paradise a place of hope and fulfilment, freedom and opportunity, others view it as a version of hell on earth. An emblem of cultural decay and a nexus of corruption, perversion, greed, destruction and death.

He also correctly places the city on the colonial landscape in which "black people were admitted into the city as a source of cheap contracted labour and were expected to return to their rural homelands (the reserves) at the end of their contracts"(p178).

Zimunya seems to perceive the city from what may be termed a Dickensian stance where the city is "both lure and trap: a lure to those who are called to it as if by a magnet" (Lehan, 1998: 9). In the introduction to *Country Dawns and City Lights* (1985: i) Rino Zhuwarara argues that Zimunya

> is determined to expose the psychic process which takes place when people move from a rural life to an urban existence. It is by illuminating what has happened to us or what might happen in future that we stand a chance of integrating both elements of the rural and the urban.

In this case Zhuwarara sees in Zimunya's poetry an attempt to culturally integrate or synthesise the rural and the urban. However, Muponde (2000: 19) is of the view that "Zimunya does not set out for a cultural integration. You will find him possessing a conserving, protective vision of life in greater measure than he has as a transformer or integrationist".

The intention of the study at this point is to critically examine Zimunya's depiction of the city vis a vis his overall intention or vision. While the road brings disruption to the peace and calm in

the rural world, it is also seen as a means of "escape" from the disfigured rural environment. For the young it is a bridge that links the rural world and the white man's mysterious world. Driven by the white man's taxes, curiosity and the magnetic "lure" of the city which is emerging on the African landscape, Africans find themselves in an entirely new world altogether. The magnetism of the city is evident in "Coke"[17]. Just like in 'Kisimiso', the poet depicts the vulnerability of the rural landscape in the face of the winds of change from the other side of the landscape. "Coke" demonstrates the intrusive nature of the whiteman's culture and civilisation represented by the city:

> Shrouded in dust of the country
>
> the delivery truck made tinkling song
>
> with bottles of soft drink – Canada dry,
>
> cream soda, ginger ale, fanta and pepsi –
>
> on that bumpy village road and Tito's appetite
>
> was bewitched by the city.
>
> (p25)

It is a moment such as this that betrays Zimunya's awareness of the reality of the conditions in the rural world. In this way the poet's fantasy world of beauty and splendour in the rural world is juxtaposed with this reality of a land battling to keep its people who have set their eyes to the

city somewhere beyond the horizon. So, Zimunya juxtaposes visions of what the land was before colonial occupation and what it has become. However, by taking the reader to the city he is now introducing what appears to be a new dimension in his overall intention which still seems unchanged, that is, to highlight the grandeur of the past and the ugliness of the present. By so doing the poet seems to be maintaining a clearly pastoral stance. According to Louw (2010: 38) the pastoral presents an "idyllic view". Secondly, the pastoral has connections with childhood as it is "that other place the human mind ceaselessly constructs as a place apart from the pressing actualities of the everyday"[18]. The third and most significant aspect of the pastoral is that it is

> The specifically literal tradition, involving retreat from the city to the countryside… any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban; and the pejorative sense in which 'pastoral' implies an idealisation of rural life that obscures the realities of labour and hardship.[19]

These are no doubt features that are apparent in Zimunya's poetry. But, it is the third feature that is particularly illuminating in examining this poet's depiction of the cityscape. In "A long journey" Zimunya tries to show how the city has come about and reveals the ambivalent feelings that it evokes among Africans. One learns that colonialism created the city by turning the land into a terrain of suffering, sweat, tears and blood:

Through decades that ran like rivers

endless rivers

of endless woes

through pick and shovel sjambok and jail

O such a long journey

(*Country Dawns and City Lights* p31)

At the same time the arrival of the road and the bus gave birth to a yearning for "the place behind the horizons", so the rural folk take to the road. However, it appears they fail to make the "place behind the horizons" home, and so they constantly look back into their past for comfort:

We moved into the lights

but from the dark periphery behind

an almighty hand reaches for our shirts.

(p31)

In this instance, one is reminded of Gabriel Okara's "Piano and Drums" which also depicts the dilemma of an African being pulled from either direction but failing to fit in either.

Nevertheless, Zimunya seems to go to great length to point out the part of the landscape in which he belongs - the rural world in the distant past. It is in this light that his vision of the cityscape should be examined.

In his city poems Zimunya shows the African's journey into a completely new terrain. The poet depicts the city as a land of superficiality characterised by "trinkets"[20] like "buns, sweets and biscuits"[21]. He appears to be deliberately trivialising the city in order to remind one of what he considers to be the true African past. Again, he is implicitly juxtaposing what he presents as completely different visions in order to condemn and condone. However, his attempt to trivialise the city seems to slightly backfire as the rural world's susceptibility to the city's trinkets or superficiality casts a shadow over its own substance. In other words, the rural world also comes out as somewhat superficial and gullible for easily falling prey to the city's lure. Nevertheless, Zimunya is relentless in his attempt to present the country and the city as completely different worlds. He again seeks to elevate the beauty of the long gone past but this time he does this by despising what is there. In "The city's beauty" (*Country Dawns and City Lights* p34) he reiterates the "transience, superficiality and illusiveness of the city"[22]. This is heightened by the brevity of the poem; a mere eight lines:

Like the beauty of a lover,

the beauty of the city

only lasts the lick of ice-cream

and the melting of chewing gum

or the coolness of beer

or the groan of a prostitute

the pleasure of the disco pounding numbness

and the tinkle of a coin.

(p34)

The city's lack of substance is likened to "ice-cream", "chewing gum" or "the groan of a prostitute". The poet seems to be sounding alarm bells.

This land that Zimunya rejects is also depicted as a dumping ground for the rural world's wayward children like the famous prostitute, Loveness, in *Country Dawns and City Lights* (p37). Loveness is called a "fire-furnace" and the "death sentence'" of men. She is like the unnamed girl who "divided" the village with her provocative dances. To the village such a woman "could only belong / to the city". And indeed, she abandons the village for the city where she is transformed into a legendary creature that devours souls. So the city is cast as a place for the country's delinquents. Its coldness and unfriendliness is accentuated by the lonely "guitar wailing in the wind" as if calling on the wandering souls of the city reminding them of the alienness of the terrain and what they have lost by straying away from the rural landscape.

In his effort to prop up his tenuous vision of his quintessential landscape Zimunya adopts what amounts to shock and awe tactics. An outstanding feature of this strategy is the depiction of the city as a Sodom and Gomorrah where morality and all semblance of social values have ceased to exist. As Muponde (2002: 20) puts it:

> Zimunya has taken us into the lair of those malignant forces that are brought to bear on the rural world. The experiences of the African who follows buns and sweets into the city amount to a horror show. They are equally disembowelling spiritually.

The poet uses excremental imagery in his attempt to shock both the spectator and the stray African into realising that the terrain which is the city is a real cesspool of evil. In "The lane" (*Country Dawns and City Lights* p52) Zimunya is blunt, filthy and unrelenting:

> The lane is a place of flesh
>
> dog flesh human flesh
>
> female flesh male flesh
>
> human blood and infant flesh
>
> blood of the mangy's penis
>
> the red raw of the bitch's vagina

when darkness comes.

Come,

let us wait here until darkness comes.

Zimunya makes no attempt to sanitise the depravity, decadence and repulsiveness of the cityscape. The word "flesh" appears a gruesome six times and is reinforced by the vulgar "penis", "bitch" and "vagina" to drive the point home. To Mthatiwa (2011: 186)

> The biblical allusion to evil through the use of the term "flesh" that Zimunya uses here signals his moral censure of the ways of the lane and the people who frequent it after dark while the scatological language signals the poet's moral outrage.

In this way Zimunya again condemns the landscape created by colonialism in order to elevate the countryside. This technique becomes even more telling if one juxtaposes the ugliness with the innocence in "Children's rain song"[23]:

Rain fall fall

we will eat berries

rain fall for all

we will eat mealies

we will eat cucumbers

rain fall fall

The poem with its childlike rhyme paints a picture, not just of the innocence of the children, but of the land itself. Like the children, the land is cast as beautiful but fragile. There is wistfulness and a deep sense of loss in the poet as he stares at the horror around him in the city. He now longs for the beauty and the little inconveniences of the rural world:

Nothing has no end,

it is true.

This rain used to sock us in the pastures

and the cattle would not stop to graze,

they would not be driven to the kraal,

it made me cry and curse sometimes

and I used to wish I were born differently[24]

The city brings into perspective the enormity of what has been lost.

"City Lights" (*Country Dawns and City Lights* P45-49) demonstrates the power of the city's magnetic pull on impressionable country minds. To some in the country, the city is a place of milk and honey:

Toothpaste comes from the city

Auntie Loveness' teeth rival milk

Sugar paves the sands of the city

My mother nearly throttled my sister

when she found grains of white

on her cheeks.

One day I will go to the city, I swear.

One day I will tread the sands of sugar

I will ride the sound of engines

in the world of lit nights

and sunny days.

Clearly, the city captures the imagination of those seeking to leave the rural world. However, the lights of the city are not used by the poet as just a magnet, they also serve to remove the

veil of darkness so as to reveal the sordid details of life in the city. The lights bring out into the open the ugliness and cheapness of human life in the city. What is revealed is a world of "green fly", "black devil", "mangy dog", "maggot" and "dung beetle". This is a terrain, says Zimunya, where there is "a world contest of ugliness" (*Country Dawns and City Lights* p 47).

This depiction of the city by the poet makes one wonder what it is about the place that makes humans lose all the qualities that are supposed to separate them from the mangy dog. This is a question whose urgency intensifies in "Nine months" (*Country Dawns and City Lights* p69) where one sees even heavily pregnant women in bars and walking the streets of the city in search of customers:

> Beer, please.
>
> Fourteen dollars per night,
>
> thirty for three.

If this sight shocks one, there is worse in "Python" which is where Zimunya does not pull any punches. He drags one through the backstreets of the city's red-light districts to experience this land's moral decay:

> And it was then he woke up one morning

and the shock made him cry like a mad man

His pudenda were swollen into an earth hill

whence red termites with scissors of horns

emerged making rattling noise at each step

the shock and the pain made him cry like a mad man:

when his wife smelt the smell she fainted

So the city is depicted as a sick land which trashes all semblance of humanity.

One feature that stands out in Zimunya's poems is what appears to be his stereo-typical views of the African woman, especially in her relationship with changes on the land. Musila (2007: 51) observes that "the body features predominantly as a metaphor in the African canon and criticism...both male and female bodies have been deployed as metaphors of various discourses". This is especially so with the female body. In Zimunya's poetry the woman is also cast in a stereo-typical fashion. Like the rural landscape she is seen as fragile, vulnerable and impressionable in relation to the changes threatening the landscape. This is the image painted in "Buns, sweets and biscuits" where the bumpkin country girl falls prey to the city's allure of scones, pies, buns, and so on.

The image of fragility and corruptibility is reinforced in “She danced” (*Country Dawns and City Lights* p35). More importantly, the girl or woman is also presented as capable of wreaking havoc to the land by sowing discord, corrupting and soiling its supposed purity:

When she danced in the village

...

Men said she had inherited the genius

of her ancestors beyond any doubt

but all women were agreed she could only belong

to the city

so the village was divided

So the rural world labels and even rejects women it deems wayward in order to safeguard its image of purity. This patriarchal attitude is a precursor to the country girl’s mutation into the prostitute in the city. There in the city she is presented as one who has lost the support of the “real” land (rural), and so, uninhibited, becomes an “eater” of men. The implication is that the woman is largely to blame for the corruption and rottenness afflicting the land.

So, the picture that emerges therefore from Zimunya’s poetry is that of a world irrevocably torn into two antithetical halves – the rural world and city world. More importantly, Zimunya

condemns the city in an attempt to highlight what the blackman has lost. He does this by re-creating an idyllic precolonial rural world which however creates an impression of a person running away from the reality that colonialism created in the form of the reserve. In fact there is little of that reality especially in his country poetry. It is in his city poetry that he makes a vigorous attempt to show how colonialism has disfigured the land. But, his attack is never direct. He even appears to blame the African for the plight he finds himself in the city. Zimunya seems to strongly believe that the African will never be home in this environment that is far removed from his envisioned edenic precolonial terrain. One wonders, therefore, whether flight can solve the African's problem.

This question is quickly answered in what one may call Hove's cityscape poems. Flight from the rural world takes one across the landscape in search of what could be better than the countryside. If the land is now divided or demarcated, flight takes one to the other side of the divide. The poem "Skyscraper" (*Red Hills of Home* p22-23) brings out Hove's impression of the "land" on the other side of the divide – the city. This turns out to be a landscape of "jaws of steel" and "pain". The land is now glass and "mud" (concrete), cold and inhuman. This is Hove's view of the postcolonial cityscape. It is hostile, unfamiliar and suffocating to those trying to flee the devastated rural landscape symbolized by the "red hills". The paradox is that the supposed journey or flight from this land of "wounds" and "pus" takes man to no comfort zone but to the same place - the postcolonial landscape. It is the same landscape in the sense that there is devastation and pain everywhere. Clearly, in this anthology one hears man's cry of pain. This,

however, is not pain from physical or bodily harm, but that of a tortured soul. The poet's images of the landscape enable one to take a peek into the human condition. One can therefore argue that Hove, to a large extent, is battling with the question of man's never-ending search for meaning. One sees in Hove's poetry images of a vast swathe of land, land which has been reduced to a "wasteland" with the puny figures of "dwarfed", "hollow men" wandering blindly across the landscape. The contradiction is inescapable: the fantasies of escape create the impression of the existence of two worlds with boundaries to overcome, but, at the same time one also gets a picture of a land bound together by a common denominator - hostility to man.

So, in "Skyscraper" Hove tries to show that in spite of the existence of "country" and "city" on the African landscape, this is still the same landscape. Similarly, poems such as "Lost bird" (p36-37), "Migratory bird 2" (p42) and "Honey-bird" (p60) show the futility of trying to escape across the land. The migratory bird or the lost bird appears to symbolise those who have visions of a better land elsewhere and believe that they are moving and crossing 'boundaries' when in fact it is movement to nowhere. It is this realisation that brings out the rhetorical but telling: "Then it dawns on me / why did I migrate?"(p42). One can feel the pain, sorrow and utmost despair as the persona sees the vision of a land of sameness:

> My seasons breathe their last, then limp:
>
> and I shall never sing

the season's flow again.

(p42)

So, Hove seems to reject the whole African landscape which appears to suggest that to him "exile" means seeking refuge elsewhere. But again, this makes one wonder exactly where this is and whether there are boundaries to be negotiated in this movement to "elsewhere". One painful consequence of the attempt to "escape" is the discovery that the whole movement has been for nothing. This comes out in "Homesick" (p40) which betrays the confusion in the African as he ultimately longs for the landscape that he has abandoned:

Then my heart smoked warm

as tears tumbled across these rusty cheeks.

Suddenly

I see

the distance from home,

the finger that strums

the cord of my heart.

So, Zimunya and Hove demonstrate how the problematic nature of land complicates the individual's and the polity's "structure of feeling". However, in depicting the city both Zimunya and Hove plainly adopt the stereotypical approach of painting the city negatively. This is unlike Roger Kurtz (1988: 75) whose analysis of the depiction of urban space in Kenyan popular writing highlights the limitations of Hove's and Zimunya's visions of the cityscape. He notes that in Kenyan writing the city "disrupts traditional social patterns, and despite its customary nature as a male environment, can be a place where women are able to create some measure of personal emancipation". In fact, it is the perceived opportunities associated with the city that make it a magnet attracting both male and female from the country.

Mthatiwa (2011: 172) sees this as "a corrective reading of the masculinist and sexist perception of the city by male writers who depict urban space as female and immoral". Here one recalls Zimunya's city poems in *Country Dawns and City Lights* like "Loveness", "The City's Beauty", "Python" and others. Ogude (2012: 150) also argues for this "corrective reading" of the city. He attacks what he calls "the stereotypical readings" dominated by the "dark vision of the city" where the "dominant image that emerges … is that of decay, economic misery, crime, and a jungle in which the sewers of life have exploded". More significantly, he challenges the conventional view of accentuating the rural - urban divide and the notion of "rigid boundaries" separating the two. Instead, the city should be seen as a "site of multiple social contacts" with "temporal and special openness". Clearly, the poetry of Hove and Zimunya fails the "corrective reading" test in its depiction of the city. This could be attributed to the fact that both poets deal

with the hard reality of colonial subjugation, disfigurement and its immediate aftermath. So, even the attempt to re-read the African city as a land of opportunity, emancipation and "manifold rhythms" is an up-hill task in the face of the depressing reality of the poverty and squalor in the slums of Africa's cities; a reality that Robert Mugabe's postcolony tries to hide by relocating the poor to the countryside through the infamous Operation Murambatsvina.

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NOTES

1. See a reproduction of the 2February 1835 Minute on Indian Education

http://www.mssu.edu/projectsouthasia/history/primarydocs/education/Macaulay001.html

2. Muponde, R.2000. *Zimbabwean Literature (poetry*). Harare: Zimbabwe Open University. P11

3. Ibid

4. *Thought Tracks* p.13-14

5. Muponde p14

6. *Thought Tracks* p13-14

7. *Thought Tracks* p17

8. ibid p94

9. Mthatiwa, S. 2011. University of Witwatersrand unpublished thesis p153

10. Muponde p15

11. See interview in Flora Wild's *Patterns of Poetry in Zimbabwe* p61

12. In Wole Soyinka's play the young teacher, Lakunle, who has travelled beyond the "boundaries" of the village is the symbol of superficiality like the brother and sister in Zimunya's "Kisimiso".

13. See "A letter to a son" in Hugh Finn(ed).1981. *Mopani Poets-Double Volume* p10-11

14. See *Country Dawns and City Lights* p27

15. See Flora Wild. P61

16. See *Thought Tracks* pxi

17. *Country Dawns and City Lights* p25

18. Stephen Watson in Pat Louw (2010) p38

19. Terry Gifford in Gerard *(2004) p33*

20. Muponde.2000.p16-22.

21. *Country Dawns and City Lights* p33

22. Muponde.2000. p22.

23. *Thought Tracks* p3

24. "Cattle in the Rain" *Thought Tracks* p5-6

CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION- Re-Reading Hove and Zimunya

This study has sought to show how Zimunya and Hove each view the land. So far there is overwhelming evidence that land elicits a variety of responses. This chapter highlights the findings of the study showing how they can shed light on the poetry of Hove and Zimunya.

In a detailed case study of south-eastern Zimbabwe, Wolmer (2006) confirms what this study arrives at in its exploration of the two poets' works:

> the Zimbabawean landscape has been shaped, reshaped, imagined, reimagined, represented, and defined by different actors. It shows how one representation of this landscape has had dramatic consequences for the ways in which this landscape and its inhabitants have been acted upon, eliciting conflicts and struggles over meaning and culminating in an equally dramatic rejection of this way of seeing and acting upon the landscape.[1]

The significance of Wolmer's study is that it confirms the problematic nature of representing the land in Zimbabwe and that it is well-nigh impossible to reduce it, tunnel vision-like, to a single 'way of seeing'. Wolmer argues that there are two main types of questions that can be asked of landscapes: ontological questions and epistemological questions. The former are

concerned with "how humans have physically transformed the environment".[1] The epistemological have to do with what he calls the "landscape's attendant cultural, symbolic and political meanings". What this means is that the land or landscape is the concrete physical environment but at the same time it is "as much imagined as 'real'- it is a 'way of seeing', or a text to be read."[2] David Matless sees this as the 'duplicity' of landscape, but he concedes that it is this same feature "that gives it its analytical potential"[3]. Applied to Zimunya and Hove, this approach can no doubt go a long way in trying to understand the treatment of land in their poetry. It is this "duplicity" of land that reinforces the image of a fragmented vision of the Zimbabwean landscape, especially if one juxtaposes the two poets.

In examining Zimunya's representation of the countryside one notices how his poetry seems to converge with the nationalistic master narrative by centralising the significance of land to the individual and the polity. In this case Zimunya's "way of seeing" is to locate the land in the past in order to use it as a means to finding his way on the postcolonial landscape. The pristine or unspoilt landscape in Zimunya's poetry simply reveals the buoyancy and hope of the early years of independence. Even where he stereotypically deals with the rot and decadence of the cityscape, the excremental images are always negated by one's memory of the breath-taking beauty that the poet sings so longingly about in his anthology *Thought Tracks* in poems like "I like them" (p4), "Mountain mist"(p7) or "My home"(p13-14). In spite of the litany of challenges faced by the postcolony, Zimunya's poetry indeed strives to infuse hope even in the midst of despair induced by current and anticipated post-independence challenges of misrule,

corruption, dictatorship, hunger, disease and a host of others that writers such Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Jack Mpanje, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah and others so graphically illustrate and condemn in their seminal works. These are some of the African writers who after the euphoria of independence begin to re-examine their position or the direction of their writing. Independence became a "fraud" or as Jameson (1986: 81) puts it, "the poisoned gift".

My contention is that the fragmented or contradictory representation of land by the two poets mirrors the nervous condition of the post-colonial subjects. It is about the embattled situation of the post-colony and the anxieties that come with it. This is indeed echoed by Graham (2010: 4): "the land inevitably becomes a synecdoche for the liberated postcolonial nation". Taken in this way, one begins to see the powerful and overarching nature of Fredric Jameson's (1986: 69) irresistible hypothesis of national allegory:

> All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to read as what I call national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation

Jameson then goes on to add that :

> Third-world texts, even those that are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic-

> necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the third-world culture and society.

So, this study has sought to show the extent to which Zimunya's poetry and that of Hove mirrors the national feeling.

In his analysis of oral story-telling in Zimbabwean writing, Vambe (2004: 5) argues that "when used in the interpretation of orature and literature, allegory becomes the song, poem or novel's potential to reveal "new ways of seeing history, new ways of reading the world"[4]. What is it then that can be read from the writing of the two poets? Can their poetry be said to mirror the present and the future in any way?

Zimunya's representation of a landscape of binaries – country and city - can be read as a predictable but still powerful image of the postcolony's fragmented landscape. This is a condition inherited from the colonial state. In this sense the postcolony's inequities create real and imagined 'boundaries' between different segments of the postcolony. By doing so, Zimunya alludes to and foreshadows the fragile nature of the independent African nation. The difficulties and associated consequences of abandoning the rural landscape and crossing over to the city that Zimunya graphically imprints on the mind's eye in "Roads II", "Kisimiso" and the city poems heighten this feeling of "division" or "demarcation". This in my view can be read as an

indictment of the skewed development in the postcolony whereby national resources tend to benefit a few regions at the expense of the rest of the country. Zimunya's city poems in *Country Dawns and City Lights* trash the notion of the city as a place of plenty or modernity with his unrelenting scatological images in poems like "The lane" (p52) or "Python" (p71). The study has noted that this is a stereotypical view that contradicts recent views in popular writing that envision the city as a land of opportunity, a land where the fetters of custom like patriarchy are cast off.

Like other postcolonial writers dealing with the cityscape, in *Country Dawns and City Lights* Zimunya condemns the poverty, squalor, decadence and the general failures of the African state. Here one is reminded of the depravity one encounters in Meja Mwangi's *Cockroach Dance (1979)* though Zimunya does not reach the depth of despair and meaninglessness that one experiences by witnessing the depressing lives of the rag-tag tenants of Dacca House on Grogan Road which no doubt are a microcosm of the independent African nation. In Zimunya's poetry, solace and redemption are possible and can only come from the nation's pristine land of the past that Zimunya presents as being never too far away. It is as if the past is always beckoning. By so doing, however, Zimunya seems to be colluding with the nationalist master-narrative by pinning the hopes of a nation on its supposedly unadulterated land or past. Can the land offer any other meaning?

In my view, Roger Kurtz's reading of Kenyan popular writing which Mthatiwa (2011: 172) calls "corrective reading" can be seen in some of Yvonne Vera's attempts at wringing alternative meaning from the land. Vera's women reject and abandon the land to venture into the city in an attempt to pursue their own dreams. By so doing Vera's characters in *Without a Name* (1994) or *Butterfly Burning* (2000) repudiate the nationalist vision of land. Vera shows how the land, whether country or city, completely fails the individual. This depiction of the land as treacherous is no doubt contrary to the nationalistic rhetoric that seeks to extol the relationship between the land and the people.

The significance of such a stance is that it refuses to succumb to the all-encompassing nature of the nationalist master narrative which seeks to silence or side-line other narratives by linking every facet of national life to land. On the other hand, one of Muponde (2002: 119)'s views that the land harbours "cryptic messages" should be a powerful reminder of the slippery nature of its meaning.

Hove's depiction of the landscape in the anthology *Red Hills of Home* where the ubiquitous pain seems to erase the notion of boundaries is initially created by the attempted flight from the "pus" filled "wounds" wracking the countryside to the city's "streets of pain". This meaninglessness of flight is amply illustrated in the poems "Red hills of home" and "Skyscraper" which highlight individual pain across the landscape. Violet Lunga (2002: 192) sees flight or abandonment of the land that one sees in Hove's poetry as engaging in what she calls "the

purposeless rural - urban movement", thus painting an image of lost souls wandering across an inhospitable landscape akin to T.S Elliot's "hollow men", "stuffed men" who "grope together", "sightless", across the "dead land", the "cactus land"[5]. So, Hove's poetry highlights sameness, monotony, hostility and dystopia. On such a landscape the notion of boundaries is of little consequence or a futile exercise as movement from one part of the landscape to another does not in any way alleviate the individual's plight.

In grappling with the reality or otherwise of "boundaries", Creswell (1997: 362) examines what he calls Michele de Certau's nomad metaphor. To the latter, boundaries are part of the weapons of the strong or powerful, whose strategies are "mapping" and "classification, delineation, division"[6]. Although the dystopian fate of those who transgress the perceived boundaries may appear to nullify the notion of agency, the marginalised's "movement to contest territorialisation" or "the cunning of the nomadic pedestrians to take short-cuts" still register as "tactics" that "refuse the neat divisions and classifications of the powerful and, in so doing, critique the spatialisation of domination"[7].

By depicting an almost uniform landscape, one characterized by suffering and pain, Hove's poetry anticipates the neo-colony's attempt to compartmentalize and label the landscape in the manner witnessed in Zimbabwe's headline-grabbing Operation Murambatsvina[8] which left thousands of marginalized Zimbabweans homeless or forcibly removed from the cities and

relocated to the countryside. In this case the state attempted to demonstrate that "power is about territory and boundaries"[9].

At the same time however, one has to acknowledge that there are moments when Hove's poetry contradicts his dominant vision of one endless barren land of pain. One such instance is when he, like Zimunya, creates an impression of boundaries on the landscape. This is highlighted especially when his personae attempt to flee to places elsewhere as witnessed in "Red hills of home":

> Red hills, and the smell of exile
>
> Exile breathing over our shoulder
>
> in a race that already looks desperate.
>
> Red hills, and the pulse of exile
>
> telling us this is home no more.
>
> (*Red hills of home* p2)

What is striking here is the poignancy and prophetic nature of Hove's vision of land. Hove's vision of land is prophetic in that it anticipates exile from post-independence Zimbabwe. Hove's poetry is also prophetic in that his vision of associating the land with pain and suffering

becomes a lived reality across the Zimbabwean landscape with the chaos, poverty, civil strife, the economic melt-down and the near-collapse of the post-independence state which trigger massive flight and relocations. So, in this sense Hove's depiction of flight and exile from the land forces one to interrogate the notion of land as home. One begins to see the reality facing modern man, the reality that land and home are not always synonymous. Flight and exile also create images of a boundary. It is as if there is a boundary between here and there. 'There' is perceived to be what is beyond the horizon. According to Bhabha (1994: 4),

> 'Beyond' signifies spatial distance, marks progress, promises the future; but our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going beyond – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the 'present' which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced. The imaginary of spatial distance – to live somehow beyond the border of our times – throws into relief the temporal, social distances that interrupt our collusive sense of cultural contemporaneity.

But then, as seen in the movement from the "red hills of home" to the land of the "skyscraper" and "pain", 'beyond' yields nothing. So, says Bhabha,

> The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past… Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of

> transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond' (P1).

The significance of Bhabha's view is that it complicates notions of place, time and movement. It is as if Bhabha is saying the border exists and does not exist. This view seems to normalise movement across the land. Such movement can be read as an attempt to challenge boundaries or confinement or a sign that the boundaries no longer exist. It is because of this that one begins to appreciate Creswell's observation:

> Everyone is travelling in the field of theory today. Metaphors of movement parade across the pages of cultural theorists, social theorists, geographers, artists, literary critics. Mobility is the order of the day. Nomads, migrants, travellers and explorers inhabit a world where nothing is certain or fixed. Tradition and rootedness have the smell of death. Diaspora is everything.

One wonders, however, whether flight or movement will always make sense in the absence of boundaries or the imagination of their erasure.

The research acknowledges the preponderance of texts dealing with land in Zimbabwe and Africa in general, but notes that the focus has been on fiction and that poetry is relatively a neglected area in Zimbabwe. This has been the report's entry point.

The poetry of Hove and Zimunya highlights the significance of the historical context or how the socio-political conditions in colonial Rhodesia shape their sensibilities or structures of feeling, as Raymond Williams (1977) would put it. In their poetry, Zimunya and Hove demonstrate directly or implicitly the link between colonialism and the disfigurement witnessed on the landscape. The research tries to show that although the land is indeed a "determinant" of "historical sensibility" in Zimbabwe that has "united" people in the past (Muponde, 2003: 3), it has also been a source of untold pain and suffering both in the past and present. Read in this manner, the land is indeed a "determinant" of historical sensibility in Zimbabwe but what is not highlighted in most Zimbabwean writing is that the land also has huge capacity of failing in its assigned role of uniting people. Clearly there is further need to investigate the mythic role of land in Zimbabwean poetry and literature in general.

Zimunya rejects the colonial vision of land and attempts to create an alternative vision. He does this by resorting to the precolonial past which he casts in edenic terms. He seems to glorify the African past and close the eyes to the concrete realities of the African landscape. There is reluctance by the poet to really engage with the sociopolitical conditions that disfigure his landscape. Nevertheless, Zimunya's journey back to the past should also be seen as his own

way of trying to make sense of the current postcolonial condition, since, says Said (1994: 1): "Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present". This is unlike the hard-hitting poetry of Tafataona Mahoso in *Footprints About the Bantustan* (1989) which caricatures the race-driven colonial vision of land, or the revolutionary voice of Thomas Sukutai Bvuma (1999: 40) which refuses to idealise land but makes the land a metaphor of the blackman's history of pain, suffering and resistance. If the land is a "synecdoche", to Bvuma it is

> Not a private paradise
>
> Nor an individual inferno
>
> But the pain and pleasure
>
> Of people in struggle

Zimunya's poetry also perpetuates the colonial binaries of town-country on the landscape. He uses the journey motif in an attempt to highlight the differences between what he sees as completely dichotomous worlds. This movement across the landscape is concretised and animated in the anthologies *Thought Tracks* "Roads II" (p64), "Kisimiso"(p18) and others or *County Dawns and City Lights* which clearly is intended to show the landscape's two worlds of town and country. One of Zimunya's strategies is to juxtapose the city and the country in order to condemn and elevate his own envisioned landscape. By so doing, Zimunya idealises one part of the African landscape.

On the other hand, Hove uses the trope of land to express pain and suffering. In some of his poetry, he makes a clear attempt to link the condition of the landscape to the detrimental impact of colonialism. More importantly, his vision seems to extend to the postcolonial terrain in terms of relevance. More significantly, there is marked contradiction and ambivalence in Hove highlighted by flight, exile and rejection of home. But at the same time, he can be read as showing that one cannot really escape as there is no respite for the individual across the landscape. Read in this way then, to him the notion of boundaries is indeed a "fiction". So, the problematic nature of land becomes evident when Hove's almost coherent vision of land collapses in the face of movement across the terrain which can only be construed as a search for another or a "better" landscape.

So, Zimunya and Hove seem to hold divergent views of land which may be construed as an image of a fragmented vision. At the same time, the totalising vision of land is questioned and problematised. The boundary is not just the physical like the fence or a line drawn on the map but societal attitudes and customs of exclusion like patriarchy. Significantly, land comes out as a victim of both history and imagination, but at the same time it shapes historical and imaginative processes. So, what exist are competing visions of land which no doubt have been and continue to be further complicated by recent events on the land in Zimbabwe.

It is hoped that this study offers a spring board for investigating further the gaps and silences in the treatment of land in Zimbabwean poetry in English.

NOTES

1. Here Wolmer quotes J. Duncan. 1995. “Landscape Geography”, 1993-94).
2. Wolmer p6.
3. See David Matless in Wolmer p7

4. Vambe quoting Slemon, 1988:64

5. T.S Eliot’s depicts the harrowing also meaninglessness of the modern man’s existence in his famous poem “The hollow men”

6. See Tim Creswell’s “Imagining the Nomad: Mobility and the Postmodern primitive” in Benko and Stromayer.1997. p362

7. ibid

8. Operation Murambatsvina also officially known as Operation Restore Order, was a government campaign in Zimbabwe to forcibly clear slums and relocate people across the country. The campaign started in 2005 and according to the United Nations it affected at least 700,000 people directly through loss of their homes or livelihood. See www.un.org/news/dh/infocus/zimbabwe

9. Creswell p362

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