A CRITIQUE OF THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND LAND IN POSTCOLONIAL ZIMBABWEAN FICTIONAL LITERATURE

by

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the representation of women and land in postcolonial Zimbabwean fictional literature, through examining the extent to which Zimbabwean literary writers deal with the challenges of women's access to owning and controlling land. Most Zimbabwean women have many generations of agricultural knowledge, skills and labour, as women have long been the primary agriculturalists who grew crops and raised animals. The research indicates that the colonial invasion, seizure and dispossession of land and oppression of African people prompted women and men to fight for liberation. However, even after independence, Zimbabwean women have continued to struggle to gain access to owning and controlling land. These struggles are well represented in creative works, such as Irene Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle*, Freedom Nyamubaya's *On The Road Again,* Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name* and *Nehanda*, Chenjerai Hove's *Bones*, Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*, Lawrence Hoba's '*The Trek And other Stories'*, Julius Chingono's 'Minister Without Portfolio', Lawrence Hoba's 'Specialisation', Daniel Mandishona's 'A Dirty Game' and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. The research, including the analysis of the primary literary texts, shows that patriarchal social customs, as well as the functions and operations of the state and the police continue to limit and deny women opportunities to access, own and control land. The literary texts also show women using strategies and tactics to challenge the gendered limitations to their access to land. African Feminist theory and approaches are used to analyse women's challenges and responses including the literary representations of land access and to address these in empowered ways.

Key Terms: Land Ownership, Access and Control; Patriarchy; Gender Equality; African Feminism; Democracy and Empowerment.

DEDICATION

To my beloved sons, Donnel 'Dee' and Atidaishe 'Tity' for your patience as mom was busy with her studies. You would always ask, 'Mom are you still doing your thesis, when are you going to finish?' I knew you wanted my attention but you also valued my studies. To my husband Errington Chiwamba, thank you for the invaluable support and encouragement, you always asked 'how far have you gone with the PhD?' To my mother Gogo Hungwe, you were there for me especially during my first year, when you accompanied me all the way to Durban baby-sitting your two month old grandson Atidaishe. Elvis, Enhance and Essence, thank you family.

And to all the women who have yet to access, own and control land, and all the men who have stood up for land and gender justice in Africa and the world.

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I am grateful to have overcome various challenges during the course of my studies:

When I started I had internet problems due to excessive power cuts. However, I managed to work during the night when power was back. And later, I used solar-powered internet.

My whole Faculty of Arts was relocated to another town (from Gweru to Zvishavane) in 2016 and I had to try to adjust to the new working environment. I had to teach for five days in the Department of English and Communication (Zvishavane Campus) then during weekends I would travel back to the Main Campus (Gweru) to teach in the Applied Education Department. When our Department was still in Gweru, we would combine classes from both English and Communication Department and Applied Education then teach them together and relocating increased workload. I managed to offload my workload to some colleagues by giving away some of my modules so that I could continue managing both my work and my studies.

After a year and a half, in 2018, I was transferred to the Department of Applied Education and this meant moving back to Gweru again, and having an increased workload and demanding responsibilities. I managed to do my studies mostly after work and I created space by clearing at least two days during the week for my studies and also made use of weekends. I am so grateful to have had the strength to persist and finally achieve the completion of the thesis.

Contents

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

This research is based on an interpretative analysis of the representation of women and land in Zimbabwean fictional literature. It explores literary representations of the inequalities of land distribution in Zimbabwean society. Zimbabwean fictional literature primarily centres on political, social and economic issues (Marechera 1978, Dangarembga 1988, Mungoshi 1982, 1989, Chipamaunga 1998). Yet such fiction does not critically engage with the root cause of the socio-political and economic challenges responsible for rupturing the Zimbabwean society and the distribution of land.

Land is central to people's survival. In any society, the issue of who owns any or all land is a heavily contested and political question. Said (1994) argues that everything about human history is rooted in the earth (land) and none of us is outside or beyond geography, or "completely free from the struggle over geography" (7). Said (1994: 7) also points out that the struggle over land is "complex and interesting" as it is "not only about soldiers and cannons" but also about "ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings". The politics and contestations governing land ownership, control and access tend to be inflected along racial, class, gender or ethnic lines. In most cases one race, class or ethnic group dominates and excludes others, exercising authority based on self-created superiority. In Zimbabwe, the land reform strategies have also incorporated the processes of exclusion, thus creating and maintaining social divisions and class disparity (Moyo, Helliken, and Murisa 2000). This research focuses on the neglected aspect of the ongoing exclusion of women.

As elsewhere, patriarchy existed in Zimbabwe even before colonialism, with men holding power in all social institutions from the family to governance. Men have enjoyed special privileges and entitlements, including over lineage (which is actually maternal in mammals,

of which humans are part), as well as the monopoly and control over individual women's reproductive capacities, with men at various levels and places thus controlling the entire society's productive capacity (Schmidt 1992). Walby (1990: 20) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". She observes that "patriarchy exists as a system of social relations" (20) and identifies six structures of patriarchy namely; "the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions" (20). The state, in its policies, often demonstrates systematic bias towards patriarchal interests. For example, in 2000 the Zimbabwean government embarked on a fast-track land reform programme, ostensibly to correct colonial imbalances in land ownership. The programme saw the government acquire and parcel out formerly white-owned commercial farms to landless black people.

The government used two models in the redistribution programme. First the A1 model involved beneficiaries getting small six-hectare plots and communal grazing land. The second, (A2 model) beneficiaries received small-to-medium size commercial farms. However, as Utete (2003) points out, in the A1 and A2 schemes only 18% and 12%, respectively, of the beneficiaries were women. In addition, land-related violence against women has not received any serious attention from the authorities (Mgugu and Chimonyo 2004). Neither has the government intervened meaningfully to alleviate the plight of women whose houses it destroyed without compensation during the infamous Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore Order) in 2005. The operation involved the destruction of vendors' markets and illegal houses in towns and business centres, most of which belonged to women. Such policies confirm Mann's (1986) argument that patriarchy is institutionalised in society and the nation state is built on such foundations of inequality. The classes and social divisions in Zimbabwe continue to exist within these patriarchal modes of production.

Patriarchy contributes to the ongoing relations of social and economic inequality, as in the relations between men and women, where men tend to appropriate what women produce. As long as patriarchy is integral to the state, men will continue to control land tenure systems, thereby excluding and dominating women. This serves to continue to widen the existing social divisions as it reduces women's rights and opportunities to access, control and own key resources such as land.

Zimbabwe's history is divisible into three critical periods namely: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. These historical periods are indicative of different historical experiences and therefore assist in understanding and mapping the different strategies and tactics employed by women to access, control and own land. Women's access to ownership and control of land was highly problematic during the pre-colonial period because the colonial system of racial and social relations perpetuated the exclusion women had already been suffering within patriarchal African cultural society. Women did not have direct access to land due to restrictive customary laws that denied them opportunities to own land in their own right.

Most women during this period had indirect usufruct rights as they accessed the advantages deriving from the use of land controlled by their husbands (Peters and Peters 1998). The male chiefs of the patrilineage held and distributed land. The chief allocated land to the headmen, who, in turn, held all village land for male members of the lineage. The participation of women in land access during the pre-colonial period was largely limited to bearing male children who would become inheritors and allocators of land some day (1998). Thus, women's access to land depended on their duties and compliance within the gendered division of labour. The gendered division of labour has impacted on women's decision-making powers in land-based livelihoods and limited women's participation in major decisions that affect their lives and bodies. Yet women were and are far more than just the

bearers of children for without women there would be no children, no boy children and hence no men or chiefs. The exclusion of women is therefore hostile to the development of society.

Women's access to and control of land has also depended on whether they are single, divorced, widowed, or in polygamous marriages. Their marital status affects their opportunities to access land. Before and during the colonial period, divorced daughters who returned to their patrilineal kin received usufruct rights to cultivate the land controlled by patriarchy for subsistence without, however, possessing it. Such a practice exemplifies women's marginalisation during this period. However, married women cultivated their husbands' land and, in some cases, their own pieces of land, where they grew their personal crops (Peters and Peters 1998). Toulmin and Quan (2000) point out that women have always been constituted as secondary users of land, as daughters, sisters, wives or mothers, and their rights of access are highly dependent on the social ties that link them to men who have primary rights over land. In addition, land access, ownership and control during the pre-colonial period largely favoured men. Women were not entitled to land. However, women did not acquiesce to such patriarchal thinking as they employed various strategies and tactics to contest and subvert this view, as is evident in the literary fiction that will be analysed. Finally, it needs to be noted that Zimbabwean women's experiences of land access, control and ownership have not been homogenous, as will be discussed later.

The period marking colonialism was chiefly characterised by invasion, conquest and dispossession of the African women and men of their land. This resulted in the creation of exclusionary physical boundaries as the Europeans arrogated fertile land to themselves while relegating Africans to barren and arid areas:

> The Africans were expelled from their choice land and through
> a system of land segregation were confined to areas of poor soils
> and unreliable rainfall. For example, the first reserves allocated

> to the Ndebele people in the early 1890s, Gwaai and Shangaan,
> were so barren, remote and uninhabitable that they were better
> described as 'cemeteries', not homes (Banana 1989: 31).

Texts such as Marechera's (1978) *House of Hunger*, Mungoshi's (1975) *Waiting for the Rain*, Vera's (1994) *Without a Name* and Hove's (2001) *Bones* emblematise the land dispossession under colonialism. These texts depict Africans inhabiting and eking out a living on the poorest of lands and resources while European settlers took over the fertile and arable land. African people were often forcibly shunted out to overcrowded and impoverished Native Reserves created by the colonial regime (Shava 2012). Colonialism created a binaried landscape and nation, where the colonialists severely limited the space of the colonised (Fanon 1961). A legal system, and a military and police force heavily skewed in favour of the relatively small group of European settlers enforced the colonial set up over the natives.

Colonialism also resulted in shifts in the cultural, economic, spiritual and material ways of life of all African people. These shifts had particular impacts on African women, who suffered much more, given the patriarchal system that was already in place.

African Feminism offers a theoretical framework for understanding and analysing the existence, roles and impacts of the colonial and patriarchal ideological frameworks. Mama (2011) gives valuable insight into the patriarchal division of resources, rights and labour and its impact on gender within African communities. Because of colonialism, women's status worsened as they suffered the burdens of being victims not only of gender, but also of race and deep impoverishment. The depiction of female characters in texts such as Hove's *Bones* and Vera's *Without a Name* exemplifies this double oppression.

Colonialism enacted laws such as the Land Apportionment Act (LAA) and the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) that legalised the discrimination against African ownership of fertile and arable land:

> The Native Land Husbandry Act in 1951 allowed individualised land tenure of men as land was registered in the names of male heads of the household [and] gave male heads of households individual, rather than lineage rights to land. Without rights guaranteed through customary tenure, female labourers, often with de facto head of household status, were marginalised to land use rights which were not registered through the NLHA (Peters and Peters 1998: 190).

These legislative Acts significantly worsened the plight of African women. Legal ownership of land through registration with legitimate authorities governed by men largely denied women access to land. The NLHA gave customary and communal land rights to male individuals and state power to government officials such as chiefs who had been incorporated into the colonial system to monitor land use and transfers.

Colonial conquest led to land alienation and racial segregation. The subsequent squeezing of Africans into unproductive reserves resulted in congestion and reduced production. Consequently, many Africans, mostly men, migrated to mines, farms and towns in search of jobs. Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1983) typifies the migration to farms by African men to work as house and field labourers on settler farms. However, given the patriarchal nature of African society, most African women remained behind to care for their families and to hold the land on behalf of their husbands and male relatives. Schmidt (1992) observes that most African women remained in the rural areas tending to the land. She further argues that if women were to join their husbands in work locations, "households would lose their rights to village land since the right of access was contingent upon continuous cultivation" (54). Women, therefore, became more involved in agriculture than men and their access to managing the land increased as they determined which crops to plant, and so on, in the absence of their husbands. Thus, male migration significantly altered gender relations and women's access, ownership and control of land patterns in colonial Zimbabwe. However, the

changes to land access, ownership and control patterns occasioned by the temporary male migration were largely transitory. This was the case particularly as the colonial laws on land followed, perpetuated and exacerbated the marginalisation of women (Gaidzanwa 2011).

Land was a central issue that provoked African nationalism and triggered the anti-colonial war of the 1960-70s. African nationalism fostered the illusion of "oneness" and "sameness" between African men and women. However, Day and Thompson (2004) hold that nationalism is a gendered political ideology largely predicated on masculine hopes, masculine aspirations, and masculine humiliation. McClintock (1993) has also argued that nationalism is a gendered masculine discourse that largely marginalises women's experiences and aspirations. These important feminist contributions to understanding nationalism nevertheless neglect the fact that imperialism, colonialism and settler colonialism complicated the battles for national independence in colonised societies, and not least because of the involvement of women as much as men in the independence struggles. Freedom Nyamubaya's (1986) *On the Road Again*, Shimmer Chinodya's (1989) *Harvest of Thorns*, Charles Samupindi's (1992) *Pawns,* Yvonne Vera's (1993) *Nehanda* and Alexander Kanengoni's (1997) *Echoing Silences* address these complexities.

Gendered dimensions of nationalism continue to haunt the post-independent Zimbabwean nation as exemplified by Nyamubaya's poems. Alexander (2006) states that nationalists of Zimbabwe's armed struggle promised a return of the land appropriated by the European settlers to Africans on the terms and conditions stipulated by the Africans themselves. However, Zimbabwe's independence witnessed compromises and betrayals of the dreams and aspirations of the African revolution. Sachikonye (2012) argues that there was no serious effort on the part of government to resolve the land question in post-independence Zimbabwe. Land only became a major political resource for the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), in 2002 because it was an election

year. The land issue became a convenient tool to rally people to vote for the ruling party, which had been losing popularity.

Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 was the result of long political and military battles. This is represented in Zimbabwean literary texts such as Dambudzo Marechera's (1984) *Mindblast*, Freedom Nyamubaya's (1986) *On The Road Again*, George Mujajati's (1989) *The Wretched Ones*, Shimmer Chinodya's (1989) *Harvest of Thorns*, Cont Mhlanga's (1992) *Workshop Negative*, and Chenjerai Hove's (2001) *Bones*. These texts largely mock the idea of Zimbabwean independence for the aspirations and dreams of the liberation struggle were not achieved. The economic independence of African people remained largely illusory as the former European settlers retained control of the economy:

> …about 6,000 white commercial farmers owned 15.5 million
> hectares of land while 8,500 small-scale African farmers had
> 1.4 million. The rest, an estimated 700,000 communal farming
> households, subsisted on 16.4 million hectares (Sachikonye
> 2012: 109).

Most of the productive land in post-colonial Zimbabwe remained in the hands of the former European colonisers. Thus, the anti-colonial war of the 1970s did not adequately address the issue of land in Zimbabwean politics as it only wrested political power from the European settlers who continued to control the economy of independent Zimbabwe.

However, the government's land reform programme in 2000 radically reconfigured Zimbabwe's economic and political landscape as hundreds of thousands of black Zimbabweans settled on land that had been occupied by whites (Alexander 2006). Alexander (2006) further states that the collapse of the economy, violence and exclusion from the international world that Zimbabwe witnessed because of the land reform

programme became a "crucial turning point" (1) in the country's history. The land reform, however, did not significantly change women's plight, as only a few benefited from the programme despite constituting the majority of the population. Thus, despite the fact that the majority of the population working in the agricultural sector are women, access, control and ownership of productive agricultural resources by women remains low. Finally, it also needs to be noted that women's experiences of land access, control and ownership have not been homogenous in Zimbabwe, as will be addressed through the analysis of the literary works.

1.2 Questions Guiding the Study

This study is informed by the following key questions:

1. How are women's relationships to land portrayed in Zimbabwean fiction in English?

2. To what extent does Zimbabwean fiction portray women having access, ownership and control over land?

3. Does fictional literature in Zimbabwe consider land as part of women's rights?

4. To what extent does Zimbabwean fictional literature address the questions of women's agency in relation to the land?

5. What tactics and strategies, if any, do women characters employ to access, own and control land?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The central objective of this research is to understand the relationship between women and land, as represented in Zimbabwean fictional literature. This objective has two parts: The first

is to examine the extent to which Zimbabwean fictional writers deal creatively with the critical challenges of women's access, ownership and control of land. The second objective is to analyse fictional representations of women's access, ownership and control of land, and to understand how gender relations affect social attitudes towards women's ownership of land.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

There seems to be a trend in Zimbabwean literature since independence for texts to centre on political, social and economic issues. They tend to occlude women's access, ownership and control of land. This research addresses these issues by examining the challenges women have in accessing land in Zimbabwe, through analysing the literary representations, both before and after independence, as there are notable inconsistencies regarding access, ownership and control of land between men and women. The research is also informed by the need to explore and map the various strategies and tactics that women employ to access, own and control land in Zimbabwe. Entitlement to land is not a natural God-given right but a socio-political and economic construct that is negotiable and contestable. That is the premise on which this research is based. Seeing entitlement to land as based on contestation and negotiation directs attention to the fact that land access, ownership and control is governed by power dynamics and contestations. However, power is not a given but a negotiable and contestable phenomenon. Thus, the relationship between women and land is not just about access, ownership and control but is also about the relationship between women and power.

1.5 Research Methodology

The methodological approach involved first making a literary survey of selected Zimbabwean fictional literature that explores and covers the issues of women's access, ownership and control of land. Then these texts were subjected to critical textual analysis that has drawn on

theoretical perspectives broadly located in Feminist Theory with a bias towards African Feminist Theories. Textual analysis is a method researchers use to describe and interpret the characteristics of content (Frey, Botan and Kreps 1999). Its purpose is to describe content, structure and the functions of the message contained in texts. In this research, selected Zimbabwean fictional texts focusing on women and land have been analysed to examine representations of the characteristic relationships between Zimbabwean women and land, with a focus on access, ownership and control of land. Selecting the types of texts to be studied is an important consideration in textual analysis. Other considerations include acquiring appropriate texts and determining which particular approaches to employ in analysing them. Textual analysis has four major approaches, including content analysis, rhetorical criticism, performance studies and interaction analysis (Frey, Botan and Kreps). For this research, textual analysis was used to help understand how people think and act, through studying and analysing the forms of discourse displayed through characters, settings and events. Rhetorical criticism was the approach used to describe, analyse, interpret and evaluate the meanings within the selected fiction on land in Zimbabwe. This is important because it helps us understand the social, cultural, material and historical contexts of both women and the land. Moreover, it enables us to evaluate society since it is "a form of social interaction" (Frey, Botan and Kreps: 231).

1.6 Literature Review

Most of the literature on women and the land attests to the fact that African women participate significantly in agriculture. Their active participation in agriculture is traceable to the pre-colonial era when African societies were primarily agrarian (Amanor-Wilks 2009, Mbilinyi and Shechambo 2009, Schmidt 1992, Gaidzanwa 1994, and Goebel 2005). Apart from agriculture, land has a number of social and cultural implications for women.

Possessing land translates into social, economic and cultural capital, which the holder can use to empower and strategically position herself in society. Conversely, not having access to land also translates into not having social, economic and cultural capital.

Mbilinyi and Shechambo (2009) assert that the issue of land alienation and struggles for land ownership, control and access "dates back to the colonial period" (97) where "the colonial state perpetuated patriarchal structures of land use and ownership within native communities and reinforced a gender[ed] division of labour which empowered men and disempowered women" (97). Women's situation worsened as a result and their ownership of land became limited. Colonialism instituted several mechanisms to ensure constant supply of cheap male labour to colonial farms, mines and industries. This left women to bear the burden of tilling the land in the absence of their husbands and male children (Schmidt 1992). Women have continued to serve as the disempowered providers of labour even after colonialism.

Despite women's pivotal role in agricultural production, the male head of the household controlled the most significant resource, land. Yet again, few African writers address the significant roles and contributions of women; instead, readers only tend to witness the unremitting subordination of women, even in the fictional literature. For example, in Muchuri's (2004) 'Letter to Amai', where Amai's husband benefits from the land reform programme, she is happy that her husband is a beneficiary and anticipates a great harvest. This occurs despite general awareness that the income women generate from agriculture largely provides for their children's food, clothing and education (Quisumbing et al 1995). In Dangarembga's (1988) novel, *Nervous Conditions*, Tambudzai, who raises her school fees through maize farming when her father fails to pay her fees, also shows the subordination of women, a little differently.

The scarcity of land has not been a problem in Zimbabwe, but women's access and control of land for women has been an issue for as long as patriarchy existed. Patriarchy is about power and control, and involves the monopolizing of power by men (Amanor-Wilks 2009). Patriarchy has been practiced in Africa for long and is seen as an aspect of African traditions. However, Amanor-Wilks argues that tradition can be invented to reinforce claims of a particular group (in this case, men), while blocking the prospects for negotiated access by excluded groups (mainly women) and when labour is applied to land it can create produce, which can generate capital. Therefore, land is a crucial source of economic and social power.

As long as patriarchal values inform negotiations over land, women will continue to have limited access to and ownership of any land. Amanor-Wilks further notes how the settler economy was also deeply influenced by Western patriarchy, and created traditions in Zimbabwe to secure black labour for white owned farms, controlling the movement of both men and women, and the use of their labour, and the access and use of land. Women were mostly confined to the rural areas where they practiced subsistence farming. Prior to that, tradition defined land rights, where the notion of ownership was well established, with customary rules of inheritance permitting the subdivision of family rights, to be transferred to the next generation. It should, however, be noted that in Zimbabwe these rules of inheritance were not extended to women and the future generation referred to was mostly male children, whom it was assumed, would continue the lineage.

Additionally, the settler colonialists created land scarcity and shortages by allocating themselves large tracts of land, and this had repercussions for women who were already relying on portions of land belonging to their husbands and fathers (Amanor-Wilks 2009). This shows that women have long been marginalized by both the traditional system and the colonial system, which exacerbated their lack of land ownership. Amanor-Wilks's main argument is based on gendered livelihoods and how women's labour has been manipulated

by patriarchal traditions, colonialism, and settler colonialism, all limiting women's chances of owning and controlling the land they have worked on for centuries.

Zimbabwean women's livelihoods are largely based on their use of land and labour. Tsikata (2009) explores the gendered nature of land and labour relations in the making of livelihoods, and she emphasizes the need to link land and labour issues so that policy efforts can deal with the challenges faced by both urban and rural women. She highlights how there have been analytical gaps that have also contributed to some of the controversies, such as debates on whether there are gender inequalities in land relations or whether women are unable to take full advantage of the land on offer because of other constraints (Tsikata 2009). But women can only take full advantage of the land if it is accessible and available and if they are allowed equal ownership, access and control rights. She notes that literature on the labour and the skills deficits of women in agriculture reveals that the small sizes of women's farms lead to lower levels of productivity.

Land uses vary in people's management of their livelihoods. In addition to agriculture, land ownership, control and access are fundamental aspects of power (social, economic and political) and these are central in the unequal treatment of people based on their gender (Tsikata and Amanor-Wilks 2019). The issue of who owns, controls and accesses land is also political as it influences the economic empowerment of people. Thus, Goebel 2005 explores the situation of women and gender relations within the context of the political and economic issues in the land reform process. If women do not have access to social and political power, it becomes difficult for them to access, control and own land, which compounds the ongoing inequalities in land ownership rights between men and women.

The relationship of women to land is not limited to agriculture alone, there is also the symbolic significance of the land. There are also spiritual connections that bind people's

relationships to the land. Qualities associated with women, such as nurturing and giving life to the land, are an important part of agricultural production as well as the conservation of land. Wangari Maathai (2006) introduced tree planting to women's groups, to protect and improve the soil, thus taking care of the soil and the land at large, nourishing it after industrial production had destroyed it. Thus, Chirere (2004) notes that most Zimbabwean writers are lagging behind on the land issue, and that there is a dearth of feminine perspectives on land issues.

Worby (2001) also refers to the negative application of power resulting from the forced uprooting and relocation of African people during colonialism. Sadly, African men continue to use their patriarchal power and its attendant privileges to evict widowed or divorced women from their marital homes or land, long after the demise of colonialism. This reflects how power differences affect women, especially in the absence of patriarchal-sanctioned male "security". The forced evictions in cases of death, where the husband predeceases the wife, exemplify this as widows are evicted because the husband had acted as collateral. Women facing these circumstances are largely powerless individuals, and depend on male association for whatever security they can get. This crisis emanates from women's lack of ownership and control of land as independent persons.

Women constitute over half of the total population in Zimbabwe. However, they struggle in their public and private lives to articulate and legitimise their wishes and needs. The way land is conceptualised in literary fiction reflects the dynamics in the struggle for land between men and women in Zimbabwe. Various commentators, such as Cheater (1986), Chirere (2004), Cairnie (2007), Bhatasara (2011) and Gonye et al (2012) address this. Cheater (1986) argues that women's exclusion from access to land in their own right is because of the payment of the bride wealth that transfers all the women's rights and reproductive capacity to the husband. Cheater substantiates this through the example of a court case in which a married

woman lost her farm to her late husband's brother because customary law ruled in favour of the brother-in-law despite the fact that the woman had jointly bought the farm with her husband. Chirere (2004) notes that Zimbabwean literature set in Zimbabwe during the colonial period portrays the cultural aspects of indigenous Zimbabwean people's hunger for land. He cites Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) as depicting the colonial relationship between whites and blacks, with whites owning vast tracts of fertile lands while blacks inhabited infertile tribal trust lands. For Chirere, the problems of land access were created by colonialism, with both African men and women as victims. However, the hunger for land that he portrays ignores women's closer relationships to the land as his view tends to be limited and largely patriarchal.

In her examination of white women writers' negotiation with land, gender, race and home, Cairnie (2007) brings in a different dimension to the land issue. She argues that white women writers underscore the complications of their claims to the land spaces they call home. She cites Doris Lessing (1983) refusing the colonial bequest to make an African land space her home. By contrast, most African women still have many struggles to proclaim a home in African land spaces.

Bhatasara (2011) focuses on the disparities of the land reform programme, noting the differential access, ownership and control of land between men and women. She notes the continued marginalisation of women's access, control and ownership of land. However, Bhatasara limits herself to the current land disparities in the land reform programme and does not consider women's quest for land as a broad persistent problem stretching back to pre-colonial times. It is in full cognisance of this view that this research seeks to offer a holistic appreciation of this problem as it focuses on African women's quest to access and own land from pre-colonial to post-independence times.

There is also a noticeable gap in various literary works which seem to undervalue the roles of women in agriculture. For example, Mungoshi (1975), Buckle (2005), Ndlovu (2005) and Maruma (2007) depict female characters whose hard work is not acknowledged. Women characters in such fiction are represented as being even less than sources of cheap labour.

On further reviewing scholars who deal with the representation of women and land in literary texts, it is observed that they find that literary texts offer deeper insights into the challenge of why, for so long, there has not been justice for women needing to access, control, and own land. Gonye *et al* (2012) focus on the representations of the land reform programme in selected Zimbabwean short stories such as Alexander Kanengoni's (2003) 'The Ugly Face in the Mirror', Charles Mungoshi's (2003) 'Sins of the Fathers' and Memory Chirere's (2003) 'Maize'. They note that the selected stories depict women as beneficiaries of the post-2000 land reform. These representations largely focus on post-2000 hence there is need to consider representations of other phases in the history of Zimbabwe to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of women's challenges with accessing, controlling and owning land. In my research I have found that women's lack of financial capacity to farm undermined their attempts to successfully access, control and own land during the land reform programme (as will be demonstrated in some of the chapters that follow).

Buckle (2005) has explored how having access to land ownership does not on its own guarantee success in farming. Rather, skills and experience matter. I have noted how skills deficits do not only affect women but men also. Apart from that, some men have access to ownership of big farms with low production. For example, in the story 'Full Circle' men are shown to be failing:

> The 'Veterans' also grabbed the land with the plum trees and
> every year Blessing watched as they got smaller and smaller
> harvests from the trees, because they did not give them fertilizer

or enough water. At Christmas time, when the trees were covered in plum, the beetles came too – thousands of yellow and orange beetles. The 'Veterans' did not spray the trees so the beetles ate the plums faster than the men could pick them (Buckle 2005: 44).

Vambe (2005) analyses the struggles over land by black people in fiction and conceptualises the post-2000 land reform as an attempt to empower black people. However, his analysis of those who control land is largely limited to men. Vambe does not offer a single woman's perspective on the land reform programme in the fiction that he analyses, another indication of women's exclusion. This creates the false impression that land ownership and agriculture are both male prerogatives, a view that replicates the problems of patriarchy. From another angle, there are also representations of the silencing and compromising of women's access, ownership and control of land, such as Eric Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006). Harrison misrepresents women's participation in the post-2000 land reform programme thereby belittling their initiatives and potential (Magosvongwe 2013).

Another misrepresentation I have found in the fiction that needs interrogating is the portrayal of African men as the only victims of colonial dispossession. Mungoshi's (1982) stories, reflecting only male figures coming back from the horrors of the cities to reclaim land in the rural areas are important but also tend to strengthen patriarchal tendencies to conflate land with men. Vambe's argument revolves around men's struggle to own, access and control land. The occlusion of women's land rights raises questions of social justice as women's land rights are part of human rights (Gaidzanwa 1994; Izumi 1999). This also raises questions of national belonging and exclusion as these new representations and interpretations privilege only men's voices while silencing women's voices.

The urban settings and spaces are also of interest. For instance, there are political contests to control urban land. Men work in unison with the state to suppress women who would have acquired certain land pieces. Resultantly, there is tension as women take various initiatives which reflect their need for land such as growing and selling vegetables and maize along roadsides.

Goebel (2005) explores gender relations and women's challenges in the context of the political and economic issues in the land reform process. However, she omits other important symbolic representations of land, such as gravesites, water wells and gardens. I also notice that her work reflects the invisibility of urban women in Zimbabwe's land distribution process. It is important to note that male entitlement and control, through the institution of marriage and the collective powers of mostly male traditional authorities, mediate urban and rural women's relationships to land. Further, some women have gained rights to farms in the resettlement processes through marriage to a man who holds a resettlement permit. This also makes them vulnerable to the complete loss of that land in the event of divorce or eviction of the husband. Women do not have primary legal rights to land.

Vambe (2011) analyses the representations of land struggles particularly in Zimbabwean Shona fiction. His analysis mainly focuses on the conflicting perspectives of the land reform programme. Politicians tend to view land in a unitary way whereas most people still struggle to access, control and own land. Vambe regards literary creations as spaces for recuperation and I agree with this line of thinking because Zimbabwean fiction offers spaces for freeing women's silenced needs and voices in relation to land issues. However, I dispute his argument that politicians view land in a unitary way. This only reflects history, and in my analysis, the politicians seem to pursue selfish aims. Vambe underscores the trampling of the objectives of the liberation war by neo-colonial leaders who have benefitted from the land redistribution exercise at the expense of many women. The Zimbabwean fiction in English

that I am analysing also reflects the struggles to control land among the peasants, war veterans, politicians and other elites. Vambe's analysis is relevant though limited in conceptualisation.

Mutasa's (2005) Shona novel *Sekai Minda Tave Nayo* [Laugh, We now have the Land] depicts Sekai managing to access and own land. However, the land redistribution exercise has continued to marginalise most women who are not as privileged as Sekai. She represents a small group of educated professional women and not the millions of ordinary women who work the land. Vambe feels that the unity of women threatens male chauvinism, which is a limited analysis. Nevertheless, Vambe's research does accommodate a few professional women. It is highly probable that if Sekai had been an ordinary peasant woman her chances of accessing land would have been limited. According to my analysis, what is lacking in Mutasa's novel discussed above is the representation of ordinary women who constitute the majority of the peasants in Zimbabwe. Many women, including many considered in the primary texts in this research do not have this package of a paid profession that is valued by society. While Vambe focuses on Shona fiction, this research focuses on English fiction, expanding how English fiction portrays land issues.

Manase (2014) considers the generational gap between the early writers and younger writers like Hoba, who have an urban experience and considers the ways the texts engage in dialogue with each other. Manase identifies traceable links that extend the thematic focus on land, as depicted in the works of earlier writers like Hove (1988; 1996) and Mungoshi (1975). In most early works by Zimbabwean writers, the land issue was very crucial and this centrality continues to haunt younger writers focusing on land inequalities, land problems, land discrepancies and land dispossession. This research also underscores this continuity in the analysis of selected texts from different historical periods. However, the focus here is on the relationship between women and land. Manase says that "the different historical moments

such as the social histories, colonial and anti-colonial eras and the post-independence dispensations are significant in mapping writers and their narratives" (2014:6). This research also conceptualises the land issue in these different historical eras and highlights the continued pattern of women's landlessness in Zimbabwe using fiction. This understanding relates to Manase's (2014) view that literature has connections and similarities that bind Zimbabwean fiction.

Magosvongwe (2013) explores the relationship between land and identity in Zimbabwean fiction in her PhD thesis, 'Land and Identity in Zimbabwean writings in English from 2000 – 2010: A Critical Analysis'. She explores the relationship between land and identity across the racial divisions and interrogates the various views on the land question in Zimbabwe, as depicted in selected works of fiction. She contextualises her arguments within the theoretical framework of Afrocentricity, which calls for African agency and aims at promoting African culture in relation to Western culture. Magosvongwe's analysis is valuable in clarifying how racism exacerbates women's access to and ownership of land, apart from the traditional patriarchal system. However, the thesis does not look at how some aspects of African culture tend to disadvantage women on issues of land and gender relationships. I shall therefore employ African Feminist approaches that call for the recognition of African women in all spheres, including African cultural practices. While Magosvongwe's important work does not focus on critical issues concerning women and land in Zimbabwe, my research attempts to bridge that gap as it explores the experiences of women in accessing, owning and controlling land.

Tsitsi Himunyanga-Phiri's (1992) novel *The Legacy* depicts women confronting societal traditions that demean and constrict them from owning and inheriting land. Himunyanga-Phiri depicts female characters (such as Mrs Mudenda) who challenge the tradition of patrilineal inheritance after the husband's death. Mrs Mudenda considers the land she fights

for as "the place that the children grew up in and have considered home for the last fifteen years" (20). Her focus is on the well-being of their children and themselves when making decisions about staying and possessing the land.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research uses an interdisciplinary theoretical approach in its exploration of the representation of women and land in Zimbabwean fictional literature. African Feminism is used as the guiding theory to understand women's access to, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe, and to analyse the literary writings about these challenges of Zimbabwean women by a range of Zimbabwean writers, women and men.

African Feminism is a developing field in Feminist theory, which validates the experiences of African women, both on mainland Africa and in the diaspora. It specifically addresses the experiences of African women, their subjectivities, challenges and struggles in various social, political, economic and agrarian contexts. It seeks to advance the power of African women over the processes and events of their lives, to further their rights and interests. The roots of African Feminism are found in the features of most African societies that stress the communal rather than individual values and embedded in indigenous theoretical frameworks that capture the complexities of socio-cultural relations of women and their counterparts (Wane 2011). She further asserts that African Feminism is a philosophy that comes from the lived experiences of African women before colonisation and is rooted in the long history that predates other feminists elsewhere. In this perspective, African feminist intellectuals have created theorising spaces which reflect and support the fight for social justice.

 In addition, Ogundipe- Leslie (2002:6) emphasized that African women "should think from our epicentres of agency, looking for what is meaningful, progressive and useful to us" as African women. This means that any framework examining African women's social, political

and economic conditions in their oppressive and empowering aspects should speak to Africa and be visible in the lived experiences of Africans. During the African Feminist Forum in Accra in 2006, the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists was adopted. It set out the mechanisms for operationalism where it charts the nature of change that should occur in communities and how this is to be achieved. With the Charter, African Feminists reaffirmed their 'commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa' (2) and also to remind women seeking gender empowerment of their 'duty to defend and respect the rights of all women, without qualification' (2). In relation to land and gender, patriarchal structures have held back women's rights to access and own land, on the grounds of gender. Democratic initiatives, like the Charter, challenge the validity of such long-standing injustices, that should be removed so that there is equality and power sharing, which would enable women to have access to own and control land.

On the challenge of gender identity, African Feminism has focused on its progress to move women away from the marginal spaces and identities and to advance women's empowerment and equality. African Feminists name themselves as Feminists as a strategy of mainstreaming themselves by identifying themselves publicly. The Charter shows that Feminists name and define themselves as a way of celebrating Feminist identities and politics, because fighting for women's rights is political, and so too is naming, in the contexts of patriarchal and gendered structures. Naming gives African women control and power. Naming is a powerful tool that can give women the ability to collaborate around shaping their identity. African Feminism is used to identify and represent African women and it empowers women to assert authority over themselves.

By choosing to name and define themselves, African Feminists have placed themselves in a clear ideological position which can potentially empower all who have been marginalised and silenced by such social, political and economic structures of inequality, hence African

Feminists help 'politicise the struggle for women's rights, [and] question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated, and develop tools for transformatory analysis and action' (Guenther 2009:4).

The term Womanism has been used by African Feminists to describe the African female experience, although the conception might slightly differ from Walker's Womanism (Ebunoluwa 2009), there are points of convergence and divergence. As an African-American Feminist, Walker (1983) coined the term Womanism as a result of the failure by western Feminism to consider black women and men in as far as issues such as race are concerned. Ebunoluwa (2009) argues that this variant of Feminism was developed to cater specifically for the needs of black women since Feminism as practiced by elite white women was deficient. Walker (1983: xi-xii) defines a womanist as:

> A black feminist or feminist of color…. [is a] woman who
> loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates
> and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility,
> (values tears as a natural counterbalance of laughter), and
> women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men sexually
> and or non-sexually committed to survival and wholeness of
> entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except
> periodically for health. Traditionally universalist… loves
> music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the spirit. Loves
> struggle. Loves the folks. Loves herself. Regardless: womanist
> is to feminist as purple is to lavender.

Womanism as an alternative theory is distinguished by its focus on the Black female experience with writings detailing racial issues, and classist issues (Ebunoluwa 2009). Apart from fighting sexist oppression, Womanists do not separate race and class oppression from sexism. They also believe in partnership with men in the emancipation of the whole race, who have long been, and remain, besieged in the United States of America. Walker's (1983)

Womanism revolves around the lived experience of 'women of color' which also references the struggles of African women. It seeks to fight the widespread patriarchal systems in Africa, the West and the rest, and some African women have associated with it to avoid the distractions connected to mainstream Feminism. Womanism has been adopted by African women writers such as Ode (2011), Ogunyemi (1996) and Kolawole (1997). Ogunyemi (1996) defines womanism as black-centered and unlike radical feminism, it advocates for meaningful union among black women and black men and black children, and stresses that men begin to change from their sexist stand. This implies that men and women should work together and also that men should embrace women as equal partners who deserve equal access to, ownership and control of land. In the same vein, Kolawole (1997) says that African women are not seeking to be like men, to look like men or to act like men. However, critics like Acholonu (1995) argue that Walker's Womanism is unsatisfactory because her womanist is first and foremost lesbian. Nevertheless, even if some African Feminists have adopted Womanism, it differs from African Feminist Theory in that family structures and heterosexual marriage are central to the experiences of African women. Womanists' claim to represent all black women is largely based on African-American women because women in Africa have different experiences based on locations, cultures, languages, religions and traditions.

1.7.1 Conceptualising Patriarchy

In as far as promoting women's access to and ownership and control of land is concerned, patriarchy has been one of the main barriers that have affected women's access to land. The system of patriarchy keeps women subordinated so that they do not move forward in trying to claim rights to own land as men continue to be in control. A patriarchal society is male dominated, male identified and male-centred. It promotes male privilege by being organised

around the control and oppression of women (Johnson 2014). Patriarchy defines what social life should be like, and what is expected of men and women, with specified qualities and roles of women and men, where masculinity and manhood are valued, and womanhood is marginalised and devalued. The subculture of patriarchy has dominated virtually all the societies of the world with significant consequences for the well-being of humanity, all flora and fauna, and earth. Patriarchy gives women half measure in terms of rights (Mushunje 2001), and often much less than that. As such, patriarchy, as a social system, is characterised by control, power and domination over women and all others in every aspect of life. Johnson (2014: 37) clarifies the narrower definition of power and patriarchal culture that 'to have power and to be prepared to use it are culturally defined as good and desirable (and characteristically masculine) and to lack such power or to be reluctant to use it is seen as weak (and characteristically feminine)'.

Accordingly, patriarchal power functions as a system of differentiation based on the notion of superiority and inferiority that accords males power and material advantages to control productive and reproductive resources while females are constrained. Thus, men, having more power, already possess or can more easily access, control and own more land, compared to women. As women are deprived access to power, they are also deprived of some rights as the right to access and own land, thus, they become powerless and easy to exploit. Through patriarchal power and violence, men have long subjected women to oppression. Moreover, without access to basic resources that they own, such as land, women have little power and virtually no options. In most societies, no one cannot avoid being involved in patriarchy because both men and women occupy social positions in it. Kandiyoti (1988) argues that women often have to bargain with patriarchy, through using different strategies and coping mechanisms, which will be discussed later, in the analyses of certain literary texts. Since most women do not have access to ownership of land because of patriarchy, they

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use certain strategies and tactics of agency. African Feminism challenges the systems of African, neo-colonial and neo-imperial patriarchy where such systems and proponents operate against the rights and empowerment of women. African men who support the human rights of women have increasingly found common cause with social justice approaches like African Feminism (for example, Ratele 2013).

1.7.2 African Feminism and patriarchy

The Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists places patriarchal social relations, patriarchal systems and patriarchal structures embedded in other oppressive and exploitative structures at the centre of their analysis. The African Feminists define patriarchy as 'a system of male authority which legitimises the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal, cultural, religious and military institutions' (Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists: 5). Patriarchal social relations have gone against what African Feminists fight for, that is respect, equality and freedom from violence and the threat from violence in all aspects. Key ethic in the Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists commits individual Feminists to believing in gender equality based on feminist principles such as the right of all women to live freely from patriarchal oppression, discrimination, violence and to have access to sustainable livelihoods and freedom of choice and autonomy. African Feminism aims at advancing equality for women.

This Charter reaffirms the commitment of Feminists such as Everjoice Win and Amina Mama to dismantle patriarchy in all its forms and to respect and defend all rights of women. All these African Feminists collectively created a space to engage and strengthen the Feminist movement in Africa. They scrutinised oppressive and exploitative gender and related social relations and spelled out their collective responsibilities to protect and respect the rights of women.

Inspired by initiatives such as those of the African Feminist Forum, Feminists in Zimbabwe

held a Feminist Forum in 2011, which has sought to create a platform for engaging and

communicating with Zimbabwean Feminists from all sections of society. Win (2011) stressed

that these forums should provide a space for African Feminists to 'think, talk and act' (5).

One of the hopes of the forum was 'to take feminist discourse and discussion out to young

women in the rural and the high density areas' (5). This issue will be discussed later, in, for

instance, the attention paid by authors to the inclusion of young female characters as

protagonists who challenge patriarchy and defend women's rights, as evident in Mahamba's

(1986) *Woman in Struggle* and Bulawayo's (2013) *We Need New Names*. The Zimbabwe

Feminist Forum (ZFF) also sought to empower women on other basic rights relating to

women's control over production as much as reproduction, such as family planning, and

abortion, which impact on the resources, hunger and land hunger of women and their

families. Lack of access to and control and ownership of land resources expose women to

exploitation and oppression, which will be discussed later in the analysis of Tagwira's (2006)

The Uncertainty of Hope, Hoba's (2007) stories 'Specialisation', Chingono's (2007)

'Minister Without Portfolio' and Hoba's (2009) 'The First Trek- the Pioneers'. Furthermore,

African Feminism has been a part of more decentred or spontaneous ongoing struggles over

the years to free women from long histories of exploitation, oppression and marginalisation in

patriarchal societies. Explaining that African women seek "all the things that other feminists

struggle for respect, dignity, equality, lives free from violence and the threat of violence"

Amina Mama points out that:

> It seems obvious to me that African women do have aspirations
> that go far beyond securing their survival: political, economic,
> social, intellectual, professional and indeed personal desires for
> change. It may be true that most African women are trapped in
> the daily business of securing the survival of themselves, their
> families and their communities — but that is merely

symptomatic of a global grid of patriarchal power, and all the social, political and economic injustices that it delivers to women, and to Africans (2001:60)

African Feminism is concerned with and seeks to advance African women's representation, empowerment and emancipation in the public and private spheres. African Feminists have aspirations that include as well as go far beyond securing their survival in social, economic, political, intellectual and professional spheres, they desire transformation in the areas of respect, dignity, equality, and freedom from violence (Mama 2001). The strength of African Feminism is that as an African-centred methodology it offers an appropriate investigative framework for addressing gender issues relevant to the African community. It seeks to be firmly grounded in the cultural and historical experiences of African people (Blay 2008). African Feminism is a positive movement, which signals a refusal of oppression, and a commitment to struggling for women's liberation from all forms of oppression: internal, external, material, psychological, emotional, socio-economic, political and philosophical.

African Feminists seek to confront all forms of exploitation or abuse of African women in every aspect of life where women can realise their potential and reach self-fulfilment. African Feminists represent Africa and its people in a more constructive way than Western paradigms that position Africa as flawed. African Feminism prioritises and contextualises African experiences of gender and African women's realities. Ogundipe-Leslie and Nnaemeka (Blay 2008) define African Feminism as not one monolithic "African Feminism" but notes that there are many "African Feminisms" to allow for the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical forces and localised realities conditioning women's activism in Africa. This way they also provide a blueprint for action rather than an exhaustive definition. While African women have experienced oppression, gender discrimination and inequality differently in their diverse societies the fact remains that these challenges are a reality for women in Africa. Theories such as Africana Womanism by Hudson-Weems

(1994) do not adequately address African women in their varied African environments. They do not challenge patriarchy. Mainstream Feminism, on the other hand, focuses on differences with men and is criticised for not including other experiences of women hence considered a reference to white middle-class women (Amadiume 2001). African women have carried out different and multiple struggles, including ace and class, hence they should define feminism on their own terms as well (Mama 2001). Nnaemeka (1998) has also argued that African environments provide the roots for local knowledge and situation that women should define themselves on their own terms. African Feminism also considers African men, as various African Feminists have believed in respect, dignity and equality for both women and men. Accordingly, fighting injustice should be everyone's responsibility regardless of sex:

> Every woman and every man should be a feminist especially if
> they believe that Africans should take charge of African land,
> African wealth, African lives and the burden of African
> development. It is not possible to advocate independence for
> the African continent without also believing that African
> women must have the best that the environment can offer
> (Aidoo 1998: 47).

African Feminists call upon men and women in Africa to work together without discriminating against each other's genders so that they realise the full benefits of their hard-won land. This would also benefit Africa in terms of development. As such, women, progressive men and men who believe in feminism should combine their efforts to formulate practical solutions to their cultural, social and political worldview so that they can transform society.

The following key words are important in analysing the extent to which women are portrayed as having access to own and control land in Zimbabwean fiction.

1.7.3 Gender

Gender has been one aspect that has affected women's access to access, own and control land in Zimbabwe. Ruth Meena (1992), an African Feminist and scholar defines gender as socially constructed and culturally variable roles played by women and men within a structural relationship of inequality between them, as manifested in economic, political, social structures and in households. Gender has been socially constructed by patriarchy, with an overdetermination of biological attributes and roles within patriarchal cultures (Kimmel 2008). The failures around gender mainstreaming and inclusivity are at odds with the intentions of African Feminists who promote equality in accessing and owning land. Equality of access and opportunity to resources does not only benefit women, but men too will benefit.

African Feminists and academics like Dzodzi Tsikata (2009) engage with the gendered nature of land and labour relations, examining how various markers such as gender, class and kinship have been used to structure access to sources of livelihood resources as land. Amanor-Wilks (2009) also discusses gendered livelihoods and the differential gender access to land where tradition can be invented to favour a particular group along gender lines while blocking and excluding another group especially women. Tradition has been manipulated by patriarchy to reinforce inequality in social, marital and labour relations. Colonialism also worsened power inequalities within the gender hierarchies that have existed in African societies (McFadden cited by Salo in Mama 2001). Thus patriarchy, largely having power to access, control and own land, structures the gendered labour relations on the land.

The UNESCO Advocacy Brief (2004) reflects on how men have much to gain from a gender equal society since many men have also suffered from socially constructed gender

stereotypes, and these patriarchal stereotypes put pressure on them. Men who are social science academics and feminists like Kimmel (2008), Ratele (2013), and Johnson (2014), strongly advocate for men's involvement in working towards gender equality.

1.7.4 Land

Land is an important asset for advancing women's development, freedom and security. Land is a natural resource consisting of the ground and soil, and is used by humans for their livelihoods. It also includes rivers, trees, rich agricultural soils, rocks, minerals, forests, habitat, and pastures. The concept extends to grazing, farming, mining, residential, recreational and commercial areas, as well as waterways. The uses of land vary and they include agricultural, residential, commercial and transport. Land also refers to the territory or nation belonging to people who live within it. The value of land is captured by Gutto (1986), who argues, somewhat too romantically, that anyone who owns land owns everything, extending from the heavens to the depths of the earth. Nevertheless, owning, accessing and controlling land affords the person or group significant entitlement over everything that can be obtained from it, at least in theory. Thus, being landless or not having access to, ownership and control of land increases inequality and vulnerability to exploitation. It is quintessentially disastrous and a sure way to poverty and dis-agency.

1.7.5 Access to Land

In this research, access to land refers to opportunities and rights to use the land. The rules of tenure define how access is granted to rights of use, control and transfer of land (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum 2010). Access rights to land and natural resources are obtained through family or legal processes of allocation, inheritance or purchase. Access to land involves a legal administrative procedure that functions in a wider political, economic and

social context. Tenure in security derives from the wider political contexts, the capacity to administer land, and the ability to invoke the rule of law, the absence of which advances insecurity (Scoons 2009).

1.7.6 Land Ownership

This refers to land possession which is either legal or customary, and which grants communal rights. Ownership can be transferred or inherited. Land ownership is guided by rules created to regulate and define how property rights and land are allocated, how access is granted to rights to use, control and transfer land. Land ownership determines who can use what land and for how long. In post-independence Zimbabwe, the Communal Land Act of 1982 for example, prevents women from having rights over land as it is administered within the context of customary law, which does not protect women. The use of customary law, which favours men, sets the ground for the continued omission of women and discrimination against women (Mushunje 2001).

Furthermore, rights to access and own land are reinforced by custom, law and some land development policies. For instance, the land reform programme in Zimbabwe does not practically address the plight of women when it deals with the questions of ownership and access to land. The customary land tenure systems (Maguranyanga and Moyo 2006) and some policy frameworks, such as the Land Reform and Resettlement Programme Phase II of September 1988 and The National Land Policy Framework Paper (revised in 1999), were supposed to have mainstreamed gender into the land reform programme, to increase the access, control and ownership of land by women. Yet all these policy frameworks have gender gaps that impact negatively on women's access to and control of land, or are silent on gender mainstreaming (Mgugu and Chimonyo 2004), as will be discussed in more detail later.

1.7.7 Land Control

Land control, particularly for the purposes of this research, means having power to influence how land is used and managed. It includes a person's ability to make decisions regarding land, determining which part of the land should be used, when, for what purposes, to achieve what outcomes, and by whom

1.7.8 Empowerment, Equality and Democracy

Empowerment is the power or ability by an individual (or group) to control his or her own life (or their own lives) by taking initiatives, making decisions, and having the freedom and authority to control one's interests. Equality refers to equal opportunities in society, allowing the fulfilment of individual potential through securing fairness and justice and removing unfavourable treatment of individuals induced by discrimination and oppression. Democracy refers to governance and decision-making by people for themselves. People who value democracy will promote equality through the empowerment, of themselves, and others. Equality is characteristic of democracy, without empowerment, we cannot have equality.

African Feminists argue that there is a need to empower women because of patriarchy, colonialism, settler colonialism, neo-colonialism, capitalism, and underdevelopment (Mama 2001). Women's social, political, legal and legislative lack of empowerment has contributed to oppression, and to powerlessness in accessing land. Empowerment in these areas will enable women to access democratic power, and empowerment, and enable the whole population to function more effectively.

Despite their differences where there is equality, people have better opportunities and access to resources, such as land. African Feminists seek more equality for something very basic that all African societies fought for in their struggles for independence. Decades later, women are

still discriminated from having access to land ownership. Women, whether married, single or widowed, need equal access to land so that they secure their survival. Irrespective of gender, all people should have access to resources as land so that they are also empowered to enjoy equal rights to land. Since these are basic human rights, men and women should enjoy equal opportunities and be treated according to the same principles and standards (Verloo 2007).

When this has been achieved, then men and women will be free to participate in all aspects of their welfare and shaping decisions by which they are governed. Zimbabweans have been denied basic democratic rights during colonialism but the attainment of independence through the liberation struggle granted hope of democracy and democratic rights in Zimbabwe, which included full citizenship participation (Makaye and Dube 2014). As such, both men and women should enjoy their democratic rights as citizens in independent Zimbabwe. Democracy that derives from empowerment and equality allows people to participate economically and politically. As equal citizens, women should be able to protect their democratic rights, including their rights to the land, so that they can contribute fully in society. Gender empowerment and equality restrain undemocratic forces, which promotes equal access, control and ownership of resources such as land. While patriarchy has continued to prevent women's access to owning and controlling land, the achievement of democracy and growing empowerment in the areas of education, law and health facilitates men and women's empowerment, and increases women's access to land resources, so that they are increasingly able to participate freely and contribute to their livelihoods and to the country's land based economy.

1.8 Introduction of the writers

My research identifies a systematic continuity of attention to women's access, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe in the literary works of Irene Mahamba (1986), Freedom Nyamubaya (1986), Yvonne Vera (1994), Chenjerai Hove (1998), Valerie Tagwira (2006), Lawrence Hoba (2009), Julius Chingono, and Daniel Mandishona in a collection of stories edited by Staunton (2009) and NoViolet Bulawayo (2013).

Yvonne Vera was born in 1964 and died in 2005. She is one of Zimbabwe and Africa's most esteemed female writers. Growing up, she witnessed women struggling to survive not only colonial oppression but also the yoke of traditional culture, which kept women down, submissive and abused while black men enjoyed all the advantages associated with patriarchy. These inequalities persist even after independence. She writes on difficult subject matter and creates strong women characters in her novels, which are firmly rooted in Zimbabwe's pre- and post-independence eras. Her literary works revolve around the issues of gender inequalities, rape and infanticide. Her novels have been widely valued and studied in African Literature.

Chenjerai Hove is a poet, novelist and essayist born in 1956 in colonial Zimbabwe. He is one of the leading figures of Zimbabwean literature. His novel *Bones* gained him international fame. Hove explores the lives of ordinary people in Zimbabwe under colonial rule. He was an activist who criticised post-independence Zimbabwe's ruling elite hence he was forced to live in exile in 2001 in Norway where he later died in 2015.

Irene Ropa Rinopfuka Mahamba is a former liberation fighter in the struggle against colonial rule in Zimbabwe. She was born in 1956 during colonialism in Zimbabwe and her novella, *Woman in Struggle* (1986), explores a young girl's rising consciousness of settler colonial

oppression and patriarchal authority and control, which oppress women. Mahamba also explores how women struggle against the oppressive socio-economic and political structures.

Freedom Nyamubaya was born in 1958 during colonialism and died in 2015. She was also a revolutionary fighter for the liberation of Zimbabwe. She left school and joined the struggle where she fought at the battlefront. Nyamubaya was a poet, feminist and farmer who provided agricultural development assistance to women small-scale farmers. In her collection of poems, *On The Road Again (1986), Poems During and After the National Liberation Struggle (1986),* and *Dusk of Dawn (1995)* she interrogates post-independence developments in Zimbabwe and revisits Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. She brings out the betrayal, problems, hypocrisy, and opportunists who hijacked the revolution and sidelined the genuine liberators in independent Zimbabwe.

Valerie Tagwira is a Zimbabwean writer born in 1974, six years before independence. She is a specialist obstetrician and gynecologist by profession. *The Uncertainty of Hope* is her first novel. She also writes short stories and poetry. In *The Uncertainty of Hope*, she investigates health-related and developmental issues affecting women. She explores the life of poor women by giving insight to the challenges faced especially by the poor in Zimbabwe during the period of Operation Murambatsvina in 2005.

NoViolet Bulawayo is the pen name for Elizabeth Zandile Tshele born in Zimbabwe in 1981, a year after independence. She did her secondary school in the city of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe and went to university in the United States. She writes about Zimbabweans' struggle for land in urban areas as well as how the government has failed to address the basic needs of the people in *We Need New Names*.

Lawrence Hoba is an entrepreneur, author and literary promoter born in 1983 in Zimbabwe, three years after independence. He has a number of short stories that appear in a number of

publications. He is one the new generation of writers who are determined to have their voices heard through writing about contemporary challenges, like land. In his collection of short stories in *The Trek and Other Stories*, he writes about relocations during the land reform programme in Zimbabwe.

Julius Chingono was born in 1946 on a commercial farm in colonial Zimbabwe. He worked as a blaster on mines for most of his life. Chingono has written a number of poems in several Shona poetry anthologies (*Nhetembo*, *Mabvumira Enhetembo* and *Gwenyambira*), short stories ('Not Another Day' in 2006 and a novel *Chipo Changu* in 1978) and a play (*Ruvimbo*, 1980). He has also published poetry in English (Flags of Love, 1983 and Flags of Rags, 1996).

Daniel Mandishona is an architect, born during colonialism in 1959 in Zimbabwe and grew up in one of Harare's high density suburbs, Mbare. Following expulsion from secondary school in the then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe's colonial name), he went to live in London. He has a number of short stories published in *Writing Now* (2005), *Laughing Now. New Stories from Zimbabwe* (2007), *Writing Free* (2011) and *Writing Lives* (2013). He has published a collection of short stories in *White Gods, Black Demons* (2007).

1.9 Conclusion

Chapter 1 contextualises the relationship between women and land in Zimbabwe, in three historical phases that presented distinct experiences and challenges for how women navigate such circumstances to access, own and control land. However, focusing only on the fact that women do not have access, ownership and control of land and attributing this to patriarchy and colonialism entrenches the stereotypical views of women as passive victims of patriarchy and colonialism. Women have responded to patriarchy and colonialism in various interesting

ways. This research unpacks the various strategies and tactics women have used to access, own and control land. The literature review problematises the issues of representation, gender and land. The research largely draws on African Feminism in the conceptualisation of gendered relationships to land, with a focus on African women's relationships to land, and to understanding African women's oppression and empowerment in relation to land.

1.10 Chapter Delineation

Chapter 2: Women, Land and Colonialism in Hove's *Bones* and Vera's *Without a Name* and *Nehanda*.

This Chapter focuses on the impact of colonialism on women's access, control and ownership of land by examining Hove's *Bones* and Vera's *Without a Name* and *Nehanda.*

Chapter 3: Women, Land and Nationalism in Nyamubaya's *On the Road Again*, Vera's *Nehanda* and Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle*.

This Chapter considers the relationship between women, land and nationalism. During the liberation struggle women realised that it is an important site not only for the contestation of colonialism but also to empower women to access, control and own resources such as land.

Chapter 4: Zimbabwe's post-2000 Land Reform and Women's Access to and Control of Land in Stories by Lawrence Hoba, Chingono and Mandishona.

The Chapter considers the impact of the land reform programme on women's access, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe. This is done through the analysis of the following short stories; Chingono's 'Minister Without Portfolio', Hoba's 'Specialisation' and Mandishona's 'A Dirty Game' edited by Staunton (2007) in *Laughing Now: New Stories from Zimbabwe,* and Hoba's (2009) stories 'The First Trek - The Pioneers', 'Maria's

Independence', 'Specialisation', 'The Second Trek - Going Home' and 'The Third Trek - Resettling' in his collection *The Trek and other Stories* (2009).

Chapter 5: Women's Contestation over City Space and Land in Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* and No Violet Bulawayo's *We need New Names.*

This Chapter explores the strategies and tactics women have used to contest and negotiate for space and land in the city, and draws on Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* and Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The Chapter concludes the study by giving the research outcomes of the analysed fiction. The conclusion identifies possible solutions from the research and establishes ways of reducing the methodological limitations of the research.

Chapter 2: Women, Land and Colonialism in Chenjerai Hove's *Bones,* Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* and *Nehanda*

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the literary and historical perspectives of colonial land injustices and how these have affected women's relationships to land. The Chapter fleshes out this argument through textual analysis of Chenjerai Hove's *Bones* (1988), Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name* (1994) and *Nehanda* (1993). It examines the impact of colonialism on women's access, ownership and control of land and analyses *Bones*, *Without a Name* and *Nehanda*.

Yvonne Vera's *Without A Name* interrogates the nature of the gender relations. The story centers on Mazvita's traumatic experiences, induced largely by the rape she experienced. Consequently, Mazvita leaves her village, Mubaira, and journeys to Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city. The rape of Mazvita is also a metaphor for the colonial 'rape' of African land that disrupted African lives, livelihoods and psyches, and forced migration to urban centres in search of employment. Vera depicts women and land as sharing the same fate particularly since colonialism, hence their close relationship. Colonialism's eviction and relocation of Africans from their prime land finds abundant expression in the work. Murray (2011) notes that *Without A Name* uses nature imagery to reflect the ongoing violence to both the land and women. Thus, the relationships between men, women and land continue to be mediated through violence, domination and power. Vera's *Nehanda* illustrates the colonial encounter and alludes to the factors that enabled ordinary people, including women and peasants like Nehanda to resist and fight against colonial invasion. Hove's *Bones* demonstrates the impact of colonial land dispossession and the suffering of women on the land.

2.1.1 Conceptualising Colonialism

Peter (1975) defines colonialism as a practice of domination involving the subjugation of one people by another. Colonialism also involves the invasion and occupation of physical space and territory, and the commandeering of all natural resources, and human labour. Colonialism can be conceptualised as an economic and political practice and ideology aimed at dominating and exploiting the people, their land and resources in an area. Colonialism constituted the people to be dominated as a race while constituting itself as another race, based on its fictionalised alibi of racial superiority, to defend the invasion and appropriation of all the land and resources. Fanon (1961: 5) calls the racial division of the colonial space the "Manichaean world of the coloniser and colonised", "a world maintained and reinforced by the racial ideology of white supremacy" (5):

> This compartmentalised world, this world divided into two, is inhabited by different species. The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that colonial reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to (Fanon, (1961:5).

In this colonial Manichean world, blackness is associated by the colonialists with characteristics like primitive, barbaric, tyrant and violent, while whiteness is associated with purity, enlightenment and civilisation. However, it is imperative to note that blackness and whiteness are social constructions in a colonial world and do not refer to natural or inborn characteristics. Fanon (1961) also argues that colonialism is possible through extreme

violence and intimidation as it is violence that governs the "ordering of the colonial world" (5) and tirelessly punctuates the "destruction of the indigenous social fabric" (6). Rodney (1981: 18) addresses the relationship of colonialism to capitalism, arguing that "capitalism has created its own irrationalities such as a vicious white racism". This clarifies that through colonialism, African rights, resources, privileges and opportunities were largely lost on the odd grounds of indigeneity and race. As if this was not enough, colonialism also had an impact on gender roles and relations, and compounded the crises of African people, and especially for African women:

> European imperialism was, from the outset, a violent encounter
> with pre-existing hierarchies of power that took shape not as
> the unfolding of its own inner destiny but as untidy,
> opportunistic interference with other regimes of power. Within
> this long and conflictual engagement, the gendered dynamics of
> colonised cultures were contorted in such ways as to alter, in
> turn, the irregular shapes that imperialism took in parts of the
> world. Colonised women, before the intrusions of imperial rule,
> were invariably disadvantaged within their societies, in ways
> that gave the colonial reordering of their sexual and economic
> labour very different outcomes from those of colonised men
> (McClintock 1995: 6).

2.2 Colonialism and Land

As elsewhere on the continent, colonialism in Zimbabwe has largely involved subjugation, appropriation and exploitation of African resources and labour. Shava (2012) argues that the

colonisation of Zimbabwe in 1890 resulted in the dispossession of the African of his or her

land. Similarly, Alexander (2006) also argues that:

> The politics of Rhodesia state-making was centrally about land - how it should be used, who should gain access to it, how it should be settled, what sort of authority was to be exercised over it - just as the politics of land was centrally about state making. It was, in the context of the settler state, a battle for legitimacy and power that intertwined in a contradictory manner ideas about customs …civilisation and progress, each expressed in the architecture of institutions …and in the definition of property rights (10).

Land thus was central to colonisation, where the European colonisers used force to entrench

their ownership and control of land while usurping and excluding legitimate African people

from ownership of, control over and access to their own land. The white colonialists and

settlers who violently and ruthlessly conquered, abused, exploited and raped the land and the

African people bears similarities with the guerilla's rape of Mazvita. Colonial land

dispossession resulted in deprivation, destitution and trauma, as Banana (1989: 2) observes:

> The colonisation of Zimbabwe was accompanied by the indiscriminate expropriation of African land by the settlers. Africans were expelled from their fertile traditional land and settled in reserves such as Gwaai, Shangaan and Binga areas with poor rainfall, which rendered them barren and inhabitable. In these severe semi-desert conditions Africans had to eke out a living on top of which the colonial state imposed on them all sorts of crippling taxes.

Sibanda (1989) corroborates this when he argues that the displacement of Africans from their

choice land underpinned the colonial system of land segregation. The colonial "reserves"

where Africans were settled were "cemeteries not homes" (1989 31). Half of the country's

most fertile agricultural land was designated for European occupation while Africans were forcibly moved to remote wastelands - called reserves - in the arid, mosquito and tsetse fly infested Lowveld of the Limpopo, Zambezi and Sabi/Odzi valleys (Alexander 2006). This colonial land dispossession proved traumatic to the African. It is equally important to note that Zimbabwe's colonisation was a well-calculated process involving European missionaries, traders and concession seekers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) posits that European concession seekers, such as Charles Rudd, were pivotal in exerting pressure on King Lobengula to sign the fraudulent Rudd Concession employed by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) to justify Zimbabwe's occupation and conquest. Ndlovu-Gatsheni observes that the Rudd Concession had a dubious "legality," as Cecil John Rhodes and company used it to trick King Lobengula into signing and granting exclusive mineral rights. Thus, Chennells (1989:124) posits that:

> The claims of the Chartered Company …depended principally on the Rudd Concession which involved Lobengula's allowing the company limited access to mineral exploration in land over which he exercised sporadic control. The company chose to ignore what was tentative and qualified in the old King's concession and interpreted it as a transfer of sovereignty which Lobengula neither intended nor had the authority, to effect (124).

European missionaries also formed a vital cog of the well-oiled colonialism juggernaut. They assisted their European governments by softening the minds of the African natives through conversion to Christianity. This paved the way for the colonisation of Africa. It is in this context that critics such as Rodney (1981) view the Christian church as instrumental in the colonisation of Africa.

Besides mining opportunities, white settlers occupied Zimbabwe in search of farmland. In recruiting white settlers for the occupation of the land between the Limpopo and Zambezi

Rivers, Rhodes promised each member of the occupation force mining concessions and swathes of fertile land for agriculture. After his dreams of discovering another Kimberly in Zimbabwe failed to materialise, the members of the invasion force naturally turned to pegging farms on land seized from Africans:

> The Pioneer Column consisted of two hundred young men of varying trades escorted by 350 'police', attended by 400 Cape 'boys' lured by the promise of 15 gold claims and three thousand acres of land each in Mashonaland.…The occupation of Matabeleland by whites took place three years later.…They were promised twenty gold claims each in Matabeleland, six thousand acres of land and a share in Lobengula's wealth (Todd 1989: 116–117).

Consequently, the land became a settler colony, characterised by a hierarchical racial citizenship (Africans as subjects and white people as citizens) came into existence. This racialised colonial citizenship meant that the African woman occupied the lowest rung of the social ladder. Thus, colonialism was not just about race and class but is also about gender. Mamdani (1996) observes that colonialism bifurcated populations into citizens and subjects. Europeans, mainly located in urban areas, set themselves up as the "citizens" with entitlement to enjoying all the economic, political, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Africans were demoted to being disempowered and dependent "subjects" and made to suffer in their rural confinements. This distinction, as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) notes, marked the beginning of hierarchicalised citizenship determined by race within which European settlers enjoyed citizenship rights and natives as subjects toiled under the decentralised despotism of indirect rule with the African chief at its apex. Thus, colonialism accentuated an already precarious social position of women under indigenous patriarchy. Schmidt (1992) contends that prior to colonialism, senior African men controlled and manipulated the distribution of land.

However, colonialism severely curtailed this power. Thus, Sibanda (1989: 32) argues that with the inception of colonial rule:

> A racial political system both at central and local levels was introduced. At the central political level, the white settlers had exclusive power and maintained a discriminatory franchise system. At the local level, the affairs of the colonised Africans were run by a Native Department …Former traditional rulers had no effective power in the new political system.

Colonialism resulted in racial land segregation where the discourse of black and white land came into existence. This land segregation resulted in the dispossession of Africans of their fertile lands. Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain* (1975) exemplifies this through the character Lucifer Mandengu who travels from the city to his home area in Manyene Tribal Trust Lands. The Hampshire Estates, owned by the European settlers, are depicted as "lush green" and "prosperous". However, the Manyene Tribal Trust Lands inhabited by Africans are portrayed as arid and drought stricken. Mungoshi, through this parallelism, directs our attention to colonial land injustices endured by Africans. This indeed is the result of the settler regime, which pushed Africans to less productive semi-arid lands. Mungoshi's (1975) biographical information informs us as well about the nature of these acts. Mungoshi was born in Manyene and his father was among the first Africans to procure a small plot in the Native Purchase Area (NPA). These were small sandy pieces of land that Africans acquired between large European estates. African women, by virtue of their sex, did not own, control and access such land as title deeds were availed to African men only. The colonial administration conspired with the already existing traditional and cultural laws to worsen women's marginalisation in accessing and owning land. Gaidzanwa (2011) notes that colonial laws on land rights followed and perpetuated the traditional marginalisation of African women. Similarly, Schmidt (1996) observes that African women's unequal access to resources was not

exclusively the result of colonial capitalism but the existing cultural structures. Racial land segregation also meant the creation of various racial land laws. Land grabbing by the European settlers meant displacement of Africans, separation of races through land alienation as well as discriminatory policies. The Land Apportionment Act (LAA) of 1930 saw the movement of Africans into 'Native Reserves' like Gwaai and Shangaan (Shava 2012). The LAA legalised segregation as evident in the unequal division of land based on race (Shava 2012). Sibanda (1989) observes that the Act also provided a basis for the policy of separate development along racial lines. The 1951 Land Husbandry Act (LHA) also restricted African land ownership to tribal trust lands (TTLs). These TTLs were arid and not conducive for agriculture. NLHA also envisaged cattle destocking to curb desertification in the already overcrowded reserves. Sibanda (1989: 32) notes that these colonial laws 'legalise[d] the racial character of the colonial state'. It is also critical to note that colonialism perpetuated the marginalisation of African women in relation to land. Schmidt (1992) also highlights how wives of large-scale farmers in the reserves and Native Purchase Areas did not share their husband's privileged position. Schmidt argues further that African women provided unpaid labour on land belonging to their husbands. This affected women's ownership, access and control of land since they did not have ownership of that land. Africans were spiritually and culturally alienated because of the colonial dispossession of their land. Table 1 summarises the colonial land policy in Zimbabwe from 1889 to 1979.

Year	Land Act /Commission	Purpose	Result
1889	The Lippert Concession	White settlers to acquire land rights from Native Zimbabweans	British South African Company (BSAC) buys concession and uses it as a basis for land appropriation
1898	Native Reserves Order in Council	To create Native Reserves in the face of mass land appropriation by white settlers	Native reserves created haphazardly in infertile, low-rainfall areas and which subsequently become communal areas.
1930	Land apportionment Act	To separate land between black and white people	The high-potential areas become white large-scale privately owned farms.

1951	Native Land Husbandry Act	To enforce private ownership of land, destocking and conservation practices on (TTLs) black smallholders	Mass resistance to legislation fuelling nationalistic politics. Law scrapped in 1961.
1965	Tribal Trust Land (TTL) Act	To change the name of Native Reserves and create trustees for the land	Because of population pressure, TTLs became degraded 'homelands'.
1969	Land Tenure Act	To replace the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and finally divide land 50% white and 50% black	Combined with the TTL Act, Rhodesia had the equivalent of apartheid.

Table 1: Land Policy of Zimbabwe 1889-1979 (Source: Ministry of Lands Land Reform and Resettlement (2003, cited by Mafa 2015:38)

2.2.1 Dislocation/Forced Migration

Colonialism resulted in forced dislocation and migration of Africans. Colonial conquest meant land alienation and racial segregation. The squeezing of Africans into reserves that were barren led to congestion and low productivity. Consequently, African men migrated to mines, farms and towns searching for jobs in the colonial economy, leaving behind most African women in the rural areas: Local mining and agricultural capital, in need of large supplies of cheap labour, ultimately favoured a migratory labour system involving 'single' men unencumbered by family members. The cornerstone of state policy was the relegation of 'superfluous' members of African families to rural reserves, where they engaged in subsistence cultivation that subsidised the sub-economic wages paid to African men. European farmers, mine owners, and state officials expected these rural-based households to produce food for the workers and their children, to bear the social costs of production by caring for sick, disabled, and retired workers, and to raise the next generation of labour. Women, of course, formed the backbone of this unremunerated labour force. (Schmidt 19926: 5)

Doris Lessing's (1964) *The Grass is Singing* poignantly depicts Africans working on settler farms. This underscores the squeezing out of Africans from their land into selling their labour to survive in the capitalist colonial economy. Therefore, women remained to hold the land on behalf of their husbands and male kin. In a way, women had increased access to land with limited control and ownership, because the land remained under the ownership of absent men. This also meant increased workloads for women who would work in the fields alone with children.

Bhebe (1989: 55) notes that the Land Apportionment Act divided the country (with a total area of 96, 2 million acres) into European and African land. Bhebe further observes that Europeans arrogated to themselves 49, 1 million acres of the prime land in Zimbabwe while Africans had only 21, 1 million acres. However, most of the unassigned land was tsetse fly-infested and therefore not suitable for human resettlement and agricultural purposes. This racialised land division resulted in overcrowding in areas designated for Africans. In addition, Bhebe also notes that even Native Commissioners tried to sensitise the colonial government to the overstocking and overpopulation characterising the African reserves. Thus, in order to survive, Africans had to migrate to white farms and urban centres in search of employment. The colonial system also imposed taxation on Africans as a way of coercing them to work on white farms. Thus, Sibanda (1989: 31) argues that "because of the need to ensure a constant supply of labour to the European mine owners and farmers, direct taxation was also imposed". Schmidt (1992) also ascertains that the colonial government, given the critical shortage of African labour on European farms, imposed heavy taxation on the African. Thus, the colonial tax laws were amended which saw the 10-shilling hut tax replaced by a similar tax payable by all African men who were eighteen years and above. In addition, there was an imposition of an additional 10 shillings for a man with more than one wife. However, this tax regime failed to force African men to sell their labour. This necessitated the doubling of the

tax and reducing the taxable age to fourteen. The only alternative to get cash to pay for the tax was to work in the capitalist colonial economy. Consequently, the conscription of Africans into the capitalist colonial economy as sources of cheap labour commenced in earnest.

Schmidt (1992) states that the impact of colonialism slowly changed indigenous social structures especially on gender division of labour. Agricultural labour, because of colonialism and the subsequent colonial tax regime, now fell heavily on African women. Thus, Schmidt (1996) argues that:

> If Shona social structures changed slowly under the impact of colonial rule, modifications in the gender division of labour were more dramatic. A large proportion of the agricultural work, supplemented by other productive and reproductive tasks, had historically fallen within women's domain. The opening of new markets and the imposition of taxes following European occupation served as an impetus to increased peasantisation, and the burden of augmented agricultural labour fell heavily on women's shoulders (43).

However, this did not alter land ownership patterns in colonial Zimbabwe. African women's position largely remained the same as the absent men continued to own and control land. Schmidt further maintains that a father would, with the consent of the chief or village headman, assign land to his married son. This situation continued to disadvantage women even though they were largely responsible for working the land. However, African men's migration to cities, farms and mines in search of employment slightly empowered women. During this period women capitalised on land during the absence of their men. For example, women were now directly involved in decision making in relation to crops to be grown. Thus, women's labour provided food and gave them increased access to land that they previously lacked because of the presence of their husbands. In addition, Schmidt maintains that women

also increased their income through selling vegetables and green mealies to Europeans. Consequently, women's perception of themselves and their identities witnessed a positive transformation because of these changes.

2.3 Colonialism and Land in Nehanda

Nehanda is Vera's (1993) first novel and second published literary work, after her first collection of short stories. In *Nehanda*, Vera revisits the colonial history of Zimbabwe through the anti-colonial activist and venerated spirit medium Nehanda, through imagining Nehanda's troubled birth where she is surrounded by a "circle of women" (4). This represents the future generation, marking women's presence on and connectedness to the land and its resources, such as the vegetation. The birth process is monitored by women who work together to support the mother to give birth without any complications. This working together resonates with the African Feminist view that African women have and need to come together and work together (Kuzwayo cited by Kolawole (1998). The birth symbolises that the birth of a new era in the hands of women was about to begin. The silence is symbolic of a deep, powerful and untainted voice that later becomes a form of ancestors' voice:

> The spirits were there … The child came silently into the
> darkness and warmth of the hut, After she had been born she
> did not cry for a day. Mother worried about this silent child
> whom she had brought into the world, and wondered if her
> daughter had the power to assert her own presence on earth.
> (12).

During her adulthood, she becomes a key figure in coordinating a revolt against the colonialists. There is a much deeper connection to the land such that people including women have to die defending the land so as to cleanse it and free it from the grasp of colonialists. For example, we note a strong connection to the land when Nehanda 'digs the soft earth with fingers, and finds a clay pot filled with red soil. The soil has been taken from an anthill. The

pot carries images of the future' (110). I interpret this act as symbolising strength and unity represented by women. The clay pot represents the future carried by women in their hands and this future is linked to women's access to, control and ownership of land symbolised by the red soil. Vera appears to be suggesting that Nehanda has long been gathering strength and unity from the land and the people, so that these become drivers of the future when people fight to possess their land. Thus, it seems as though Vera is suggesting that Nehanda both struggled and gave in to death for the future of her people and the land.

In addition, 'Nehanda sees the future clearly and distinctly, and is fulfilled. But for now, her people will continue to be killed until evidence of her death has been found. They found her sitting in a clearing, waiting' (114). Vera suggests that Nehanda's relationship with the land is profound and goes beyond individual access and ownership, which is why she fights for everyone (and even future generations) to have access to and ownership of land. Furthermore, as Vera represents Nehanda as the strong woman she was, who fought to defend the land, so that people do not lose their ownership and control of their ancestral land, rivers and related resources, and all their rights of use and access to all of these, Vera produces more accurate representations of women activists than the patriarchal misrepresentations of the women. For example, in *Nehanda* women are not only tillers of land but defenders of land. Thus, ancestors trust women to defend the rights of everyone in as far as land is concerned. When Nehanda is born she is granted a 'safe passage' (3) by the ancestors hence the ancestors have chosen a woman to represent them in defending the land. It is said that 'others would recognize the child by her gifts and her difference – her eyes that would see distances. Her eyes would brim with dancing prophecies of hope and despair' (6). Hopes of freeing the land and hopes of accessing and owning land are given through a woman, Nehanda which shows

the importance of women and their strength to withstand difficult situations where fighting

for land is concerned. Nehanda becomes a symbol of resistance and struggle.

Nehanda becomes an intermediary, connecting her people to the land. She is later captured

and killed by the colonialists, but she embraces death as a triumph where "she welcomes her

departed, and the world of her ancestors" (118). She enters the spiritual world, which offers

what Vambe (1999: 57) remarks as "a continuous extension of human responsibility beyond

the world of tangible things".

The women also exercise agency and contest subalternity through one of the few resources

they actually have, that is, by acting as spirit mediums. Spirit possession allowed women to

get their voices heard. For example, Vera represents Nehanda channelling a powerful

ancestor concerned with issues of land: 'she speaks with the guidance of the departed which

shape[s] her tongue into words. Words grow like grass from her tongue' (36). Vera's

representation of the historical Nehanda also gives women space to exercise agency and

locate African sources of power and influence accessed by the historical Nehanda, so that

contemporary women can have greater agency in fighting for land and livelihoods.

In Vera's novel, the character Nehanda also serves to affirm the history of anti-colonial

resistance and women's important roles in long resisting colonialism, and also to foreground

the politics of gender, given women's ongoing landlessness. The historical Nehanda was able

to transcend gender limitations and through her, Vera is able to represent and address the

challenge of women and their land prospects within patriarchy, colonialism and neo-

colonialism. Lewis (2002:4) posits that:

> Vera's emphasis on Nehanda's connection to the land is
> therefore key to an exploration of the spiritual power and
> unique perceptiveness, with Vera challenging the stereotype of
> the African woman as a mere cipher of male centered symbol-

making. Debunking assumptions about the victimisation of
African women in traditional society, Vera questions the
conventional belief that traditionally women were non-beings
and lacked all agency. This is illustrated through Mr Brown, a
central colonial figure who looks down upon women [and
doubts that natives listen to women].

Through the use of ancestral power, Vera's Nehanda becomes a combatant who demonstrates authority and agency regarding the land of African people when she commands them to fight colonialism and to fight for their land. She urges people to resist colonialism and to fight on so that they do not lose land and the future that is connected to the land:

Spread yourselves through the forest and fight till the stranger
decides to leave. Let us fight till the battle is decided. Is death
not better than this submission? There is no future till we have
regained our lands and our birth. There is only this moment, and
we have to fight till we have redeemed ourselves. What is
today's work on this land if tomorrow we have to move to a new
land? (66).

From this perspective, Nehanda stands as the most prominent anti-colonial liberator who has a deep relationship with land. Women should not be glorified as mere symbols in nationalistic projects that are male centered. Lewis (2002:5) argues that '[w]omen generally have increasingly been transformed into symbolic adjuncts in Zimbabwe: the third chimurenga, the recent land redistribution… has progressively written women (as former combatants, national heroes, farmers and social agents) out of official and public scripts of national reclamation'.

Given that land ownership and belonging for women and men in Zimbabwe has always been understood and experienced spiritually and materially, it has been linked to the ancestors who have been understood as the final custodians of land hence the commitment by the people to

fight and claim back their land from colonialists under the guidance of their ancestors. The notion of claiming back the land is addressed by Vera (1998):

> The new kind of claim is something that happened in their
> effort to resist the takeover by the British settlers. Before it,
> their concept of ownership was part of a value system; it was a
> belief that the land was protected by the ancestors, that the
> ancestors, the departed- not the dead but the departed were
> guardians of the soil so to speak. They were the ancestral
> shelter for the land and they themselves were being taken care
> of by the land, by the ancestors (76).

Regarding the character Nehanda and her deep and assertive spirituality as apparent in her commitment to fighting for land, Vera (1998) states that:

> I am more interested in that the entire world which Nehanda
> inhabited and which enabled her as a woman, as a spiritual
> woman, to bring people together enough that they listened to
> her. They believed her enough to fight for their land, for the
> land not only for their land (77).

Vera addresses the old and ongoing challenge colonized people and women have had with being silenced, through Nehanda's example of becoming the center of power, through having the agency to take the authority to speak for herself and for others:

> the men stop dancing and kneel around Nehanda, and the
> women in the outer circle cast protective shadows over the
> bending bodies of men. Nehanda closes her eyes and speaks
> with a trembling and troubled voice. Her voice rises higher, as
> though to reach every crag surrounding the village (62).

The need for African women to join men and all the free people of the world to be at the center of their own power is what African Feminists like Ogundipe-Leslie (2002) advocate, for instance when she indicates that 'we should think from our epicentres of agency, looking

for what is meaningful, progressive and useful to us as Africans as we enrich ourselves with forerunning ideas from all over the world including Europe and America (6).

In addition, women like the historical Nehanda were also connected to the land through the ancestors, which shows that people's relationships to land has been both material and spiritual. African women have greater material contact with land as many more live on the land and survive directly off the land, and Vera (1993) shows this clearly through many characters: the woman trader, the midwife, Nehanda's mother and Vatete.

The woman trader at Nehanda's birth has access to large areas of land through her capacity to be mobile and travelling across the land. This woman is empowered and is represented as having the freedom to go beyond the confines of her home and the land around her home. The woman trader claims her right to the land through travelling and trading without patriarchal limits upon the division of domestic labour, partly as she is widowed (5). Through travelling she sees and is able to interpret early indicators of the arrival of white people and the impending colonialism.

She dreams about how the stranger (the white man) whom she refers to as a sign has decided to live among: 'the stranger builds a home before he starts taking the people's cattle and moving people "into the barren part of [the] land where crops would not grow" (11). This dream later manifests into reality with the onset of colonialism, which forced African people into reserves. The dream anticipates colonisation and its devastating effects. The Africans never imagined that the white men would stay. They only thought that they had come temporarily to dig for gold and would go away after exploiting African resources.

Later in the novel, Vera exposes the white man's deviousness as he refuses to leave the land. The colonial encounter is fortified by the documentation brought by the colonisers to 'legalise' their presence through exercising authority on African land. Vera represents this through the dare (village gathering place) (37) where matters are presided over by the elders. The dare symbolises performance and participation. The white men treat "elders with contempt" (38), laughing at them and their African beliefs and go on to produce documents for them to sign the land away. The elders refuse, sensing the danger and new threat they face. There is collective understanding that land is a shared resource. Colonialists do not have this understanding; hence they demand ownership rights to the land. The elders do not oblige to the colonialists' demand as they deliberate the matter. They then make the following observation;

> We allow him to dig for gold, but the land is not his. The land
> cannot be owned. We cannot give him any land because the land
> does not belong to the living (42-43).

In African traditional cosmology, land is owned by ancestors who share it with the living. As a result, land ownership is not decided at an individual level. It is communal and sacred. Vera presents the historical presence of the white man, whom the people suspect has "unusual customs" (43). From the onset, black people did not fully comprehend the whiteman's ways especially because "the whiteman held the paper like a sacred thing" (43). They were suspicious of his intentions. The subsequent signing of documents - presumably a reference to the infamous Rudd Concession between King Lobengula and Cecil John Rhodes - led to the historical seizure of land by British colonialists. The moment the stranger in *Nehanda* builds his home on the hill, marks the establishment of his authority, omniscience and dominance of which the narrator would reminisce, "He had moved us into the barren part of our land where crops would not grow" (11). This marks the reality of the invasion and loss of

land through dispossessions by colonialists who used stealth and deception as discussed above. Prior to colonialism, women were at in harmony with the land and are portrayed accessing land through farming, making shelter for their families and collecting firewood.

> They sit together, the fields rolling behind them with short bushes of drying groundnuts held in small disappearing mounds. Nehanda, seeking praise from Mother, has collected a sizable amount of wood from the adjacent forest to carry home for the evening fire (26).

Vera reflects the social, economic and spiritual importance of land for the security of women and the society. The woman trader has 'a circle of huts, and land to plant her crops' (5) even though she is a widow. Thus, land is shown to be equally important for everyone despite one's gender or social status. Having ownership and control of her marital home and land allows the woman trader to have shelter and food, hence she is empowered and free. Land becomes a source and guarantor of social and economic security. Women generally had access to the land and had harmonious associations relations with it before the colonial land laws and its enforcing agents were created to destroy such links and to define and entrench colonial relationships between the rulers and subjects. The colonialists had established a government station, police and a prison to enforce the brutal laws and authority on the African and his land. Mr Browning, a white man, suggests to his colleague, Mr Smith, that they should enlarge the prison for order and justice (55). The irony is that they should be in prison for unjustly occupying the land. This aptly captures the unjust and capitalist society that was cultivated by the colonialists. Colonialism disturbed the African family's economic and social relationship to the land.

Vera also shows that colonialism disturbed the African family's economic and social relationship to the land. The land provided families with food security through faming crops

and keeping livestock with women and men working together as family. However, as shown in *Nehanda*, colonialism limited access, ownership and control of land. For example, Moses is reduced to a servant serving the white men. As a result of colonialism, he and his family's access to land is linked to his ability to pay the hut tax with money obtained from selling his labour to Mr Brown. It is said that 'he feels ashamed of it. If it were not for the hut – taxes that he is being made to pay, he would not accept the work' (45).

On top of that indignity, Moses's native name (Mashoko) is changed as he is renamed and given a biblical name (Moses) as a sign of progress. In a way, this translates to loss of identity and connection with the ancestors. Mr Browning justifies the renaming when he says, 'The new name is easier to remember, and more importantly, it is a step toward [sic] the goal of civilising the country' (44). Moses is stripped of his dignity as a family man as he tries to protect his wealth, that is, his cattle from being confiscated if he fails to pay the hut tax. As a result of colonialism, his family's access, ownership and control of the land is linked to his ability to pay the hut tax with money obtained from selling his labour to Mr Brown.

2.3.1 Gender, Spirituality and Land

Women's voices have been silenced both by colonialism and patriarchy in Africa. In *Nehanda*, Vera recuperates and recovers women's voices through spiritual possession of ancestral voice, oral language and invoking the cultural structures of the Shona society. Vera states that "[h]er voice is that of the departed. It comes from the beginning of time. The people stand at the mouth of the cave, calling, asking her to pass to them voices of the departed" (81). Vera portrays women as having eternal relationship with the land. Spirituality is an integral part of the life for the African people that transcends birth and death. Some of this is shown through the main character Nehanda who is born carrying a spiritual gift. This

show that she possesses power and knowledge bestowed on her by the ancestors. Her birth is regarded as a "gift to the living" (3). Spirituality allows for gender neutrality. For example, people pray to the "ancestral mudzimu" (spirit) and to a "mhondoro" (lion spirit) which is "the guardian that unites the whole clan" (27) and is said "one of the strongest spirits of the land" (27). Therefore, spirituality goes beyond gender and women and men identify with and become loyal to the ancestral spirits. The novel shows a collective regeneration of the nation with land is the major asset.

Vera recuperates the voices of women silenced by both colonialism and patriarchy. Women are valued and their status is uplifted. Women's agency is promoted through Nehanda, whose status is raised despite the subordinated status of women in society, hence "the appropriation of spirit possession by a female character generates meanings that destabilise both the colonial African patriarchy's worldview" (Vambe 1999:59). The oral language of invoking ancestors that Vera uses gives Nehanda the power to lead a new path on the land for the benefit of everyone. It has vast potential to rally men and women as a formidable collective. This is what African Feminists like Ogundipe-Leslie (2007) propagates for in her African Feminist theory, Stiwanism.

The formation of a circle (*dariro*) during Nehanda's birth indicates a protective barrier, strength and cooperation of women. The *dariro* is testimony to collective participation and performance for common good in the world. It indicates an enclosure fostering women's relationship as they work together under the guidance of their ancestors. Vera therefore projects the women witnessing the birth of another special female child as "the circle of women asserted their strength through their calm postures, waiting .They knew that the birth of the child, for whom they all waited, was something that they did not have power to

control" (4). The birth process excludes men, thereby exhibiting the importance of the unique role that women distinctly play in bringing up life. All this affirms the feminist thought that values collective effort. This is also proclaimed by Wane (2011) who asserts that African Feminism developed through bonds which women had with other women since the nature of African village life was one collectivity.

Nehanda critiques Second wave western feminism and this novel projects Vera herself as an African Feminist who also articulates other African Feminists' commitment to advance feminist perspectives. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) challenges feminist discourses that view Western feminists as providing guidance to African women. She argues that African women had indigenous avenues that they used to fight injustice, "indigenous feminisms" (223). Her argument is that 'indigenous feminisms also existed in Africa' (230).

Indigenous feminism is rooted in African environments where women's subordinated roles are challenged in one way or another by African female writers and scholars. This includes an inquiry into social, cultural and economic relationships of inequality and as well as challenging subordinated roles through fighting for dignity and recognition in their different experiences and contexts. It was advanced by African scholars like Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), Aidoo (1998) and Nnaemeka (2003) as a way of detaching from mainstream feminism associated with the United States and Europe, and the negative notions regarding women's practices of resistance as having originated from the West to Africa. Ogundipe-Leslie (2002) propounded Stiwanism to pinpoint her position with Feminisms where she advocates for 'Feminisms' rather than 'Feminism' because of the many perspectives and differing social needs that need to be addressed and articulated. Ogundipe-Leslie's (2002) Stiwanism is a way 'to move us away from defining feminism and feminisms in relation to Euro- American or elsewhere, and from declaiming loyalties or disloyalties' (6). She further argues that she 'felt

that as concerned African women we needed to focus on our areas of concern, socially and geographically' (6) and 'take our discourses away from arguments about being or not being Westernised and imitative (6).

Practices of women's resistance were not a Western invention and Aidoo (1998) concurs that Feminism has been practiced by African women for a long time as part of 'our heritage'. Western versions of Feminism are considered a negative mode for women seeking empowerment by African scholars as argued above. As a result, African women scholars suggested indigenous methods of claiming women's rights. In this view, Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) asserts that in most African cultures there have been resistance and activism by women going back to precolonial times. As such, Africa as a diverse continent has seen more varied approaches that engage women's experiences, which is a strength in as far as fighting for women's rights is concerned.

In this regard, Nnaemeka (2003 asserts that Nego- Feminism which is "grounded in negotiation and the 'no-ego' idea challenges through negotiations and compromise, knows when, where and how to detonate patriarchal landmines; it also knows when where and how to go around patriarchal landmines that are indigenously African in gender discourse" (2003:359).

All these views speak to the particular experiences of African women originating from the African continent. These approaches try to formulate indigenous African gender theory which has risen due to the critical need for African female writers and critics to synthesise an indigenous African theory in order to properly situate and locate their particular experiences of African women within the discourses of gender, colonialism and racism.

Therefore, indigenous feminism links with African Feminism in the way African Feminism prioritises and contextualises African women's experiences of gender and African women's

realities, such as having limited access to, ownership and control of land. African Feminism is not a monolith, there are many "African Feminisms" and this allows for the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical forces and localised realities conditioning women's activism in Africa.

Scholars like Wane (2011) postulate that African Feminism is part and parcel of African women's lived experiences and it is about African indigenous ways of knowing which are holistic and not compartmentalised into neat piles but more fused together. Steady (1989) posits that African women were original feminists in their struggle to overcome different oppressions as they sought to emancipate themselves from inequality. There have been indigenous manifestations of resistance and activism among women in African cultures going back to precolonial times (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994) and many women's mutinies around the world predate Western Feminism or occurred without any contact with Western Feminism (McClintock 1995: 384). Given these arguments, Feminism in Africa should not only be traced from modern Western women but from the legacies of indigenous feminist women within and beyond their communities. This means that Feminism is not a new approach in Africa. It has been there and is as old as humankind. It has also been grounded in the life realities of African women which include social realities and cultural practices that aimed at emancipating women. Ogundipe-Leslie (2002:1) stresses that it should be remembered that there were radical outlets for women in indigenous African cultures and in our colonised societies and that contact with Europeans brought with it the inheritance of European movements and social concerns. Thus, African women through engaging indigenous feminist practices, have challenged the cultural, political and colonial injustice which limited their access to, control and ownership of land.

Through Nehanda and other female characters in *Nehanda*, we see activism and resistance by women as they fight for land. Nehanda's portrayal in the novel raises her above the ordinary

woman. She is located at the centre of traditional authority when she becomes a custodian of land for both men and women. In the cultural worldview of the African people, women had special roles in society. Nnaemeka (1996) argues that social structures and cultural practices provide an understanding of history and also recovers African women's achievements and traditions of resistance. Vera recognises and values this significant elevation of women within a culture known to be inherently patriarchal. For example, women like Vatete, who is the midwife and the trader, occupy special social positions. That bears testimony to the fact that African women occupied strategic and powerful positions in society. In *Nehanda*, women participate within important cultural structures. The midwife is an important figure in the novel and she is part of the traditional village council where she plays a major role:

> she was often invited by the elders to arbitrate in matters of the village, especially those concerning women. The dare was a large clearing in the centre of the village. Those who were admitted to the dare knew the power of words. The midwife was among the shapers of wisdom, who determined the future of the village (9).

The social importance of midwives afforded them positions within the power structures of the society. This meant that women had representation through which they could negotiate and voice their concerns, although their power was limited since men dominated the traditional councils. Vatete also occupies an important position. She is referred to as "the most important of the human presences in the room" (5) since she is involved in the births of children, the birth of life. This highlights the existence of Feminism in Africa. Women from different traditional setups have been feminist. They have long been seeking their rights and dignity. These women are represented in fictional literature as having made sacrifices by leading the way in the struggle for respect and equality (The Charter of Feminist Principles for African

Feminists, 2006). Amadiume (2001) further asserts that women made real sacrifices and already acted as 'feminists, even if not quite identifying themselves as such' (48).

In the text, *Nehanda,* besides the fact that there was some consideration for women to participate within the social structures of society, women feared for their daughters born into this system that silences the larger group of women.

> The child came silently into the darkness and warmth of the
> heart. After she had been born she did not cry for a day. Mother
> worried about this silent child whom she had brought into the
> world, and wondered if her daughter had the power to assert her
> own presence on earth (12).

On another dimension, the midwife and other women present are witnessing the birth of a nation pushed into colonialism and its turmoil. The mother worries about the uncertainty of the future of the daughter she delivers. Her silence appears to symbolise her vulnerability on the land that has been defiled by colonialism. The women, on the one hand, facilitate Nehanda's rite of passage into the living and the ancestors, on the other hand, welcome her into their spiritual realm. The burial of her umbilical cord in the ground symbolises this spiritual connection to the land. In other words, the women are witnessing the birth of a nation pushed into colonialism and its turmoil.

Vera highlights the spiritual and physical importance of the land for the society as well as portraying the manner in which women accessed the land. They accessed land through these physical and spiritual connection rituals when "the women buried parts of the umbilical cord in different places in the fields, spreading it as though to bless the earth with it" (12-13). The connectivity of the new born Nehanda as well as the women to the land is established at each birth through the burying of the umbilical cord in the ground. Hence, the taking away of that

land, as colonialism would do, constituted enormous violence to their lives, even though Nehanda was also to show enormous agency in defending the land.

As a quest for equality of access, Vera gives women a special place in the spiritual realm as they become custodians of ancestors' voice, which is not gendered, which may explain the respect they command from both sexes. It is in this vein that Musanga and Mutekwa (2013:89) state that "the Shona cosmos is in harmony with spirituality that does not discriminate based on gender".

2.4 The Representation of Women, Land and Identity in Hove's *Bones*

Bones, by Chenjerai Hove (1988), explores the experiences of Marita, who is the chief protagonist. Marita is depicted as a:

> …wife in a peasant community … a labourer on a vast commercial farm, as a mother whose only son opts to fight for freedom, and, finally, as a woman whose experiences symbolise those human aspirations which revolve around the need for freedom and self-fulfilment (Zhuwarara 2001: 217).

The story is set on a large white commercial farm in colonial Zimbabwe. The description of the fields as "stretching forever as if they were the sky" (33) underscores the vastness and aggressive nature of the dispossession and dislocation of the African from their land. That captures great loss and vulnerability. Hove gives readers a glimpse the vast expanses of white-owned virgin land through Marita when she stares through a bus window and sees:

> … trees in their greens and rocks wearing the different patterns
> of their birth, the grass green with little patches of bare ground

> …These were large farmlands which nobody farms. The owners
> are frenzied or vicious when they see someone walking through
> these unspoiled forests that are their farms (67-68).

Hove (2001) and Mungoshi (1975) use the journey motif in their texts to capture the reality of colonial land disparities between blacks and whites. Marita, in *Bones*, views land through the bus window in the same manner as Lucifer has a panoramic view of land disparities in colonial Zimbabwe from a bus in Mungoshi's *Waiting for the Rain*. African people are made to occupy semi-arid lands while whites farm on fertile lands.

On the contrary, areas occupied by Africans are "not even good for donkeys to live in". They are a place where "people and dogs eat from one plate" (15). Thus, Manyepo's farm:

> … becomes a strategic and powerful symbol which captures the
> central contradictions and tensions that revolve around the issue
> of land, and which constitute an essential feature of the
> Zimbabwean experience (Zhuwarara: 217).

Hove largely depicts Africans as victims of colonialism and its attendant segregatory policies and laws. These land policies and taxation laws resulted in forced migration as Africans sought employment on white-owned commercial farms. This is clear when Chisaga, one of the male characters in the story, says:

> Do you remember how the whole Muramba village came here to
> look for work when they heard a new farmer was coming to open
> a new farm? Some came with their children, their dogs and cats
> and all they could carry. Manyepo was here, fuming as if the
> villagers had annoyed him by coming to offer their sweat to him
> (35).

In *Nehanda* as well, Mashoko's name is changed to Moses (marking the loss of identity), and he is forced to work for Mr Browning so that he can pay the taxes. This coercion to work is clear in that Mashoko does not find his work interesting, he is ashamed of his work as a houseboy. These taxes were hitting hard on the natives who did not understand the reason for paying the taxes let alone afford them. The only alternative was to seek for employment. This meant succumbing to the capitalist society. Land is central in Hove's *Bones*, which shows how Africans, became destitute because of colonialism:

> Shortage of fertile land plus the numerous taxes which settler governments imposed on an already impoverished peasantry compelled many destitute to seek employment in the mines and factories which were mushrooming all over the country as well as on white-owned farms. All these were economic institutions of the settler state which were forever hungry for cheap black labour (Zhuwarara 2001: 217).

However, through the character Marita, Hove foregrounds African women's experiences under colonialism. He seems to argue that colonialism worsened the plight of the African women. It destabilised the African woman's material, economic, social, marital, familial security and self-worth, as she became a victim of African patriarchy, colonialism and imperial economics. This is what African Feminist approaches struggle for, securing women's survival and their communities. Hove manages to creatively deal with critical challenges of women's access to control and own land within the oppressive and exploitative structures and social relations.

I now focus on the relationship between women's access to land and identity. Identity is largely about how one perceives oneself or how others perceive the self. In addition, identity is about how one positions themselves in society. Hogg and Abrams (1988: 2) define identity as people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are and how they relate to

others. Similarly, Jenkins (1996: 4) notes that identity refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities. Hall (1989) also affirms that identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses. Owning, accessing and controlling land and as well as having many wives to work the land is central to the identity formation of most African men. However, marriage provides women with a social identity connected to accessing land even though the husbands hold title to the land. Traditionally, women in Africa married largely for security reasons (Weinrich 1983) and access to land was one aspect that ensured that security. Thus, a single woman had serious challenges in owning, accessing and controlling land. Colonialism, however, disrupted this traditional system as women's marriage as a strategy of accessing land was no longer significant. In *Bones*, Marita is married to Marume, and the couple, because of colonialism, has no access to land. Rather, the land they work on is a commercial farm owned by Manyepo, a white farmer. Furthermore, Manyepo ruthlessly exploits Marita's labour. Janifa, another female character in the text, has this to say about Marita:

> The rains have come, but they do not seem to spit enough. She
> will help them spit on Manyepo's soil. Yes, this is Manyepo's
> soil. Marita will be here all the time. She is part of Manyepo's
> soil. She works it. She eats it. She breathes it. She feels it in her
> insides (15).

Land was one element that afforded security and status since women accessed the husband's land through marriage. Therefore, marriage improved women's status. This implies that if a woman was not married, access to and control over, let alone ownership of land was difficult. This principle did not apply to single men because they were assured of land by virtue of their being male. However, colonialism did not guarantee even the married women access to

land. For example, Marita in *Bones* has no land although she is married. Hence, Marita becomes a farm labourer. Weinrich (1983) argues that in African traditional culture men generally desire hardworking wives who can work and endure the backbreaking rigours of agricultural work to achieve great harvests. This reflects the importance of women's labour in agriculture. It also implies that African culture acknowledge women's role in agriculture, yet this same system openly denies women access, control over and ownership of land. Thus, there is an acknowledgement of women's ability in agriculture as providers of labour for the men who mostly own the land. Women have been agriculturalist with many generations of skills, knowledge and labour. This explains partly the high cases of polygamy in the African marriage system; to make more women work for the man. One can argue that this was some sort of institutionalised slavery under the rubric of marriage. Both the white colonial system and the African traditional system exploit women for their hard work and as such, Manyepo prefers Marita's labour to that offered by her husband whom he refers to as "lazy" (20).

Land is also a symbol of historical and cultural continuity. There is the concept of a rural home where, according to Zimbabwean tradition, one's roots are. The burial of the umbilical cord in the soil links one with the land spiritually and culturally. This identifies one with his or her ancestral spirits because the clan of people belonging together collectively owns the land. The concept of a rural home expresses a Zimbabwean/African view of land in terms of sociocultural identification. The question *Who am I?* in the African context expresses the notion that one possesses roots in the land, has a place in the world, or belongs to a community which is one's home (Mutambara 2008). It is notable how land gives an identity at both personal and social levels. Thus, the appropriation of land and the subsequent dispossessions during colonialism further worsened women's position in society. With the onset of colonialism, women lost the most valuable assert that defined them as white

colonialists usurped the land, leaving Africans destitute. Land, for an African woman, represents life, power and hope at an individual, cultural and spiritual level. Women, because of colonialism, could no longer perform their roles of motherhood, as they were now providing labour on white farms instead of working on their land to feed their families with produce derived directly from the land. Hove presents a whole village of men and women affected and impoverished by colonial dispossession of the African of their land. Women became mere sources of cheap labour following colonial land dispossession. Manyepo sadistically exploits women's labour for two months without pay. He can only confirm them as his workers after they have been weeding "for two months before I can be satisfied. Then I will tell you who stays and who goes" (36). Thus, women suffer the most because of the unholy alliance of patriarchy and colonialism.

Gaidzanwa (1994) reiterates that women's economic well-being was mediated through their ties to men which were kin based. It is critical for women to retain strong ties with men as husbands, sons, brothers and fathers in order to avoid social and economic marginalisation. She further notes that women who had quarrelled with or had weaker or non-existent ties with men were very vulnerable. Such women would seek refuge in towns and mission stations. Hove's *Bones* explores women's experiences regarding ownership, access and control of land, especially during the colonial period. The setting itself is on a whiteman's farm. Marita and Janifa's presence on this farm underscores the violent expropriation of African land. *Bones* reflects a historical fact of colonial dislocations that pushed Africans away from their land. Graham (2009) observes that *Bones* reproduces a gendered narrative of anti-colonial nationalism showing how rural women play a central symbolic role in the liberation process while being socially excluded from it. The presence of women like Marita and Janifa at Manyepo's farm underscores the importance of women's labour under

colonialism. Colonialism turned women like Marita into objects of labour and entrapped possessions, much like the land owned by colonialists. *Bones* presents the pain, suffering and burdens of women on the land. It vividly captures the nature of the poverty characterising the African reserves. Marume rebukes Marita when she tries to resist Manyepo:

> Woman, since when have you become a man? You will be dismissed here. If you are dismissed, let me tell you that you will go alone. I am not going back to that reserve where dogs and people eat from one plate. The reserves are not even good for donkeys to live in. Never mind the work you do here. Do you think all these people who shut their mouths in front of Manyepo are mere shadows. They know who gives them their daily bread (15).

The label "Mother of a terrorists" (16) attached to Marita because her only son has joined the liberation war, haunts her physically and psychologically. The liberation struggle therefore caused trauma for women like Marita who had to endure intimidation. In addition, the label "witch" (14) is attached to Marita, because she dares to confront Chisaga and Manyepo, pains her. Hove depicts men as largely weak since they cannot confront the coloniser. In contradistinction, Hove depicts women as resilient and courageous in the face of colonial brutality. Manyepo ill-treats, scolds and exploits Chisaga and Marume. Chisaga and Marume believe that they cannot challenge Manyepo, as the land is his. However, this is a false consciousness that Chisaga and Marume harbour because they are the rightful owners of the land. Only women of courage and valour such as Marita can confront Manyepo. Women have always struggled for their emancipation and rights. Resistance was either subtle or more open. Janifa actually bemoans the fact that Marita's death robbed the African workers of a courageous person when she says, "…you used to tell him about us. The men are all castrated …They cannot lift their heads against one man" (14-15). Land also provided some privacy and allowed women to form some social relations with other women, far from the society and

men. Away from men, they find peace, freedom, refuge and become themselves on a secluded space. Janifa says to Marita, "Can we go out, behind the anthill so that we can be ourselves there. I remember one day when two women came to share secrets of their husbands behind the anthill where I was helping myself. They were so full of stories in their hearts" (2). This emphasises one of the key elements of African Feminism that is, women supporting each other in social and cultural circles.

2.5 The Relationship between Colonial Dispossession and Women's Access, Ownership and Control of Land in *Bones*

Colonialism made Africans strangers on their land. It broke the relationship between the Africa and their land. Marita's husband, out of helplessness and desperation on Manyepo's farm, ironically bemoans the position of Africans when he notes, "We are chief's sons in a strange land" (23). He, however, fails to realise that they feel alienated from their own land, because they are the rightful owners. Manyepo, by virtue of his power derived from his white race, usurped this right to land. Women suffered because their husbands could not decently provide for the families hence their forced migration to colonial commercial farms. Hove largely depicts women as sources of cheap labour. This is also reflected by Amina Mama (2011) who points out that most African women are trapped as they struggle to secure the survival of themselves, their families and their communities. Marita and Janifa worked on the whiteman's farm, initially without being paid, so that they could prove themselves and secure their stay on the farm. It is in this vein that Meena (1992) notes that physical differences are crucial in constructions of how people are treated. Biological differences between females and males produce differences used to reinforce and justify prejudice and discrimination against women. Africans received no compensation for the loss of their land seized under colonialism. This adversely affected their access to land. For women this meant that they

could no longer have the land privileges they previously enjoyed as wives. Chisaga painfully describes the land dispossessions thus:

> Makaza the District Commissioner who comes in his Land Rover to tell us that by the end of tomorrow we must move because he is building a road where we live. If we do not move, Makaza drives bulldozers over our grass huts with a smile on his face. Then after he has destroyed our homes he comes the next day on his horse to ask for taxes (36).

This exposes the cruelty of colonial land dispossessions. However, Hove is optimistic. He evokes African spirituality to raise hope for the destitute people in *Bones* Chapter Seven, 'The Spirits Speak'. It is significant to note that spirituality was central to the liberation war against colonialists. The spirit medium that speaks in the text agitates for restoration and calls for 'many bones scattered across the land [to] fight so that the land of the ancestors is not defiled by strange feet and strange hands' (48).

This can also be linked to women such as the historical Nehanda who was an influential spirit medium during the 1896 resistance to colonial rule in Zimbabwe. Spirit possession gives women power and respect. This explains why Nehanda commanded considerable power and influence. This is why, although she was captured and killed in 1898, her spirit continued to possess other mediums and her 1896/97 exploits continued to be linked to the theme of resistance leading to the revival of the liberation war in 1972. In fact, Nehanda is said to have vowed just before her execution by the colonial administration, to return to fight again (Lipenga 2013). This is why her name became important to the nationalist movement and her image continues to be important in the history of Zimbabwe (Beach 1998) in which women became actively involved both physically and spiritually in the fight for land. In addition, different political parties use the myth of Nehanda to appeal for national solidarity, thereby making her an icon of hope and strength in the nationalist discourse of Zimbabwe.

It is important to note that the prominence of Nehanda, a female medium possessed by a female spirit - as the driving force of the liberation struggle, concretises the role of women as champions and defenders, if not custodians, of the land. Hove's reference to the spirit speaking in the novel points to how his fiction is informed by the historical Nehanda who becomes a spiritual icon in inspiring people to reclaim their land and dignity. The role of women in resisting colonial invasion and domination is an important factor that drives people to take up arms fight. Marita reflects this indomitable spirit when she confronts Manyepo. Hove uses "disease" as a metaphor for colonialism:

> Disease has eaten into the wealth of your soil …Disease has sucked the juice of the land you inherited for your children. Do not sit and drink to the comfort of your hearts because there is no reason for you not to rise …Disease crawls on the rocks which you have known to sit there all the time for your protection (43).

The spirit's reference to the coloniser as "disease" brings to the fore the issue of land which must be reclaimed if the African is to be "healed" from colonialism. Thus, Hove treats "reclamation" of land as synonymous with "healing". Hove also depicts colonialism as an invasion by "a mountain of white locusts" (44). These "white locusts" spread "disease" on the African continent and will "not leave to go to the land of their fathers" (45). The metaphor works as prophecy when the white settlers soon show that they are on the land for the long haul. The "disease" also refers to the consequences of colonialism such as landlessness, poverty and suffering. In addition, the metaphor of "disease" also refers to women's lack of ownership, access to and control of land since the little opportunity of accessing land they had vanished with the new colonial land laws. The spirit's prediction in *Bones* turns out to be true with the colonial invasion and the subsequent land dispossessions.

Nehanda's prophecy therefore inspired people into fighting during the first Chimurenga uprising of 1896-7 against colonialism. Hove depicts women as having more influence and unlimited access to the land when they are spiritualised rather that in their physical form. However, women need to physically own, access and control land in their lifetime.

Marita has the double tragedy of not only losing land, but also her son who joins the liberation struggle. To worsen her predicament, the colonial police torture her for having a son who is a freedom fighter. Many women like Marita were tortured because their sons, daughters or husbands had joined the struggle; they received the same torture a captured freedom fighter got. Given their immense contribution to the liberation struggle, women in post-independence Zimbabwe should have equal opportunities with men in terms of access and ownership of land. Women were the worst victims of this colonial land disparity. Women do not have any power or control over land in colonial Zimbabwe. Because of colonialism, they are even more vulnerable and exposed as they lack the security that their homes used to provide in pre-colonial times. Chisaga, in *Bones*, rapes Janifa in a farm environment that does not protect women. He has privileges as a house worker, which he uses to abuse women. Colonial dispossession therefore further limited women's access and control of land and this made them more vulnerable to abuse under colonialism.

2.6 The Paradox of Land in Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name*

This section examines Yvonne Vera's (1994) *Without a Name*. The novel centres on a young woman, Mazvita, who is raped by a soldier during the liberation war. She is left traumatised and becomes displaced. She falls pregnant and moves to the city where she later kills the baby as a way of freeing herself of the burden.

Vera, through Mazvita, depicts African women as entrapped by the abuse of land during the liberation war. Mazvita is not able to defend herself from the soldier because of colonialism

and war. The soldier takes advantage of the conditions of war to rape her, hence she becomes physically and emotionally disconnected from the war infested land. Her relationship to land that she regards as home does not guarantee her full security because of the rape: 'I only had my arms, because my legs were buried in the mist, but I felt that mist moving upwards, towards my face. Then I felt something pulling me down into the grass' (23).

During the rape, Vera (1998:80) reiterates that 'he does not reveal himself and she does not see [his face] in the mist. To her this experience merges into the whole land question because in Zimbabwe the [recent] war was fought very much over land issues. She rejects him and the land together with him; and that's why she has to leave it' (80). We note that the rapist (who is a liberation fighter) denies Mazvita what is most essential to her, that is, her basic human right to control her body in the same manner colonialism denied women and men their land, the most essential source of livelihood.

Mazvita struggled to cope with both the rape and the war against settler colonialism, which both destroyed her life. The man who raped her also killed her family members. She narrates the horrendous experience of losing her family as she runs home, 'how the sky behind her exploded as the village beyond the river burnt, and she shouted loud because her arms reached forward, but not forward enough to rescue the people, to put out the flame' (25). Mazvita loses her home and family that she could not rescue. The second war of liberation in the 1970s left women like Mazvita helpless on the land with no homes, no families, trauma and horrifying memories hence Mazvita's resolution to leave the land. Women could not access land freely for the war limited them access. The novel exposes realities confronting women that are often silenced or ignored by some writers. Through Mazvita Vera raises the silenced voices of women abused during the war.

Furthermore, *Without a Name* depicts men who cling to the land while a woman like Mazvita is so traumatised by the combination of colonial and gender oppression that she urgently needs to escape from both. She realises that this could be the only path to move on and recover the past trauma thus she tells Nyenyedzi, "I must move on. I will move on' (25). This shows that through colonialism and the war, many women's relationships to land are associated with trauma. As a result, women like Mazvita felt that the war-ravaged land does not offer safety and happiness.

When she meets Nyenyedzi who cares about her and values the land, he tries to convince her to stay but she tells him 'I cannot live here. We must go to the city and live there. I don't know if we are safe even in this place. The war is everywhere' (24). Mazvita prioritises her safety first because she had experienced war thus, she warns him about how bad the war was in Mhondoro, 'It is hard to close your eyes there and sleep. It is hard to be living' (23). However, the paradox is that Nyenyedzi is a man and does not have the same war experiences as Mazvita. Nyenyedzi tells Mazvita that he likes the land and cannot leave the land and go to a strange unwelcoming place (24). He stays behind in Kadoma while Mazvita, who has had a disturbing experience feels she can no longer stay on the land (infested by war) as 'she possessed a strong desire for her liberty and did not want to linger hopelessly between one vision and the next' (34).

In as much as access to, ownership and control of land is important for women, women sometimes face complications associated with the land. For example, the war makes it difficult for them to feel safe. A woman like Mazvita needs better access to safe land where she is not prone to violence and abuse. Lack of physical safety and security have profound effects on women's relationship to land as in the case of Mazvita. Mazvita realises that she can only liberate herself by making inner personal choices that are not clouded by feelings for a man and what that man wants from her. She becomes her own liberator. In this case she

tries to free herself from a place ruined by war, to give herself an opportunity to discover something new elsewhere, and to empower herself. Given her past experiences with war and her traumatic memories Mazvita is justified in seeking recuperation and something better in modernity. African Feminism considers women as agents of change and feminists such as Wane (2011) call for women to hold their destiny in their own hands instead of waiting to be rescued by others.

Women organise their own forms of resistance and in this case Mazvita resorts to infanticide and leaving the land where patriarchal Nyenyedzi wants to keep her as '[h]e called upon the land to give him this woman that he cared for. He could not leave the land and be a man' (39). In other words, Nyenyedzi considers owning land as a characteristic of manhood just as he believes that having a wife is also part of being a man. However, Mazvita contests this patriarchal view through exercising agency in relation to land when she chooses herself over Nyenyedzi and the land affected by war to live her own reality where she has freedom. This correlates to the values of African Feminism and with scholars like Wane (2011) who contends that African Feminism tries to engage with the many specific realities, locations and complexities of African women by placing the women at the center of analysis. Vera through writing *Without A Name* is concerned about women's freedom even if it entails separation from the land especially if the land is not safe for women.

Furthermore, Vera (1998) indicates she is:

> Interested in a more contemporary reality of how women feel in their own pursuit of their own freedom and their own desire to understand their own bodies against the background of the changing times and relations towards things like land… the reality in Zimbabwe is such that women are wondering what their relationship to land actually is- and their own bodies. It

involves your body when you are tilling the land, and you know

you are taking your body into that space (80).

Through Vera's *Without A Name*, we understand better how gender relations affect social attitudes towards women, land and liberation. Vera challenges gender relations and liberation narratives that are male centered through Mazvita who struggles to liberate herself from men and from the war affected land. Lewis (2002:1) upholds that 'Vera's message of liberation pushes back the boundaries defined by male- stream nationalist projects'. For example, for Nyenyedzi liberation is characterized by winning the war and taking back the land, however for Mazvita, it goes beyond that to include personal safety on the land, and freedom, including freedom from danger or any threats of abuse.

Mazvita has redefined her consciousness towards land to find a new direction which offers her a better possibility of freeing herself. However, she faces challenges in her new direction and goes back to Mubaira. Vera (1998:80) argues that it is 'the ancestral pull of the land which…is always an overwhelming force'. One can conclude that women's relationship to land is connected to ancestral power.

Colonialism largely relegated women to the rural areas while African men had more latitude to migrate to colonial urban centres in search of employment. This forced migration worsened the plight of African women, as they became now largely became responsible for subsistence farming. The colonial Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 individualised tenure through registration that only recognised men. Gaidzanwa (1994) observes that this act Act defines the farmer as a man despite the fact that women were working and living on the land while the majority of the men migrated into urban areas. Vera (1994) actually addresses this issue in *Without a Name* through a male passenger in a bus on his way to his rural home in Mubaira from the town who tells the other passenger how all the agricultural activities are

done by his wife. He says, "I am going to Mubaira ….It is our home because my wife is there. She plants the crops" (53). The other male passenger also notes that his wife also stays in the rural areas:

> My wife stays at home, we had a large harvest of groundnuts last year. A whole ten sacks. I wonder how she did it, but a woman's strength is not to be frowned upon.… A woman's back is strong. A man cannot bend like that all day. A man cannot bend like a woman (53).

This is an acknowledgement of women's roles in rural subsistence farming. Ironically, men largely control the money earned from the farming, because they, in fact, own the land. The male passenger whose wife had a bountiful groundnuts harvest, plans to sell the harvested crop to buy a plough, exemplifies this. Women's lack of land ownership directly affects their freedom to make decisions on the money made from the harvested crop sales. This can be understood within the African Feminist approach that advocates for equality between men and women. Women need to make decisions on their labour as they try to secure their survival. This will go a long way in improving women's lives materially. As Vera shows, the woman only benefits a little from all the work she does on the farm. Instead, it is the husband's quality of life and status that improves through the woman's toil. Interestingly, "home" for most men is the place where the wife is, as exemplified by the man in the bus. Women therefore make habitable and comfortable homes out of the land, which men cannot do, as they are always "passengers" living off the toil of women. The departure of young able-bodied men from the rural areas into urban spaces worsened the gender division of labour as women also assumed male tasks and responsibilities (Schmidt 1992). However, African women partially benefitted from male migration into the cities and farms because this relatively increased their opportunities to access land as they remained on the land. Women now had access and sometimes control over land in the absence of their husbands since they

would decide which crops to farm and where. Their dilemma, however, remains that of keeping land on behalf of their absent husbands. This adds to the complexity of the relationship between land and women. The same land that African women desire to own and control is also hostile to them as it fails to protect them from the hazards posed by the liberation struggle. Mazvita typifies this since the land fails to offer her comfort, protection and security. Her rural home is destroyed during the war and soldiers even go on to use the land to violate women's bodies. This is highlighted when a soldier rapes Mazvita:

> Mazvita felt the man breathe eagerly above her. She hated the breathing; she hated even more the longing in the breathing: mostly, she hated the land that pressed beneath her back as the man moved impatiently above her, into her, past her.… Afterwards ... she connected him only to the land. It was the land that had come towards her. He had grown from the land. The land had allowed the man to grow from itself into her body (30-31).

Consequently, Mazvita is very desperate and afraid. She leaves Mubaira for Kadoma where she is unable to sustain a relationship with Nyenyedzi because of her fears. She leaves for Harare where she meets Joel but, as fate would have it, she soon becomes destitute and homeless. Thus, gender oppression causes Mazvita to become dislocated from the land that she used to anchor on. She has no home both in the rural and urban setting. This means that her future is mortgaged. This dislocation sets off a chain of misfortunes in her life because she has been uprooted and disconnected from the land that is supposed to guarantee her security and safety. As a result, Mazvita finds herself pregnant following the rape in Mubaira, and she is later driven to kill the baby in the city (Harare). Mazvita's character represents what African women seek: respect, dignity and life with no threat of violence, among other goals, which are also the things most feminists struggle for, as pointed out by Mama (2011).

Trauma and loss suffered during the war of liberation made both men and women abandon their homes and lands, and seek employment on European commercial farms. Mazvita goes to Kadoma where she gets employment on a European commercial farm and works with Nyenyedzi, she has no family, she is alone and does not have any home to go back to. Colonialism breeds family disintegration and debilitating homelessness. Nyenyedzi wants to go with Mazvita to help reconnect her with her homeland and family in Mubaira. However, Mazvita refuses Nyenyedzi's affirmation of his care when she tells him: "I can never go back there. The war is bad in Mhondoro" (23).

Women are very vulnerable in a war-torn land, hence Mazvita's compulsion to escape. To Mazvita, the war-torn land has become a threat as it fails to protect her from the rape. She loathes "the land that pressed beneath her back as the man moved impatiently above her, into her" (30). Vera's representation of this incident reflects how dangerous men exploit land to the extent that women cease to connect to it. Mazvita connects the land to the man who not only forces himself on her, but also fiendishly ravages her womanhood through rape. "It was the land that had come towards her. He had grown from the land. She saw him grow from the land …The land had allowed the man to grow from itself into her body" (31). Vera shows how men shape their realities by drawing on their patriarchal power over the land to impose their will and desires on women. Vera's *Without a Name* examines how the abuse of women on the land by soldiers fighting over land during the war of liberation added to the oppression of women. Women like Mazvita are sexually violated on the land and they wish to escape from the suffering and torture.

When there is war, women's ownership, access and control of land is very limited. Actually, it becomes a threat as women become increasingly vulnerable to more abuse. In the context of the liberation war, women relate to land differently and Vera demonstrates the ways men and women relate to the deeply contested land. Mazvita's decision to leave the land is a result

of the sexual abuse she suffers. Land reminds Mazvita of the rape she experienced, an experience she struggles to forget. Thus, Vera offers a complex re-evaluation of how violated women relate to the land and its features (Mangena 2015). More so, Vera (1994) describes how the war affected women physically and psychologically. Mazvita flees Mubaira to work on tobacco farms because the war ravaged land failed to protect her. She tells Nyenyedzi of her desire not to return to Mubaira because of the trauma she experienced and her fears that the area was a dangerous battleground. The novel shows landlessness and displacement during the war of liberation as circumstances that forced women to work on colonial farms. Mazvita becomes destitute after the destruction of her home, and the only place she could go to is the farm. She tells Nyenyedzi:

> Then I felt something pulling me down into the grass. This something pulled hard at my legs, till I fell down. It was a man that pulled me into that grass. He held a gun. I felt the gun, though I did not see it. After that experience, I decided to leave (23).

Different circumstances force women to migrate to urban spaces. The rape incident forces Mazvita to migrate to Harare. While the land offers fewer threats to men during war, women experienced rape with the contested land "pressed beneath her back as the man moved impatiently above her, into her, past her" (30). Women are more vulnerable as much on the land as anywhere. With the end of the war, Vera's novel points to the need for women to empower themselves and reclaim that same land to help regain the security and dignity they once derived from the land. The novel also shows the need for women to control the land because it is a source and guarantor of life. Because of the war, Mazvita does not share the same vision on land with Nyenyedzi who wants to remain while Mazvita wants to migrate to the city. Nyenyedzi thus tells Mazvita:

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We cannot carry the land on our shoulders. No one can take the land away. To move away from the land is to admit that it has been taken. It is to abandon it …We have to wait here with the land, if we are to be loyal to it, and to those who have given it to us. The land does not belong to us …we are fighting the strangers so that they leave, and we can protect the land (32).

Mazvita acknowledges what Nyenyedzi is saying but asks him, "Does this truth belong equally to all of us?" (33), that is to women too. The impact of patriarchy means that women and men do not share the same subject positions or views about land. Women are more unsafe and do not benefit much from the land, particularly under the double-tragedy of colonialism and patriarchy. Thus, Mazvita refuses to confine herself to a 'truth' that favours men. Like all postcolonial people, women need to define themselves and construct their own reality that is not shaped by the privileged. They must show urgency and act, like Mazvita who tries to escape the limits imposed on women's freedom. Because she "did not agree with the vision he [Nyenyedzi] held for the land" (32-33), Mazvita tells him that, "we do not own the land. The land is enclosed in barbed fences … we live in fear because even those who fight in our name threaten our lives" (33).

Vera advocates for the development of women's "ability to influence and change definitions of [their] own reality" (34). Women need to free themselves and deal with their realities of their relationship to land. While staying on the land is the solution to Nyenyedzi, to Mazvita it is not so because "to her the land had no fixed loyalties" (34). As Vera shows how the liberation struggle affected women and men differently, this difference accounts for the conflicting visions of the land between women and men. Whilst man like Nyenyedzi want to continue to stay on the land, women like Mazvita, who had traumatic experiences, advocate for freedom from the war affected land.

2.6.1 Escape from the Land, to the Illusions of the City

After the rape, Mazvita is obsessed with escaping from the land. She develops what Harding (2003: x) describes as "a charged symbol of human consciousness". She opts for the apparent freedom of the city and embarks on a journey. However, the city offers Mazvita only partial refuge from her physical and psychological traumas. Thus, as Harding (2003) argues, the city is a "text" represented as a place of civilisation and is "mythologised". This usually gives rise to a belief that everything is perfect in cities. Mazvita's imagination and rural misfortunes shape her perception of the city. Nyenyedzi refuses to go with her to the city because of his different perspective on the land. We note the failure of the war-torn land to protect women. The war and the land that seemed to conspire against her in allowing her to be raped are the sources of Mazvita's problems. Mazvita therefore imagines the city as a place where she can have freedom and where life would be better. She tells Nyenyedzi that "I left because I want to reach the city, I really must go to the city" (23). The city becomes a symbol of hope and freedom. However, it is imperative to note that despite Mazvita's perception of the city as a land of freedom and hope, the city itself has its dangerous claws. She even imagines the city as free from the liberation war. She feels the city can offer her protection and freedom that the war torn land in Mubaira failed to provide. She tells Nyenyedzi:

> We must go to the city and live there. It is said there is no war
> there. Freedom has already arrived. Do you see the people who
> come from the city; they have no fear in their eyes. Look how
> frightened we are here (2).

However, Nyenyedzi refuses to go to the city, as he likes the land. This land welcomes men but fails Mazvita as a woman. For Mazvita in her trauma, freedom and liberty lie in movement. Furthermore, the city is projected as offering an easier life, as exemplified by the brick buildings with assuring words such as *"Nyore Nyore"* [It is very easy] (15). Vera also

provides descriptions of filth and decay, which alludes to the seediness, intimidation and dangers of the city, especially to newcomers like Mazvita. The exonerating aspects of city life include the promise of greater freedom and the atmosphere of greater gender equality because "men and women wore trousers" (46).

2.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has engaged African feminist theory to enable a better understanding of the lives of Zimbabwean women's experiences regarding their access to, ownership and control over land during colonisation and how this transformed women's lives. It has discussed how colonialism worsened the marginalisation of women as it affected women's access, ownership and control of land, using Hove's *Bones*, Vera's *Without a Name* and *Nehanda*. The selected literary texts show how the liberation war led to the victimisation and traumatisation of women as they are sexually violated on the land because of the displacements. Both *Bones* and *Without a Name* show men who take advantage of the disruptions on the land to rape women. Janifa in *Bones* is raped by Chisaga and Mazvita in *Without A Name* is raped by a soldier. *Bones* and *Nehanda* also represent spirit possession, which they portrayed as important in empowering women to give hope and encourage people to fight for their land. The Chapter also examined conflicting feelings between men and women regarding land. On the one hand, women like Mazvita in *Without A Name* need to escape from the war-torn land since the land is associated with bad memories and vulnerability, while, on the other hand, men like Nyenyedzi feel that they have to stay on the land. This shows that men and women experience colonialism and war differently.

The Chapter also underscored how women lost further control of the land as they did not have legal ownership through registration. Colonial-forced migrations left women as place-holders in the absence of their husbands. However, this forced displacement created

opportunities for women to access and control land as men were absent although they did not realise the full benefits of the land. This was exemplified in *Without A Name*. The Chapter also explored the illusions of the city. Harare) is represented as a space that offers freedom for women apart from the war-devastated rural areas. This Chapter is significant as it traces historical aspects of the relationships of women and land in Zimbabwe. It also reflects on how feminist values have always been apparent in the struggles of Zimbabwean women, who have been struggling for respect as they seek to live free of violence or any threat of violence. *Bones* and *Without A Name* exemplify this.

Chapter 3: Women, Land and Nationalism in Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*, Irene Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle* and Freedom Nyamubaya's *On the Road Again*

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter examines Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* (1993)*,* Irene Mahamba's (1986) *Woman in Struggle* and Freedom Nyamubaya's (1986) *On the Road Again*. While Vera articulates early nationalist struggles involving women, Mahamba pays attention to the problematic relationship between nationalism, the nation and women's access to and control of land. Both *Woman in Struggle* and *On the Road Again* address the experiences and challenges of women in the anti-colonial nationalist struggles for the liberation of Zimbabwe. Male-authored literary texts on the nationalist liberation struggle, such as Shimmer Chinodya's (1989) *Harvest of Thorns* and Wilson Katiyo's (1976) *A Son of the Soil*, are also important portrayals of the anti-colonial resistance. However, their literary fiction largely undermines womanhood by making women's experiences irrelevant. For example, *A Son of the Soil* demonstrates how African men have constructed a masculine nationalist project that downplays the participation of women in the struggle for liberation (Njanji and Hungwe 2013), and in *Harvest of Thorns* there are stereotyped female roles of domesticity.

The chapter also advances the view that the ideology of nationalism largely created the illusion of equality and sameness during mobilisation of Africans to combat colonialism. There are gender limitations, as observed by Mama (2001), where women are mobilised at a national level to support agendas that cannot be described as egalitarian because they neither redress gender injustices nor intervene in oppressive gender relations. However, the continued treatment of women as second-class citizens makes the illusion of equality in post-independent Zimbabwe unsustainable.

3.2 Conceptualising the Relationship between Nationalism, Nation and Women's Access and Control of Land

Colonialism is largely about expropriating and exploiting African labour and resources. However, this expropriation and exploitation triggers resistance that crystallises in the desire for self-rule. The African elite comprised of the African bourgeoisie and intelligentsia who had been the recipients of Western education championed this desire. However, Fanon (1961) argues that:

> A bourgeoisie that has only nationalism to feed the people fails
> in its mission and inevitably gets tangled up in a series of trials
> and tribulations. If nationalism is not explained, enriched, and
> deepened, if it does not very quickly turn into a social and
> political consciousness, into humanism, then it leads to a dead
> end (143-144).

Though African nationalism contributed significantly to the emancipation of the African continent from the yoke of colonialism, it is important to take heed of Fanon's (1961) stern warning of the pitfalls of nationalism. He argues that national consciousness, instead of crystallising the people's innermost aspirations or the most tangible product of popular mobilisation, is a crude, empty and fragile shell. Fanon (1961: 142) further states that nationalism is a "magnificent hymn which roused the masses against the oppressor" but became largely irrelevant in the aftermath of independence:

> Nationalism is not a political doctrine it is not a programme. If
> we really want to safeguard our countries from regression,
> paralysis, or collapse, we must rapidly switch from a national
> consciousness to a social and political consciousness. The nation
> can only come into being in a programme elaborated by a

revolutionary leadership and enthusiastically and lucidly appropriated by the masses (142-143).

One witnesses a betrayal of the dreams and aspirations resulting from African nationalism during the height of the anti-colonial struggles in postcolonial Africa. This is largely exemplified by African post-independence literature that chiefly protests against the excesses and aggrandising tendencies of the ruling elite.

The African bourgeoisie and intelligentsia that championed African nationalism was largely male in composition. It is critical to note that African men and women were actively involved in this desire for self-rule even though they participated differently in the "national project". The gendered nature of nationalism accounts for this difference. This resonates with Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault (2000) who argue that in the post-cold war era, nationalism has emerged as a major force in global politics and women are central to the politics of nationalism albeit in contradictory ways. Women in most nationalist discourses primarily figure as phantasmagorical, sexualised or maternal symbols that embody national identities and boundaries. Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault (2000) further argue that women also figure as active participants in nationalist movements and as victims of sexualised violence undertaken in defence of nationalist identities and boundaries.

Nationalism may be defined as "the ideology which members of the community, those who are of the same kind, share – through which they identify with the nation and express their national loyalty" (Mayer 2000: 1). It is the exercise of internal hegemony, the exclusive empowerment of those who share a sense of belonging to the same "imagined community". However, nationalism is inseparable from gender and sexuality, as it is:

> the language through which sexual control and repression …is justified, and masculine prowess is expressed and exercised Because nationalism, gender and sexuality are all socially and

culturally constructed, they frequently play an important role in constructing one another – by invoking and helping to construct the 'us' versus 'them' distinction and the exclusion of the Other. The empowerment of one gender, one nation or one sexuality virtually always occurs at the expense and disempowerment of another (Mayer 2000: 1).

The nation that comes into existence, irrespective of the rhetoric of equality for all who partake in the national project because of nationalism, is "emphatically, historically and globally – the property of men" because the authority to define the nation mainly lies with men (Mayer 2000: 2). While it is men who claim the prerogatives of nation and nation-building, it is for the most part women who actually tend to accept the obligation of nation and nation-building, for:

All nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous – dangerous not in Eric Hobsbawn's sense of having to be opposed, but in the sense that they represent relations to political power and the technologies of violence (McClintock 1995: 352).

McClintock (1995) further argues that:

No postcolonial state anywhere has granted women and men equal access to the rights and resources of the nation state. Not only have the needs of postcolonial nations been largely identified with male conflicts, male aspirations and male interests, but the very representation of national power has rested on prior constructions of gender power (13-14).

However, the global militarisation of masculinity and the feminisation of poverty ensure that women and men neither live postcoloniality in the same way, nor do they share the same singular postcolonial condition. McClintock (1995) also argues that all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender and despite many nationalists' ideological investment in the

idea of popular unity; nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalisation of gender difference, as there is no nation in the world that gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state:

> Rather than expressing the flowering into time of the organic essence of a timeless people, nations are contested systems of cultural representation that limit and legitimise peoples' access to the resources of the nation-state (353).

Nationalism invents nations where they do not exist and most modern nations, despite their appeal to an august and immemorial past, are of recent invention. Consequently, "nations" are "imagined communities" in the sense "[t]hat they are systems of cultural representation whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community" (McClintock 1995: 353). However, McClintock further posits that "nations" are not simply:

> …[p]hantasmagoria of the mind but are historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed. Nationalism becomes, as a result, radically constitutive of people's identities through social contests that are frequently violent and always gendered (353).

Renan Mayer (2000: 2) defines a nation as "a soul, a spiritual principle … a moral consciousness" which its members believe must be maintained at all times and at all costs. Mayer (2000) also observes that a nation can be approached as a glorified ethnic group whose members are often attached to a specific territory over which they strive for sovereignty or at least the ability to manage their own affairs. Smith (1986), cited in Mayer (2000), argues that members of the nation believe in their common origins and in the uniqueness of their common history and they hope for a shared destiny. These members who claim to belong to a nation amplify the past and keep memories of communal sufferings alive and share national

symbols like customs, language and religion. They are often blind to the fact that their national narrative is based on myths and on "fictive ethnicity" (Balibar, in Mayer 2000: 2).

The nation is a sexed social phenomenon composed of sexed subjects whose "performativity" constructs not only their own identity but the identity of the entire nation as well. The idea of nation therefore relates closely to gender and sexuality. Mayer (2000) argues that nation, gender and sexuality are all constructed, or at least in relation to another, they are all part of culturally constructed hierarchies and all of them involve power. Mayer (2000) further states that because the nation was produced as a heterosexual male construct, its "ego" is intimately connected to patriarchal hierarchies and norms. These hierarchies and norms enable men and nation to achieve superiority over women and a different "Other" by controlling them.

The nation therefore is constructed as the hegemonic domain of both masculinity and heterosexuality and is a major site for the institutionalisation of gender differences. As a result, the intersection of nation, gender and sexuality is a discourse about a moral code, which mobilises men (and sometimes women) to become its sole protectors and women its biological and symbolic reproducers. The nation is largely constructed as a "hetero-masculinist project" and imagined as a "brotherhood", which suggests that nations mainly spring from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliations and masculinised hopes (Enloe 1989, cited in Mayer 2000). Therefore, the nation, regardless of location, largely remains the domain of men. Nationalism also relies on the family trope to naturalise and normalise its operations in society. The metaphor of family is indispensable to nationalism. The nation is depicted as one great family, the members as brothers and sisters of the motherland or fatherland, speaking their mother tongue … [T]he family of the nation overrides and replaces the individual's family but evokes similarly strong loyalties and vivid attachments. Even where local allegiances are tolerated and real families given their due, the language and symbolism of the nation asserts its priority and, through the state and citizenship, exerts its

legal and bureaucratic pressures on the family, using similar kinship metaphors to justify itself (Racioppi and O'Sullivan 2000: 25-26).

Aspects of male dominance re-emerge within the national family because of similar gender attitudes regarding the family that are transferred into the nation where the state gets involved by endorsing and enforcing bylaws governing the "national family". McClintock (1995: 45) argues that:

> The filiative (familial) order … flourished as a metaphoric afterimage, reinvented within the new orders of the industrial bureaucracy, nationalism and colonialism. Moreover, filiation would take an increasingly imperial shape as the image of the evolutionary family was projected onto the imperial nation and colonial bureaucracies as their natural, legitimising shape.

Thus, the concept of family becomes dangerous in a nation because patriarchal tendencies resurface within the hierarchical social forms that are assumed as natural. The moment people assume themselves as a larger family within the nation, the more they become easily subordinated along gender lines. McClintock (1995) further notes that:

> First, the family offered an indispensable figure from sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests. Because the subordination of woman to man and child to adult was deemed natural facts, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. The family image came to figure hierarchy within unity as an organic element of historical progress, and thus became indispensable for legitimising exclusion and hierarchy within non-familial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism. The metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial

thus depended on the prior naturalising of the social subordination of women and children (45).

The male role in the nationalist scenario is typically "metonymic" as men are contiguous with each other and with the national whole. Women, in contrast, appear "in a metaphoric or symbolic role". However, given that not all men, and certainly not all people, are created equal, the "horizontal comradeship" implied in nationalism and, subsequently, nation is gender, sexuality, race and class specific. This is mainly discernible in the distribution of resources as some people, given their gender, race, class, age and ethnic background have easy access to resources. Since nationalism is based on difference, the "imagined community" therefore cannot be inclusive as internal hierarchies often occur along lines of gender, race, class and sexuality, irrespective of the national discourse of internal unity. Men are generally expected to defend the "moral consciousness" and the "ego" of the nation and they tend to assume this role because their identity is so often intertwined with that of the nation that it translates into a personalised image of the nation. Because men regard the nation – that is themselves – as a single body, their own "ego" becomes at stake in national conflicts, and they frequently seek to sustain control over reproduction and representation of both sexuality and nation and over the boundaries of the nation, through defining who is included in, or excluded from it (Anderson 1991).

Davis and Anthias (1989, in McClintock 1995), identify five major ways in which women have been implicated in nationalism. Firstly, Davis and Anthias note that women are seen as inherently biological reproducers of the members of the national collectives. Secondly, women are projected as reproducers of the boundaries of national groups (through restrictions on sexual or marital relations). Thirdly, women are conceived as active transmitters and producers of the national culture. Fourthly, women are conceptualised as symbolic signifiers

of national difference. Lastly, women are seen as active participants in national struggles. In addition, women's centrality in national projects is also based on their symbolic status, connected to their reproductive roles, as representatives of purity. "Pure" and "modest" women can re-produce the "pure" nation and without this patriarchal notion of "purity in biological reproduction", it is claimed that the nation will not survive.

National narratives and myths are also critical to the survival of nations as they construct the "ideal" image of the nation (McClintock 1995). In Zimbabwe, there is constant reference - in myths, songs, and oral and written literature - to the roles played by the spirit mediums, Nehanda and Kaguvi, in inspiring the first colonial resistance. It is through such narratives and myths that a nation justifies its existence and preserves its uniqueness. This is done by constructing myths about the creation of the nation and by defining members of the nation and the nation itself. African political elites are important in the construction of the nation and its narratives as the nation is generally represented so that it serves the aspirations of the bourgeoisie "elite".

In these narratives, the nation is virtually always feminised and characterised as in need of protection; women are configured as the biological and cultural reproducers of the nation and as "pure" and "modest", while men are represented as defending the national image and protecting the nation's territory, women's "purity" and "modesty"', and the "moral code". Most commonly, the idea of an "ideal nation" and its "model" members are represented in the arts, literature and the media, in public speeches and in the writings of the nation's leaders – in every medium through which the nation is mobilised. Anderson (1991) frames the nation as an "imagined community" whose members conceive it to be united, exclusive and worthy of many sacrifices. This view is significant as women (including Zimbabwean women) were also mobilised in the broader nationalist aspirations of the colonised nations. However, feminists argue that it is important to be more critical about these mobilisations and alliances.

The nationalist alliances between men and women did not succeed in reducing gender injustice and improving gender relations after independence in Zimbabwe. If alliances are to be formed, they need to be strategic because there have been many instances where women have been brought into broader struggles both nationally and internationally. However, feminists have been realising that these struggles have worked with gender and power in ways that have not transformed gender relations as might have been hoped by women (Mama 2001). Thus, women became part of the "imaginative constructions" of imagined political equality and imagined liberation and are still waiting for their expectations to be fulfilled.

African political elites have the power to define the nation in ways that further their own interests to construct the nation. These elites define who is central and who is marginal to the national project (Mayer 2000). Nationalism and the nation tend to impose a monolithic national identity. However, this is seriously contested by the "multiplicity, fluidity, contextual, and contested qualities of identities" that undermine "any notion of a single all-embracing primary identity to which all others must be subordinated at all times and costs" (Eley and Suny 1996: 10). The concept of "nation" has multiple meanings in terms of membership, boundaries, and origin myths – and the ways in which these meanings are permeated with notions of masculinity and femininity. Racioppi and O'Sullivan (2000) also argue that national identities and geographies shift and change and that the idea of a nation is an imagining that misrepresents the diversity that exists within the borders it names. Pfaff, cited in Eisenstein (2000), states that nationalism articulates a "communal" loyalty positioned against loyalties seen as subversive to the recognised shared identity. This entails that nationalism requires one to be very loyal within an enormous large body that purports and dictates certain uniformity amongst its members who would have assumed a shared identity. Both men and women acquire this shared identity upon set loyalty standards that distinguish them from those who do not share the same identity.

Walter Rodney brings an important dimension to understanding nationalism in the context of anti-colonial struggles when he refers to nationalism as "a supposed credit of the colonialist" (1981: 242). He points out that nationalism is a form of unity that grows out of historical experiences where a sense of oneness emerges from social groups trying to control and defend their land and environment against competing colonial groups. Rodney alludes to the numerous African states prior to colonialism whose failure to realise that colonialism posed a real and imminent threat to their existence, which required them to unite to defend themselves against it, led to their capitulation and ultimate demise. In the same vein, unity between African men and women is also important since they are components of the African society, which shares the similar, if not the same historical experiences of colonialism.

Regarding land and labour productivity, Rodney (1981) argues that the "exploitation of land and labour is essential for human social advancement, but only on the assumption that the product is made available within the area where the exploitation takes place" (162). This, however, is problematic as Rodney considers the economic and developmental issues of a nation without realising that this is predominantly masculine, with men (and especially powerful men) as the principal beneficiaries of the economic development.

Anderson (1991) also discusses how imperialist nationalism was important in constructing a superiority complex with which the coloniser would justify their domination and subsequently strengthen their national pride in the imperial homeland. This was justified in the narratives written about the colonised (Conrad 1902, Haggard 2007) where the colonialists would assume the role of civiliser. The imperialists justified the exploitation by colonialism as they built unity among themselves to strengthen their dominance. Nationalism in the Zimbabwean context was rooted in the desire for independence from colonialism. Bull-Christiansen (2004) attests that:

The early nationalism had been described as a rural indigenous

response to the colonial occupation of African land. Africans

were being evicted from their land to make way for white-

owned commercial farms. This caused the Africans to organise

themselves in defence of their indigenous rights to this land.

Nationalism has, as such, been described as emanating from the

issue of African rights to African land. The evictions opened up

for an African nationalist discourse of the different groups of

people who came to live together as a consequence of the

evictions, fostered not only local or tribal ideas of rights to

land, but came to see themselves mainly as African (49).

Land, therefore, was a central grievance in mobilising people to dislodge colonialism.

However, accessing, controlling and owning this very land in post-independence Zimbabwe

largely favours the political elites. Men largely constitute these political elites. These political

elites have projected an image of being gender sensitive, mostly by signing on and

domesticating a number of international, regional and national gender-related legal

instruments. For example, after the Beijing Conference in 1995, the Zimbabwean government

drew its plan of action for gender empowerment. It also adopted the Convention on the

Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDEW) of 1991, the 1984

Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender

and Equality in Africa, the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Gender

and Development Protocol and national policy framework, the Maintenance Act (1999),

Administration of Estate Act (1997), and the Domestic Violence Act (2007), among others

(Mutanana and Bukalia, 2015). However, despite adopting these policies, the government,

through the political elites, has been marginalising women to further its own political ends by

controlling women's participation in politics and other economic and social spheres (Maposa,

Tshuma and Maviza 2015).

3.2.1 Women, Nationalism and Land in *Nehanda*

Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda* both celebrates, and reinvents the historical Nehanda by creatively reconstructing the birth, childhood, and challenges of a Nehanda who advances the initial mobilisation for resistance against the British colonisers. She urges the people to cleanse the land of the whiteman who had settled on the land as she tells them that, 'the land must be cleansed with your blood' (61). The value and significance of the land to the African people is shown by how she calls for a collective attempt to fight regardless of death. This call is recognised and celebrated by Vera not only as necessary nationalist resistance against colonial aggression but also from the African Feminist perspective which celebrates the struggles of African women, men and children in the struggle to resist exploitation and domination. Vera and Hove establish a link between ancestors and feminism by portraying empowered women, women who are acting against oppression and exploitation. Women have made sacrifices in relation to land and most have lost their lives in order to exercise autonomy. Examples include Nehanda in *Nehanda*, Marita in *Bones,* the woman soldier in 'Daughter Of The Soil' and female guerrillas in *Woman in Struggle*. These are examples of Feminist ancestors are represented as having made numerous sacrifices in relation to land, hence African Feminists commit to protecting this legacy. Vera draws on the oral story and struggle songs (about the historical Nehanda) and written accounts to create a novel that celebrates the history of Nehanda's resistance to the coloniser and to patriarchy with the aim to bring out the woman's story of difference from within colonial and patriarchal tradition. This is demonstrated when the character Mr Brown makes a deeply prejudiced judgement of Nehanda based on his sexist, ageist, racist and patriarchal colonial presumptions:

> I doubt that the natives can listen to an old woman like her. What can she tell them? This society has no respect for women, whom they treat like children. A woman has nothing to say in the life of the natives (75).

Sexist judgements are also demonstrated through the women's discussion on land in the absence of men when they connect and understand each other without being silenced by men. When they discuss the woman's dream, they say that if they tell the elders (comprising men) about the dream they will be told, 'what you have dreamt you have dreamt, do not awaken it' (12). Vera shows these women challenging the gendered patriarchal, colonial and neo-colonial structures that have undermined women's relationship to land. Nehanda's strength is extraordinary, and as a woman and a spirit medium she carries words and messages from the ancestors to the people. The colonial invaders felt intimidated by this woman because of her bravery and courage. She challenges the white administration as she tries to rescue the land for her people, for she clearly sees how the people were cheated by the white man because of their own generosity. Vera creates the allusive character Nehanda to celebrate the renowned national liberator Nehanda:

Nehanda was gifted with spiritual abilities of foretelling the movements of the opponents. Besides politics, she was consulted concerning general national matters. During the war in her possessed state, she could tell where the danger resided and used spiritual wisdom to guide the war (Dube 2018:2).

Beach (1998), Charumbira (2008) and Kaoma (2016) have referred to Nehanda's leadership role in resisting colonisers. Dube (2018:3) further maintains that Nehanda was the spiritual power behind the 1964-second uprising against colonisers and that, today in Zimbabwe, the success of the country's political independence in 1980 is attributed to her. Given this

background, Nehanda's role was and continue to be important in the fight for freedom and the fight for land.

By recreating the fictional Nehanda, Vera deconstructs patriarchal and hegemonic attitudes towards African women. The character Nehanda refuses to live according to the norms of patriarchy and gender constructions of both the African and western traditions. Nehanda speaks of freedom and ownership of the land. She calls for unity and cooperation, telling her people:

> We extended too long a hand to the stranger. Now there is
> much work to be done, and it must be done quickly. Together,
> with our spears and our hard work we must send the enemy out
> of our midst... (61).

The people respect her command and "listen to the voice of their ancestors" (61). It appears that Vera concurs with other African Feminists, like Aidoo (1998) who advocate for unity between men and women. Aidoo calls for a collaboration of African men and women to progress towards improving and changing their societies. Vera stands out and moves from Second Wave Western Feminist narratives about gender relations when she presents relationships of solidarity between African men and women, thus transcending gender binaries at a level of African spirituality and material needs for unity to overcome the various challenges. Musanga and Mutekwa (2013: 81) argue that "Vera's focus on gendered readings of the nationalist discourse of liberation attempts to combat the masculinist construction of the national project and its negation of gender equality". In this case, the character Nehanda plays a critical nationalist role as she initiates resistance against the coloniser. This points to Feminist thought that recognise that Feminism did not develop in an academic setting, but in the villages where the inclusion of women was evident in the social, economic and political spheres (Steady1989: 5-8). Nehanda becomes a woman commander, commanding villagers to

flee to the hills and fight for land from there for cover and protection as she assures that 'In the hills we shall protect ourselves from the stranger. In the hills, the wisdom of the departed will guide you. Do not fear anything' (80). There is a mutual relationship between women and land. As women fight to free the land from colonial invaders, the land offers protection by allowing them to have a better attacking position during the battle and also allowing them to take cover so that the enemy would not easily attack them. Nehanda tells the people to flee to the hills because that is where they can protect themselves from the stranger (80). Women take advantage of the terrain to fight during the battle. For example, three women push big boulders down the cliff attacking their enemies (the white men):

> The first three boulders fall almost simultaneously. An egg-shaped one is propelled by three women, one pushing the top while the others use log as a lever. It lands just behind the man with the sabre, striking nothing on impact but achieving a remarkable roll, injuring two horses before coming to rest at the narrow place halfway down the hill (86).

Everyone joins in hurling boulders and stones down the slope, the enemy is defeated and forced to retreat leaving their weapons behind. The people also realise that this victory is not enough to ensure their safety. 'They will only be safe, if the white men leave the land' (88).

As such, driving out the white invaders is one step towards the struggle to own, access and control land which is crucial for women and their livelihoods. Vera writes within the African Feminist framework when she engages the active involvement of women and the indigenous knowledge structures where people and the environment are dependent as in the above example. It is in this vein that Wane (2011) suggests that African Feminism is action oriented and grounded in indigenous knowledge structures that emphasise the independence of people and the environmental structures. Women like Nehanda are important in the development of our societies. The scale of the injustices against the women activists who fought for the

access to, control and ownership of land by all African people, including women, is most apparent in the case of Nehanda, who remains deeply misunderstood and under-appreciated (much like all women despite their contributions), even today.

Collective efforts on the land are key to African development and this can only be realised by recognising the valuable efforts of both men and women. Vera projects this through the collective efforts of men and women in building the huts when she says that "the hut was made of sturdy *musasa* poles dug deep into the ground by the men, then plastered liberally by the women" (18). The building of the hut together by men and women can also metaphorically refer to the building of a nation, which calls for the participation of everyone thereby transcending all forms of gender roles that deter progress. Rwabyoma (2014) argues that the nature of the African village life was one of collectivity not autonomy. By virtue of the collectivity, African Feminism emerged as a unified collective thought. Progress can be achieved if both men and women are allowed equal access, ownership and control of the land. It is in this regard that Kolawole (1998) argues that African women should take on board men, as affirmed by act of building, which is a collective effort.

3.3 Contesting Colonialism and Patriarchy through the Liberation Struggle in Irene Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle*

Irene Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle* (1986) is a novella that explores the experiences of women during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Mahamba presents a women-centred and feminist reading of the liberation struggle largely marginalised in the fictional works of male writers like Wilson Katiyo (1976) and Shimmer Chinodya (1989). These male writers depict the liberation struggle as largely the preserve of men and therefore give credence the argument that nations mainly spring "from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation and masculinised hope" (Enloe 1989, cited by Mayer 2000: p. 2). Mahamba underscores the

centrality of women in the creation of a nation as she explores the awakening consciousness of women during the colonial period. *Woman in Struggle* centres on the experiences of Nyevenutsai, a young woman who leads a miserable life soon after the death of her aunt. Nyevenutsai assumes care of her aunt's children and her uncle, her late aunt's husband who intends to marry her, and this complicates her life. The uncle invokes "*chimutsamapfihwa*", a cultural and patriarchal practice where a girl, usually a blood relative to the deceased wife, is given in marriage to the deceased's husband.

Feminists and democrats see this practice as very oppressive to women. The United Nations has also condemned the practice of forced marriages when it established in The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) of 1948 that men and women of full age have the right to marriage and that marriage shall be entered into with the free and full consent of intending spouses. Nyevenutsai's father worsens her situation as he supports the uncle's decision to marry her. She was around fifteen years old and supposed to be in Form Two. Schmidt (1992) notes that the pledging of children took place frequently and in most African countries. If a girl refused to go to her intended husband, her father in most cases would have no means of repaying the lobola. Even if he could repay, he had to abide with cultural expectations. This type of cultural practice does not empower women but curtails and limits freedom to make major decisions affecting their lives. Girls who protested were often threatened and beaten into submission. Consequently, most girls forcibly entered into these arranged marriages.

Nyevenutsai's father is not capable of returning the bride price paid for his late sister, and as tradition, the only way to appease the widowed brother-in-law is to give Nyevenutsai as a replacement wife to him. However, the liberation fighters tell the widower, Nyandurai, how men have always taken unfair advantage of women and mistreated them, and how the

liberation war has proved that women are equal to men, hence the need to do away with customs such as giving away girls in marriage, as women need to make their own choices. They go on to tell him that he "cannot claim another wife as if … claiming another car … When you pay lobola you are merely giving thanks to the girl's father… and to show them you are grateful" (26). This shows a strong connection between poverty and the absence of land and this makes women vulnerable. Nyevenutsai's question that, "Why couldn't he marry someone else and leave me to look after Regerai and Tsungai at my father's home" (9) also reinforces this. Nyevenutsai feels obliged to take care of her aunt's children but because she does not own any home or land, she has no capacity to do so outside marriage to Nyandurai. The fact that the "home" belongs to her father underscores that as a daughter she does not have claim over it. This further explains why women have had little choice over whom they would marry.

Nyamubaya, as a Feminist writer, shows the change that women wish to see in their communities and how it is achieved with the help of men. Through Nyevenutsai's struggle, Mahamba questions the legitimacy of the patriarchal structure that keep women subjugated. Mahamba picks up these ideas drawing from African ancestors. African women have always resisted patriarchal social relations structures that oppress and exploit women.

3.3.1 Women, Nationalism and Land

Woman in Struggle depicts women as actively participating in the liberation struggle to reclaim their land because they have also identified closely with land. Nationalism, as Alexander (2006) argues, is a powerful means of claiming authority over land and promises a return of the land on people's own terms. We therefore find women highly valued and connected to the land and everything that the land represents as nature. The novel opens with

a short poetic stanza where the word "woman" is repeated to emphasise the importance of women, and the connectedness between women and the land:

> Woman of the Jungle,
>
> Woman of the Bush,
>
> Woman of the Soil,
>
> Woman of Africa (5).

This underscores the centrality of women in Zimbabwe and Africa in general. It also directs our attention to the relationship between woman and "jungle", woman and "bush", woman and "soil" and woman and "Africa". This demonstrates the fact that women and land have a symbiotic relationship. It is inconceivable to talk of women without mentioning land and vice versa. This physical and symbolic relationship between women and land challenges colonial and patriarchal narratives of land that privilege men. Mahamba also underscores the various positive relations between women and land. Land, in the form of the indigenous "jungle" and "bush", provided security and a fortress from the attacks of the settler (Rhodesian) forces during the liberation struggle. We are also told that women belong to the "soil", and the "soil" is a metaphor of life, belonging and nourishment. Mahamba therefore challenges colonial and patriarchal narratives of nationhood and citizenship that marginalise and consign women to second citizenry status in relation to fundamental rights like access to land. She achieves this by linking women physically to the land, and suggesting that they are fundamentally part of the land.

The "jungle" and "bush" also suggest sustenance as they provide food, shelter and protection. This is evocative of a free nation capable of providing for and protecting its women as they are integral and valuable citizens. These images show the importance of women. Firstly, women are part of the jungle, as they are "woman of the jungle". During the liberation struggle, the jungle created a space for the fighters as it offered shelter, protection and food.

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This hints to the question of belonging, especially towards the construction of a nation that saw the participation of both genders in the bush war of liberation. Images of "bush" and "jungle" become symbolic in terms of the idea of a nation.

This resonates with Pepetela's (1983) *Mayombe* which describes the symbiotic relationship between the forest/jungle and African people through his depiction of the Mayombe forest of Angola, which "allowed itself to be accessible only to the sons of the soil but remains impenetrable to the foreigner" (83). The "bush" and "jungle" offer physical, emotional and spiritual security to the combatants of the liberation struggle, especially women. The phrase "woman of the soil" suggests the sacrifices made by the women who lost their lives in defence of their land. This also resonates with Anderson's (1983) view that people are prepared to sacrifice themselves for their nation even to the point of death. The "soil" apparently opens up to the dead fighters who, through death, identify with the land. The last line that reads, "Woman of Africa", underscores the importance of women in nation building. It also evokes the independent nations born out of African creativity and the nationalist liberation struggles against colonialism. It further underscores women who have had unique life-experiences. Thus, Mahamba seems to argue that women and land are inseparable and that to starve women of land is to kill the nation.

Most people employ the family trope that is central to nationalism to naturalise and normalise its operations in society. Mahamba also imagines the nation as a family. She says:

> Today it shall be told
>
> The joy of belonging
>
> The security of a family. (31)

The family may be seen as the smallest unit that forms the base for a successful nation where members from different families identify with each other as brothers and sisters who belong

to one big consolidated family called nation, continent and world. In this imagined family, members partake expected duties, responsibilities and are loyal to that family. Mahamba therefore celebrates the joys of belonging to a "national" family as well as the feeling of security one has. Thus, she treasures a family of both men and women in a nation. Women therefore used the liberation struggle as a platform for their empowerment in relation to accessing land.

3.3.2 Opportunities Generated by Women to Challenge Patriarchal Monopolies and Opening Access to Land

Mahamba's novella, *Woman in Struggle*, offers a woman's perspective of the liberation struggle and helps begin the rewriting of the history of the liberation struggle, which, until then, had been narrated mostly from a male perspective. Mahamba exposes and castigates patriarchal oppression and the patriarchal subversion of women's basic human rights. The inclusion of a female voice in the narration underscores the capacity of women to represent themselves. Mahamba subverts both colonialism and patriarchy as her female characters resist both settler colonialism and patriarchy. In *Woman in Struggle*, the liberation war experienced by the protagonist Nyevenutsai offers consolation and strength to exploited women. The title itself points to the numerous struggles and challenges experienced by women. The liberation struggle offered women an opportunity to reconfigure their relationship with the land, which has been the real source of the power that men use to exploit women. Nyevenutsai escapes from the land owned by her father and uncle to fulfil her dream of leading an independent life. For her, joining the freedom fighters offers her an opportunity to access the land physically as a fighter as she could move on the land anyhow like other fighters without restrictions. Thus, the nationalist struggle created space for women's struggle for change of certain cultural practices that compromised women such as *chimutsamapfihwa*. Mahamba situates women's struggles within the larger political issues. Nyevenutsai's

struggle is complicated as she fights a struggle within a struggle. Unlike men who are fighting against colonialism only, Nyevenutsai's struggle is two-pronged. She is fighting against both patriarchy and colonialism. This resonates with the argument that "too many women have broken out of the confines of domesticity and have carved out a space in the public arena even if they fall short of full emancipation" (Enloe, cited in Ranchod-Nilsson 2000: 174). Nyevenutsai takes responsibility for her own freedom by joining the liberation struggle as a combatant. She does not wait for other people to fight and resolve her problems. She reports her attempted forced marriage to the freedom fighters. The freedom fighters summon the uncle to a hearing where comrade Dzvoo cautions him:

> Women are not what we men like to think they are. The present war of liberation in Zimbabwe has proved that women are as tough as men are. However, it should be understood that women have always been equal to men. Men have taken unfair advantage of them and mistreated them. The women before our war of liberation did not have a chance to prove themselves but today in the war of liberation, they have proved beyond doubt that women are equals. Due to this therefore, certain customs practised by our elders have to go. It is no longer possible to force a woman to marry a man she does not want, either through 'Chimutsa Mapfihwa' or 'Kuzvarirwa'. We can no longer say a woman should earn less money for the same job or that she should have no property or that she should leave her job because she has fallen pregnant (25).

However, the verdict bewilders Nyandurai who responds:

> …but I thought you people were here for real liberation, for the restoration of our traditions and the glorification of our way of life, that was corrupted by the whites and yet you are here to say we should forget about our customs and encourage daughters to defy their elders (26).

The phrases "our traditions" and "our way of life" reflect Nyandurai's deep-seated misunderstanding of the ideals of the liberation struggle. He sees the liberation struggle as a platform for the regaining of lost male power. Nyandurai's hearing, presided over by a male freedom fighter, therefore underscores therefore the extent to which women fight and contest for recognition and freedom in society. The ideal society that women like Nyevenutsai are fighting for can only materialise after the demise of colonialism and patriarchy. This is evocative of Ranchod-Nilsson's (2000: 182) argument that:

> Throughout the century, women took advantage of multiple spaces in the nationalist struggle within competing movements, military camps and rural villages to insert their own agendas and desires into the many nascent discourses about 'the nation.' While some of their concerns clearly involved access to state power and resources, other concerns were centred on the local.

Women facilitated their struggle for securing respect and dignity in society through negotiating on social and political platforms. Nnaemeka (1998) posits that the language of feminism lies collaboration, negotiation and compromise which runs counter to much of the western feminist engagement. We also read of women reporting their abusive husbands to the freedom fighters and having such husbands publicly criticised and chastised. Shimmer Chinodya's (1989) Harvest of Thorns also publicly chastises promiscuity. However, given the mobility of the freedom fighters, there is no guarantee that man like Nyandurai would totally reform. What is critical, however, is that the liberation struggle promoted female emancipation and treated women as equals. Thus, Ranchod-Nilsson (2000: 183) observes that:

> During the war, women took advantage of the political spaces open to them to assert their own desires for change within households, within local communities, and at the level of the state. Any assessment of change resulting from women's

participation in the nationalist movement would, therefore, have to address changes, not only in state policies and institutions, but also changes in gender relations within households.

Women are also depicted as conscientising each other. This conscientisation reflects a deep-seated sense of sisterhood in the text. They are in concert in the struggle and realise the indispensability of cooperation and harmony. These women do not believe in individualism but collectively constitute to become a formidable collective in the struggle for survival and liberation from patriarchy. Nyevenutsai's aunt supports and introduces her to the freedom fighters, which results in Nyevenutsai beginning to better appreciate the liberation struggle. Eventually, she decides to participate as a female combatant because of her becoming more and more conscious of her life situation. Nyevenutsai is also informed by the freedom fighters that they are fighting for:

> …our land, taken away at colonisation, would become ours again, our people would stop being overcrowded in reserves where there is neither good soil for agriculture nor pastures for cattle (15).

Comrade Dzvoo also helps change people's perception about the changing status of women when he says, "Right now in our liberation army we have got women who fight side by side with us, women who have trained with us, faced hardships of attack" (24). Comrade Dzvoo testifies to this gigantic leap forward that women have taken by actively participating in the liberation struggle side by side with men. However, it is highly ironic that the group of combatants he leads does not have a single female combatant. We only see the involvement of men in fighting injustice. African Feminists like Aidoo (1998) propose that every woman and man should be a feminist especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, hence we note the collaboration and compromises made in the story.

3.4 Contesting for Women's Space within a Nation and Women's Rights including the Right to Access and Own Land in Nyamubaya's *On The Road Again*

On the Road Again (1986) is a collection of poems by Freedom Nyamubaya that largely explores the difficulties and challenges Zimbabweans encounter in their day-to-day experiences in post-independence Zimbabwe. Nyamubaya's poem 'Daughter of the Soil' (3) is a direct and impassioned response to the tag "son of the soil" through which African nationalists not only affirmed their belonging to the African land, but also celebrated their historical, and cultural importance which exclude women in the struggle for liberation. Nyamubaya challenges this gendered veneration of nationalist fighters through a gendered statement, which is her way of simply asserting that there is urgent need to recognise that women not only fought in the struggle but also that they have a stake in the land issue that is equal to that of their male counterparts. Yet Zimbabweans can learn from the historical Nehanda, who was female but became one of the first revolutionaries the British colonialists hanged, for more egalitarian ways of distributing land. Indeed Yvonne Vera's (1993) novel *Nehanda* celebrates and connects the historical Nehanda to the land and history in several ways, including the birth ceremony to transfer her mother's placenta to the soil, thereby acknowledging a "daughter of the soil" who would inspire not one but two anti-colonial struggles for liberation (*chimurenga*).

Throughout her poetry, Nyamubaya is concerned with the plight of the downtrodden in society, and women in particular because they are among the most oppressed social groups. The poem 'Daughter of the Soil' strongly links women to the land. She focuses on misconceptions of the liberation struggles and makes the case that women deserve recognition for the sacrifices they made, which included fighting for the land. Given the sacrifices made by women, it is very unjust to continue to marginalise women in post-independence Zimbabwe. Both Vera and Nyamubaya implicitly challenge the axiom "son of

the soil" because the word "son" is exclusionary as it refers to patriarchy. In addition, the axiom is also a gendered appropriation of the concept of land that does not take into account women's experiences even though they are equal to men, which participation in the liberation struggle proves. While the Shona axiom '*Mwana wevhu'* is inclusive the translation Son of the soil, does not carry the same meaning in as far as it leaves out women as owners of land with equal access and ownership. In most cases, their experiences were different from the usually glorified masculinist discourse of independence. Women suffered rape, torture and abuse, among other heinous atrocities that the glorified males did not encounter. One therefore wonders what becomes of women in as far as land issues are concerned, if men are the "sons of the soil" as purported. This idea of patriarchy appears to reemerge also into the sensibilities and policies informing the fast-track land redistribution process the Zimbabwean government embarked on from 2000, which has largely excluded women as reflected in the next text to be analysed.

The themes and issues covered in the collection of poems in *On the Road Again* range from gender, post-independence disillusionment and betrayal of the visions and aspirations of the liberation struggle. I will, however focus on five poems namely 'Daughter of the Soil' (3), 'The Train was Overbooked' (5), 'The Dog and the Hunter' (8), 'A Mysterious Marriage' (13) and 'Thinking Narrowly' (49). Nyamubaya wrote the poems during and after the liberation struggle. In the introduction, Nyamubaya says:

> Now that I have put my gun down
>
> For almost obvious reasons
>
> The enemy still is here invisible
>
> My barrel has no definite target
>
> now

> Let my hands work –
>
> My mouth sing –
>
> My pencil write –
>
> About the same things my bullet
>
> aimed at (1).

Nyamubaya reflects the innermost desires of women and their experiences during the struggle. She declares in this introduction that her pencil will write about the same things she is fighting for, thus reiterating the focus of the title "On the Road Again". Nyamubaya's poetry represents another strand of feminism influenced by Marxism within liberation movements and political parties. According to Gaidzanwa (2010), this type of feminism was born of women's participation in the liberation struggles focusing on advancing women's interests. It was then strengthened by the post-conflict marginalisation of women and poor war veterans, most of whom were excluded in the independent era because they did not have links to the liberation elites and their poor education. In other words, women who participated during the war of liberation continue to fight for their rights and recognition against the injustice and marginalisation they encounter in the independent nation. By virtue of her being an ex-combatant, Nyamubaya is forthright in her assessment of the fruits of independence. In a way, she can be considered an authentic spokesperson for the female freedom fighters in literary circles in which most of whom have been silenced. However, it is highly ironic that the treatment of women as marginal citizens continues in independent Zimbabwe given their sacrifices during the liberation struggle. Feminists like Mama (2001) however, describe as undemocratic those regimes that do not hesitate to mobilise women to support agendas that do not redress gender injustices. The struggle in the post-independence era, however, is now radically different from the one during the liberation war as it is now against opportunists and the political elites and thus the battleground has shifted. Lorde (1984) urges mutuality

between women, shared support, interdependence and also that interdependency between women is the way to a freedom which allows the 'I' to be, not in order to be used but in order to be creative (1). She further remarks that "women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs" (3). Thus, women are on "the road again" to continue to fight for their freedom in independent Zimbabwe. Women become creative and proactive regarding their unrealised aspirations as they were "used" in the liberation struggle. Vera (1992) argues that:

> …the women, without power to govern, often have no platform
> for exposing their disapproval. Words become weapons. If
> speaking is still difficult to negotiate, then writing has created a
> free space for most women, much freer than speech (2-3).

Thus, nurturing each other in a redemptive way is a significant platform that women can use to share their challenges. Instead of having guns and grenades exploding, women engage in this explosion of words through both writing and speaking. Nyamubaya says that her "mouth sing[s]" and her "pencil write[s]" about the same things "that her bullet aimed at". She narrates and shares traumatic experiences and painful memories that female freedom fighters experienced during the liberation struggle. However, these experiences and sacrifices in post-independence Zimbabwe are not honoured. Nyamubaya expresses disappointment with the fact that things did not turn out as expected in the new Zimbabwe. Her poems present what Anderson (1991) refers to as the temporality of a nation. Temporary in the sense that its ideologies do not last, all promises made become empty promises. Fanon (1961) argues that nationalism and nationalistic history function as tranquilisers that cover up the treachery of a kleptocratic government and a single party. Nyamubaya echoes this in her poems 'The Train Was Overbooked' (5), 'The Dog and the Hunter' (8), 'A Defeated Victory' (10), 'A mysterious Marriage' (13) and 'Thinking narrowly' (49).

The poem, 'A mysterious Marriage', highlights the participation of both men and women during the liberation struggle. However, women continue to be marginalised in politically independent Zimbabwe. In the poem, both men and women leave their homes to join the war. It is clear in the poem that men and women fought the same enemy but did not have the same agenda. After the war and the euphoria of victory, men and women realise that they are not treated the same. Everyone was involved in the fight for freedom as it promised fulfilment of the dreams and aspirations of the liberation struggle. From a feminist perspective, Nyamubaya critiques Zimbabwe's independence as "fruitless and barren" because the fruits, that included access to, ownership and control of land and freedom, were not realised by women. Nyamubaya seems to argue that independence only benefited men and this is evocative of the argument that:

> The nation utters different narratives for its different inhabitants.
> Not everyone is a citizen with full access to his/her rights. Yet
> the discourse of liberal democracy promises the 'dream' of the
> collectivity to everyone. One's sense of a nation shifts according
> to one's positioning within it or outside it (Eisenstein 2000: 38).

From this viewpoint, women, like Nyamubaya, who actively participated in the liberation struggle, had their dreams shattered when they failed to access what they fought for and this included the right to own, access and control land and other women's rights.

Nyamubaya castigates the ruling elite as hypocritical. Most of the ruling elite never went to the war front. Only a few did during the liberation struggle. Yet they control the levers of power in independent Zimbabwe. However, the real people who faced the enemy's firepower at the front and sacrificed their lives continue to suffer marginalisation. While natalism and nation are in theory predicated on homogeneity, the reality is that nationalism and nation are fractured along racial, gender and class lines. Nyamubaya shows the weaknesses of the new

nation in the poem 'Thinking Narrowly'. The poet highlights how women suffer marginalisation in the new nation:

> We should accept
> We have been fucked up
> We have been fucked
> Left, right and centre.
> We will work our arses up
> Till sweat turns into blood
> I know it's hard
> For many of us to accept,
> We have been fucked
> We all know by who (49).

Nyamubaya exposes the lie of homogeneity and erasure of women that is at the centre of discourses of nationalism and the nation. She portrays a nation where many feel betrayed. What accentuates this speaker's betrayal is that the culprits are a few erstwhile comrades who now control the levers of power in independent Zimbabwe. However, the poet remains optimistic, for *aluta continua* (the struggle continues), for women must continue to fight the inequalities, to achieve empowerment through basics such as access to land ownership and control. Therefore, the poet declares that she will continue to be a combatant until desirable life conditions for women are achieved, which include access to, ownership and control of land. Nyamubaya explores the unequal and hierarchical nature of nationalism and the nation. A nation cannot fully accommodate diversity out of the homogenised mass that nationalism creates by trying to forge unity across differences (Eisenstein 2000) at the expense of key groups such as women.

3.4.1 Women's Metaphysical Access to Land in 'Daughter of the Soil'

The poem 'Daughter of the Soil' challenges the grand narratives of the heteronormative male project of the Zimbabwean nation promoting previously oppressed men partly by marginalising and diminishing the roles and contributions of African women in nation building. The poem is about a woman liberation fighter who dies at the battlefront. The title of the poem is significant as it challenges the patriarchal narratives of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle that give prominence to the role and contribution of men during the liberation struggle. Nyamubaya, by entitling her poem 'Daughter of the Soil' engages some patriarchal narratives and discourses of Zimbabwean nationalism and the liberation struggle, as encapsulated in the statement 'Son of the Soil.' It is interesting that there is a novel by Wilson Katiyo (1976) entitled *A Son of the Soil*. The word "son" shows the value placed on men as the custodians and guardians of land. Control, access and ownership of land primarily belongs to men. 'Daughter of the Soil' explores the experiences of a female combatant killed in the heat of battle. Nyamubaya writes:

> Suddenly it was dark
>
> The air was breathing hard
>
> A thick layer of helicopters hovered
>
> Like vultures ready to attack.
>
> Did I know sand would bubble?

In the flames, I saw her perish (3).This dead female combatant was "One of the warriors Africa provided" (3). The word "warrior" is mainly associated with militant men. In addition, Nyamubaya describes the dead woman as a freedom fighter:

A sister of the motherland,

Who sought freedom

Justice for her people

In the hot air, her soul burnt away

Above the angry mountains, her voice echoed

Away

Yet she had ventured to join the brave

Who had given their lives in the dark smoke that

swallowed my sister

Feeling defeated but sure of victory

I saw her die kicking in protest.

In the flames disappeared the freedom fighter
(3-4).

The poem testifies, in a manner chillingly reminiscent of the Chimoio and Nyadzonya massacres where thousands of Zimbabweans lost their lives, the many lives that were lost during the liberation struggle. Nyamubaya further notes that:

Her blood spurted above the trees

Like the gushes of a bomb

I saw her cry – like a woman dying in agony

Yet she was laughing the laughs of pain

Screaming: long live the suffering masses (3).

This underscores the hardships that women experienced in the formation of the Zimbabwean nation. The word "nation" is derived from the Latin word "nation" that means "to be born" (McClintock 1995: 357). Nyamubaya, in the poem 'Daughter of the Soil', celebrates the heroic deeds of women who sacrificed their lives for the birth of Zimbabwe where everyone is entitled to equal treatment and improved livelihoods obtained from accessing and owning land. Wane (2011) states that women have been involved in activism against colonialism though their efforts are not rewarded in the same way as men after independence. This is also evident in the historical discourse of liberation in Zimbabwe's sculptures at the National Heroes Acre where the Zimbabwean government commissioned the erection of a national monument to honour the heroes who died during the liberation struggle. The sculptors constructed the figures of men wearing trousers while women in skirts are holding guns. This is however an incorrect depiction of women fighters during the war given that they had to run, climb trees and perform all the combat activities as their male counterparts. The sculpture relegates women to subordinate positions so as to distinguish them from men yet they performed similar roles to men during the struggle, as they fought for all their rights, including freedom and land.

However, history (Zimbabwean history included), is largely told from the perspective of men. This is what Nyamubaya contests in 'Daughter of the Soil' as she also gives voice to suppressed histories and narratives of the liberation struggle by focussing on the experiences of ordinary female combatants who sacrificed their lives for the birth of a new Zimbabwe. Therefore, Nyamubaya rewrites the history of the liberation struggle, a history that is largely phallocentric. This history in postcolonial Zimbabwe has given birth to a 'ZANU-ised' history – a history that privileges the exploits of the party ZANU PF and male combatants. While there are recognised communal loyalties in the nation, aspects of gender are constantly referred to in shaping and defining the nation as well as deciding who gets more recognition.

The nation is a gendered social construction. This is evidenced by the reference to the nation as "motherland". Nyamubaya tells us that the dead woman is "A sister of the motherland" (3). This shows that women's relationship to land is powerful. Thus, Zimbabwe as a nation is equated to a "motherland" underscoring the reproductive, nurturing, gender and sexual representations and significations of nationhood. I argue that the idea of seeing Zimbabwe as a "motherland" invokes the familial tendencies of the nation. This resonates with Smith (1991a: 79), cited in Racioppi and O'Sullivan (2000: 25-26), who argues that nationalism and nation also rely on the family trope:

> The metaphor of family is indispensable to nationalism. The
> nation is depicted as one great family, the members as brothers
> and sisters of the motherland or fatherland, speaking their
> mother tongue …The family of the nation overrides and
> replaces the individual's family but evokes similarly strong
> loyalties and vivid attachments. Even where local allegiances
> are tolerated and real families given their due, the language and
> symbolism of the nation asserts its priority and, through the
> state and citizenship, exerts its legal and bureaucratic pressures
> on the family, using similar kinship metaphors to justify itself.

However, what is interesting about Nyamubaya's 'Daughter of the Soil' is the fact that Nyamubaya reverses some of the stereotypes associated with women in conventional nationalist thinking which sees women as passive in nation building. By valorising the heroic effort/deeds of a female combatant of the liberation struggle, Nyamubaya underscores the significant role and contribution of women in nation building. It is some kind of rewriting history against the long standing and debilitating bias towards men that is dominant in literature. Thus, Nyamubaya refers to the dead female combatant as a "freedom fighter" and "warrior". Traditionally, the role of protecting a family (nation) is exclusively the province of

men. However, Zimbabwe's liberation struggle witnessed the training and inclusion of female combatants in the struggle against colonialism. This inclusion significantly altered traditional gender relations between men and women and had a tectonic impact on our conceptualisation of masculinities and femininities. Women therefore cease to be passive reproducers of the nation, as they become active protectors of the family.

The title of the poem 'Daughter of the Soil' also points to women as the embodiment of the nation. It implies a natural connection between women (daughter) and the "soil". The woman, as "daughter", "warrior" and "fighter", fights to liberate the land (soil) from the clutches of colonialism. The daughter dies in her struggle and Nyamubaya tells us that her death is a symbol of sacrifice and hope as we feel "defeated but sure of victory" (4). Thus, the poem 'Daughter of the Soil' reflects a natural bond between women and the land. The "daughter" in the poem claims access, control over and ownership of land. The poem's dead woman connects herself to the land through death and she, through death, becomes one with the soil. Nyamubaya seems to argue that women should have direct access, control and ownership of land in postcolonial Zimbabwe because they sacrificed their lives in defending the "motherland". This echoes Hoba's depiction of Maria in the story 'Maria's Independence' where we see Maria, because of the land reform programme, access, control and own land. More so, the character Maria is depicted by Hoba as more successful in farming compared to most men who gained land during the land reform programme, but proved to be irresponsible like Baba in 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' (as shall be discussed in the next chapter). Considering this poem, Nyamubaya underscores the myriad sacrifices made by women during the liberation struggle. Consequently, women in post-colonial Zimbabwe should have direct control over, access and full ownership of land. Furthermore, the liberation war empowered women to assert themselves and African Feminists acknowledge these women as

earlier African Feminists. The Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminism (2006) asserts that:

> we also draw inspiration from our feminist ancestors who blazed the trail and made it possible to affirm the rights of women. As we invoke the memory of those women whose names are hardly ever recorded in any history books we insist that it is a profound to claim that feminism was imported into Africa from the West. We reclaim and assert the long and rich tradition of women's resistance to patriarchy in Africa (15- 19 November, 8-9).

The resistance of African women and their feminist struggle for dignity and equality was visible prior to the liberation struggle and the analysed fictional literature depicts this (*Bones, Without A Name, and Nehanda*). It is important to recognise how African Feminists fought alongside men to liberate the country from the colonisers. As such, as new independent states were crafted, this also called for the constructing of new identities for African women as full citizens with full and equal access rights to own and control resources as land and labour

3.4.2 Problematising Citizenship from a Gendered Perspective in 'The Train was Over-booked'

This section examines Nyamubaya's poem 'The train was Over-booked'. The poem centres on the post-independence Zimbabwean situation where the former freedom fighters and the majority of Zimbabweans are excluded from the country's resources while opportunists take advantage of the independence. It presents the economic and social injustices in independent Zimbabwe. Nyamubaya uses the train metaphor where she highlights that soon after independence; people meant to be the legitimate passengers on a train from Beira to Harare remain behind at the train station, only for train to leave for the trip with those on the waiting

list and the crooks who were milling about in the waiting room. Nyamubaya attacks the political betrayal at independence that saw a clique of pretenders taking over the reins of government when the real fighters are marginalised. She raises critical questions on marginalisation. This poem centres on the betrayals of the dreams and aspirations of the liberation struggle by the new elite who assumed power and authority at independence. Nyamubaya writes that:

> From Beira to Salisbury
>
> Some think it was full
>
> Others say it wasn't
>
> But the train still made it
>
> To its destination, Salisbury,
>
> Now called Harare (5).

Nyamubaya uses the trope of a journey to capture the transition of Zimbabwe into an independent country. "Beira" is one of Mozambique's cities and thus underscores the role and contribution of Mozambique to Zimbabwe's independence. "Salisbury" was Rhodesia's capital city. Thus, the journey from Beira to Salisbury, which is a journey of liberation and freedom, was supposed to include all Zimbabweans irrespective of ethnicity, gender and class. However, Nyamubaya bemoans the segregatory tendencies of the new independent Zimbabwean nation that deliberately excludes people who sacrificed their lives for the new independent Zimbabwe. We are therefore told:

> What happened to the passengers
>
> Those who actually bought tickets?
>
> I saw women with children
>
> Wandering about at the station,

Old people staggering, luggage in hand,

Awaiting official announcement

Young people hustling at enquiries

Trying to check the departure time;

But the train had gone halfway the journey (5).

Nyamubaya sees the new Zimbabwean nation state as being governed by the African political elite who are largely male. In the poem 'The Train was Over-booked', Nyamubaya highlights how women, children, the old and the young are excluded from having access to, ownership and control of resources such as land in the new nation of Zimbabwe. This is evidenced in the poem where the passengers left behind include, 'women with children', 'old people staggering' and 'young people hustling at enquiries' (5). Nyamubaya highlights that these marginalised groups of people continued to suffer after independence. However, what is interesting about the new leadership is that it is largely composed of people who did not contribute meaningfully to the liberation struggle. She says:

Those on the waiting list

Got seats also to Salisbury

Who else took the booked one?

It was discovered right in Harare:

With no tickets and no passports:

Crooks in the waiting room really made it to

Harare (5).

Nyamubaya insinuates that opportunists referred to as 'crooks' (line 21) who once masqueraded as nationalists and revolutionaries hijacked the new nation of Zimbabwe. This problematises our understanding of the relationship between nationalism, nation and nationhood. Nyamubaya suggests that women, children, the old and the young are excluded from the new nation of Zimbabwe which included access to, ownership and control of land. This is evidenced in the poem where the nature of passengers left cited include, 'women with children', 'old people staggering' and young people hustling' (5). This echoes McClintock's (1995) argument that:

> No postcolonial state anywhere has granted women and men equal access to the rights and resources of the nation state. Not only have the needs of postcolonial nations been largely identified with male conflicts, male aspirations and male interests, but the very representation of national power has rested on prior constructions of gender power (13-14).

This new leadership, described as "crooks" with "no tickets and no passports", now has and exercises power in the new Zimbabwe. That this new leadership does not have the "tickets" and "passports" to be on the train underscores the fact that they do not deserve to be on "the train" as they did not meaningfully contribute to the struggles to reclaim the nation from colonialists. It is this political group, with no revolutionary credentials, that is deliberately marginalising women. I therefore argue that this is evidence of the retrogressive tendencies of nationalism in post-independence Zimbabwe since women were mobilised during the liberation struggle on the understanding that they were combatants who were equal to their male compatriots.

However, in post-independence Zimbabwe women become second class citizens. This underscores what Fanon (1961) sees as the "trials and tribulations of national consciousness"

not everyone made it to the destination, Salisbury which is independence. I also argue that nationalism and nation, at the level of subjectivity, impose a monolithic national identity. This is challenged however by the multiplicity, fluidity, contextual, and contested qualities of identities that undermine any notion of a single all-embracing primary identity to which all others must be subordinated at all times and costs. Nyamubaya demonstrates how the Zimbabwean nation, irrespective of the rhetoric of equality, is largely a myth as women continue to suffer marginalisation despite their contributions during the liberation struggle. Thus, it remains difficult for women to own, access and control of land in post-colonial Zimbabwe is even though they contributed to the liberation struggle as attested by the poem 'Daughter of the Soil'.

3.4.3 Nyamubaya's Representation of the Manipulation of Women in 'The Dog and the Hunter'

In the poem, 'The Dog and the Hunter' Nyamubaya explores the betrayal of friendship between a "dog" and its "master". This is metaphoric of how some people during the liberation struggle manipulated others to achieve their selfish desires and aims. Nyamubaya tells us that:

> In scarcity, dog and master are friends,
>
> Tied around the neck, the hunter drags him along.
>
> In thick and dark forests, Zvichapera is loose.
>
> Sniffing and trekking game, Zvichapera leads.
>
> Behind trees and ditches,
>
> Game dodges the dog (8).

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Nyamubaya insinuates that during the liberation struggle, there was unity as people fought for a common purpose. This "unity" created the illusion of "friendship" and "comradeship". This idea of "friendship" and "camaraderie" resonates with Smith's (1991) idea of "deep horizontal comradeship" and sense of "brotherhood" governing the politics of nationalism. However, it is critical to note that despite this rhetoric of equality and sameness for all partaking in the "national project", nation remains like other feminised entities emphatically, historically and globally the property of men. Nyamubaya writes that:

> With energy the dog sniffs,
>
> Searching and chasing, Zvichapera plays it double,
>
> Heading trees, and collapsing on dirty rocks
>
> With determination, Zvichapera struggles on,
>
> With little sympathy, the master encourages him.
>
> Playing the rear-guard, the master wanders behind (8).

The "dog", aptly named "Zvichapera" (It will come to an end) is depicted as dedicated and committed to the success of the hunt. The master, however, has a peripheral role as he plays "the rear-guard" and "wanders behind". By playing "the rear guard", the master does not want to expose himself to the dangers and hazards of the hunt. Nyamubaya, through this metaphor of the dog and master, therefore underscores the fact that during the liberation struggle some people used others for their selfish gain. Thus, Nyamubaya depicts nationalism, as a discourse that superficially creates the impression or illusion of sameness. Paradoxically, this very nationalism is deeply fractured as the "camaraderie" and "brotherhood" implied in nationalist rhetoric is really the relationship of a dog and master. This is further reinforced by the following lines:

Once again, the two unite,

Seeming to share duties.

The hunter initiates, the dog implements,

With division of mental and manual labour (8).

However, once the hunt is over the dog is no longer important. We are told that:

Having eaten a bone of stone

A warm welcome with wide smiles for the hunter

     at home

With a big stick, the dog is beaten for stealing

     meat

After a second thought bones are thrown to

     Zvichapera

And the hunter calmly munches the juicy flesh.

From one rubbish pit to another, Zvichapera

     survives.

Until the next hunt, Zvichapera is neither wanted

     nor fed (8).

Nyamubaya depicts how resources such as land in independent Zimbabwe are distributed. The "master" allocates himself the biggest and juiciest portion of the hunt which he "calmly munches" (8). However, the "dog", which ironically contributed much more to the success of the hunt, feeds on bones. Thus, once independence is secure the services of the "dog" are no longer important as it suffers marginalisation. the persona bemoans the peripheralisation of

those that sacrificed for the nation. Such betrayal is castigated with all the impunity it deserves. The metaphor of the hard working but oppressed dog represents post-colonial Zimbabwe where resources are allocated unequally depending on gender, ethnicity, class, and race. Women do the hard work but still suffer marginalisation. Such is their fate as they were side-lined at independence through the differential allocation of resources from a gendered perspective. Nyamubaya implores the African Feminist goal to fight for equality through the poem.

3.4.4 'A Mysterious Marriage'

Nyamubaya's poem 'A Mysterious Marriage' focuses on the relationship between two key constructs "freedom" and "independence". These two terms underpin most discourses of nationalism and nation:

> Once upon a time
> there was boy and girl
> forced to leave their home
> by armed robbers.
> The boy was Independence
> The girl was Freedom.
> While fighting back, they got married (13).

The depiction of a "boy" and a "girl" in the poem echoes the familial trope governing the concepts of nationalism and nation. Marriage cements the relationship between this "boy" and "girl". "Freedom" and "Independence" are the girl's and boy's names, respectively. Thus, the "boy" and "girl" relationship is metaphoric of the unity of the masses in fighting against colonialism. The marriage between this boy and girl symbolises the illusion of sameness created by the discourse of nationalism. Nyamubaya tells us that:

> After the big war they went back home.
> Everybody prepared for the wedding.

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> Drinks and food abounded,
>
> Even the disabled felt able.
>
> The whole village gathered waiting
>
> Freedom and Independence
>
> Were more popular than Jesus (13).

Nyamubaya insinuates that during the liberation struggle everyone aspired for freedom and independence from colonial rule. However, after the war:

> Independence came
>
> But Freedom was not there.
>
> An old woman saw Freedom's shadow passing, walking through the crowd, Freedom to the gate.
>
> All the same, they celebrated for independence (13).

Nyamubaya suggests that in 1980 Zimbabweans only became politically independent. In the poem 'A Mysterious Marriage' expectations of independence are absent as shown by Nyamubaya where 'Independence came / But Freedom was not there' (13). In other words, the poet stresses that independence came but it had no freedom, people continued to live in bondage with no access to, ownership and control of land. In Nyamubaya's poem, freedom is important, it allows people to claim ownership of the means of production so that they enjoy independence. Nyamubaya's name 'Freedom' implies the will to continue to fight for women's freedom and right to access, own and control land. In fact, this independence did not translate into freedom for most people as the nation state of Zimbabwe remained fractured along gender, racial, sexual, class and ethnic lines. Women are still marginalised in most key areas of the economy such as having access to, control and ownership of land. Essof (2012: 43) argues that by the mid-1990s it was "clear that gender concerns were incidental in the mindset of the Zimbabwean government".

3.5 Conclusion

Chapter 3 explored and problematised nationalism and women's access to, ownership and control of land within liberation war discourse which mobilised women to join and actively participate as combatants alongside their male compatriots. Vera's *Nehanda,* Mahamba's *Woman in Struggle* and Nyamubaya's collection of poems in *On The Road Again* are central to discussing women's experiences in the nationalist struggle against colonialism for an independent Zimbabwe. *Nehanda* shows the important role that women played in fostering nationalism, as well as the active role women have played in leading the nationalist struggle to free the land and the people. *On The Road Again* shows how women continue to be exploited and marginalised economically and socially after independence, through the betrayal of the visions and values of the liberation war. Women also continue to suffer from marginalisation by their erstwhile comrades, and it seems that the active participation of women in the liberation war only assisted in shaping a patriarchal nation centred on a patriarchal state.

Besides fighting against colonialism, many women also participated in the liberation struggle to advance their struggles against the social and patriarchal traditions that disempower them. This is reflected through the authors' representations of women who report their abusive husbands to the comrades and Nyevenutsai's challenges to her father and uncle on the human rights issue of forced marriage.

The experiences of women in the three texts discussed in this Chapter show how women were central during the liberation struggle in the shaping of a "nation". However, their dreams and aspirations were betrayed as testified by their marginal access to resources after independence. Women only accessed land through contact when they participated in the war.

All the literary texts bring out the central objective of the research: understanding the relationship between women and land through understanding the problematic relation of nationalism to the liberation struggle. The chapter also indicates how individual responsibilities of Feminists are not individualistic and not about their uniqueness, but how they represent other characters. For example, Vera and Mahamba, as individuals, are representing other women as well as extending respect to women through the different characters in their literary fiction and poems.

Chapter 4: Zimbabwe's Post-2000 Land Reform and Women's Access to and Control of Land in Stories by Hoba, Chingono and Mandishona

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter examines Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform and women's access to and control and ownership of land in stories by Lawrence Hoba (2009), Julius Chingono (2007) and Daniel Mandishona (2007). Hoba's short stories 'The First Trek – The Pioneers', 'Maria's Independence', 'The Second Trek – Going Home' and 'The Third Trek – Resettling' appeared in 'The Mirror', a local newspaper, and were also published in a magazine called *The Budding Writers of Zimbabwe*. They have also appeared in the blogsites such as www.zimbablog.com, and in the collection *Laughing Now: New Stories from Zimbabwe* edited by Irene Staunton (2007). This Chapter contextualises these stories by understanding the problems created by Zimbabwe's land reform programme for women's access to and ownership of land. The intention of Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform programme was apparently intended to empower the black majority who had been disadvantaged by the colonial land imbalances. However, the majority of black Zimbabweans who were supposed to benefit from the land reform programme are not a homogenous group as they are differentiated along class, ethnic and gender lines.

This Chapter focuses on the gender dimensions of the land reform dispensation and the gendered nature of land and labour. It seeks first to map the lived experiences of women's attempts to access, own and control land in post-colonial Zimbabwe within the new land reform dispensation. It has been observed that gender relations are constituted in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structure the life chances of men and women and that society imposes different roles based on biological difference, and this has often legitimised women's exclusion from decision-making processes (Mafa et al 2015).

The social, political and economic crises have exposed the challenges of making a living amongst Zimbabweans particularly women who face insecure and poor livelihoods. Tsikata (2009) argues that secure livelihoods are promoted through equitable and viable land and labour systems. She further emphasises how gender, class and kinship also structure ownership, access to and control of livelihood resources.

4.2 Zimbabwe's Land Reform

Zimbabwe's land reform programme is one of the key indices of the country's political and economic crisis that imploded post-2000 and had a dramatic impact on the country's agricultural, economic and geopolitical landscape. Alexander (2006) argues that the country was dramatically unsettled as hundreds of thousands of black Zimbabweans moved onto white-owned land. Alexander further observes that the violence, international isolation and economic collapse that accompanied the land reform programme were a crucial turning point in Zimbabwe's history and perceptions of race, just as the unequal division of land became the central focus of the redefined nationalism of the ruling ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front) party. Consequently, ZANU-PF began enunciating a new vision for Zimbabwe, based on a virulent assertion of sovereignty against the forces of global capitalism, neo-colonialism and the internationally mediated demands for good governance. Ranger's (2004) concept of patriotic history closely resembles this new vision of Zimbabwe. Patriotic history, as Tendi (2010: 1) argues, is premised on a "repackaged, authoritarian version of Zimbabwe's liberation history" whose central theme is land dispossession:

> A grievance going back to the First Chimurenga of 1896 when
> British South Africa Company rule was first established, land
> was a central grievance in the Second Chimurenga. Land
> alienation remained unresolved in 2000 because the minority
> white population still controlled the majority of the most

productive land. Thus, land became the driving ideology of the

Third Chimurenga, which ZANU-PF cast as the completion of

the liberation struggle after the First and Second Chimurengas

against colonial rule (1).

King (1974), cited in Zarin and Bujang (1994:10), argues that "there are three motives of

land reform" and these are political, social and economic. The political motive is

considered the last resort but very decisive as it determines the extent of reform. Many

governments use it as the last resort to gain or retain power (10). Considering Zimbabwe's

post-2000 economic and political crisis, the ruling ZANU-PF government used this

political motive of land reform to regain power that was diminishing. Madhuku (2004)

argues that ZANU- PF devised a survival strategy and picked on land and portrayed the

opposition MDC as opponents of land reform hence the approach became radical to fit the

description of 'revolutionary'. Socially, the land reform intended to redress colonial land

injustices on the majority of black Zimbabweans. Economically, the land reform was

expected to improve livelihoods through agricultural activities. A selection of stories by

Hoba (2009), Chingono (2007) and Mandishona (2007) are analysed in this Chapter to

examine women's access, control and ownership of land in light of the social and

economic motives of land reform, where social justice and equality have also been key.

Zinyama (1991) defines land reform as an improvement in ownership rights and in the

way land is held. Zinyama (1991) further argues that land reform involves changing and

restructuring the economic, legal and political arrangements governing the ownership and

management of agricultural land. Land reform means that there should be improvement in

land access, control over and ownership, and that the legal, political and economic

framework should embrace these improvements. Moreover, in Zimbabwe or anywhere

else, these changes should also redress gender imbalances. Land reform is also defined as

the redistribution of land for the benefit of the landless (King 1971). This definition upholds the idea that the land reform should focus on those who do not own land, and in Zimbabwe, a large number of women do not have ownership of land despite the fact that they constitute the majority of the country's population. Tai (1974) has seen land reform as a means to provide land to the landless, and notes that land reform refers to public programmes that seek to equitably and rationally restructure a defective land tenure system by compulsory, drastic and rapid means. This entails a more radical form of restructuring. Tai (1974) has seen the government playing a major role in the whole process of land reform, from initiation to completion: when the government is involved, the land reform process becomes legitimate and the government needs to be sensitive to women in such programmes. Once women have economic resources and are empowered the quality of their life significantly improves. Land was central to Zimbabwe's liberation war. However, after independence no serious effort was made to de-racialise land ownership patterns in the country. The acquisition of land by the government through the willing buyer willing seller policy failed to successfully de-racialise and redistribute land equitably among the majority. Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform programme was mainly provoked by the result of the 2000 constitutional referendum. Vambe (2004) argues that since 2000 the Zimbabwean political landscape experienced some major changes after the ruling ZANU PF party lost the constitutional referendum. This view is corroborated by Sachikonye (2012) who notes that the land reform exercise was mooted soon after the referendum result became known in February 2000, and that the immediate catalyst was the political setback of the "NO" vote to the government. Raftopolous and Savage (2004) contend that war veterans initiated the farm occupations because the referendum marked the first major defeat of the ruling party against any political and/or civic opposition. In response to the referendum defeat, ZANU PF engaged in a series of land occupations that

radically transformed Zimbabwe's political and economic landscape. As argued by Alexander (2006), the referendum marked a watershed in Zimbabwean politics as debates over the proposed constitution escalated into a contest between the ruling party and the opposition, Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The subsequent defeat made it clear that ZANU PF faced a major challenge in trying to regain the trust and confidence of the people. Thus, this defeat forced ZANU PF to embark on the land reform as a strategy of winning back its support. This resonates with Tai's (1974: 56) assertion that:

> When seeking power, the elite can use land reform to radicalise the peasantry. When controlling power, the elite can use land to heighten the conservatism of the peasantry. By such uses of reform, the elite would be seeking not only to establish a broad rural base but also to make the peasants an important ally if it confronts its political challenges from non-peasant forces.

Because of the referendum defeat in 2000, a dramatic shift in terms of strategy by the ruling party was witnessed where war veterans took centre stage in land occupations as ZANU PF realised that "land was the ticket on which the ZANU-PF government would secure a fourth term of office" (Essof 2013: 47). Alexander (2006) also argues that "land occupations were not only about land redistribution but also about creating a political campaign appealing to ZANU PF's constituency, and also to punish constituencies engaged in opposition politics" (186). Thus, the land reform programme was mainly executed as punishment for both the opposition party supporters and the white commercial farmers who, according to Sachikonye (2012), had played a significant role in mobilising people to reject the referendum. Sachikonye (2012) also argues that another dimension of the land reform was to identify loyal zones that were rewarded and opposition zones that were punished (115). This politicisation of land had the negative effect of redistributing land along partisan lines.

The war veterans used force and violence to occupy commercial farms mainly owned by whites. Sachikonye (2012) reiterates that this process of unplanned, coercive and chaotic occupation of commercial farms was referred to as "Jambanja" and the government termed it the "Fast Track Land Reform Programme" (FTLRP). The Shona term "*147ambanja*" is evocative of the chaotic nature of the programme. The term is also closely linked to aspects of masculinity that denote and privilege "physical prowess", "physical strength", "warrior-like" male qualities as opposed to women who are largely considered and constructed as "soft", "fragile", "understanding" and "peaceful". Thus, women had no clearly defined space in the politics of "Jambanja" as men mainly executed it. Resultantly, men benefited more out of the land reform than women as they spearheaded the violent land occupations. Texts such as Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006) mirror the violence that was characteristic of the land reform. The text vividly captures how Harry, a white farmer, lost his land to the war veterans and ZANU-PF youths.

Moyo and Yeros (2005) describe the land reform in Zimbabwe as radical and compulsory acquisition and repossession of land. They further argue that the land reform was a movement organised and led by the war veterans' associations focusing exclusively on the immediate question of land repossession. However, Zimbabwe's land reform is characterised by different phases and targeted four groups. Alexander (2006) argues that the targeted groups included "the landless, war veterans, the poor and commercial farm workers" (46). Sachikonye (2012) observes that the first phase of the land reform programme started with land invasions soon after the constitutional referendum and continued up to parliamentary elections. During this phase, there was no clearly defined programme or direction since it was characterised by violence. The second phase occurred during the post-election period where there were now clearly-defined parameters with specific targets and an increase in the land to be redistributed with the government pledging to end violence, restore the rule of law, and

establish transparency. Lastly, the third phase saw low intensity invasions involving army officers, politicians and state bureaucrats seeking to acquire better land and/or increase the sizes their land holdings.

Zimbabwean women suffer marginalisation on various issues relating to land. The advent of the land reform programme gave women hope as they looked forward to accessing, controlling and owning land. However, this hope soon turned into disillusionment and despair as "traditional forms of social organisation and values were implicated in complex ways in the ideology and practice underpinning land redistribution" (Essof 2013: 43). Farm workers were displaced together with their employers, and women constituted the majority of the displaced workers. Thus, the land reform programme accentuated the vulnerability and the poverty of the majority of the displaced women. Sachikonye (2012) also attests that female farm workers were the greatest losers. Some of them ending up living like squatters as the new landowners also evicted them from the compounds they lived in. However, Raftopoulos,Hammar and Jansen (2003) argue that gender balance at occupied farms varied with some farms having an even proportion of both men and women. However, these farms were near communal areas. This might be attributed to the fact that when land was given to families they would keep both the rural home and the new resettlement, because of the insecurities associated with the nature of these land allocations. In this way some women came to have a bit of favourable ownership, access to and control of land because of the opportunities made available by land reform. Scoones (2010) complicates this by reflecting that most women made use of the new land through marriage, as wives of male land owners Associating land ownership with marriage shows how patriarchy has continued to marginalise and isolate women from owning land in their own right. Scoones (2010) further notes that the increased size of fields in the resettlement areas has the distinct advantage for women growing their own crops, which increases their income, although they are still

confined to their subordinate position regarding their access, control and ownership of land. Scoones also argues that the new resettlements created an opportunity for female emancipation and empowerment as some women escaped from the deeper patriarchal structures of the communal lands. This particularly applies to women who had been ostracised by their communities.

Given that war veterans were at the forefront of land invasions, it meant that more men allocated themselves land as they continued to assert themselves via old patriarchal systems that had always privileged them to have easier access over resources such as land. As the government legitimised these settlements, it marginalised women. Clarifying the context, Jacobs (1998: 279) has pointed out that the 1997 data shows that about 75% of registered landowners in Zimbabwe were male, 20% of the farms were jointly owned, and women owned 5%. This shows an unequal distribution pattern considering that women constitute the majority in Zimbabwe:

> A gender analysis of the land question in Zimbabwe shows the inability of formal law to ensure women's right to land when such laws are not socially legitimate and enforceable …Women's access and rights to land is shaped by gender determined power-relations, which exist across a range of institutions. At present women in Zimbabwe have legal rights to land, but in many contexts they are without secure access (Jacobs 1998: 16).

Unfortunately, the advent of the land reform in 2000 did not change this unfair land distribution. Table 2 (below) shows land allocation by gender during the land reform programme in the eight provinces in Zimbabwe. Women in all the provinces were granted far less land than men in both communal (A1) and commercial (A2) land allocations. The two

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lists of men and women per province in Zimbabwe show the extent to which women lagged behind in almost all provinces and countrywide in land allocated both for peasant farming and commercial farming, despite the fact that women form the majority of peasant farmers.

Table 2 Land distribution by gender

Province	Model A1	Model A1	Model A1	Model A1	Model A2	Model A2	Model A2	Model A2
	Number of Males	%	Number of Females	%	Number of Males	%	Number of Females	%
Midlands	14 800	82	3 198	18	338	95	17	5
Masvingo	19 026	84	3 644	16	709	92	64	8
Mash. Central	12 986	88	1 770	12	1 469	87	215	13
Mash. West	21 782	81	5 270	19	1 777	89	226	11
Mash. East	12 967	76	3 992	24	*	*	*	*
Mat. South	7 754	87	1 169	13	215	79	56	21
Mat. North	7 919	84	1 490	16	574	83	121	17
Manicaland	9 572	82	2 190	18	961	91	97	9
Total	106 986	82	22 723	18	6 043	88	796	12

Source: *Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr Charles Utete, August 2003, p. 40.*

Another factor that has impeded women from legally owning land was the challenge of legal titles. Having legal title to land would give security to women and empower them to make big decisions associated with ownership, control over and access to land. Women's legal claims to land are subject to patriarchal systems where men, who in most cases are heads of the family, have control of the land (Yngstrom 2002). Women are largely excluded from having land ownership in the land reform programme because of the policies of resettlement put in place. Goebel (2005) argues that resettlement policy dictates that a wife gains the right to farm in resettlement areas only because of her status as a wife of a man who was granted a permit that bears the man's name only. Thus, women are reduced to providers of cheap labour for their husbands with very little control of the allocated land:

> The married woman is therefore vulnerable to complete loss of land rights in the case of divorce. A permit holder may also be evicted for failure to comply with resettlement rules or for unacceptable social behaviour. Since a married woman has resettlement rights only through her husband, she is forced to leave the scheme if her husband is evicted, even if she has no part in the cause of eviction (Chimedza, cited by Goebel 2005: 60).

Goebel also notes that divorced women on resettlement schemes are vulnerable to losing their rights to land. In Zimbabwe, land is usually registered under the husband's name and single women face difficulties in accessing land (Gaidzanwa 1999). Because of culture and tradition, most women eventually opt for land access through their husband, to protect the marriage even if this access may be unstable as it is linked to the nature of a woman's relationship with her husband. Customary laws continue to resurface despite other laws meant to uplift women. Such laws include the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982, which gives women adult rights at eighteen years.

In as much as it was a move intended to improving women's access to land, this infringed and further undermined women's rights, because being given ownership to land based on having dependants was more of a discriminatory move since the same measures were not considered for men. Furthermore, the move did not consider the fact that some women do not have children, and that some choose not to have children, hence they might not necessarily have dependants. If having dependants was the ticket to land, then such women would forfeit their right to land despite the fact that they are single and landless. The state itself shoulders some of the blame as it continues to reinforce old alienating systems by giving husbands permits that limit the chances of married women owning land. That it is, in fact, women who constitute the majority of peasant farm workers compared to their male counterparts, compounds this problem. Most women's husbands are always absent working for waged

labour in towns and cities. The Zimbabwean economic and political crisis that imploded post-2000 further alienated most men from their land. Most men immigrated to neighbouring countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Botswana and Mozambique in search of employment. Goebel (2005:76) notes this absence of men arguing that "women outnumber men at extension meetings on master farmer classes, because men do piecework in neighbouring commercial farms leaving women to do the farming on resettlement". However, the case is complicated for single women who were either widowed, divorced or single parents as they were given resettlement permits:

> In the early years of resettlement, as part of its early support for gender equity, the government was committed to a policy of allowing unmarried women with dependants to obtain permits for resettlement in their own rights (Goebel 2005: 88).

Chenaux-Repond (1993) says that the unwritten government policy for widows in the resettlement areas has been to change registration books and permits to bear the widow's name so that she and her dependants would be allowed to stay on the land if her husband dies. This opened up spaces and opportunities for more women to access, own and control land, which was still extremely difficult in the communal areas where customary law was the norm. Such women no longer risked eviction as they were now allowed to stay on, with limited harassment from relatives using customary laws of succession and inheritance. The women could now take over from their late husbands as the new owners of land with full ownership rights. Women need support from each other, and especially from women who occupy influential positions in local and international forums so that they can assist in the design and implementation of land policies that favour women. It is in this spirit that feminists, such as Everjoice Win (2004), wrote an open letter to Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

during the latter's tenure as chairperson of the African Union Commission highlighting that women:

> know that their rights are being violated every day, in the name of this land. I believe in other women and I want to continue to have faith in other women. I assume that you are in leadership to promote and protect the rights of women. I assume that you feel for other women. This is an assumption that those of us who work as feminists often make. We think that because one woman has gone through a particular struggle, she will easily identify with the struggle of others. Sisters, you are letting us down. The women of Zimbabwe are hurting. Thousands have been physically abused and raped. Many are unable to survive from day to day and millions are groaning under the weight of oppression. I'm speaking of black women. Women who have never owned land, either in pre-colonial or postcolonial times, and who have not been given any of the celebrated redistributed land. Our President, Robert Mugabe, is on the record saying that women cannot be given land in their own capacity.

Women can help each other in redressing issues of landlessness if they use their influential positions to champion land injustice. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's position as chairperson of the African Union Commission (in fact she was the first woman to lead the continent's male-dominated organisation of African Heads of State) had created hope for most women in Africa in as far as promoting and protecting women's rights was concerned. She was strategically positioned to challenge and lobby for women's issues, including land rights as well. This was at the time when women in Zimbabwe had not been granted their rights to land. In fact, the then President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, had not shown any inclination to giving women full rights to land and natural resources. This is reflected in Win's letter (quoted above) "Our President, Robert Mugabe, is on the record saying that women cannot be

given land in their own capacity". Even one of Mugabe's Vice Presidents then - Joseph

Msika, also a man - shared the same sentiments with his boss. For example, when asked at a

press conference why women did not have land rights, Msika's response, like his boss'

statement cited above, was typical of entrenched patriarchal bigotry:

> because I would have my head cut off by men if I gave women
> land …men would turn against the government, giving wives
> land, or even granting joint titles, would destroy the family
> (Jacobs 2000: 13).

Such pronouncements could have been challenged at a continental forum through women in

positions of power, as was Dlamini-Zuma then, and notable changes could have been effected

to empower women in terms of access and ownership of land. African Feminists recognise

women in leadership positions, but are also concerned with the delivery of women leaders on

gender equality. Msika's statement shows that men in leadership positions are simply

concerned about maintaining power and their patriarchal relations. The land reform in

Zimbabwe did not seriously consider women as eligible beneficiaries. The presence of

women in political offices does not automatically guarantee gender-fair outcomes for most

women. Being a woman leader does not automatically translate into the will or ability to

pursue Feminist agendas (Tamale 1999).

4.3 Women and the Politics of Land in 'Minister Without Portfolio' by Julius Chingono, 'Specialisation' by Lawrence Hoba and 'A Dirty Game' by Daniel Mandishona

I selected stories by Julius Chingono, Lawrence Hoba and Daniel Mandishona from

Laughing Now: New Stories from Zimbabwe, a collection of stories edited by Irene Staunton

(2007). The stories largely focus on experiences of ordinary Zimbabweans, especially post-

2000. They portray the various ingenious tactics and strategies that people employ to survive

the political and economic crisis bedevilling Zimbabwe. For purposes of this research, I will examine three stories namely; 'Minister without Portfolio' by Julius Chingono (originally published in *Laughing Now* 2007), 'Specialisation' by Lawrence Hoba (first published in *Laughing Now* 2007 and also appeared in 'The Mirror', *Writing Now* and the *Magazine of the Budding Writers of Zimbabwe*) and 'A Dirty Game' by Daniel Mandishona (originally published in Laughing Now 2007).

4.3.1 Black Elite Bureaucratic Power and its Effects on Women's Access, Ownership, and Control of Land in Julius Chingono's 'Minister without Portfolio'

Julius Chingono's story 'Minister without Portfolio' introduces us to a government minister in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The minister leads a lavish lifestyle that is reminiscent of the excesses of the postcolony described by Mbembe (2001). Men like Minister Kambeu have used power and authority irresponsibly and have disempowered women through exploiting and limiting their access to resources. According to the Land Commission of 2017, a Minister may make provisions for land settlement, issue offer letters and give orders to lawful occupation, yet these Ministers abuse their positions. African Feminists advocate for responsible leadership that exercised through opening equal opportunities to access resources for both men and women. This story represents the dangers of irresponsible leadership as it leads to none non-production on the land. Chingono describes the minister as promiscuous and corrupt. Minister Kambeu is chauffeur-driven to his farms in a Mercedes Benz in the company of a prostitute-cum-mistress. The minister is a repulsive character whose chief character traits are pride and arrogance. He is very boastful and refers to himself as "a non-constituency member of parliament appointed by His Excellency because of my war credentials" (10). He equates the way that he loves the land to how he loved Agnes, his mistress. As they drive past the newly resettled farms, readers are given a panoramic view of the impact of the land reform on Zimbabwe's agricultural commercial farming landscape.

The minister sees the land reform as a "green revolution" positively transforming the economic and political fortunes of the country:

> Look, see the revolution my girl! …. the fields are red like the blood of the freedom fighters. Soon the seeds will grow and bear crops. The green revolution is in progress. It will bear abundant grain to feed the people (10).

Chingono uses the minister's journey as a metaphor of examining the impact of the land reform on Zimbabwe. Readers, through this journey trope, witness the impact of the land reform. The minister has this to say as they pass through farms:

> Look at the farms … a farmer needs seed, fertiliser and money for labour. I'm fighting for that because the Zimbabwean man is a hard worker who needs help and we are doing just that. Farm after farm is being worked on. Look at those labourers using ox-drawn ploughs … how many spans … eh … ploughs? (12).

This passage draws our attention to the farm workers as well as to the ironies of the land reform programme. The fact that farm workers use "ox-drawn ploughs" (12) to cultivate the land is highly ironic given that the equipment they are using only exposes the resettled farmers' lack of capacity to cultivate the vast expanses of farmland they now occupy. Thus, Chingono mocks and challenges the Zimbabwean government's land reform programme as an ill-thought out adventure hence the failure to sufficiently capacitate the newly resettled farmers. In addition, the minister's farm itself is in a sorry state as it is under-utilised. He only finds pride in owning land without really making an effort to make the land productive. The minister also sees farming as a male enterprise as he states that "I'm fighting for that because the Zimbabwean man is a hard worker who needs help" (12). In his discourse of farming,

women are non-existent and this explains why he does not even involve and invite his wife on his farm trips. The minister's behaviour captures encapsulates the weaknesses of the Evolution Theory of land, which assumes that more efficient use of land and higher security can be realised through individual tenure. In typical fashion, Minister Kambeu has several farms, which he accumulates through his political connections and power. This determines his unlimited access to land. The Evolution Theory, according to Mafa (2015), brings more insecurity in terms of access and rights to land use as it discriminates against women who do not have political power to make individual title accessible. Thus, having men such as the minister at the helm of politics and government is anathema to female emancipation, especially in the area of owning and controlling land. Furthermore, men like Kambeu become gatekeepers against gender equality for they control the economic assets and political power (Connel 2005). The minister has a patronising and condescending attitude towards women as seen by his treatment of Agnes, his mistress. The impact of sexist land distribution is observed not just on women but also on the lives, health and prospects for the next generation. For example:

> They saw people busy on the fields with the onset of the early
> rains. Some were using hoes. Agnes pointed her long fingers at
> the workers, mesmerised that men and women could be so
> absorbed in their work. Women with babies strapped on their
> back worked as hard as all the others (12).

The irony is that even in the post-independence era of land reform, women's access to land continues to be primarily through working as farm labourers and not as owners of the land – a serious throwback to the pre-independence period marked by colonial domination. The land reform programme has placed notable strain on women's productive and reproductive labour pushing women into tenuous low paying work (Ossome 2015). In the case of the Minister,

women might not be paid at all if his farm was unproductive his farm. He thus exploited both land and women's labour. Tsikata (2009) has argued that attention should be given to connections between land interests and control over other resources like labour, since there are linkages between land and labour relations in the making of livelihoods.

Men who are politically connected tend to monopolise the whole land reform process as they allocate themselves more and more farms through corrupt means. The selection of beneficiaries had no laid down procedures since it was done through "jambanja". In most cases, chiefs, district administrators and war veterans selected the beneficiaries of the land redistribution programme (Masiiwa and Chipungu 2004). And, all these positions were largely dominated by men. Minister Kambeu exemplifies this as he boasts of owning five farms:

> I enjoy seeing people working on the land as sons and daughters
> of the soil. I feel my blood flow through my body. I feel
> rewarded. We only require five years to become the bread-basket
> of the whole region. I like farming. Do you know how many
> farms I have? Five! And I'm in the process of acquiring others.
> I can get you one … your size (13).

This illustrates the masculinist nature of the land reform process. The fictional representation of how women may access ownership of land shows that gender relations affect social attitudes towards women's ownership of land. Men decide when and how to allocate land to women. However, Chingono's depiction of Agnes is sexist as he is mostly interested in portraying Agnes as a prostitute who is neither interested in farming nor seeking independent economic means to free herself from the world of prostitution. When Kambeu presents Agnes with the prospect of owning a farm but she flatly refuses. To this extent, the idea that Agnes refuses a farm even though she might have corruptly owned one is suggestive of the fact that

Chingono subconsciously might have failed to imagine women as owners of land in post-colonial Zimbabwe. It is also a burden to have land without enough resources, as this would worsen the position of women who in most cases do not have enough capital backing. This is in sharp contrast to Lawrence Hoba and his depiction of Maria in the story 'Maria's Independence'. Maria owns land and is more successful as a farmer, compared to her male compatriots. Thus, Chingono's view of women is sexist given that Agnes in the story does not outgrow her profession as a prostitute and seems contented with being a prostitute. We are told that Agnes:

> wanted to listen to music and not tirades about the land. This was one thing she found wearisome about her profession. She found politicians bombastic. Most of them thought that she was naïve. She let them believe so by not talking much and pretending to listen (14).

Chingono also shows that if women happen to own land, such land is described as derelict. This is the situation at one of the farms they pass, and ironically, Minister Kambeu forgets that he owns it and mistakes it to be owned by the women's league secretary:

> Do you know the owner of this farm? The pattern of idleness repeated itself at the farm compound. The drunkenness manifested itself at all compounds. People really enjoying their alcohol and prostitutes seemed to have found themselves appropriate working places to sell their wares. Life seemed a long celebration. Women danced and wriggled their hips, sexually taunting the motorists. The men whistled, raised their mugs and beckoned them to join in the partying (14-15).

Political elites like the minister are greedy and have multiple farms, and are given a lot of money and resources to make the land productive. However, they lack commitment, either because they have too many farms to manage or does not feel emotionally connected to the land in the sense of land of heritage. Unlike the close and sacred relationship between the land and the people referred to in *Nehanda*, in this story there is lack of commitment to defending and being emotionally attached to the land. This is could be because they come from outside these communities and are less likely to be worried about developing new communities at the expense of where they came from. An example can be drawn from Minister Kambeu who only passes by his farm without any attachment to the land, the lack of productivity at such farms contribute to the abuse of national resources and neglect.

The failure to use the land productively results in poor harvests and poor returns on the massive investments. Thus, deserving people did not benefit from the land reform. Only grossly irresponsible and highly incompetent elites muscled their way to the front of the queue of beneficiaries as the land issue became highly politicised, resulting in them accumulating as much land as their insatiable greed allowed them. The Land reform programme was supposed to benefit four groups, namely the landless, commercial farm workers, war veterans and the poor (Alexander 2006). However, according to the reality obtaining on the ground, and such a story, none of the targeted groups benefitted. Women have continued to provide cheap labour for the new landowners, like Kambeu.

The land reform did not bring justice and equality to women hence the portrayal of women in poverty as exploited workers and prostitutes. Rather, we see men's ownership to, access and control over land being legitimised by the patriarchal ideology of male dominance. The changing political environment that produced land reform in Zimbabwe has influenced new relationships amongst those in political positions, where political elites have increased their privilege to access, own and control land.

4.3.2 Pulling Strings to Get Land: Government Officials and Corruption in Daniel Mandishona's 'A Dirty Game'.

The Land Reform programme was characterised by corruption from the highest to the lowest levels, such that it became an impediment to women's access and ownership of land. In the story 'A Dirty Game' by Daniel Mandishona (2007), a thirteen-year-old girl narrates how they had to apply for visas to attend her sister's wedding. The queue is very long and some people had to queue for the whole day to have their papers processed. Since the narrator's father is a senior government official, he manages to "jump" the queue as he asks for a favour from the man serving at the British High Commission. The man, in exchange, asks her father "whether he could use his political connections to arrange a large commercial farm for him, preferably one with a large dam or stream running through it" (96). The father assures him that it was not a problem and promises the man land. Mandishona gives an glimpse of how male senior government officials and influential people use their offices to "arrange things" (96), which represents corruption.

In this case, the narrator's father uses his political influence to determine who gets some land and where. This shows the levels of selfishness and lack of transparency or accountability in land allocation. The story suggests that some men are corrupt and cut deals between each other, which further marginalises women who do not have even legitimate links to higher offices. Because of corruption, most women fail to control, access and own land.

Moyo and Yeros (2005) argue that the black elite exercised its bureaucratic power not only to make room for the petty bourgeoisie but for itself. In addition, since the elites often construct the nation, they have the power and are able to define who is central and who is marginal to the national project (Mayer 2000). Further, the men who have access to land fail to utilise it: "people were being given farms and not doing anything with them" (97). The narrator also

shows how there was bad publicity in the press to that effect, but nothing was done to redress this situation.

4.3.3 Women's Access to Land and Reinforcement of Discriminatory Practices in Lawrence Hoba's 'Specialisation'

Lawrence Hoba's story 'Specialisation' (2007) explores the experiences of the newly resettled farmers who engage the services of a traditional healer to boost their agricultural activities. Hoba seems to argue that this belief obstructs the expected productive benefits of the land reform programme as such men seem to believe that agricultural produce can be boosted through such practices rather than productive effort and more scientifically proven methods. On the other hand, women have always been more productive, even before colonialism, hence the more men marginalise women, the more the women, and families, and society as a whole, fail to benefit from the land.

Similarly, in Chingono's 'Minister without Portfolio', the narrator shows the newly resettled farmers forcibly evicting the former white owner:

> So all we had needed to do was to wait for Baas Kisi to go to
> the city, as he always did every Friday, and then telephone him
> and say, 'you white kaffir, don't bother showing your nigger
> arse here because we will do your ace meat with a sharp panga.
> The farm and everything on it is now ours. We, the sovereign
> sons of the soil (15).

The prevailing gender relations worsen women's position regarding their access to land as they access land in a more physically painful way like Mama Nina in the story. Moyo and Yeros (2005) note that some denounce the land reform process as "destructive", yet others celebrate it as the culmination of black empowerment. Land ownership largely belongs to

men, as it is silent about women landowners. Women only have access to land through their husbands as evidenced by Mama Nina in the story. The newly resettled farmers are both women and men. Workers are given "specialised" duties, with Chimoto ploughing the fields, Mama Nina sowing groundnuts, the narrator sowing maize and Baba Nina and the kids weeding the field. The newly resettled farmers believe in specialisation where each one is supposed to perform what they can do best:

> So when I had taught them what the father of mass production had told me in those economics textbooks, they had abandoned everything they had ever known before. They had agreed that they'd never thought mushandirapamwe (cooperative farming) in which everyone worked together would succeed. Everyone had to do what they knew best. And that much we did. Baba Nina drove the truck. And Chimoto ploughed the fields. Mhama Nina sowed the roundnuts and groundnuts because these were a woman's crops and I sowed the maize. The children, Baba Nina's children, weeded the fields (16).

This specialisation of tasks follows the unequal distribution of power and the socially-constructed roles in decision making, control and ownership of resources (Ellis 2000, in Mafa 2015). The "specialisation" seems to reinforce gender stereotypes. Mama Nina grows groundnuts, which are traditionally considered as a woman's crop. She is limited in terms of choice of crops to grow. Mama Nina is only able to access land because she is married to Baba Nina who has land ownership rights. Her lack of access to own land rights in this case, makes her not to overcome the unfair traditional sexual division of labour. Furthermore, even if married women do have some access to land use through their husbands, they are compromised as they do not control their bodies and labour. Tsikata (2009) argues that the control over women's labour is enshrined in the conjugal contract. Thus, the narrator shows

that Mama Nina is never well and cannot fully perform her assigned specialisation of sowing groundnuts because she is always sick or pregnant, which is another disadvantage for women within unequal relationships. Mama Nina does not have the capacity to control her fertility, which becomes a major constraint for her, as she cannot contribute fully, in a healthy state, towards her personal development and her family's well-being. She is compromised by the pregnancies she frequently carries in addition to the double workload, which her husband does not share. She is always burdened as Baba Nina controls her body, her life and her labour. Feminists in Africa challenge patriarchy and other systems of exploitation of this nature. Mama Nina and Mama's exploitation is linked to patriarchy. Baba Nina, Chimoto, and the narrator fail to make the land productive. Consequently, the three consult a spirit medium who advises them to work harder. It is therefore highly ironic that the three are failing to tame and make productive the land they forcibly occupied. They have everything at their disposal but still fail to make the land productive. The narrator even observes that they had forgotten to find someone who knew about irrigation because they had a dam full of water and the irrigation equipment was still lying idle:

> I remembered that we – Chimoto, Baba Nina and I – had forgotten to find someone who knew about irrigation. Someone who would wake up each morning with the same gusto as we did to do what they had to do. Our dam was still full and the irrigation equipment was lying idle. Maybe specialisation could work after all, if only we could find someone with the right skills to join us (19).

Thus, the newly resettled farmers had all the resources at their disposal but lacked adequate expertise and experience of using the farming equipment. The idea of specialisation could be of value within the land reform programme, but it requires more expertise to use the available

resources and to share responsibilities fairly, according to people's skills, to realise the productivity of the land. Mama Nina is actively involved in production but she is not benefitting and this can be accounted for within the gendered division of labour where gender relations assign specific roles, responsibilities and expectations between men and women to the detriment of women (Muyoyeta 2004). The way the men assign Mama Nina a role affects the land's productivity as she works alone to sow the groundnuts and her reproductive role is affected since no one is taking responsibility to support her social well-being. This critically becomes a challenge for Mama Nina whose access to land is linked to her labour. The story creates a site for confronting Zimbabwean women's experiences regarding their access to land.

It is important to realise that women's farming prowess is vital as women make significant contribution through their roles as farmers and entrepreneurs. The women engage in multiple livelihood strategies, such as producing crops, preparing food, maintaining homes, caring for the family and many more. However, the gendered division of agricultural skills reflects power relations between men and women. For example, men engage in productive activities to generate income and women perform reproductive duties such as child bearing, child caring, cooking and fetching water.

4.4 Challenging Traditional Notions of the Relationship between Women and Land in Hoba's *The Trek and other Stories*

The Trek and Other Stories is a collection of stories by Lawrence Hoba (2009) that explores the experiences of ordinary Zimbabweans who are now the "new" farmers because of the land reform programme. 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' and 'The Second Trek – Going Home' were originally published as 'The First Trek' in *Writing Now (*2005).

This section focuses on four stories namely 'The First Trek – The Pioneers', 'Maria's Independence', 'The Second Trek – Going Home' and The Third Trek – Resettling'.

The selected stories in Lawrence Hoba's (2009) *The Trek and Other Stories* focus on the importance of land in Zimbabwean political, social and economic spheres. Women are depicted as having indirect access to land through marriage, which renders them more vulnerable to become victims of eviction in cases of divorce or husband's death since they lack legal entitlement to the land. Hoba (2009) underscores this in 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' (1-3) through the depiction of Baba who acquires a farm but does not include his wife in the ownership. The notice board has 'Mr B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24' (2) which highlights this patriarchal tendency of omission and exclusion.

Ironically, it is Mhama who works the land while her husband sits in the shed. The story's child narrator insists on women's ownership of the land as a reward for their hard work when he says, "I think baba should have written 'MRS' instead of Mr, he never works in the fields" (3). The capital letters used for "Mrs" signify how deeply the narrator feels that the farm should belong to the woman. Hoba depicts Baba as always drunk. Baba's drunkenness epitomises his irresponsibility as a father and a farmer. This points to unfair discrimination particularly gender discrimination, which the Land Commission is against as it advocates for equitable access to land.

4.4.1 Women as 'Invisible' Labourers of Land in Hoba's 'The First Trek- the Pioneers'

Lawrence Hoba's 'The First Trek – the Pioneers' (1-3) examines the experiences of the Magudu family, which has been recently allocated land during the land reform programme. The story's title is suggestive of Zimbabwe's colonial history and invokes discourses of "penetration" and "invasion" by the Pioneer Column where the coloniser, in this case the British, is projected as penetrating and invading the territory of the colonised

"other". This invasion and penetration is also based on the colonial imagery of projecting the colonised territory as "virgin" territory, which is largely portrayed as "empty" and "underutilised" space that can only be transformed through the sheer hard work of the benevolent coloniser who is introducing civilisation to the colonised (Said 1994). The title of the story is thus also suggestive of the sexist nature of colonialism largely spearheaded by men. Alexander (2006) observes that the partisan violence, international isolation and economic collapse attendant to the land reform programme was crucial in accentuating the economic and political crisis that imploded in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The Magudu family in the story are the "pioneers" of the land reform programme. Hoba depicts the Magudu family as migrating trekking to "colonise" land that formerly belonged to a white commercial farmer. However, this Magudu family is a poor peasant family. The journey they make to their new farm and the little possessions they have exemplify this:

> The old scotch-cart makes its way slowly along the old beaten down track …Baba has a pair of manyatera and yellow overalls written 'NRZ' at the back …I am also hungry. Mhama gives me a gourd of sour milk to drink. Some pots and pans lie clattering in a corner. I hate the noise. A sack of maize meal, almost empty, sits next to the pots, in an old 20-litre tin. Mhama uses the tin to fetch water from the well every day, for washing Chido's old nappies, for cooking sadza and muriwo, and for father's bath …An old mattress lies rolled up with some blankets inside, tied with gudza rope, next to the mats. There is no bed base. Father erects one with sticks dug into the ground. My own bed, which we left behind, had a mattress made from sacks filled with soft straw. Mhama must have emptied the sacks and put them somewhere because I cannot see them from where I sit next to her. Some old sacks lie next to the rolled mattress, they contain all our clothing. A few old nappies for Chido, Mhama's dresses,

baba's trousers and shirts, and my torn shorts and T-shirts. There

is also baba's old suit that he wears on special occasions (1-2).

Hoba also depicts Mr Magudu as a drunkard and largely irresponsible as he is a violent

and abusive husband and father. The young narrator informs us that:

I know tomorrow we will be busy, Chido and I will be

discovering our new home, *Mhama* will be exploring her fields.

Baba - he will be gallivanting, searching for the farmer who

might have brewed a few drums of thick, rich *masese* [thick

African beer] (3).

The word "gallivanting" is suggestive of someone who is only interested in fulfilling his

pleasures while ignoring his duties as a father and farmer. Hoba, through the depiction of

Baba, presents the land reform programme as having allocated land to people who were

largely irresponsible. The land reform programme as represented in the story did not

address equality as emphasised by African Feminism and the Land Commission Act and

this limits women's empowerment. It is the irresponsibility by men who own land and the

lack of women's empowerment to own land that chiefly explains the collapse of

commercial farming after the land reform programme that Chingono also castigates in his

story 'Minister without Portfolio' (discussed earlier). Thus, the metal board inscribed "Mr

B. J. Magudu, Black Commercial Farmer, Farm 24" (2) is a mockery of the land reform

programme, especially given Baba's irresponsibility. In addition, the inscription on the

metal board underscores the sexist nature of the land reform programme. "Mr" emphasises

that it is only men who are allowed to own land. The inscription does not say "Mr and

Mrs". This highlights the invisibility of women as beneficiaries in the land reform

programme. It also emphasises the land reform programme's predominant criteria that

assumed a household centered on a married couple (Moyo, cited in Maguranyanga and Moyo 2006). Given the role of Mhama on the farm, this is a grossly unfair and disrespectful marginalisation of women. The farm that Mr Magudu and his family occupy is an A2 farm (a large-scale commercial farm) that is very productive:

> The sun wearies on towards the hills, where it will soon disappear behind them. Vast expanses of sugar-cane, green and tall, appear on both sides of the road. We pass a farm gate, with 'R W Whyte, Farm 23' made beautifully out of metal on it. The teacher told me that 24 comes after 23, so I know the next farm will be our own (3).

This farm is allocated under the Fast-Track Land Reform programme to Baba as he is the male family head. This leaves his wife, "Mhama," with limited ownership as Baba proceeds to affirm his ownership by erecting the metal board bearing his name only. However, given the irresponsibility of Baba, it is difficult to sustain the productivity of this farm. If there is no productivity, poverty will increase rather than being alleviated as the programme purported to achieve. The fact that the family does not command the requisite finances to fully utilise the farm shows up in Baba's failure to take responsibility. The farm implements the family has exemplify this:

> A plough sits at the far end of the scotch-cart, still looking new. Mhama bought it last year with money from her groundnuts. Though Mhama always works hard, I prefer to play with Chido and baba favours the calabash. Two hoes lie next to the plough, Mhama's hoe is worn from use, baba's is still new and clean. The inscription 'Master Farmer' is still visible. The only use his hoe is put to is rubbing against the shoulders when he goes to the fields to inspect the work that has been done (2).

The child narrator notes that "Mhama's hoe is worn from use" while baba's "is still new and clean" (2). I argue that the two hoes are metaphoric of the gendered nature of work in this family. Though Mhama does not own land in her own right as a woman, she is the one who bears all the agricultural load for this family. This explains why her hoe is "worn from use" (2). This underscores the exploitative and abusive nature of baba and patriarchy in general. Baba does not allow Mhama to own land yet it is Mhama who works the land while Baba will "be gallivanting, searching for the farmer who might have brewed a few drums of thick, rich masese" (3). Hoba seems to argue that men, typified by Baba, should be denied land rights as they are largely irresponsible and do not contribute in a significant way to the productivity of land. In contrast, women (exemplified by Mhama) exercise great responsibility as they make land productive through their hard work with very little resources and therefore deserve to access and own land in their own right. Mhama's resources are limited to the hoe she uses but Baba has the farm, the scotch-cart and the hoe that is never used. This disarticulation between labour and tenure might suggest a hidden gender component in the land reform that is typical of feminisation of labour (Ossome 2015). Mhama is trapped by the social injustice of unequal division of labour as she tries to secure the survival of her family first. In light of this, imbalances in the intra-household division of labour lead women to contribute high levels of unpaid labour to crop production and this is partly responsible for their higher levels of poverty (Tsikata 2009).

In addition, Hoba seems to argue that the land reform programme, by denying and ignoring women the right to own land, made a serious mistake whose consequences include the collapse of Zimbabwe's economy post-2000. Hoba, like Chingono in 'Minister without Portfolio', depicts men as largely irresponsible. Thus, men are largely to blame for the collapse of Zimbabwe's agriculture. Hoba's depiction of women as closer to the land than men seems to suggest that women are more responsible compared to men in working

the land. Hoba also seems to argue that women should access and own the land, as they are the ones who actually work it. This is a significant departure from Chingono in 'Minister without Portfolio'. Hoba's depiction of Baba and his family is both a tragi-comic and satire of the land reform programme for giving people who are irresponsible large tracts of land to farm. Mama's situation could have improved if the land reform programme had a consistent and fair land distribution criterion based on equality and justice. This could have changed the situation of women by empowering them in as far as social and economic resources are concerned. The criteria should however not only be institutionalised to mainstream gender. As noted by Mama (2004), getting women into existing institutions rather than transforming them can be dangerous from a feminist perspective because there is a risk of just fitting women for the sake of it without changing their positions.

If Baba was a responsible husband, Mama could have been in a better position as her efforts would have been complemented by Baba, and they could have worked better towards improving their livelihood together. Mama fails to challenge her subjectivity because she is trapped as she has to secure her survival first and that of her family because of patriarchal power, social and political injustice.

Zimbabwe's Land Reform programme was characterised by two models - the A1 or small-holder farming undertaken on a "villagised" basis with communal grazing land or within self-contained units, and the A2 model intended for medium to large-scale commercial farming. However, the fact that Baba is ill-equipped to take charge of his allocated farm had catastrophic consequences for the family and the nation of Zimbabwe in general as such irresponsibility resulted in the collapse of the agricultural sector and associated industries. Alexander (2006) notes that:

The economic consequences of the land occupations in combination with drought, international isolation and political conflict were catastrophic. The economy contracted significantly every year from the start of the Third Chimurenga, shrinking by record levels of over 13 per cent in 2002 and 2003. Roughly, half of all Zimbabweans were deemed in need of food aid in 2002, and severe food shortages persisted in subsequent years. The manufacturing and mining sectors reported drastic falls in production while agricultural output plummeted, adding to already severe levels of unemployment. Inflation soared out of control, while foreign currency and fuel shortages added to the crisis (192-3).

The next section considers the story titled 'Maria's Independence' and explores the experiences of Maria who migrates from Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, to claim a farm during the land reform programme.

4.4.2 Gendered Migration Land and Female Independence in Lawrence Hoba's 'Maria's Independence'

The story 'Maria's Independence' by Lawrence Hoba considers the experiences of Maria and her allocation of a farm during the land reform programme in post-2000 Zimbabwe. It focuses on the experiences of Maria who ventures into commercial farming because of the land reform programme. However, most men in the story laugh at and mock Maria's attempts at farming. What is surprising though is the fact that Maria thrives as a commercial farmer where most men are failing. Hoba depicts the land reform as principally masculine in nature as it is "no place for women" (4). In addition, the men in the story question Maria's motive in having a commercial farm; "why did she join the onslaught to which only men had rushed?" (5). Interestingly, Maria transcends these

patriarchal stereotypes to assert herself as a proud and successful commercial farmer. Thus, Maria's story presents a black female perspective of the Land Reform programme and seriously contests the traditional patriarchal nature of the "trekkers" and "pioneers" of the land occupations that we see in 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' championed by men like Mr Magudu. Her experiences subvert not only the masculine nature of the land occupation but also traditional notions of land ownership and rights. As a way of respecting women, this story becomes a tool for transforming and empowering women through advocating for equality and restoring land to everyone. African Feminists who work towards fighting for women's rights recognise this advocacy.

Maria moves from Harare to the farms after receiving an offer letter for a piece of land by the government. Maria challenges our conventional perception of trekking and pioneering as essentially a male endeavour. The narrator observes that:

> Maria came from the city: the place that continues to look
> towards the future of our ancestor's enemies. We only knew of
> her after several weeks. For when we came – even we who had
> arrived together – did not know the other was already there (4).

Maria seriously contests the traditional thinking of a woman as she ventures into commercial farming largely perceived as the preserve of men. The narrator notes that "It was only when we were finally settled that someone said there was a beautiful woman in our midst" (4). The way the narrator describes Maria is significant. She is as a "beautiful" (4) woman. The idea that "someone" mentions the existence of a "beautiful woman" in their midst is suggestive of the sexist discourses associated with the Land Reform programme and men's perception of women. The men seem to be fixated with Maria's beauty and not her farming acumen. Thus, to most men on the resettled farms it was

unthinkable that a woman should be interested in farming. Hoba's Maria is a sharp

contrast to Julius Chingono's Agnes who wants "to listen to music and not tirades about

land" (14). Hoba depicts Maria as a woman with a deep passion for farming, unlike her

male compatriots. The fact that Maria is not only a woman but a "beautiful" (4) one

underscores how the story satirises gender stereotypes and assumptions that view

"beautiful" women as essentially male ornaments and weak vessels who are not supposed

to burden themselves with farming. However, Maria challenges this thinking as she

refuses this stereotype of being a weak vessel and an ornament for men. Furthermore,

Maria, through her womanhood and dressing, also contests the conventional understanding

of a farmer as essentially male. The narrator notes that:

> Then we all saw her. She always wore tight pants and skimpy
> tops, which exposed her belly and tummy button that seemed to
> point insultingly at our glazed and bloodshot eyes. No one knew
> what had driven her out of the glare of the city's lights onto the
> farms to claim a piece of our ancestral heritage for herself. She
> with a body so lithe, she could be a dancer (4-5).

The above description of Maria is suggestive of a woman of loose morals. However, she

proves that she is not a loose woman as she is solely preoccupied with her farming. Most

male resettled farmers initially thought that she would not cope with the rigours of

farming. The narrator naively and in a sexist manner states that:

> So, we gave her a few months to outlive the euphoria of her and
> our new wealth. After that she would surely move out, for she,
> like Martin or me, had not lighted upon the large farmhouse, or
> the machinery. Wasn't that what everyone wanted? Or maybe
> she had people she wanted to put off a 'trail of trickery' as
> someone called it; someone who claimed to have seen her in the

thief – and prostitute- infested avenues of Harare. Time on a farm was all she needed. Why else would a woman, who had a way with her eyes that left one weak-kneed, walk out on the joys of the city that never sleeps? If she did not have to escape her past, why did she join the onslaught to which only men had rushed? Or did she believe she could find better men? But we who rushed to grab were united in our poverty and of no use to a woman who looked far too complicated for our simple minds (5).

It is important to note that Maria is a successful farmer compared to most resettled male farmers. Maria challenges the social constructions of patriarchy. She manages to push shatter social boundaries that limit women's access, control and ownership of land through her daily struggle as the only woman amongst men who are sceptical towards women's ownership of land. She exemplifies the struggle of African women as they try to have access to land ownership and the triumphs that come because of the continuous struggle. The narrator remarks that:

> As time passed people began to falter. The farms were not the paradise we'd thought them to be. There were no schools or clinics. We had neither the strength of our ancestors nor the machinery of our ancestor's enemies. What had once been there had been stolen. We blistered our hands cutting trees and tilling the soil but no rains came to quench our thirst or to water the maize. Even the animals that had kept us clinging on disappeared one by one. Those who now found game and firewood scarce simply moved deeper into the farmlands where they remained in abundance, or did until we arrived. We had unknowingly become the bad custodians of our ancestor's wealth (6).

Hoba sharply contrasts the failure by men to farm with the success of Maria. He depicts Maria as a hard-working farmer who is determined to succeed. Maria shows her grit and determination when she "would balance a twenty-litre tin of water on her head and with the grace of a lioness walk all the three kilometres from the river" (6). Therefore, it is important that the Zimbabwean government continue honour such women as Maria and many other women by giving them the right to access, control and own land. Hoba, through Maria, seems to argue that women if given a chance can significantly help in improving the fortunes of the country's commercial sector. However, men fail to appreciate the hard work that women like Maria devote to their farming. Hoba depicts the male characters in the story as only interested in Maria's beauty as noted in their snooping at her while she is bathing in the river. Instead of appreciating or even learning from her dogged determination to succeed as a farmer, the men waste valuable energy and time engrossed in their sexist and economically unrewarding carnal pursuit, drooling over her "heavy–laden hips swaying to and fro" (6).

Maria's success as a farmer is enough testimony that women need to access and own land. The narrator noting the success of Maria as a farmer tells us that:

> Then one day, not so long ago, Martin rode to her farm on his
> government-issued motorbike. Everyone else had left but Maria
> remained employing her own workers. He travelled through
> acres of maize before he reached the farm-house. She jumped
> into his lap the moment she saw him, and threw her arms
> around his neck (7).

It is therefore highly ironic that Maria is a successful farmer in an environment where most men, such as Mr Magudu in 'The First Trek- the Pioneers' and Martin and the narrator in 'Maria's Independence', have failed. Hoba portrays women as successful

where men have failed. Hoba also seems to be arguing that by giving land to women the Zimbabwean government was empowering women to be independent. Thus, female independence is synonymous with access to, control and ownership of land by women. In addition, Hoba, through the depiction of Maria, underscores the fact that women are more responsible than their male counterparts. Maria fulfils many women's struggle for equality as she challenges patriarchal and gender constructions during the land reform. This is one of the ideological tasks of African Feminism, to understand the patriarchal system and to fight against all forms of patriarchal exploitation and oppression.

Unlike Mhama (in 'The First Trek – The Pioneers') who fails to negotiate her access to, ownership and control over land despite having proved that women work harder than men, Maria successfully negotiates her way through manipulating patriarchal norms and rules. When the men discover Maria's presence on the farm, they feel that "this was no place for women, let alone beautiful ones" (4). Maria therefore breaks such feelings and norms, which exclude women from farm occupations. It is this view that Mafa (2015) echoes in arguing that that people's relationship with land is governed by multiple opportunities for political manoeuvring.

Maria also negotiates for land using her sexuality to attract men so that she gets land and manpower to assist her. Women formulate copying mechanisms and strategise within patriarchal constraints. According to Kandiyoti (1988), women call for different strategies to maximise security and optimise life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance in the face of oppression. Gender, thus, becomes open to negotiation, mediation and contestation. Maria also manipulates the "*kongonya dance*" to include herself into the nationalist narrative which shaped the land reform programme and thus she gets accepted and ultimately acquires land. It is said that:

> …she would dance the 'kongonya' with such gyrating
> movements that surely the ancestors would turn in their graves
> and cursed the day they let the enemy bring his gramophones to
> the growth points. Who would not notice the way her eyes
> rolled as if looking for prey while she sang the old liberation
> songs (5).

Kongonya is a Zimbabwean dance that was popular during the liberation struggle. Peasants and guerrilla fighters would dance during the night political meetings (called *pungwe*) in the bush. The *kongonya* dance had a popular national appeal born out of a desire for a wider cultural independence and it played an important socio-political role in Zimbabwe as it facilitated mobilisation, morale boosting, psychological anchorage and comfort for the fighters (Gonye 2012). Not only does Maria get land, she also becomes successful in securing her survival. On the other hand, the fact that Maria commands the power to make some men work for her shows that women are not always victims but can also be leaders and winners. In an African Feminist view, Maria's struggle becomes successful as she gains respect, dignity and enjoys some level of equality. She is able to secure her economic and social survival. It is also notable that whilst the story 'Maria's Independence' is highlighting some Feminist principles of empowerment, it also emphasises how there is no direct path to empowerment. For women the process of empowerment is associated with continuous struggle.

Guided by the African Feminist thought, this research charts the progress of gender equality in our communities, seeing for example, that Hoba, through the character Maria, shows the dismantling of the patriarchal exercise of sexism when Maria has access to ownership of land and is successful at the same time. She also defends and protects her right to land and her commitment is shown when she remains behind at the farm even when various men fail and leave.

4.4.3 Unstable Land Tenure Rights in Lawrence Hoba's 'The Second Trek- Going Home'

'The Second Trek – Going Home' by Lawrence Hoba focuses on the experiences of the Magudu family as they face eviction from their allocated farm during the Land Reform programme. This story is textually related to 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' as it explores the experiences of the Magudu family analysed earlier. The farm, as suggested in 'The First Trek – the Pioneers', was initially productive as it was characterised by "vast expanses of sugar-cane, green and tall, appear on both sides of the road" (3). However, in 'The Second Trek – Going Home' this productivity has collapsed because of the incompetence of the Magudu family:

> There are piles and piles of sugar-cane. The whole farm is full
> of it because baba couldn't find a tractor to take it to the mill.
> He says murungu should have left the tractors. I wonder why he
> left everything else. Even the dead mesidhisi-bhenzi. That's
> what baba said it's called, the car under the big mango tree next
> to our scotch-cart (27).

The collapse of the farm's productivity is metaphoric of the collapse of Zimbabwe as a country because of the incompetence of its leaders. The narrator underscores this incompetence through the metaphor of disorder and decay. We are told that everything on the farm is not functioning or working properly. Thus, because of this disorder and decay there are "piles and piles of sugar-cane" (27) filling the "whole farm" (27) which cannot be taken to the mill because there is no transport. It is in this vein that Sachikonye (2004: 13) has this to say about land reform:

Production of the key commodities has been on a downward spiral since 2000. It will neither be easy nor possible to restore production levels in the next five years, owing to a variety of factors, which range from a deficit in farming skills and experience to constraints on resources, especially credit, seed and fertiliser. Food security has been under threat owing to low yields since 2001.

Raftopoulos (2009), who notes that the fast Fast-Track Land Reform programme had adverse effects on the agricultural sector, also corroborates this view. The existence of large tracts of vacant and underutilised land, vandalised and deteriorating infrastructure, the decline of specialised production systems and that of seed maize production typify the destruction of the country's once vibrant commercial agricultural sector. Furthermore, the fact that the family has not been paying their electricity bills and therefore failed to resuscitate the irrigation system underlines the Magudus' poverty. The young narrator who states that, "If we had money, maybe the engines would now be working and we would have enough water to irrigate the fields" (29), echoes this. In addition, the family fails to pay its farm workers who depart for other farms. The only farm worker who remains behind is Sekuru (old man). Sekuru only stays at the farm because he has nowhere to go:

> Only sekuru works quietly among the sugar-cane. Sometimes I
> go with him. There is no school here. There are no other
> children. They all went away with their parents when baba
> couldn't pay them. Only sekuru didn't go. I asked him why and
> he said that he had nowhere to go. He looked away when he
> said this and I thought he would cry. His voice was very funny.
> Mhama says he is from a faraway country called Malawi, that's
> why he speaks like that (27).

The Magudu family fails to succeed in their farming largely because of the father's irresponsibility. We note that the father is abusive to his wife and family. The father hits the young narrator's mother with a hoe handle and fractures her arm. This temporarily incapacitates mother from working in the fields. In addition, the father spends most of his time drinking beer and never invests his time and money into farming. The family faces eviction in the absence of Mr Magudu, who is away on his usual drinking spree. This story shows the risks that women face if they do not have access to owning and controlling land. Women become insecure as their access to land is inexorably linked to incapable or unreliable husbands who nevertheless have and exercise sole ownership rights to land. In this case, Mhama's hard work on the farm is not recognised. She loses the farm since she does not have ownership rights to that land. In addition, she cannot even fight for the farm because Baba who has ownership rights is absent during the eviction.

The next section analyses the story, 'The Third Trek – Resettling', which again focuses on the experiences of the Magudu family as they attempt to resettle in their old village after the eviction from their farm.

4.4.4 Women as Heads of Families in Lawrence Hoba's 'The Third Trek - Resettling'

The story 'The Third Trek - Resettling' continues the journey motif characteristic of the stories such as the 'The First Trek - the Pioneers', 'Maria's Independence' and 'The Second Trek – Going Home'. Hoba depicts the Magudu family as having failed in their farming endeavour. The depiction of the Magudu family challenges the conventional narrative of the Land Reform programme as largely successful in resolving the Zimbabwean land issue and in the process empowering black people. Part of the failure is largely because of the state failing to address gender inequality and poverty. The story focuses on the Magudu family during their eviction. This points to land tenure ambiguities

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where the settlers have no secure formal documentation resulting in insecurity systems of tenure (Maguranyanga and Moyo 2006). No appropriate measures are taken to give security of tenure. The eviction takes place during the absence of the father:

> The driver of the police truck was impatient with Mhama who kept insisting we use the beaten down track we'd used when we came in the scotch-cart. Mhama told him if we went on a different road then she would not know the way back home. I don't know why she lied, because when we came to the farm, she'd told baba that the bigger road was less bumpy. Of course, baba told her to shut up because he doesn't take instructions from anyone. I don't know whether he will accept that the farm is no longer ours. I pray that he will because I don't want to go back there again. There's no school and I have to spend all the days playing with Chido. I no longer want to play with her. She's just a girl. I am now a big boy. Also, the farms have made Mhama bad, and there is no priest to make her good (48).

The eviction of the family in the absence of the father heightens tension in the family. The incident where Mr Magudu returns home, is largely unwelcome and he worsens the situation by hitting Chido:

> Baba came back last night. He stank of beer and could hardly stand. I don't even know who told him that we were back home. He just stumbled in, and for some time we all sat there, not moving …and then baba asked us if we had not seen him …Chido must not have known who he was because she just walked over to him and peered into his face, then she pulled a face and stepped backwards. She was just in time because baba had stretched out his dirty hands to embrace her. That was when everything went bad. Chido does not like strangers and she

started wailing …baba was infuriated. But it was sichupeti! How could he expect Chido to remember him. And even if she did, his breath was smelling very bad. Then baba slapped Chido on the cheek and Mhama, who had been watching him, suddenly stood up and placed herself between baba and Chido. She has never stood up to him before, but that was because she used to go to church (50-51).

The narrator's description of Baba further underscores the repulsiveness of his character:

Despite his anger, baba looked frail. He wobbled as he stood and then he pushed Mhama but she did not move a centimetre. He got angrier …Then Mhama pushed baba and he fell back onto the bench that runs across half the kitchen …But Mhama only hit baba once with her hand and then he feigned sleep (51).

Mhama has become more assertive and Baba appears significantly emasculated. Mhama's insistence to the riot police to use "the beaten down track" and not the "bigger road" that is "less bumpy" (48) underscores her assertiveness. It also underscores her resistance to the system that restricts women's access to land.

4.5 Conclusion

Chapter Four explores Zimbabwe's historical land processes and the post-2000 land reform programme in selected stories by Hoba, Chingono and Mandishona. The Land Reform programme was addressed and it was noted that such a programme should not only emphasise economic development but should address issues of equality, poverty, and labour relations as well. Through the stories this chapter shows that women in Zimbabwe did not benefit much from the Land Reform programme. It has also showed that the relationship between women and the land reform programme was complex. Women who accessed land

through their husbands work harder than the men because of unequal distribution of resources and labour, which do not support women's reproductive roles. Onerous and unpaid labour governs women's access to land. This is portrayed through Mhama in 'The First Trek- the Pioneers' and Mama Nina in 'Specialisation'. The land reform process was supposed to give women an opportunity to become landowners. However, Chingono's female character Agnes, shows no interest in the land reform and neither is she interested in owning her own land. Mhama in Hoba's 'The First Trek – The Pioneers' is exploited and abused by Baba as she toils on land that is not legally hers. It is only Baba who is given land during the land reform programme.

Nevertheless, Hoba's Maria presents a different picture altogether. With her deep passion for land, she is a productive farmer, unlike most of her male compatriots who are only interested in beer and chasing after her. The point of view advanced by Hoba is that the Zimbabwean government must seriously consider giving women land because they are more responsible than their male compatriots are. Hoba depicts most of the men in the stories discussed in this chapter as drunkards, abusive of their women, largely irresponsible and therefore are undeserving beneficiaries of land reform. The stories illustrate that giving such men land is tantamount to giving power to people who have no capacity to exercise judiciously. It is therefore clear that Zimbabwe's Land Reform programme had glaring shortcomings, which made inevitable the subsequent demise of the country's agricultural and industrial landscape. Alexander (2006) points out that the agricultural landscape was destabilised as hundreds of thousands of black Zimbabweans moved onto "formerly white" land. This is clearly captured in the portrayal of the Magudu family. From all the stories analysed it can be observed that the government has believed that men are inheritors of land and not women. The land reform structures in use enabled women's human rights to be violated because they are framed within the patriarchal ideology. Finally, this chapter underscores how gender inequality

exacerbates disempowerment, resulting in undemocratic and unproductive environments that promote patriarchal intimidation and abuses.

Chapter 5: Women's Contestation over City Space and Land in Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter considers how women contest and negotiate for access to city spaces and land. The ideas of Lefebvre (1991) and Harvey (1996) on space and Gutto (1986) on land inform my analysis of *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Valerie Tagwira 2006) and *We Need New Names* (NoViolet Bulawayo 2013). I argue that women in the city are not a monolithic group, neither is city space and land homogenous. In the city, women are differentiated along the lines of class, ethnicity and race. This differentiation determines their ability to access and control

city space or land. City space includes all land within the city that women can make use of either legally or illegally. For the purpose of this study, specific attention is paid to the physical land on which women negotiate various relationships with men, in terms of housing, agriculture and market stalls, which they seek to own and control. This includes unused land spaces within or beyond their home boundaries, where they engage in vending or growing food crops. I use the term space to refer to other uses of city land. Tagwira (2006) in *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts the city police, largely comprising men, chasing the women and destroying their gardens, thereby controlling women's freedom through controlling city land and spaces, and in the process disrespecting their dignity.

Poor and destitute women, like Onai in *The Uncertainty of Hope*, are unable to access, own or control the "respectable" and "prestigious" city space or land unlike the more privileged middle-class professional women, like Emily, who have the financial, social and cultural capital to access and control such land spaces. Crucially, city land and space is heterogeneous and this is largely a result of economic and political factors, which resonates with Lefebvre's (1991) concept of space as a social construct.

5.2 Theorising City Space and Land, and the Relationship between Space and Gender in Zimbabwe

The city spaces and land are products of colonialism (and the accompanying capitalist forces) which divided African land into urban and rural areas for administrative and commercial purposes. That this division still exists in post-independence Zimbabwe attests to the continuities of colonialism long after its supposed demise in 1980, when Zimbabwe became an independent country. Mamdani (1996) notes that colonialism resulted in the creation of the rural-urban divide on the African continent. The desire of the European colonisers to entrench and further reinforce their economic and political interests triggered

this division. Noyes, cited in Primorac (2006: 58), elaborates that a key aspect of colonialism was the establishment of spatial boundaries and the rules governing crossing of these artificial borders. The spatial boundaries that colonialism created were accorded differential treatment in terms of development. As a result, the urban spaces were more developed compared to the rural spaces. This is an example of the inequities of colonial development. These disparities have seen the urban space being projected as epitomising 'modernity' and 'civilisation' while the rural spaces have been regarded as the embodiment of African 'tradition', and therefore stereotyped as 'backward' and 'primitive'. These divisions between the urban and rural spaces continue to plague the development policies and projects of the post-colonial nation state, which favour urban areas. Thus, urban areas have better health and education facilities compared to rural areas. The unequal distribution of wealth and resources has resulted in the migration of rural people to urban centres, in search of employment and the elusive dreams of success. The urban space is also perceived as a place of promise and better opportunities as it supposedly offers many means of survival compared to the limited opportunities available in the rural areas. However, the city is largely a paradoxical space of opportunities and failures.

Despite these imposing contexts of history and privilege, women in the cities do not simply accept the spatial limitations drawn for them. Instead, they engage actively and creatively with the urban land spaces through their own strategies of living, working and socialising. In order to survive, they appropriate and restructure the city spaces and land. Women have come to realise that they cannot continue to depend on men to survive in the city. They have to contest and fit into the social product of the city space. They have to summon their inner powers to assert their independence and control of their destiny. Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisation of space as a social construct containing social

relations of production and reproduction helps deepen an understanding of the agency of women in the city. Lefebvre (1991) argues that space, as a social concept, serves as a tool of thought and action. In addition to being a means of production, space is also used to signify assertiveness, control, domination and power. Space serves as a tool that facilitates thought and power that necessitates action. Space enables the women to think and act upon this important resource. The idea that space is a social construct implies that space is malleable. There is, therefore, need to transcend viewing space as merely an "objective physical surface with fixed characteristics upon which social categories are mapped out" to seeing space as both a social product and a shaping force in social life (Primorac 2006: 59). Thus, the idea of empty space, pre-existing the social relations of production and reproduction does not exist as space embodies and enacts social relationships. Harvey (1996) also argues that space is a product of relations derived from historical and social processes and events. Thus, space is malleable and can be reconfigured. Space is not just physical but also ideological and discursive and is therefore prone to negotiation and contestation.

Imperial actions influenced or determined the early growth of many African cities. This imperial influence included the geographic location and architectural layout of the African cities. The mapping of the empire involved more than cartographic exercises in charting empty spaces and constructing topographical surveys as it also entailed the implementation of urban planning schemes where ideas of racial segregation were the principal mechanism for the physical separation and division of urban space (Murray and Myers 2006). Just as racial segregation was central in the urban planning schemes of colonial cities, so is class in post–independence Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's elite and middle class tend to occupy affluent low-density suburbs, such as Borrowdale in Harare, while the lower working classes dwell in high-density suburbs, such as Mbare. Harare's city space is

based on the coexistence of "ghettopolis" and "dalepolis" in one urban formation. The term "ghettopolis" refers not only to the city of poverty, or to the spatial concentration of the urban poor in squatter camps and fringe settlements but also accounts for the "disabling city" whose physical infrastructure is falling or has crumbled (Ndjio 2006). Thus, some city spaces, such as Mbare in *The Uncertainty of Hope* and Paradise in *We Need New Names*, can be categorised as "ghettopolis". However, the city is also characterised by spaces/locations of luxury and privilege. Musanga (2015: 104) terms such places/spaces "dalepolis" as they are city spaces of "privilege, luxury, and comfort that are the preserve of the elite of Zimbabwean society".

Women in the city contest and negotiate for land space in various ways. However, tracing this contestation and negotiation demands an appreciation of Zimbabwean history. The city is a colonial creation. There are three ways of approaching the African city (Maguire 2015). Firstly, the city can be conceptualised as a site of control and restriction. This can be enforced along racial, class and gendered lines, with an individual being denied access to certain spaces. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, gender and race are no longer critical variables in accessing space. However, class is still a very important variable in accessing some spaces. Elite suburbs such as Borrowdale still rely heavily on class as a determining factor in accessing them. Secondly, the city can be understood as a planned and planning space (Magure, 2015) that is not homogenous, and the unevenness can be attributed largely to economic and political factors. Lastly, the city functions as a political site of disaffection (Magure 2015).

Because of colonialism, Africans were forced to migrate into the cities in search for waged labour in order to pay the various taxes that were introduced by the colonial administration. Jeater (2006) argues that African migrant workers in urban areas and mine compounds were predominantly male as women were largely relegated to the rural areas. Jeater's (2006)

treatise traces the roots of the gendered city where it was considered not appropriate for women to stay in cities. The treatise further argues that "African women were less likely to find a place to stay in town than African men" (32) as it "was normal" for an African man to be in town, but African women were seen as very much "out of place" (35).

One of the main ways in which gender relationships are constructed and patrolled is through the control of physical spaces. Men tend to control city land spaces. However, women largely see the city as a place with opportunities, some relative freedom and better life. Barnes and Win (1992) attest that the presence of women in towns is as old as Southern African colonialism. Hungwe (2006) contends that colonial authorities, largely through urban policies that governed migration, opposed female migration to urban centres. Consequently, there were few women in the cities during colonialism, and such women were usually single and widowed or those rejected by society, especially those who would have escaped oppressive marriages. More importantly, Otiso (2005: 85) notes that there were quite a number of restrictive laws in urban areas during colonialism barring "Africans …from owning urban land". Otiso (2005) further notes that Africans were given temporary urban residence since their presence was only to supply labour and not to settle permanently in cities. Similarly, Feremenga (2005) indicates that strict colonial control of the urban population resulted in land disparities that continue to plague contemporary Africa. Apart from patriarchy, which already disadvantaged women, colonial laws worsened women's access to city land spaces as the laws largely denied women opportunities of owning and controlling city land spaces by strictly regulating their stay in the cities. In addition, the population of women in cities was low compared to men whose presence was acknowledged by colonial administrators. Given this colonial background, women's access, ownership and control of land in cities continues to be marginalised.

State police in urban areas/cities have targeted women several times on city land after independence in Zimbabwe. There was Operation Chinyavada (Scorpion) in 1983 specifically targeting women found on the streets after six o'clock in the evening. This crackdown was meant to rid the streets of commercial sex workers and force them to migrate to the rural areas (Harris 2008). In preparation for the 1986 Non-Aligned Movement summit in Harare, women walking alone at night were targeted as they were presumed to be commercial sex workers (Vambe 2008). In 1991, the city of Harare launched another operation specifically targeting women as preparation for Queen Elizabeth II's visit to attend a Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. The idea was to give an impression that Zimbabwe was a 'clean' country (Musiyiwa 2008). The Zimbabwe Republic Police launched Operation Chipo Chiroorwa (ladies get married) in 2007 to rid urban areas of commercial sex workers by encouraging them to get married. In 2011, there was Operation Chengetedzai Hunhu (maintain your dignity) with similar objectives as Operation Chinyavada. Operation Dyira Bonus Kumba (spend your annual bonus at home) followed in 2012 and in 2013, Operation No Loitering was launched with the objective of ridding urban areas of commercial sex workers (Benyera and Nyere 2015).

These clampdowns targeted and criminalised women's activities only and not men, yet in commercial sex work, the women's clients are men. From these episodes, it is notable that this problem of targeting and victimising women in urban land spaces has also been inherited by the state in the post-colonial Zimbabwe where the state owns the land in cities, which is managed by government departments and parastatals that are not gender sensitive. Land for housing in urban areas was given to men and it is only in the late 1980's that women have started to have access to such land to buy and register houses in their own names (Gaidzanwa 1995).

5.3 City Space, Land, Operation Murambatsvina and Gender in Valerie Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope*

The Uncertainty of Hope centres on the complex lives of Onai and her best friend, Katy. They are both vendors and Katy is also into black market currency dealing. The novel explores the consequences of Operation Murambatsvina on the urban poor living in the 'ghettopolis'.

On 19 May 2005, the government of Zimbabwe enforced a national crackdown dubbed Operation Murambatsvina/'Operation Restore Order' (Solidarity Peace Trust 2005), which affected over two million people engaged in informal trading and living in informal structures and backyard cottages. The word "*Murambatsvina*" literally means "Drive out the filth/rubbish". *Murambatsvina* is a compound word formed by *muramba + tsvina*. *Muramba* is an inflection of the verb "*ramba*" meaning "to do away with", and "*tsvina*" means "dirt" or "filth". The filth referred to was largely the urban poor including women who had rapidly occupied unused land in the cities and towns by erecting informal settlements, shelters and vending stalls. These were used for informal trading ranging from fruit and vegetable vending, tuckshop ownership, flea market, firewood selling, cross-border trading and salons, among others. The government claimed it was using the police and security forces to supposedly "restore order" by forcibly destroying informal structures and stopping informal trading activities (mostly involving women) in informally designated areas. Houses and structures that officials considered not sanctioned by urban councils were razed to the ground in what the government claimed was an attempt to restore sanity to urban planning (Tibaijuka 2005). The operation involved the destruction of 'flea' markets and housing used for many decades by informal traders and vendors resulting in the loss of livelihoods. It also "involved bulldozing, smashing and burning of structures housing many thousands of poor urban dwellers" (Tibaijuka 2005: 12). As a result of the operation, over 92 000 houses were destroyed and about 700 000 families lost their shelters and viable forms of livelihood, and

about 18 percent of the total population was directly and indirectly affected (Mufema 2005).

It is asserted:

> In social terms, the Operation has rendered people homeless and destitute, and created humanitarian and developmental needs that will require significant investment and assistance over several years. Economically, substantial housing stock has been destroyed, and the informal sector has virtually been wiped out, rendering individuals and households destitute ... in political terms, the operation has exacerbated an already tense and polarised climate characterised by mistrust and fear ... Institutionally, the operation was conducted by central Government authorities, including the military, in an area that legally falls under the purview of local government (Tibaijuka 2005: 13).

Operation Murambatsvina was conducted as a way of masking the Zimbabwean government's incapacity to fulfil some of its promises pertaining to urban housing. Furthermore, the operation had a hidden political dimension as it was also an attempt by the Zimbabwean government to punish the urban poor for their support of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Mlambo 2008). The operation was also a political attempt by ZANU-PF to regain its control and reassert its hegemony over ordinary Zimbabweans, especially the urban poor and youths (Moore 2008). Some previous research carried out indicates that the state largely amended laws, reformed the judiciary system and the constitution such that the government decides what could be law from its own reference (Bhatasara 2011).

In addition, the operation was a massive onslaught on the informal sector (Raftopolous 2008). Action Aid International (2005) recorded a total of 1 193 370 individuals affected

by Operation Murambatsvina. Another fact-finding mission estimates that the total population directly and indirectly affected by Operation Murambatsvina is about 2.4 million or 18 percent of the total population. The victims had three main categories, which included those who lost livelihood, homes and those who have lost both (Tibaijuka 2005). If 18 percent of the total population lost their livelihoods and or homes, then one can only imagine the substantial amount of land space lost by these victims in mostly urban areas.

The progress that the women had made to access, own and control city space was also largely reversed. Zimbabwean politics is largely the domain of men, and policies and actions like 'Murambatsvina' mean that men continue to derail women's efforts to access and control city land spaces:

> patriarchy had reconfigured itself and the political will to meaningfully address gender inequality in Zimbabwe diminished rapidly, being replaced by the desire to regulate and control women both in the private and public sphere. This was done through the very sophisticated and powerful invocation of counter-revolutionary nationalist and cultural discourse that tended to interpolate any women's organising as feminist and feminism as being antinationalist (Essof 2013:32).

Women therefore did not have much voice in challenging Operation Murambatsvina. Yet women owned most of the livelihoods that were destroyed by the operation. Operation Murambatsvina targeted women in order to undermine their efforts and, in the process, deprived them of their livelihoods and property. This is in contrast to the fundamental Human Rights Conventions and Gender Policy frameworks identified earlier, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory. The saddest irony of it all is that these legal instruments are undermined by the same government that signed them (Vambe 2008). This is worsened by

the fact that many women cannot claim city land, as it requires them to have proof of ownership, which they do not have. Most women, like the one in the following picture (Fig 1), were forced to demolish their own houses and house extensions by the government. This can be read as an attempt by the government to deny women access to city spaces irrespective of the fact that the concerned women might have legally owned the house stands (and then proceeded, out of need, to erect structures not sanctioned by the council).

Figure 1: *Woman destroying her house during Operation Murambatsvina*
Source: Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee, Utete 2003

Tagwira's *The Uncertainty of Hope* depicts the consequences of Operation 'Murambatsvina' on the livelihoods of people in the city, especially women who had their market stalls and houses destroyed. Women from various backgrounds struggle to survive in the city as they become homeless with no source of income.

The Uncertainty of Hope also largely provides a female perspective of the effects of Operation Murambatsvina on the urban poor. The operation caused untold suffering for the urban poor already struggling to survive the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy post–

2000. This collapse was evident in the long queues for basic foodstuffs, as depicted in Tagwira's novel. The operation therefore testifies to the dystopic nature of life in most urban areas in Zimbabwe, especially in poor neighbourhoods like Mbare. Wane (2011) highlights that African Feminist intellectuals should create theorising spaces for African indigenous women who speak from the grassroots because many African intellectuals do not largely share the burden of having to worry about basic necessities such as food, shelter, health and education. *The Uncertainty of Hope* can be read as a platform created by Tagwira to show how African indigenous women, are coming from different environments with varied levels of poverty, to show their need attempt to access, control and own land for basic necessities. Women try to negotiate for city land space using various strategies. Characters like Sheila and Gloria are depicted as commercial sex workers and the money they make allows them to access city land as they pay rent for the shacks they occupy. Gloria is in a relationship with Garikai, Onai Moyo's husband, and lures him to marry her. With marriage seen by most women as providing some security, Gloria takes advantage of Garikai as she does not own a house. This is further complicated by the nature of Gloria's job, as it does not guarantee her any security. By trying to marry Garikai, Gloria seeks to secure her stay in the city, as she would have increased her chances of accessing Garikai's house:

> [Gloria] did not want to die a lonesome death on the streets of Mbare, or in a ditch somewhere, as happened to some of her dearest friends in the profession. She needed a man to call her own, a man who would look after her when HIV lands its claim upon her (39).

Gloria is thus a character who is worried about her security in the city where land spaces are not easily accessible to single women like herself without a stable income. She therefore negotiates for shelter and livelihood through prostitution as a way of accessing city land space. She is afraid of becoming homeless and the only way possible for her to

secure a home is to marry Garikai. However, it is ironic to note that the marriage Gloria desires does not guarantee security and stability to women. This is evident in that Garikai does not treat his wife Onai Moyo with respect. He brings home a commercial sex worker as a co-wife, which reduces Onai's dignity. Onai Moyo treats her marriage and husband with respect and provides for the family as Garikai squanders his salary on commercial sex workers. Onai's marital status only offers her access to Garikai's family home but she struggles to live and survive in that space as Garikai is a domineering and sadistic husband. Garikai brings home commercial sex workers, which exemplifies his violence, cruelty, and sadism. In these ways, rogue masculinity and patriarchy have continued to dominate in the cities, much to the disadvantage of women and children. Garikai even brags to his friend, Silas, as they discuss about Gloria that he is not concerned whether Onai discovers his extramarital affairs. He informs his friend that "I really don't care if she finds out. If she can't live with it, she's free to go anytime" (37).

Under patriarchy, most women do not enjoy equality in their own homes and families, even after fighting for national liberation and equality. Women lack secure access to home spaces of their own because they have no access to jobs, job security, independent financial resources and assets under patriarchy and neo-colonialism. Zimbabwe's financial challenges, resulting from hyperinflation, political unrest and the weakened currency severely affected women who had to rely on men. Under these and related conditions patriarchy reinforces itself, deviant masculinities fester unchecked and women have very little to no chance of challenging this as there are no state social support structures in place.

Women are portrayed struggling to cope under difficult economic situations as they demonstrate resilience and explore various survival and copying skills. African Feminists like Olabisi (1998) observe that fighting for survival is a priority for African women whose countries are in economic crisis as they engage in a variety of income earning projects so that

their families survive. Onai is a vendor and Katy is both a vendor and a black market foreign currency dealer. Young women like Emily and Faith are depicted as women who also manage to survive in the city. Emily has some access and control over city space as she is depicted as a career woman. Faith is a law student and Emily is a medical doctor. In addition, Emily and Faith, unlike Onai, are in a position to negotiate their lives independent of oppressive men. One's socio-economic position is crucial in accessing and controlling city land. Emily and Faith are able to access and control land given their social classes and professions, unlike Onai who belongs to the poor.

On the other hand, some women bargain with patriarchy to access and control city land spaces. Some single women like Gloria and Sheila use sex as a bargaining tool in their quest to access land and homes owned by men. Some married women, like Maya, are vocal and have access and control over city space and land. However, Maya is alleged to have given her husband some love portion to make him weak and docile, as the husband does not even question her. Maya has some relative power as she has control and access to her house, although she doe does not own it. She uses this cultural practice of love portions (kudyisa) as a way of bargaining with patriarchy. According to Chivaura and Mararike (1998), "kudyisa" is practised by some women in Africa where they use a concoction of medicinal herbs to exert control over their husbands and take over the affairs of the home. The medicine is not supposed to cause serious illness or death, the intention is to exert a strong effect on the body's reticular activating system. The man usually 'falls asleep', takes advice from his wife only and thinks of his wife always. He also loses control of the home and is at his wife's mercy. Maya capitalises on this practice to her advantage:

> The only person who seemed to appreciate Maya was her timid
> husband, Mazai. He was something of a laughing stock among

the men anyway. Who did not know that in Mazai's home Maya

ruled the roost? (123)

This timid behaviour projected by Mazai is not socially expected and accepted in African

men and is associated with weakness, especially in the Zimbabwean context where

masculinity is highly cherished. There is a reversal of gendered roles as the wife, Maya,

assumes roles expected of the husband. Kandiyoti (1998) posits that patriarchal bargains

exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine

the nature of gender ideology in different context.

From Maya's experience, most women have indirect access and control over city land spaces

through marriage especially where they have an upper hand. As such, there are several ways

a woman can use to have access to land, and having these 'rights' provides a measure of

security that other women may not have (Agarwal 1994).

However, it is most recognisable that widows in most cases are more vulnerable compared to

other women, as it is easy to force them out of their homes after the death of their husband.

Most women do not have legal rights over their family homes and are usually exposed and

vulnerable when the husband dies. After Garikai's death, Onai and her children face eviction.

However, Garikai's uncle, VaSolo, tells Onai that "every home needs a man to be in charge

… we have agreed that we want to keep you in the family" (245). Toro, Gari's brother,

quickly confirms that "I'm now in charge here … so I will move in here, with my wife and

children" (246). Onai refuses this new arrangement by telling Toro that she can look after

herself and her kids. As a result, she loses the house to Toro who gets angry and says "you

disrespectful, stupid woman! Get out of my house now, and take your snivelling children

with you … I want you out of here immediately" (246). This proves that ownership, access

and control of city land spaces can only be temporarily guaranteed through marital unions.

Land rights of married women like Onai are not secure. This is why she is easily evicted from

her house. This show that marriage does not guarantee full ownership, rather it gives temporary access for women and in most cases, women like Onai are constantly reminded that they do not own anything.

Shungu, who is married to Toro, then claims access to the land space that Onai used to occupy after Onai is displaced by Toro. She made no effort to help Onai: "Onai knew that Shungu wouldn't help her. She probably couldn't wait to move to the city" (247). As a woman too just like Onai, she is not also secure since she is ironically in the same position as Onai. The fact that Toro displaces Onai affirms that women like Onai largely do not have access or control over city land. Women therefore have limited access to city space and land as most of the houses and the land where the houses are built are not registered in their names. Garikai's extended family supports Toro as they have already decided for Onai and her kids without her consent despite the fact that she is an adult who has been living at that house. Thus, a woman's class position is defined through a man and open to change: a well-placed marriage can raise it, and divorce, or widowhood can lower it (Agarwal 1994). This underscores the need for women to have ownership and control of city space and land independently, as ties and relationships do not guarantee women and their children security. Given the economic collapse and job losses witnessed post-2000, women supplement income and try to survive utilising city land spaces. Magure (2015: 653) asserts that "urbanites were forced to or predominantly rely on informal trading in urban spaces for income". This survival strategy resulted in the contest for city land spaces between police and innovative women who used city land spaces to engage in enterprising ventures such as vending. In their quest for respect, dignity, and economic survival, a number of women in the text survive on market stalls where they sell fruits and vegetables. These women include Maya, Hannah, Onai, Katy and Rhoda. However, the market stalls are destroyed during Operation

Murambatsvina and the women are constantly chased away by the police who arrest them and confiscate their wares:

> City by-laws do not allow vending at undesignated sites. As a result, municipal police officers are infamous for harassing these helpless vendors who by their own admission sell their merchandise in undesignated spaces (Magure 2015: 657).

This shows the social, economic and political injustices affecting women. Market traders, like Onai Maya, Hannah, Katy and Rhoda, are vulnerable to physical violence from police and they have no personal security. Ossome (2015) have argued that the informal economy represents a poverty trap for women, concentrating them into low-income activities with little prospects for advancement. Lack of sustainable options is shown to push women into vulnerable employment in the informal sector and excludes them from more secure, sustainable and higher-income opportunities afforded through accessing lucrative city land spaces. Politics in Zimbabwe affect women's access, control and ownership to land. Izumi (1999) asserts that gender issues have been largely sidelined and compromised and existing powerful groups have retained control of land and land spaces. In this case, powerful social groups include politicians and those who hold high social positions or ranks in the civil service and the military. Thus, Murambatsvina destroyed women's efforts to sustain themselves on the various land portions and spaces they occupied as vendors. This left them destitute as they lost their wares to municipal police and soldiers. Katy and Onai who survive on market stalls exemplify this. Operation Murambatsvina negatively affected them, as it forced them to stop their business. Some women even committed suicide because of Operation Murambatsvina. We are told that:

> One woman's bloated body had been found floating in a ditch overflowing with raw sewerage. Nobody had any idea how she had died. Those who knew her, said she might have died of grief,

because she too had lost virtually everything. Another woman
had committed suicide by taking rat poison, when both her tuck-
shop and her shack were demolished within a few hours of each
other (155).

Intra-urban mobilities provide temporary land spaces and temporary freedom as women move within the city. Onai moves from Mbare to Mr Jongwe's home in Borrowdale after she is hired by Tapiwa to work for him at his late wife's bridal shop as a dressmaker. She is given free accommodation at Mr Jongwe's premise. She becomes independent and is able to live with her kids, earning her own money. Though she does not own the land space, it gives her temporary freedom that she did not have in Mbare. Thus, women's mobilities accord some access to city land as testified by Onai. Women can access city land spaces but they have limited control and men mostly own the land. In this case, Mr Jongwe owns the land space that gives Onai some relative access and freedom.

In Tagwira's novel, the reader also witnesses women transcending conventional gender roles to assume more traditionally masculine roles as they work to provide for their families. Onai and Katy, whose assumption of dual responsibilities for their families even though their husbands are present, exemplify this. Onai's husband, Garikai, is present but he is a toxic personality who does not provide for the family. Thus, in the context of invisible and absent masculinities typified by Garikai, women like Onai assume hitherto masculine responsibilities and work to provide for their families. Katy's husband, John, is absent because of work (as a long distance truck driver) but he provides for his family. However, this does not stop Katy from working to augment their income.

Onai and Katy have vegetable markets and Katy is also involved in the black market selling foreign currency. Women are represented as capable of manoeuvring and surviving by taking great risks to survive despite the dangers and threats of operating in the city. These survivalist

strategies contribute to the reconfiguration of traditional Zimbabwean fatherhood and motherhood. Women like Onai are depicted as coping better in moments of crisis compared to their male counterparts typified by Garikai. Garikai's form of masculinity is toxic to the welfare of his family, as he does not provide for his family. Musiiwa and Chirere (2007) observe that fatherhood is defined by conjugal and family responsibilities and that a man's ability to accomplish such responsibilities earns him respect from his wife and children. This is what Garikai lacks yet he owns a portion of land in the city in the form of a house. Owning land in the city therefore does not necessarily result in the exercise of greater responsibility, as exemplified by Garikai. His wife, Onai, does not own land but is able to provide for her family. What makes Onai continue staying with the abusive Garikai is the fact that she has no other alternative as she does not have her own home in Harare. Garikai owns the land on which the house is built. Having land rights and owning city space and land can also improve the way women are treated especially by men. In addition, women owning and controlling land is critical in their attaining of independence and freedom from abusive and exploitative relationships. In cases such as Onai's where the husband (as the bearer of a patriarchal line of power) is in control of the home and land, the husband and his relatives like Toro do not respect her. Rather, she is marginalised in the important discussions of the extended family. Thus, her friend Katy tells her husband, "If only there was a way for Onai to earn enough money to buy a house of her own and take care of her children. I'm sure she would leave him" (17). Katy's husband, John, replies thus, "This is Zimbabwe. A poor woman will always be a poor woman. Onai will never own a house. She is an unemployed dressmaker who works as a vegetable vendor" (18). Despite being a professional dressmaker, the city does not offer land for Onai, a skilled woman.to practise her dressmaking. Most women in the city are unskilled and they make up the majority of the informal sector as evidenced by

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the many women we find in the text involved in vending. Tagwira describes the horrific destruction caused by Operation Murambatsvina:

> Innovative home owners had haphazardly added extra rooms to the 'main house': a variety of shacks, resourcefully constructed from wood, asbestos, metal sheet ….These were rented out to families ….Both Katy and Onai were proud owners of such shacks. It was not unusual to find among them a scattering of vegetable plants that families used to supplement their diets (52-53).

Households were sustained by the extra shelters rented out to tenants as well as the erected vending stalls. Onai and Katy also rented out extra rooms to families as a way of getting supplementary income and as an effort to utilise city land space for their survival. Women worry about fulfilling social reproductive tasks as they provide for their children through vending and renting out rooms. Feminists argue that women then become trapped by their families as they try to secure their families livelihood.

During the destructions by the government, women could not control or access these unutilised land spaces even though the spaces were within their legal yards. The municipal police, army and the State police prevented women from accessing city land spaces and benefitting from them. Police Commissioner Nzou undermines and despises everything done by women yet when he needs foreign currency, it is women who come to his assistance. He despises doing business with Katy as he suspects that she cannot keep secrets because he knows what he is doing is illegal, especially with his position as a police commissioner. This prejudice sees women's opportunities constricted, as men feel more threatened by women's abilities in such urban spaces. This is attested to by the Police Commissioner who states that "women are such bad drivers if it was up to him, they wouldn't be allowed on the roads at all" (66). Commissioner Nzou is surprised when he discovers that women like Katy are aware

of confidential information about the demolitions of houses. Instead of warning Katy as someone who provides him with foreign currency, he wants to ambush her with surprise demolitions and arrest. The city spaces continue to be dominated by men. Control over city land by the government seems to be very political and it aims at disempowering urban dwellers, particularly women because they pose a threat to the ruling party.

Women in the cities form alliances for gender-based women's rights as a way of claiming city land and space. Examples include the Kushinga Women's Project where career women like Emily and university students like Faith participate and encourage other women to report cases of gender abuse. Kushinga Women's Project is a support group that lobbies for the rights of women in Zimbabwe and offers intervention programmes for women in abusive relationships (Essof 2013). A peaceful march against gender violence is arranged in the city by the Kushinga Women's Project and is supported by other existing women's groups. They even register the march to make it legal but Tom, Emily's brother, disapproves their participation. He warns Emily and her friend Faith that "the authorities were highly suspicious of any gatherings, anything that resembles protest" (263). Furthermore, their request for television coverage for the march is turned down. All efforts by women to make their voices heard are blocked.

Faith and other women protest against the demolitions and she tries to convince Tom, her boyfriend, that the march is not political. However, Tom sardonically responds that, "So when have women's issues not been political …have you forgotten that more women than men cast votes in any election" (263). Tom projects women as politically naïve despite their being in the majority. Women such as Faith, however, believe in political mobilisation and participation for the emancipation of women in society despite men often politicising women's genuine issues to silence them. Whilst men like Tom, acknowledge that women cast more votes than men, women continue to be restricted and undermined in accessing land in

the city. Riot police and the armed officers foil the arranged march that begins at Town House. This peaceful march by unarmed women ends violently as the women are attacked by armed police, with some being beaten, arrested and charged with public disorder and inciting violence. Women could not use the city land spaces for peaceful demonstrations because the demonstrations were considered political. However, it can be noted that these women who are struggling against oppression are not doing so as individuals, but collectively, as a framework for support. Nnaemeka (1998) argues that the majority of African women are not hung up on articulating their Feminist ideology, they just do it.

Faith is uneasy over Tom's acquisition of Mr Johnson's farm, as she believes that he might have gotten the farm through "Jambanja". However, her fears are allayed by Melody who informs her that:

> When Mr Johnson was murdered, Tom was in the process of making final payments on the farm. It seems that the sale had been agreed between them for some time. However, soon after the farmer's death, his property appeared on the list of farms that had been repossessed by the government … and I hear bigwigs were eying it, as they always do when they spot a good thing. So Tom took the matter to court where, fortunately, he won. So the farm was subsequently taken off the repossession list (202).

As a result, Faith as a woman advocates for a transparent and accountable way of accessing and owning land in post-independent Zimbabwe.

"The conditions under which women were organising in … had become increasingly challenging and the state's unvarnished hostility to gendered discourses meant that women activists become the target of the state sponsored violence" (Essof 2013: 31). Women from the richer group, the middle class and the poor formed alliances to negotiate and demonstrate

against the ill treatment from the police. This is exemplified by the formation of the Kushinga Women's Project by Emily and Faith.

The destruction of houses during Operation Murambatsvina meant that more women became homeless and more vulnerable to poverty. Those who had become homeless were to register for houses council built through Operation Garikai. However, the houses were inadequate given the scale of the demolitions. In addition, allocation of the houses built to substitute those destroyed was riddled with corruption, resulting in most individuals whose properties were destroyed not getting the new houses. The allocation of the council built houses was controversial, because beneficiaries were chosen mainly based on patronage politics and favouritism (Benyera and Nyere 2015). This lack of transparency aggravated the plight of women most of whom did not have political connections. The demolitions exposed women to sexual exploitation as they tried to access council houses. For example, when Onai tries to register for a house under Operation Garikai she is sexually assaulted and almost raped at the offices by Mr Boora, who claims that he will "assist" her if she "pays" him with sex as he "walked around the desk, and bending over her, wrapped his arms tightly around the upper half of her body, and clutched her bosom" (292). Thus, men like Mr Boora manipulate women because they have power, influence and control over systems governing land and spaces in the cities. Unfortunately, Onai's rights as a widow are ignored as Toro, her late husband's brother, throws her out of the house together with her children leaving her a destitute.

5.4 Women Contesting City Land Spaces in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) portrays post-colonial Zimbabwe's urban poor, including women and children, suffering in a squatter camp after being dispossessed by

the government's "Operation Murambatsvina". In the shanty camp, men manipulate and claim the land spaces to advance themselves economically.

The juxtaposition of Budapest, an elite residential suburb, and Paradise, a nearby squatter camp underscores the segregatory nature of city land spaces in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. Access to Budapest is restricted and the parents from Paradise disapprove of their kids venturing into such land spaces. The narrator, Darling, is a young girl who lives in Paradise with her mother. Her mother warns and discourages her and her friends from going to Budapest. She and her friends survive on stealing guavas from the nearby exclusive suburb because of poverty. They get into a Whiteman's house and are astonished to see the spaciousness of the house. Darling imagines how many people from Paradise could live in that big house. Thus, the issue of land space is political as traces of segregation and separateness continue to haunt independent Zimbabwe. Most women (and men) grow up with restricted access to land spaces from a very tender age.

The informal use of land spaces seen in this text resulted from the economic collapse of Zimbabwe in the post-2000 period. Men such as Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro make use of land and have privileged access and control of a patch of land on a nearby mountain (Fambeki), where he earns a living as a self-styled prophet. Prophet Mborro has established a church and makes money from it through the majority of women followers, who gain membership by paying money. Darling says how "[a]fter preaching somebody passes a big white bowl around for offerings" (36) and how other church members "look like angels in their flowing robes that have now lost their whiteness" (31) against the prophet who "is wearing [a] brand new white robe" (33). This difference in dressing points to the extent of the poverty of the congregants in old robes while the prophet is the only one with a new robe.

Men and women sit opposite each other, men on one side and women on the other "like they are two different rivers that are not supposed to meet" (32). There are distinctions even in how women and man utilise land spaces in church. Men and women's sitting positions are arranged according to sex, they sit separately and do not mix. Furthermore, Mborro appropriates for himself land space for his shrine on the mountain, which he considers holy, thus the land space becomes his property. Jeater (2000: 36) notes that:

> It is noticeable that [some] African men appear to have been making claims to public spaces in urban environment in an assertive, and somewhat aggressive way. It seems that African men, in their use of open ground, were asserting a right to urban spaces in a way which marginalised African women's access to those spaces (36).

Men such as the prophet use land spaces that they have personalised to abuse women. The woman who is forced to attend Prophet Mborro's healing sessions exemplifies this: the "prophet publicly places his hands on her stomach, on her thighs, then puts his hands on her thing and starts rubbing and praying hard for it, like there's something wrong with it" (40). Darling mentions that no one seems to notice the abuse because they believe they are in a church and the prophet cannot be questioned because of the powers he has. The abuse compels Chipo, a young girl, to tell her friend Darling that that is what her grandfather did to her:

> He did that, my grandfather, I was coming from playing with Fin bin Laden and my grandmother was not there and my grandfather was there and he got on me and pinned me down like

that and he clamped a hand over my mouth and was heavy like

a mountain. (40-41)

Thus, men like Mborro take advantage of young and older women because such 'religious land spaces' are not protective of women as they are over-determined by patriarchal interests.

Darling also narrates how men's domination is facilitated by state operations in construction projects that do not involve women. Darling narrates how "It's just madness inside Shanghai…the Chinese men are all over the place in orange uniforms and yellow helmets. And then there are black men, who are working in regular clothes" (42). Women workers are not accorded job opportunities in the construction companies in the cities, as these are considered traditional male occupations, and that problem is compounded by racial discrimination. No women work there, in fact, men take advantage of gender domination to further abuse women as they have paying jobs. They indulge in sexual activities where they pay for sex instead of employing women so that they earn a decent living.

As a writer, Bulawayo explores some marked boundaries and forbidden territories and land spaces that women cannot freely access. Mother of Bones is restricted from talking, walking freely and greeting other women as they pass through Vodloza's shack. Darling says, "When we pass the people standing in line outside Vodloza's shack, Mother of Bones only waves; here she cannot shout because it's a healer's place" (27). This man, Vodloza, has control over Paradise, as he is a self-styled healer who instils fear and is respected because of his supposed powers, although he extorts money from unsuspecting clients who believe in his healing powers. Many people find solace in the supposed divine powers they believe he possesses. Men like him control some considerable land space as they use fear and magic to bamboozle people, fabricating boundaries and marking land spaces that no one can access. The narrator says:

> I keep my mouth shut like I'm supposed to while Mother of
> Bones shouts greetings to the people we see on the way,
> Bonfree's mother, MaDube, who is pounding nails on the roof
> of her shack with rocks; NaBetina holding her squatting
> grandson Nomoreproblems; Mai Tonde sitting on a stool and
> peering inside her screaming baby's ear; NaMgcobha dictating a
> letter to a tall boy I've never seen before. (26)

All these women have nothing to do, they are idle in this shanty place. They relate on the basis that they all live poor lives in Paradise.

Young women's educational needs are also not catered for. The young children living in Paradise have dropped out of school because the squatter camp does not have a school. This is worsened by the economic hardships faced by their families. As a result, their dreams are captured by their inquisitive questions to Fat Mangena when they ask:

> What are you building? A school? Flats? A clinic? They lack all
> these facilities, they don't go to school, they have no proper
> accommodation, they don't have medical facilities, to them the
> presence of these developments almost gave them hope only to
> be told that 'We build you a big big mall' (46).

The irony is that there are poor people living in Paradise who do not even have money to buy basic food items because of poverty, so the building of a mall is more of a mockery to their poverty. They are not involved in the planning of the cities so they do not determine what is to be built on city land spaces although they are part of those spaces. Salm and Falola (2005: 2) observe that those in power often control the planning and development of urban spaces with particular intentions in mind. There are an estimated 2.5 million poor people in the cities of Zimbabwe (Urban Report No. 1:2004). Despite their numbers, poor people, like the people in Paradise, do not have power and hence cannot influence any planning or development initiatives. This explains why the people in Paradise do not even know what is taking place.

Darling's mother bemoans her life because of the demolitions and dispossessions when she complains:

> We didn't always live in this tin, though. Before, we had a home
> and everything and we were happy. It was a real house made of
> bricks, with a kitchen, sitting room, and two bedrooms. Real
> walls, real windows, real floors, and real doors and a real shower
> and real taps and real running water and a real toilet you could
> sit on and do whatever you wanted to do (62).

Because of the demolitions, people like Darling's mother no longer have privacy. She is humiliated and her dignity as a woman is eroded. She was once a flourishing woman who has now been reduced to destitution with no decent livelihood or shelter for herself and her daughter. Darling's mother now engages in commercial sex work. Darling's mother smuggles men into a room that she shares with her daughter and this has a damaging psychological and emotional effect on young Darling. Darling has this to say of the sexual escapades:

> Now there is a very soft tap on the door. It's that man again.
> Mother pulls the blankets over my head and then blows out the
> candle before opening the door. But what she doesn't know is
> that I am always awake most of the time this happens (64).

The demolitions also created security challenges for women's property which was now left exposed with some destroyed. The narrator describes the demolition scene thus:

> There is dust all over from the crumbling walls, it gets into our
> hair and mouth and noses and makes us cough and cough. The
> men knock down our house and Ncane's house and Josephat's
> house and Bongi's house and Sibo's house and many other
> houses. When bulldozers finally leave, everything is broken,
> everything is smashed, and everything is wrecked (66).

MotherLove's shack is said to be the biggest in Paradise as she manages to profitably use the limited land space in Paradise where she illegally brews and sells beer. MotherLove thus

testifies to the strategies and tactics that women employ to access and control land and space. However, African Feminists have debated whether women's increased participation in informal activity contributes to their empowerment or their impoverishment (Ossome 2015). In this case, women's impoverishment is exposed by the nature of informal trading they engage in.

The cemetery is the only city land space that provides equal access to both men and women when dead as both occupy equal land sizes. In the novel, whenever there is a funeral both men and women work together since death has an effect on both of them and that no one has control over it.

It is significant that NoViolet Bulawayo, whose actual name is Elizabeth Tshele, has renamed herself NoViolet Bulawayo after her mother, who died when she was a baby (Moji 2015), and the city of Bulawayo as a way of identifying with her home town.

In restricted areas, a man guards Budapest from kids such as Darling. Land space therefore is seen as heterogeneous and the crossing over from one land space to another is heavily policed and manned. The guard, in a threatening voice, asks Darling and her friends their business in Budapest:

> What prompts your presence in this territory? I command you to immediately turn around and retrace your steps. Extricate yourselves from these premises and retreat to whatever hole you crawled out of (105-106).

It becomes is interesting to note the guard's use of the colonial style of language that is authoritative. Darling and her friends defend their right to venture into policed land spaces such as Budapest. The first chapter is titled "Hitting Budapest", that points to some kind of hostile invasion reflected by the way Darling and her friends steal guavas, spit on the clean pavements and vomit. What is also interesting to note is that the guard is angry because of the

spit but Godknows proudly responds thus; "What, you are complaining about just spit? Our friend has vomited on these streets before" (106). What Godknows states resonates with Bayat's (2000) contention that the urban poor have strategies of encroaching on the property of elite groups. These children are seeking justice by fighting inequality though in a subtle way. Bayat further notes that "the disenfranchised groups carry out their activities not as conscious political acts; rather they are driven by the force of necessity" (57). Darling echoes this idea of "necessity":

Mother would kill me dead if she found out; we are just going. There are guavas to steal in Budapest, and right now I'd rather die for guavas. We didn't eat this morning and my stomach feels like somebody just took a shovel and dug everything up (1).

5.5 Conclusion

Chapter Five discusses contestations and conflicts over city land access and control by women. City land spaces have been a product of colonial and capitalist forces that created unevenness in development between rural and urban areas. The Chapter argues that as women try to fit into these urban land spaces, they face challenges in accessing and controlling the land controlled largely by men. The Chapter further examines how women have mostly been affected by displacements and evictions by family relations and by security forces, which limit their access to city land spaces. The Chapter analysed the struggle and negotiation for land spaces by women for their livelihoods. *The Uncertainty of Hope* and *We Need New Names* both show how Operation Murambatsvina targeted informal traders and structures run mostly by women. Despite these conflicts, the women struggle and negotiate for access to land spaces for their livelihoods. Furthermore, women face challenges and insecurities when trying to make a living from the city land: they have no rights to access the land and are forced to live like criminals (always being chased by police) as they engage in

their livelihood activities. The literary texts also question the legitimacy of the structures that govern land. They expose the impacts of the structures that have oppressed women (Operation Murambatsvina) and that continue to limit women's rights to own, access and control land. However, they also illustrate the spirit of Feminist solidarity and respect as women support each other, as seen in the characters Onai, Katy, Melody and Faith, and the alliances and lobby groups against abuse in *The Uncertainty of Hope.*

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This research has explored and critiqued the extent to which Zimbabwean fictional writers creatively deal with women's challenges of access, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe. The research has also examined how social attitudes to gender relations and towards women have affected women's access, ownership and control of land, and how this has continued to lead to ongoing inequalities of land distribution and of women's rights and empowerment in Zimbabwe.

The selected literary texts have assisted in analysing, exploring and understanding the deep, complex and fractured relationships women have with the land. They highlight the extent to which Zimbabwean authors have represented the range of critical challenges women face as they try to access, own and control land. The literary texts reflect unequal land relationships between men and women in Zimbabwe. The selected literary texts examine how patriarchal values, structures and gender relations result both in women's landlessness and in negative or negligent social attitudes to women's ownership of land. The selected literary texts have been useful in exposing unequal land relationships between men and women in Zimbabwe.

6.2 Research Findings and Strengths

One significant finding of this research project is that literary texts offer important representations of women's challenges in accessing, controlling and owning land in Zimbabwe, and possibly elsewhere as well. The research found that literary texts can make important contributions to knowledge and society as they reflect and examine the politics involved in women's lack of access, ownership and control of land after many years of

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independence, and even after a government programme aimed at land redistribution (The Land Reform Programme). Through the intensive reading, analysis, and research of primary and secondary sources, these literary texts were identified as making significant contributions to the representation of women's access, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe: *Woman in Struggle* (Mahamba 1986), ''Daughter of the Soil', 'The Train was Overbooked', 'The Dog and the Hunter', 'A Mysterious Marriage' and 'Thinking Narrowly (Nyamubaya 1986), *Nehanda* (Vera 1993), *Without A Name* (Vera 1994), *Bones* (Hove 1998), *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006), 'Minister Without Portfolio' (Chingono 2007), 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2007), 'A Dirty Game' (Mandishona (2007), 'The First Trek-The Pioneers', 'Maria's Independence', 'The Second Trek-Going Home' and 'The Third Trek- Resettling' (Hoba 2009) and *We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013).

The research has also established that most literary texts portray women as not having access, ownership and control of land: *Bones* by Hove 1998, *We Need New Names* by Bulawayo 2013, *The Uncertainty of Hope* by Tagwira 2006,' The First Trek- The Pioneers', 'Specialisation', and 'The Second Trek-Going Home' by Hoba 2009 and 'Minister Without Portfolio' by Chingono 2007. Women farm workers, like those in the story 'Minister Without Portfolio', suffer most during the evictions and displacements as their poverty increases spawned by the land reform programme (Bhatasara 2011). The new farm owners underpay women thereby increasing their poverty, as reflected in the story 'Minister without Portfolio'.

The research has considered how the legal and political environments have been changing: land reform opened up opportunities for women to assert themselves. The research examined literary texts that show how the land reform has the potential to change women's subordination, if and when women get equal access to land ownership and control. 'Maria's Independence' (Hoba 2009) is an example of how women's ownership of land can change their gender roles as Maria becomes an employer hiring men's labour.

This research has also examined how African men and women became better allies during the long struggles for the liberation of the people and land of Zimbabwe. Yet, decades after removing the settler/colonial government and embarking on the land reform programme, the Zimbabwean government continues to fail to exercise equality in the land redistribution. This failure to exercise equality has resulted in women being disadvantaged and blocked from fully exercising their rights to have equal access and ownership to the important resource of land.

The research shows how the neglect and marginalisation of women's basic human rights to land and equality is challenged in the literary texts that show a visible disparity between men and women's access to and ownership of land. The stories, such as 'The First Trek- the Pioneers', 'Maria's Independence', 'Specialisation', 'The Second Trek- Going Home', 'The Third Trek- Resettling', 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2009) and 'Minister Without Portfolio' (Chingono 2007),re-evaluate the claims of nationhood when women remain marginalised although they carry the bulk of the work. Women are blocked from fully exercising their right to have equal access to resources as land.

The research further examines the continued marginalisation of women after independence in Zimbabwe. It was found that gender marginalisation has stubbornly persisted, particularly with regard to women's access, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe's cities and in the new resettlement areas, even though there has been land redistribution and the Land Commission Act to oversee the process and purportedly to redress colonial land ownership imbalances. The Land Reform programme in Zimbabwe did not address factors such as gender equality and empowerment. This hampers the advance of democracy, as most people are not free to participate and shape the decisions by which they are governed. The responsible authorities seem to have failed to work within the provisions of the Land Commission Act because they failed to ensure accountability, fairness and transparency in

the administration of land. They also failed to eliminate unfair discrimination, particularly

gender discrimination. The literary texts analysed in this research (*The Uncertainty of Hope*

by Tagwira 2006*, We Need New Names* by Bulawayo 2013*,* 'The First Trek-Going Home',

'Specialisation' 'Maria's Independence' and 'The Third Trek- Resettling' by Hoba 2009)

highlight the shortcomings of the land reform programme to even begin to accommodate

women, even though they constitute the majority of the population in Zimbabwe. The literary

texts show how this failure represents a major setback in creating equal opportunities

between men and women at this fundamental level of human resourcing. Women's long

history of working on the land, often in the absence of their male counterparts (husbands,

fathers, or brothers) was not considered by the state as land allocations were done largely

based on traditional customary laws. Consequently, it has been argued by this and other

researchers (Bhatasara 2011) that the land reform programme has shrunk the spaces for

genuine participation of women in the development process by denying those equal rights to

land and natural resources, and in fact contributing to the widening of gender inequalities. As

a result, the literary texts portray women having access to own and control land to a very

much smaller extent, and in fact there is only one story 'Maria's Independence' (Hoba 2009)

that shows a woman owning land in her own right.

In addition, gender relations have affected the uplifting of women's status through restricting

women from having access to land ownership and control as represented in *The Uncertainty*

of Hope, (Tagwira 2006), 'Specialisation' and 'The First Trek- The Pioneers' (Hoba 2009).

From this point of view, it can be inferred that the struggle for land will continue in

Zimbabwe until such a point when the government becomes more proactive and gender

sensitive through mainstreaming women's basic human rights, including land access,

ownership and control, and close monitoring of the administration systems. The literary texts

analysed, also indicate that proper channels, guidelines and rules were not followed in

redistributing land. Rather, writers such as Chingono (2007), Hoba (2009) and Mandishona (2007) show how partisan politics took over and became the main factor guiding and shaping the land allocation and ownership rights. This corresponds with the situation that the land redistribution programme also did not provide any political space for women to negotiate land rights, in fact, it was violent and dominated by men.

The research also shows the impact of marriage on women's access to land. The literary texts studied show marriage as one factor that has enabled women to indirectly access land, as wives of men who legally owned land. Women's access to land in these cases is largely determined by the strength of the marriage. In the case of Marita in *Bones* (Hove 2001), for example, even marriage could not accord her access to any land because her husband lost land through colonial dispossession. Consequently, both find themselves working on a white man's farm, and failing to have meaningful livelihoods. The research also noted that marriage fails to secure women's access to land in the event of death, war, dispossession, relocation and so on. For instance, the character Onai in *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006) loses both her marital home and the land on which the marital house was built, after the death of her husband. Even when her husband was alive, she had no direct ownership and control as this was dependant on the state of her marriage. In some cases, land ownership vested in family units offers women temporary access and control over land, though only to leave the women vulnerable in cases where those family ties break down. As such, the state's allocation of land to the husband does not guarantee women's ownership of land. Such allocation is grounded in the gender blind masculinities and femininities, which assume that leaving land to men will automatically benefit women in the households (Bhatasara 2011).

Marriage therefore, is seen to have a great impact on women's access and rights to land (*The Uncertainty of Hope* by Tagwira 2006, *Bones* by Hove 1998, 'Specialisation and 'The First Trek- The Pioneers' by Hoba 2009), especially considering that women only gain secondary

access to land, which they later might lose, upon being widowed. This becomes a source of insecurity considering that they have to survive and often have kids to take care of. Women become vulnerable to abuse and exploitation if they rely on men who own land. These characters in the literary texts represent the dilemma that the majority of Zimbabwean women are still facing. In reality land ownership vested in men will have men continue to control and define what women can and cannot have in terms of land. In this regard, it was also observed that women who are linked either by marriage or association to men with political positions and power have a better chance of accessing land, as noted in the satirical 'Minister Without Portfolio' (Chingono 2007) where Agnes is offered an opportunity to own land by the Minister which she declines.

The research also looked at how the liberation struggle created spaces for women to challenge marginalising patriarchal marriage practices that affected women such as "*chimutsamapfihwa*". This is discussed in Chapter 3 where Nyevenutsai in *Woman in Struggle* (Mahamba 1986) negotiates her escape from a forced marriage when she joins the liberation struggle as a fighter.

Another significant finding from this research is that there is continuation of colonial operational systems on city land, which limits access, ownership, and control of city land by women, as observed in the analysis of *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006) and *We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013). Through analysing a range of literary texts on women's access to land, the research finds that the writers have shown how the management of Zimbabwe's postcolonial urban land spaces continue to operate on the legacies of colonial patronage, as women continue to have limited access and ownership of city land spaces. The poorer classes, of whom women are the majority, do not have access to housing land (Scarnecchia 1999). This exacerbates the contestation for city land spaces. The research has examined how the development of city space was a colonial construct. It existed because of the division of

African land into rural and urban areas for administrative and commercial purposes. *We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013) and *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006) show that the majority of women remain the 'others' (this time of class and gender) that continue to struggle to access control and utilise city land space, as the police and other restrictive forces target them.

Women's efforts to engage in activities such as vending to supplement income have been impacted by repressive operations by the government and police. These government operations target women whom the police arrest, as discussed in Chapter 5 where Onai, Katy, Maya, Hannah and Rhoda's market stalls (in *The Uncertainty of Hope* by Tagwira 2006*)* are closed and shacks demolished during the government's clean-up operation. The question of land access, ownership and control for women in Zimbabwe continues to be a topical issue, similar to how conflict over land between men and women is a running motif in *Without A Name* (Vera 1994), *Bones* (Hove 1988)*, We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013)*, The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006) and 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2009)

The other problem that limits women's access to owning and controlling land is that the government consists of patriarchal structures and these intersect with neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism to serve the interests of political elites. This was depicted in 'Minister without Portfolio' (Chingono 2007), The Second Trek- Going Home' and The Third Trek-Resettling' (Hoba 2009) and *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006).

Furthermore, patriarchal laws continue to inform and govern land use and occupation in the cities. Regulatory bodies such as the municipalities ignore the plight of women who occupy city land spaces for livelihood, especially those in informal trading. There are no significant budgets set aside by the government and municipalities to empower women in their endeavour to independently access and own land.

The research found that women, particularly those in the city, realise that their survival cannot be fully dependent on men hence they assert and secure themselves by accessing and controlling parts of the land that are not utilised in the city. In *We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013), women erect informal structures and engage in vending as ways of accessing that land to make a living, while other women engage in illicit businesses, which thrive well. MotherLove for example, has the biggest shack in the slums of Paradise. She manages to use the limited land space to her advantage by selling the beer she brews. However, not all the women have such dispositions or skills necessary to manoeuvre or negotiate their quest to access, own and control land in their own right.

Another finding of this research relates to how some women use other available means to access city land spaces. The literary texts show that some women use their sexuality to entice wayward married men as a way of accessing city land not easily accessible to women, especially single women. This is highlighted in *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2008), where Gloria and Sheila do not have stable incomes and therefore engage in commercial sex work to rent the shacks they live in, which were erected by other women. They access city land by using their earnings from such work to pay for their access to the urban land spaces they occupy.

Additionally, while men have access to owning land and participating in the formal economy, women do not have such rights or privileges, and depend for their survival on engaging in informal economic activities. The informal economy (vending, and even prostitution) traps women in low income activities. Patriarchal structures still continue to exclude women from more secure, sustainable and better remunerated opportunities enjoyed by their male counterparts, as evidenced in Bulawayo's (2013) and Tagwira's (2006) literary texts. Such political and economic injustices continue to trap women as they struggle for dignity and

equality. The patriarchal ideology of male dominance continues to legitimise men's control and access to land.

The intensive research into the work of the creative texts and writers clearly shows that after the many decades of struggle for liberation, democracy and equality were supposed to have meant that women too would have rights to access and own land. *Bones* (Hove 1998) , *Nehanda* (Vera 1993), *Without A Name* (Vera 1994)*, 'Daughter of the Soil', 'The Train was Overbooked', 'The Dog and the Hunter', 'A Mysterious Marriage' and 'Thinking Narrowly' (Nyamubaya 1986) and *Woman in Struggle* (Mahamba 1986) reveal how rural women have experienced increasingly insecure livelihoods and limited control of land. This was largely because of colonialism and gender inequalities in the distribution and control of land and labour. These literary texts show the extent to which women have been oppressed on the land and dispossessed from the land. Such sufferings pushed them to get actively involved in the liberation war either as fighters or as playing auxiliary roles in the war. Furthermore, Mahamba (1986) Nyamubaya (1986) and Vera (1993) have advances the fair representation of women's contributions to liberation by portraying women cadres fighting alongside men, or leading the struggle, as in the case of *Nehanda* (Vera1993). By representing women as principal characters, these writers make the women liberation fighters more visible.

A notable key finding is that the literary texts are not all female-authored, as some are male-authored as well, showing the advance of the values of gender equality and justice in the representation of women's challenges in accessing, owning and controlling land. The following literary texts show women's continued struggles, challenges and subjectivity in the various political, social and economic contexts after independence in Zimbabwe: *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006), 'Minister Without Portfolio' (Chingono 2007), 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2007), 'A Dirty Game' (Mandishona 2007), 'The First Trek-The Pioneers', 'Maria's Independence', 'The Second Trek-Going Home' and 'The Third Trek-

Resettling' (Hoba 2009) and *We Need New Names.* (Bulawayo 2013). Readers can clearly see that the fight for women's rights goes back centuries, and continues in the newer social, economic and political contexts. The literary texts show how gender discrimination in land access, land control and labour relations greatly affect social attitudes towards women's ownership of land. They also show how these social attitudes disempower women, and affect how labour is distributed in the access and control of resources.

In addition, this research project finds that women have always had deep spiritual connections and material relationships with the land. The fiction analysed in the research has profoundly shown how a range of women have related to and connected with the land in Zimbabwe. There is a symbiotic relationship between women and the land, as exemplified by the representation of the birth of Nehanda and the ritual burial of her umbilical cord in the land by women in *Nehanda* (Vera 1993). Vera shows the deep physical and spiritual bond women have with the land. The trader woman at Nehanda's birth also shows other aspects of women's deep connections to the land, in that she has travelled long journeys on the land to the extent that she has become very knowledgeable about the land, which allows her to be conscious of many new things happening in the land. This spiritual connection and deep relationship with the land enables her to foretell the arrival of the colonialists and the subsequent colonial land invasions.

Furthermore, the research has also found that the literary texts address the importance of unity and cooperation between men and women in fighting against colonialism to reclaim the land. Given women's participation in liberation and nation-building, the issue of women's agency in relation to land has been extensively addressed. Nyamubaya (1986). through her poem 'Daughter of the Soil', and Mahamba (1986), in her novella *Woman in Struggle,* show the active involvement of women during the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe. The rallying point of the liberation struggle was the land question. The portrayals of these women depict

the proto-Feminism that existed long ago as African women (and men) were struggling for justice, equality and respect. These examples also point out that African women have long aspired for change in the social, economic and political systems. Steady (1989: 20-21) has argued that African women were the original feminists who sought to emancipate themselves from the bonds of servitude, and inequality and racial discrimination. In this regard, new identities that are free from patriarchy need to be crafted for women where full rights of access, control and ownership over land resources should be extended to women.

The literary texts are analysed using African Feminism, which affirms and advances women's rights as well as questioning the patriarchal structures that keep women subjugated. African Feminism is an important tool for analysing and questioning gender relationships and structures governing women's access, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe.

The research establishes that as an interpretive, African Feminism tool has enabled readers and writers to identify and address the impacts of gender and related social inequalities on women's economic development, as observed in *The Uncertainty of Hope* by Tagwira (2006), 'Minister Without Portfolio' by Chingono (2007), 'The First Trek- the Pioneers', and 'Specialisation' by Hoba (2009).

African Feminist activism and writings also help strengthen literary and intellectual readers capacities to understand and analyse Zimbabwean literary texts and to recognise that some of the writers are either Feminists, or draw on Feminist approaches, including Mahamba (1986), Nyamubaya (1986), Vera (1993;1994), Hove (2001), Tagwira (2006), Hoba (2009), and Bulawayo (2013).

African Feminism has served as an important tool in helping the researcher advance her grasp and conceptions of equality between men and women in society, particularly in understanding the relationship between women and land and the depth of the extent to which

women do not have access to, control of, and ownership of land. It has also facilitated an in-depth review and understanding of unequal labour relations emanating from women's lack of access to controlling and owning land, labour issues and other ramifications of how women's lack of control of any land, that threatens women's security, livelihoods, equality, independence and dignity. In the case of Mama in Hoba's (2007) 'The First Trek- the Pioneers', and Mama Nina in Hoba's (2007) story 'Specialisation', they have no access to labour, they do not control their labour, and the land formally belongs to their husbands. Their husbands do not support them, or share agricultural responsibilities although these women are working for their families to provide food. This is an indication of unequal labour relations resulting from women's lack of access to control and own land. What is lacking in these marriage relationships is cooperation between men and women, which comes with gender equality and inter-gender respect (Mama 2001), to enable the healthy progress of African society.

African Feminists like Gaidzanwa (1995), Aidoo (1998), Nnaemeka (1998), Ogundipe-Leslie (2007), Amanor-Wilks (2009) and Ahikire (2014) offer a systematic framework for examining the lives and land access needs of many women including married women, single women, and many women headed families. Several literary texts analysed in the research address the question of women's agency in relation to land by using Feminist frameworks which give deeper insights into and awareness of the basic human rights of marginalised women. These literary texts include *Woman in Struggle* (Mahamba 1989), *On The Road Again* (Nyamubaya 1986), *Nehanda* (Vera 1993), *Without A Name* (Vera 1994), 'The Second Trek- Going Home', 'The Third Trek- Resettling', and 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2007) and *The Uncertainty Of Hope* (Tagwira 2006).

A significant finding from the research is the recognition of the extent to which African Feminist thought and literature have been making important contributions by asserting the

equality of men and women, and by addressing forms of disempowerment and discrimination. African Feminist ideas are beneficial both as a tool of resistance and in pursuit of justice in women's ownership of land in Zimbabwe, and other societies, as well as in the study of culture and literature. African Feminism enlightens writers, and readers, about the representation of women's challenges with access to land ownership and control of land. Literature provides a platform for African Feminist activism, to help advance the recovery of women's rights, such as the right to land, and to addressing women's numerous challenges in accessing and owning land.

African Feminist insights strengthen analyses of women's rights, and the roles of African and colonial patriarchy, and help build knowledge in the areas of land ownership, land control and land access. They have also helped with developing greater intellectual capacity to interpret and advance the concerns that motivated this research, by strengthening and expanding engagement with human rights and democratizing discourses in contemporary Zimbabwe, the continent and the world.

Another significant strength of African Feminist theory in and through this research is how the theory helps advance a clear understanding of the impact of different patriarchies (at micro- and macro- levels of society), ranging from familial to state to colonial and neo-colonial patriarchies, particularly in *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006), *Bones* (Hove 1998), *Without A Name* (Vera 1994) and *We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013)

Working with African Feminism has also helped the researcher to see that African Feminism as a philosophical and theoretical approach, and an instrument of analysis does not exclude men. It was also observed that there are some African men who engage with and even practice African Feminism such as the writer Chenjerai Hove (2001) and the academic Kopano Ratele (2013). African Feminism is open to incorporating men who support women's

struggles through promoting feminist activism that men may contribute to the freedom of women, and the achievement of greater empowerment and equality for women, men, and children, through the elimination of unfair patriarchal power and injustices. Notable literary texts that consider land as much a part of women's rights as men's rights include *Woman in Struggle* (Mahamba 1986), where guerrillas, who are men, challenge patriarchal social practices and abuse. There is also 'The First Trek- The Pioneers' (Hoba 2009), where a boy child narrator, representing the future, advances beyond the privileges and prejudices characteristic of the beneficiaries of patriarchy, to support the struggles of his mother.

The research, through the analysis of literary texts, explores how African Feminist writers protect and advance the legacies of women who fought for the liberation of the land. Examples of women showing great power in the fight for African people's rights to their land and natural resources are drawn from Nehanda's leadership qualities in *Nehanda* (Vera 1993) and the poem 'Daughter of the Soil' (Nyamubaya1986) where an unnamed woman fighter dies at the battlefront.

African Feminists have argued that women still need to be granted equal political, social and economic rights, and advocate for equality in all spheres (Oyekan 2014). The literary texts *We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013), *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006) and, 'Daughter Of The Soil', The Train Was Over-booked' and 'The Dog And The Hunter' (Nyamubaya 1986) analysed in this research advance women's rights. They depict how women are marginalised and undermined within their communities and society.

The research has shown that creative writing by women writers allows them to exercise women's agency and also act as a platform for fighting unfair treatment based on gender injustices. Speaking may sometimes be difficult and 'if speaking is still difficult to negotiate, then writing has created a free space for most women-much freer than speech. The text is

granted its intimacy, its creation of a world, its proposals, its individual characters, its suspension of belief. Writing offers a moment of intervention (Vera 1991:1). Here Vera emphasises how writing accords women power to express themselves which is sometimes not found in speaking. Writing permits women agency in the fight against oppressive and unjust circumstances. Women writers analysed in the thesis manage to express themselves through speaking in their work, on the struggle by women to have access to, control and ownership of land. For example, Bulawayo (2013) in *We Need New Names*, Mahamba (1986) in *Woman In Struggle*, Nyamubaya (1986) in *On The Road Again,* Tagwira (2006) in *The Uncertainty of Hope* and Vera (1994;1993) in (*Nehanda* and *Without A Name*). In addition, Nfah- Abbenyi (1997) concurs with Vera (1991) that women writers:

> have not just openly lamented, questioned, and criticized the
>
> neglect of their work; they have also attacked this neglect
>
> through their ongoing exercise of the act of writing, They have
>
> slowly but surely used their writing as weapons to invade the
>
> battlefields that had hitherto been occupied and dominated by
>
> male writers making tangible gains along the way. These
>
> women writers have beaten and are still beating their drums and
>
> are letting their war cries be heard side by side with those of
>
> their counterparts at home and abroad (1997:148).

Nfah-Abbenyi captures how women writers have exercised agency through writing about the various issues affecting their lives such as having equal access to, ownership and control of important resources such as land.

Furthermore, another important finding through this research has been that there have been shifts in gender roles and relations and these have had implications on women's agency in

relation to land. The observed changes and shifts in gender roles and relations in Zimbabwe, have in part, been driven by political, social and economic factors. The patriarchal structures that underpin gender roles have been shaken, as women have sought equality and access as full citizens, and have come up with strategies for dealing with patriarchy. These strategies, sometimes referred to as 'patriarchal bargains' (Kandiyoti 1988), enabled the researcher understanding how some women represented in the Zimbabwean literature under study negotiate and manage patriarchal norms.

In addition, the research has shown that as gender roles shift patriarchal norms also shift, thus the African Feminist struggles against patriarchal representations have placed the patriarchal norms under pressure (Ahikere 2014). As such, many men try to hold on to patriarchal power by becoming hostile when they feel threatened by the changes. Eisler (2000) argues that when patriarchal norms are stressed in situations where men are threatened they react in ways that reaffirm their masculinity. Baba in 'The First Trek-The Pioneers and 'The Second Trek-Going Home' (Hoba 2009) and Gari in *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006) try to reaffirm their masculinity through engaging in verbal aggression, anger, violence, infidelity and neglect of the family. All these behaviours are patriarchal symbols of manhood, when men feel that their masculinities are threatened they try to reassert themselves by behaving in ways that subordinate women (Kimmel 2008).

The research has also looked at unequal gender norms in land access and ownership, through the ongoing struggles of women, and at the literary texts that address the call for equal opportunities when women no longer comply with restraining gender norms, as in 'Maria's Independence' (Hoba 2009) and *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006). From the primary and secondary text analyses done, it seems clear if women are to acquire legal ownership of land, they will be able to become more economically empowered through their increased access and control of land, and they and their families' living standards will improve.

6.3 Possible solutions to some of the challenges of women's access, control and ownership of land discussed in the research

The research has identified the role of the system of patriarchy (including colonial, African, neo-colonial and the domination of individual men) in decision-making over land as a strong challenge. As a solution, the patriarchal laws and administrative processes that govern and regulate land use and occupation in the country need to be revised and regulatory bodies such as the municipality must involve women whenever they formulate bylaws. It has been argued that most people in Zimbabwe rely on land owned by the state. Most communities depend on usufruct rights that leave women vulnerable to patriarchal, political and economic pressures on the land (Chiweshe 2017). For instance, the Constitution of Zimbabwe recognises customary law and Section 280 of the Constitution, which gives traditional leaders a responsibility to perform cultural, customary and traditional functions that include administering communal land. This is problematic because patriarchal values and rules that disadvantage women are rooted within the cultural and customary traditions that inform traditional distribution of land. The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17) provides for the appointment of village heads, headmen and chiefs and Section 5 stipulates their functions related to land. These include land allocation, use and occupation in communal or resettlement areas (Chibememe et.al 2014). Given this position within the constitution, there is need to maintain vigilance so that patriarchy does not unfairly influence any legislative tools regarding land access, ownership and control. Of course, all these structures and positions need to be open to women and to be monitored to enable transformation.

Another solution to women's limited access to land ownership and control is that the legal system and the Constitution should protect women who obtain access rights to land through

family or marital ties so that they enjoy full benefits and security where they would not become victims in cases of divorce or when a spouse dies. This will increase their freedom to make decisions on how to utilise the land, which will benefit the nation at large since it has been evident that women are hardworking when it comes to agricultural work.

As such, the government should enact legislation and set up regulatory bodies prioritising women's full empowerment in as far as land allocation is concerned. It should also be noted that land, for women, does not only refer to the arable land used for agricultural purposes. Women's land use varies. They also need land for residential purposes and commercial use, as in the setting up of market places or mini shops for supplementary income. Therefore, land allocations should also consider these crucial aspects.

Another challenge identified is the deteriorating political and economic environment where women's fundamental rights, such as the rights to land, are shelved and not considered a priority as the economic crisis takes centre stage. This could be solved if the government and responsible authorities come to realise that the economy could be turned around if more women, who have knowledge and experience of farming are given land and support. The agricultural sector could be more productive, increasing the food supply and food security, thus turning the economic crisis into an opportunity. This can be achieved through increasing women's access to land, having policies, legislation, and positive attitudes towards women's control and ownership of land, and doing away with social, political and economic injustices.

Furthermore, the other challenge is that there are few women in politics. The research has showed that more women need to be engaged in politics so that they have better access to power. What has been realised in the course of the research is that power is the issue, and that men want more power at the expense of women's rights. This has been evident in the research and historically, it has been observed that men dominate traditional leadership

positions and they also form the majority of landowners, politicians and heads of households (Dodo 2013), hence they confer most privileges to themselves including land. The research also shows that the political elite have hijacked ownership of vast tracts of land, and their operation and conduct is "mafia-like" as they "grab" any land they like, under the protection of the government: 'Minister Without Portfolio' (Chingono 2007), 'A Dirty Game' (Mandishona 2007) and 'The Second Trek- Going Home' (Hoba 2009). As a result, women find themselves being elbowed out of opportunities to access, own and control land because they either do not have any influential positions to command authority or they only have limited positions. This situation can only be reversed if more women participate in politics and activism ('Maria's Independence' by Hoba 2009) as this could assist in their fight for land ownership rights. If women mobilise in their numbers to support each other in this, their numbers could shake patriarchal power over them and their access to land can be increased. In texts such as *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006) the women show that, unlike the men, they value accountability and transparency when it comes to land.

Moreover, there is the challenge that women lack the resources to mobilise to fight for land, because most power and resources are controlled by men. Yet women form the majority. However, women will continue living in poverty because they rely on handouts from men, since most women only have access to their husband's land. It therefore becomes difficult to transform their marginalisation and come up with practical solutions because all this needs both financial, political and social backing. This is something that women cannot afford in the male-dominated society. It can only happen when the Zimbabwean society reaches a point of radical transformation where, as Nnaemeka (1998) and Ogundipe-Leslie (2007) suggest, both men and women work together symbiotically. Until people reach such a point, the various works of fiction suggest that women can only rely on continuous negotiation in as far as, access, ownership and control of land is concerned. Women can also continue trying to

manipulate rules around land ownership rights, as indicated in *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira 2006). Apart from that, "the land is enclosed in barbed fences" (Mazvita in *Bones* p.33).

Another solution for the struggles for human rights and social justice comes from the various literary representations reflecting the realities of women's access, ownership and control of land in their diverse circumstances. These show that women themselves must deal with their own and other women's issues of empowerment regarding land. This should start from the individual level to the collective levels, since experiences of access, ownership and control of land differ from one woman to another. This will enable women to influence and utilize the collective framework for support. In the literary texts, the younger generation is already aware and critically questioning men's ownership of land, and the exclusion of women, as clear in 'The First Trek-The Pioneers' (Hoba 2009).

The research also raises the huge omission that while there was the land reform aimed at correcting a long history of colonial injustice, there has been no justice for women's land rights. Gendered relations have continued to affect social attitudes towards women's ownership of land. Zimbabwe's legislation and land reform laws should rigorously involve women from all levels, that is, from their varied status to represent themselves such that positive reforms can be experienced when everyone is included in the administration of land. The inclusive administration also allows for transparent monitoring of allocations, so that abuse of land ownership can be avoided and monitored through following proper allocation channels that include women. Land allocations in the texts analysed are shown to be anti-women. They do not involve women at any stage, from policy formulation to allocation, or to implementation.

Art, and in this case literary art, proves useful in portraying the relationship between women and land in Zimbabwe and the challenges faced by women in accessing, owning and controlling land. It informs us how gender relations have affected social attitude towards women's ownership of land. As a result, there is need to design transparent land policies that incorporate ordinary Zimbabwean women, particularly as women form the majority who do not have access and ownership of land. The existing Land Commission Act in Zimbabwe states that Ministers may make provisions for land settlement and may issue offer letters, lease, deeds and permits. It is crucial to begin engaging such Ministers to address inequality as they directly act on the policies. While they may fail to ensure accountability and fairness in the administration of land, women must be given power to monitor the Ministers so that there is equitable access and ownership of land, this will assist in the elimination of all forms of unfair discrimination, particularly gender discrimination. In addition, the state must also take legislative measures to give security of tenure to every person lawfully owning or occupying land.

The Land Commission Act needs to be improved to ensure that all land beneficiaries should be documented and recorded by gender so that corrective measures can be directed to future land allocations, which will balance access, ownership and control, by gender. A land audit by gender should be done as well, not just a general land audit, but an audit that clearly spells out land use by gender. This will help in better accounting for the allocated land.

Another possible solution is to embark on social action to change the process of land reform. The literary texts such as 'Minister Without Portfolio'(Chingono 2007), 'Maria's Independence', and 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2007), 'The Second Trek- Going Home', 'The First Trek- the Pioneers' 'The Third Trek- Resettling', and 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2009) and *We Need New Names* (Bulawayo 2013) indicate that people, in particular women, are not being involved in community empowerment through land ownership. There is no

mobilisation of the people's power to take action in addressing social inequality and land injustice. Outsiders and in most cases men become the only beneficiaries of land. Such texts show that all of this needs to change now.

The state should distribute land fairly and it must be responsible for good governance. The state should engage local authorities, which must strategically structure land allocations systems that encourage equality. Women need to support each other from grassroots level through formation of local community alliances so that they have strength and power in numbers to challenge land inequalities and demand for land ownership within their communities from community leaders. These alliances will allow women to have agency and redefine themselves without men defining them. When women occupy powerful decision making positions there will no longer be a need for labels such as feminism, feminist goals would have been accomplished (Geathers 1998: 457-40). Finally, it is important to realise that "change always begins with awareness, action follows later" (459). It is no longer time to be sexually exploited as represented in the discussion when women manoeuvre for land through sex to access and own land.

6.4 The contributions of the research to scholarship

One of the primary contributions of the research has been to identify and select literary texts on the core issue of land and women's access, ownership and control. The research gathered and analysed a range of literary texts that represent women's experiences and relationship to land in Zimbabwe. The following texts creatively explore women's challenges in accessing, owning and controlling land during the colonial phase: *Nehanda* (Vera 1993), *Woman in Struggle* (Mahamba 1986), *Without A Name* (Vera 1994)*,* and the independent phase (through the analysis of 'Daughter of the Soil', 'The Train was Overbooked', 'The Dog and the Hunter', 'A Mysterious Marriage' and 'Thinking Narrowly' Nyamubaya (1986), *The*

Uncertainty of Hope Tagwira (2006) and *We Need New Names* Bulawayo (2013). The stories represent the post-independent land reform phase: 'The First Trek- the Pioneers', 'Maria's Independence', 'Specialisation', 'The Second Trek- Going Home', 'The Third Trek- Resettling' (Hoba 2009), 'Minister Without Portfolio (Chingono 2007)', 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2007) and 'A Dirty Game' (Mandishona 2007).

Furthermore, women's experiences of landlessness and their struggle to access and own land have been represented in literary texts. These texts have contributed in integrating women's rights to land and their success in lobbying for women's rights necessitates the gradual development of new identities for women as in the story 'Maria's Independence' (Hoba 2009). The research contributes to developing a culture of awareness and support of equal land distribution, perhaps through the continued struggles, Feminist solidarity, and continued artistic work as represented in the literary texts analysed.

The research also contributes to extending the understanding of the multiple and varied identities of Zimbabwean women. Women's experiences, subjectivities and struggles vary, and so do their land use needs. For example, Mama Nina's land use needs in the story 'Specialisation' (Hoba 2007) is different from Onai's in *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira (2006). Mama Nina needs land to farm for their livelihood, whereas Onai needs it for housing and vending purposes. Both literary texts show that each woman can achieve equality, dignity and justice in the struggle to access, to control and own land in her respective land use needs.

The research contributes to the collection and examination of literary texts that offer deep insights into understanding the challenges of women's access to land, what women have been doing about these challenges, and what the government has been doing or not doing about this, especially in the period after independence when most landless Zimbabweans had been hopeful of getting land. Like other art forms, literary texts can make important contributions

towards achieving the goals of equality, such as gender equality, through fighting and exposing patriarchy and all forms land and labour exploitation.

Another contribution is that the literary texts can and do offer tools for transformatory analysis, through paying attention to the dialogue and action of characters as the texts articulate the oppressive and exploitative relations that affect African women as they try to access land. Literary texts enable such important topics as women's ownership of, control over and access to land to be discussed as scholars commit to understanding the deep challenges women face, as well as to transforming African society, and in particular, women's access to owning and controlling land. In addition, the research contributes as to exploring and drawing from the additional resource of African Feminist scholarship in the areas of land restitution, gender empowerment and equality, and the disciplinary areas of literary and related arts, humanities and social sciences.

6.5 Implications of the Study

In Zimbabwe, the land policies were created in 2000 without proper consultation and without involving women. They had been framed out of sudden political and economic moves with no valid research, but only in response to existential issues. These included the land reallocations and forced displacements (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) where the ruling ZANU PF party expediently used the land reform programme to attract support that was shrinking (as addressed in 'Minister Without Portfolio' by Chingono 2007 and 'Maria's Independence' by Hoba 2009). The state predominantly adopted a "state centric-rights approach" in deciding what should be law (Bhatasara 2011). When land was being reallocated there was no research conducted to identify first the gendered dimension of men and women's access, ownership and control of land. This would have reduced speculation,

injustice and misrepresentation. Decisions on who should own or have access to which land should be decentralised and made at an individual level inclusive of gender parity.

Another implication of this study is that women have continued to fight for equal opportunities to access, own and control land, and future research could analyse more post-land reform literary texts by way of understanding the extent to which women in Zimbabwe have progressed in fighting for opportunities to own, access and control land.

6.6 Conceptual/Methodological Limitations of Study

There are not many literary texts written addressing women's quest for access, ownership and control of land in Zimbabwe. Most of the literary texts dealing with questions of women's access, ownership and control of land emerged largely during the land reform programme when land was acquired and redistributed to the citizens of Zimbabwe.

The procedure used to select the literary texts analysed in the research study attempted to be as comprehensive as possible although it does not consider all the literary texts on land in Zimbabwe. The study omits literary texts in the Shona and Ndebele languages, which could not be analysed within the timeframe and language focus of this research. To overcome this limitation, there is need for more research on literary texts in these languages, as well as more research that is comprehensive across all the languages in Zimbabwe.

6.7 Recommendations arising from the research study

From this study, it is recommended that there is a need for more research on women's challenges with regards to land access, control and ownership in Zimbabwe, including other literary forms as well, such as drama, which has strong elements of performance and

participation. This might help represent issues of women's access, ownership and control of land better, as well as contributing to advance the struggles of women.

African Feminism can also be applied to autobiographical texts by women on land in Zimbabwe since these texts tell stories which give first hand life experiences on access, control and ownership of land. More women in Zimbabwe could consider accessing the strengths of African Feminism to help them advance their struggles for equality and recognition. More attention could be given to achieving equality, this will help women in their quest to access, control and own land.

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APPENDICES

List of Tables

Table 1. Land Policy of Zimbabwe 1889-1979

Source: Ministry of Lands Land Reform and Resettlement (2003). Cited in, Mafa,O. 2015:38.

Year	Land Act /Commission	Purpose	Result
1889	The Lippert Concession	White settlers to acquire land rights from Native Zimbabweans	British South African Company (BSAC) buys concession and uses it as a basis for land appropriation
1898	Native Reserves Order in Council	To create Native Reserves in the face of mass land appropriation by white settlers	Native reserves created haphazardly in infertile, low-rainfall potential areas and which subsequently become communal areas.
1930	Land apportionment Act	To separate land between black and white people	The high-potential areas become white large-scale privately owned farms.
1951	Native Land Husbandry Act	To enforce private ownership of land, destocking and conservation practices on (TTLs)black small-holders	Mass resistance to legislation fuelling nationalistic politics. Law scrapped in 1961.
1965	Tribal Trust Land (TTL) Act	To change the name of Native Reserves and create trustees for the land	Because of population pressure, TTLs became degraded 'homelands'.
1969	Land Tenure Act	To replace the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and finally divide land 50% white and 50% black	Combined with the TTL Act, Rhodesia had the equivalent of apartheid.

Table 2. Land distribution by gender

Source: Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee, Utete 2003, p.40.

Province	Model A1 Number of Males	Model A1 %	Model A1 Number of Females	Model A1 %	Model A2 Number of Males	Model A2 %	Model A2 Number of Females	Model A2 %
Midlands	14 800	82	3 198	18	338	95	17	5
Masvingo	19 026	84	3 644	16	709	92	64	8
Mash. Central	12 986	88	1 770	12	1 469	87	215	13
Mash. West	21 782	81	5 270	19	1 777	89	226	11
Mash. East	12 967	76	3 992	24	*	*	*	*
Mat. South	7 754	87	1 169	13	215	79	56	21
Mat. North	7 919	84	1 490	16	574	83	121	17
Manicaland	9 572	82	2 190	18	961	91	97	9
Total	106 986	82	22 723	18	6 043	88	796	12