

EXPLORING THE LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF URBAN SURVIVAL AND
COPING STRATEGIES IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWEAN
FICTION IN ENGLISH FROM 1999 TO 2009

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

OF

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY

NELSON MLAMBO

201014742

OCTOBER 2013

Main Supervisor: Professor J. Kangira

Co-supervisor: Dr. T. Smit

ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration of the literary representation of survival and coping strategies during times of socio-political and economic crisis as presented in selected contemporary Zimbabwean fiction in English. The main purpose of the study was to investigate how fiction, particularly the short story, manages to capture the various innovative and resilient ways used by the people inhabiting the city during tempestuous and trying times, and how they manage to live with hope and positivity.

The study was primarily a qualitative, desktop research where from a total of nine short story anthologies, nineteen short stories and one novel were purposefully selected and analysed. This analysis was mainly informed by three theoretical frameworks - the resilience theory, trauma theory and the chronotope theory. Resilience theory is a literary interpretation of texts that puts emphasis on people's strengths which enable them to survive and cope with challenges they meet in life. The chronotope is a theory which elucidates the fictional connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. Resilience theory assisted in investigating the capacity for successful adaptation and socio-cultural innovation as presented through the characters in the selected fictional works. Trauma theory in literary studies refers to the literary presentation of a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society. The chronotope theory helped in contextualising the study and

amplifying the period of extreme socio-political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe's history (1999 to 2009) as a special case for scrutiny.

The study contributes to the creation and dissemination of knowledge on literary theory, particularly in its espousal of theoretical frameworks which cohere with practical issues faced by Zimbabwean people. The study also contributes to the body of knowledge which seeks to recognise the creative potential of disadvantaged people, as it recognises the innovativeness and agency of the ordinary people as represented through fiction about the Zimbabwe crisis.

The findings in this study revealed that human agency is ubiquitous and that Zimbabwean ordinary people are able to innovatively face their challenges with varied measures of success. The characters in the Zimbabwean short stories explored in this study courageously and resiliently reconstruct the city space to make it a liveable place of their own. The utilisation of city spaces for urban informalities helps the characters to negotiate space and thereby survive. It has further been revealed that in order to survive and adapt to new situations, the characters in the Zimbabwean literary fiction reflect what was really happening during the crisis, had to resiliently change their cultural identities and transform into protean beings. Furthermore, the study revealed that one way of negotiating crisis times is through migration. Through an analysis of metaphors of migration in Zimbabwean fiction, the study highlighted the role of diaspora and remittances as a critical coping strategy to survive catastrophic economic collapses. Moreover, the fictionalization of resource politics, which is how writers present the

people's claim on the natural resources, also revealed the democratic ways of surviving hegemonies and also building a peaceful ethos for a better future.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that human agency abounds in many forms and survival is still an option, in spite of the challenges faced by the ordinary people as presented by the characters in Zimbabwean fiction. It can also be concluded that the women characters as presented through the fiction are better able to cope with dystopian and crisis times than their male counterparts. Coping strategies demonstrate that the ordinary people are innovative, resilient and capable of exploiting opportunities at their disposal and manage change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE(S)
Abstract	ii
Table of contents	v
Acknowledgments.....	viii
Dedication	ix
Declaration	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Orientation of the study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	6
1.3 Research questions	9
1.4 Significance of the study.....	9
1.5 Limitation of the study	11
1.6 Literature review	11
1.6.1 Introduction	11
1.6.2 The representation of the city, agency and informalities in literature.....	12
1.6.3 Trends in Zimbabwean literary criticism	19
1.6.4 The short story genre and quest for relevance.....	23
1.7 Theoretical framework	33
1.8 Methodology	41
1.8.1 Research design.....	41
1.8.2 Population.....	43
1.8.3 Sample.....	43
1.8.4 Research instruments.....	44
1.8.5 Procedure.....	44
1.9 Research ethics.....	45
1.9 Chapter outline	45

CHAPTER TWO: RETHINKING THE POETICS OF URBAN INFORMALITIES: RECONSTRUCTING THE CITY SPACE	48
2.1 Introduction.....	48
2.2 A man can die trying in ‘A land of starving millionaires’	51
2.3 Magnets of hope: The urban space, coping and resilience in three short stories.....	57
2.4 Fragile certainties with the ‘Minister without portfolio’	73
2.5 Scoffing at destitution and the macabre in ‘Last laugh’	79
2.6 Conclusion	83
 CHAPTER THREE: CHANGING IDENTITIES, RESILIENCE AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION FOR SURVIVAL IN TIMES OF CRISIS	85
3.1 Introduction.....	85
3.2 Individual metamorphosis and a resilient response in ‘The Hare’	87
3.3 Surviving against all odds in <i>The uncertainty of hope</i>	106
3.4 Conclusion	124
 CHAPTER FOUR: METAPHORS OF MIGRATION, THE DIASPORA AND SURVIVAL: NEGOTIATING THE CRISIS THROUGH SEEKING ALTERNATIVE SPACES	126
4.1 Introduction.....	126
4.2 Escaping home by any means necessary in search of a better life	130
4.3 Smuggling, remittances, and household survival in crisis-hit Zimbabwe	156
4.4 Conclusion	172

CHAPTER FIVE: SALVAGING ACTIVISM, VOICING CONTESTED TERRAINS AND THE RESISTANCE OF REPRESSION DURING A CRISIS	176
5.1 Introduction	176
5.2 Surviving hegemonies: Fiction, the feminisation of political survival and the resilience of activism	176
5.3 Fictionalising resource politics and the imagination of a better Zimbabwe.....	206
5.4 Conclusion	215
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	218
6.1 Introduction	218
6.2 Conclusion and findings	218
6.2.1 The relevance of the topic and theoretical framework	219
6.2.2 Restatement of research questions	222
6.3 Recommendations	230
REFERENCES.....	232

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to record my special gratitude to various individuals who made this study possible. I am particularly indebted to my supervisors, Prof. J. Kangira and Dr T. Smit, who tirelessly read my work, advised, encouraged and provided expert advice throughout the course of this study – especially the inspiration when my spirit was fainting.

A special thanks goes to my wife, Sarah Mlambo, who has been my source of inspiration and pillar of strength. To my wonderful children, Nokutenda and Atinzwaishe, and my brother, Tanatswa; thank you for the understanding, sacrifice, support and encouragement. To my friends and family, thank you for the support and spurring me on. My soul-deep appreciation goes to the Lord God Almighty for all the blessings!

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Anenyasha, whose eleven days in our lives will always be cherished.

DECLARATIONS

I, Nelson Mlambo, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work or part thereof, has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher learning.

No part of this dissertation may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (e.g. electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the permission of the author or The University of Namibia in that behalf.

I, Nelson Mlambo, grant The University of Namibia the right to reproduce this thesis in whole or in part, in any manner or format, which The University of Namibia may deem fit, for any person or institution requiring it for study and research, providing that The University of Namibia shall waive this right if the whole thesis has been or is being published in a manner satisfactory to the University.

..... [Signature]

Date.....

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

This study explores how literature represents the various ways that people living in urban areas and crisis-hit contexts form and devise so as to innovatively reconstruct the world around them to survive and live in the city with hope. The study is mainly based on short story anthologies set in Zimbabwe during the crisis period between 1999 and 2009. The years stretching approximately from 1999 to 2009 in Zimbabwe were characterised by a profound economic and political crisis that almost drove the country to total collapse and there is a general consensus amongst academics, critics, and scholars that this period is fit to be called the *Zimbabwean crisis* (Chiumbu & Musemwa, 2012; Jones, 2010; Musoni, 2010; Raftopoulous, 2009; Mlambo, 2011a).

The major concern of this literary study stems from the realisation of the gaps in general academic knowledge capturing the plurality and complexity of urban cultural studies (Raftopoulos & Yoshikuni, 1999, p. 3), the coping tactics of the ordinary people and the “lack of related data and information on the livelihood strategies of the urban poor” (Pryer, 2003, p. 1). The intention of this study is to find how innovative directions in contemporary urban cultural studies can account for the acceleration of change in our time and how man responds to this change. As such a number of scholars have raised the unanswered question on how, through fictional writing and representation, an image of a city and its dwellers may be clarified (Raftopoulos & Yoshikuni, 1999, p. 7).

This study uses fiction, particularly the short story, as a metaphorical vehicle of presenting survival and coping strategies and brings into focus new threads of imagination which challenge Afro-pessimisms that characterised descriptions of modern life in essentialist terms. This essentialism; a myopic, rigid, and limited view, has raised controversies which need some clarification as well as redress. The research therefore seeks to challenge the view of a city entrenched in polarities and binaries (Muchemwa & Muponde, 2007), where the city is narrowly viewed as a hub of immorality, corruption, loss of innocence, dissent, and the urbanite as a lost, deranged and powerless victim of this “monster”. Such a view is finding challenges from a new crop of critical writers and thinkers who have lamented the traditional analysis that fails to see the potential ways in which the ordinary people live in the city (Muchemwa & Muponde, 2007; Muponde & Taruvinga, 2002; Muponde & Primorac, 2005; Vambe, 2010; Lindell, 2010).

This study seeks to enlighten and elucidate the disagreements on the literary representation of urban life and coping mechanisms of a people under difficult circumstances. A literary analysis which is positively recognising the survival mechanisms as well as the agency and resilience of ordinary people had, until the present study, remained marginally developed.

This study therefore seeks to offer critical routes for understanding the techniques of survival needed to make it in the city during periods of tempestuous changes that threaten the urbanites in Africa as represented through fiction. The aim is to explore and analyse the fictionalisation of coping strategies in crisis-hit urban Zimbabwe and illustrate how literary texts can narrate resilience and inform us about the various

ways that can be used to handle change, adversity and uncertainty. The inspirational ways that colour the urban landscape present some fluidities which are invisible and can elude activists, urbanists, and policy-makers; but with the imaginative recreation of the politics of informality and survival tactics in their variegated complicatedness made possible and more visible through the representation afforded by fiction, a new terrain is hatched. This is corroborated by Anyidoho, Busia and Adams (1991) who found that:

Even in the best of times, the artist is constantly reaching beyond the present; the severity of Africa's present situation of crisis must urge our artists even farther into their version of new life ... inspired by the belief that given the severity of the current crisis of life for African peoples, and given the intuitive and cultivated ability of the creative artist to monitor and accurately capture the complexities of any human situation, ... writers should provide not only important insights into various dimensions of the problem, but also and perhaps even more crucial, offer subtle but reliable pointers to probable solutions. It is to the artists we must turn for a creative but ultimately realisable vision of the future. (p. ii)

The above quotation persuades one to closely ponder about the words of Rodney (1981) when he exhorted the African world to place more prominence on the desire to organise rather than simply agonise. Enshrined in this age-old wisdom, expressed by Rodney and discussed in this study as well, is the desire for fortitude and resilience in the quest for solutions to issues that confront humanity, and realise that despite the level of difficulty within a situation, therein also is enveloped

opportunity. The survivor motif explored in this study has been demonstrated and is corroborated by the lives of African-American slaves whose resilience, tenacity, inventions, and heroic exploits still colour our present day world; all this in spite of the drudgery of the slave institution. Mention can be made as to how this show of resilience and fortitude is articulated in the autobiographies of the likes of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs (Mlambo, 2011b). In his exploration of the African-American autobiography, Mlambo (2011b) comes to the conclusion that even in the most gruesome circumstances like slavery, the slaves managed to find means and ways of handling pressure to the extent of escaping the system. This is an indication that even in impossible situations, the human spirit, due to its tenacity and resilience, can prevail as well as flourish.

Moreover, it is undeniable that the whole globe is becoming more urbanised and writers of fiction have managed to complicate the city lives in their representations and interpretations, demonstrating the paradoxical image of the city as a place of both opportunities and difficulties. The United Nations predicts that over the next twenty-five years, all population growth will be in the cities of the developing world, and at current rates, it is estimated that 60% of the world's total population will live in cities by 2030 (Mougot, 2006, p. 17). It therefore becomes critical to also take note of former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan's observation that, as more and more people make cities their home, cities will be the arenas in which some of the world's biggest social, economic, environmental, cultural and political challenges will be addressed, and where solutions will be found (UNCHS-Habitat, 2001, p. 1). The

present study takes a special interest in how solutions and answers to life's challenges can be imagined in fiction.

The complexities of change in turbulent urban Zimbabwe during the 1999 to 2009 years revolutionised the ordinary people's way of life as new challenges came about which the people of Zimbabwe had never witnessed before. It brought about challenges at an accelerated rate; challenges which are and can be faced by other Southern African cities, though possibly at a different rate. The period was marked by an unemployment rate of over 90%, and the inflation rate running into millions of percentages. The official rate of inflation was 231000% in August 2008, though the informal rate was said to be in the trillions. This dizzying rate of inflation left virtually almost everyone in the country a Zimbabwean-dollar billionaire. Such a situation of accelerated inflationary rates therefore raises pertinent research questions on how far possible it is to capture and represent this fluid phenomenon in fiction and to what extent the critical analysis of such a representation can inform academia and postcolonial discourses on survival, hope and resilience. The other question that can be raised in relation to the economic meltdown emanating from grim situations like the one spelled out here is about the literary tools that can be used to possibly paint a positive picture from the Zimbabwean crisis as represented in fiction.

Furthermore, as Vambe (2010) has argued, when the world does pay attention to Zimbabwe, it is to sanction its leaders and lament the decay of its infrastructure, thus being blind to how ordinary Zimbabweans move beyond the crisis (p. 89). It is therefore fitting and highly important that a study such as this one explores the diverse versions of cultural transformations for survival that have given Africans

(and Zimbabweans in particular) agency to rise above these challenges and carve exciting avenues of being in the city. The question for many people who have thought about the Zimbabwean situation during the crisis is always that given such circumstances, “how do people survive?” It becomes vital that such remarks be further explored through a critical literary analysis of the fiction set in Zimbabwe during that specific period of socio-economic and political meltdown, and find out which survival and coping mechanisms were employed by the various characters.

Interrogating the representations of realities in their diverse forms encompassing street vending, restructuring of urban private and public spaces, migration and remittances, to mention a few, as narrated by different writers, unlocks the potential possibilities fictional works have in handling contemporary issues. This study therefore raises and grapples with serious questions and concerns relevant to academia, literary critics, policy makers, politicians, urban planners, civic society, local government and nongovernmental organisations in Zimbabwe, Southern Africa and the world over.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this literary study is to investigate what the selected Zimbabwean fictions written between 1999 and 2009 claim are the ways in which ordinary Zimbabweans innovatively coped with the crisis that rocked the country by means of resilience, resistance, creativity and daily adjustment of their lives so as to survive the crisis and go beyond it.

The research issues in this study focus on societal creativity, how literature records the inspirational ways of successfully living in the city and how the dystopian city can be understood as a centre for opportunities, possibilities and adaptability.

There is now a general convergence of opinion in the regional and international research and academic fraternity that the period from around the years 1999 to 2000, when Zimbabwe's ruling party first experienced a serious challenge to its rule leading to the formation of the Coalition Government/ Government of National Unity on 13 February 2009, can by all means be called the decade marking the Zimbabwean crisis (Vambe, 2010; Muponde & Primorac, 2005; Primorac, 2006; Muchemwa & Muponde, 2007; Mlambo, 2011a; Mlambo, 2012). According to Bond and Manyanya (2003), "Zimbabwe's plunge" originated in the financial meltdown of 14 November 1997 – the "black Friday" when the Zimbabwe dollar lost 74% of its value (p. 11). At the height of the crisis, Zimbabwe had a world record inflation for countries not at war, with a currency denomination stretching from as little as a one Zimbabwean cent note to a fifty billion Zimbabwean dollar note (and a one trillion bearer cheque, which was then used as everyday legal tender). Furthermore, price changes became a daily if not hourly event, and one's take-home salary "could hardly take one home". The period was also characterised by political polarisations, the breakdown of institutions, malfunctionality of the rule of law, state violence, shortage of basic commodities, Operation *Murambatsvina* (the cleanup of urban slums and informal dwellings), corruption, a cholera outbreak that claimed more than 4000 lives, brain drain, incessant queues, HIV and AIDS, to mention but a few.

Yet against all these odds, the ordinary people managed to survive the crisis. Furthermore, the city in crisis-hit Zimbabwe as presented in the selected short stories can be viewed as a paradoxical centre of economic, social, political and cultural innovation which prompts the readers to positively rethink basic notions of urbanity and citiness. Investigating and explaining the living conditions and experiences during such times, from a qualitative point of view through fiction, allows us to appreciate the cultural creativity and coping tactics displayed by the inhabitants, who are characters in these stories. This is in contrast to representations that emphasise the magnification of more apocalyptic visions of the city as well as the limitations of “land politics” and “governance politics” which have come to represent Zimbabwean literary and socio-political criticisms. In fact, to mirror creativity even in the midst of adversity and limitations, creative culture manifested in the publication of the notable anthologies such as *No More Plastic Balls and other Short Stories* (Chihota & Muponde, 2000) and *Writing Still: New Stories from Zimbabwe* (Staunton, 2003), *An Elegy of Easterly* (Gappah, 2009), and the novel *The Uncertainty of Hope* (Tagwira, 2006). These were, to a greater extent, responding to the state of affairs in the country and they capture the decisive moments heralding the “Zimbabwe crisis”, and to a large extent represent how the city dwellers and ordinary citizens take on new options and think harder than before about ways to survive from one day to the next and adapt to changing times.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study explores the fictionalisation of survival and coping tactics of the urbanites as it answers the following questions:

1. How does literature, particularly the short story, represent the common man's survival and coping strategies?
2. What can we learn from the crisis-hit and institutionally weak Zimbabwean urban situation?
3. How do literary texts participate in representing and reflecting the versatility and resilience of the ordinary people?
4. How can imaginative short fiction and literary theory allow readers to imagine ways of negotiating the crisis in a globalizing world?
5. How can an understanding of dystopian hope inform attitudes and interventions which recognize and complement the inventive potential the ordinary people have to direct survival at a macro level?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the critical concept of knowledge creation and dissemination. In the new millennium and its new challenges, there is a quest for knowledge workers/creators who can positively position Southern Africa in the global imaginary and academy, especially in the new discursive frontiers which seek to challenge Afro-pessimisms. It is an addition to the scant body of literature that is dedicated to providing timely, critical and alternative research and analysis of Africa (Lindell, 2010). This study thus further adds to the bank of knowledge on

contemporary postcolonial studies, thereby also becoming a useful reference tool to students, politicians, the general public and academics studying Zimbabwean and Southern African literature in general and urbanites' survival and coping strategies in particular.

It is envisaged that this study will bring to the fore a clearer understanding of Afro-centred literary theorisations, not in opposition but in a complementary manner to the grand narratives and grand theories, ultimately validating the truth-potential of art and how its truth-claims open doors for public debate. In its expansion of human agency and resilience, the study expands the notion of people making their own history rather than being subjects. Therefore, urban dwellers will find the study more enlightening and inspiring in their quest for self-emancipation, public participation and survival in difficult times.

Finally, by clarifying the representation of every day survival strategies, the research also enlightens civic organisations, nongovernmental organisations, policymakers and municipalities interested in interventions; these are people driven or bent on expounding the critical concept of endogenous development. This recognition of survival and coping strategies of urbanites in particular and the ordinary Zimbabweans as represented in fiction signifies the contribution the study will have on the socio-economic and cultural progress, not only in Zimbabwe, but in Southern Africa and any part of the world where the research will reach.

1.5 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is limited in its consideration of only fiction written in English, and this has been done for research manageability. This means that some fictional works written in local languages have not been explored as they fall outside the scope of the study. In addition, of the stories and novel analysed, only those set in the urban sphere or those that have an urban orientation have been primarily focused upon. This is in conformance to the scope of the study, which is on urban survival culture and coping strategies during the socio-economic and political meltdown in Zimbabwe during the 1999-2009 period. The study is also limited to stories and a novel, set within a specified time frame, the years bordering 1999 to 2009, for this is the critical period which manifests the typical “urban survival” strategies in question.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section reviews the literature that is related to the research topic - survival and coping strategies as presented in contemporary Zimbabwean literature of the crisis. The aim is to show what is already known in literature about the area of urban survival and coping strategies during a crisis, the importance of the short story and also the gaps in knowledge which exist and how this study seeks to fill up this gap and complement what is already known. This section further clarifies the trends in Zimbabwean literary criticism and finally further presents the viewpoints which have been taken by various critics and academics about what really the Zimbabwean crisis means.

1.6.2 THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CITY, AGENCY AND INFORMALITIES IN LITERATURE

There are a number of gaps in knowledge as well as unanswered questions, disagreements and representational shortcomings in the literature on urban dwellership and survival tactics by the urban poor. Commenting on the interplay between fiction and city representation, Frederiksen (1991) observed that “urbanisation is a universal social tendency of urgent local importance” (p. 228). However, this sense of its urgent local importance is yet to be fully explored and utilised, despite the fact that it features prominently in African literature. From Balzac through Dickens to modernism in Europe, a central theme has been the development of the individual in relation, not to society in general but to the potentialities and limitations set by the social structure of urban life (Frederiksen, 1991). The question on the processes and transformations of the urban dwellers in an African setup and how this process enlightens an understanding of innovation and agency still remains an unexplored area in academic research. Therefore, exploring the representations of survival culture and coping strategies during periods of extreme difficulty in this study fills this gap and also contributes to an accounting of the role of the short story in clarifying some of the major concerns humanity is facing in the present world. Recognition of the agency and subjectivity in the ordinary people finds ample corroboration and clarification in Lindell (2010) who has lamented that:

Despite much writing on the persistence and growth of informal economies, our understanding of the politics of informality has been hampered by deeply

entrenched views that tend to deprive people in the informal economy of agency. (p. 1)

Other works have decried the paucity of academic knowledge capturing the processes of informalisation and casualisation of livelihoods which loom larger and expansively within our present world (Lindell, 2010; Simone & Abouhany, 2004). Yet also, though in a nascent stage, there are growing calls for looking upon local informal socio-economic urban practices not as merely marginal, impulsive manifestation of chaos and decay or as deviations from a Western normative ideal, but as providing the basis for social economies from which a different life and economic leeway can be envisioned (Pieterse, 2008, p. 5). This is a critical route that has been further explored and elucidated from a literary perspective in this study. As Pieterse (2008) has introduced the idea of “insurgent citizenship”, of critical importance in this study is to further “chronotopically” anchor this noble idea and articulate the representation of the urban subalterns and their appropriation of the space of the city as a coping strategy as well as the other numerous survival tactics they employ (p. 6).

The present study takes a special, but not exclusive, look at the way people in the city manage change and cope with institutional deficiencies occasioned by the Zimbabwean crisis because there is a paucity of academic knowledge in that area. Critical representational shortcomings and deficiencies about the city in Zimbabwe have been aptly captured by Wekwete (as cited in Raftopoulos & Yoshikuni, 1999) who noted that “a major deficiency in the study of urban development lies in the lack

of detailed urban historiography particularly accounting for the origin of specific urban settlements” (p. 212).

Interrogating this further to include the urban players and common people’s reclamation of the city in specific spatial and temporal dimensions thus validates some of the questions that have informed this study, such as the need to ask how literature, particularly the short story, represents the complexities of change and the common man’s urban dwellership and also what we can learn from the representation of the crisis-hit and institutionally weak Zimbabwean urban situation.

Furthermore, the emergence of urban historiography in Zimbabwe has found expression in Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni (1999) and the two have become leading scholars on Zimbabwean urban history which had previously suffered a remarkable deficiency, that is, has not been fully explored. Although theirs is not a literary exercise, the present research has sought to provide alternative views to social science research and rather than quarry the distant past (pre-colonial and colonial), the present challenge has been set in the more contemporary postcolonial scenario. The present study has therefore taken note of the fact that whilst a substantial amount of literature has been produced to arrest the poverty of urban historiography, the challenge is in providing continuities, especially with regards to the post-independence state of African cities and the forms of urban survival culture that are evolving.

More perspectives on fiction and the city have been presented by Kurtz (2000), who has revealed some of the dynamics of Nairobi’s urban dynamics as a classical marker of the postcolonial urban cultural condition. For Kurtz, what is particularly

interesting is the fact that the city that was in colonial Africa presented as a seductress who traps and degrades the African male, now is presented as a place that contains possibilities for both males and females. Because it disrupts traditional social patterns, this city is, despite its nature as a male place, a site where women are able to create some measure of personal emancipation (Kurtz, 2000, p. 108). Yet there are still critical questions which need answers. That is why in this study the recurring concern is on how dwellers in search of opportunities and survival, engage in multiple forms of restructuring the city, make pragmatic decisions and reconstitute their identities.

Furthermore, in his analysis of urban spaces, de Certeau (1984) has emphasised their dynamism and how this dynamism shapes and is shaped by power, economy, culture and society. Particularly informative in his analysis is the way in which he considers social representation and modes of social behaviour employed by individuals and groups, describing the tactics available to the common man for reclaiming his own autonomy from the all-pervasive forces in the city. This amazing adaptive capacity of the ordinary urbanites he calls tactics of living and in the present study, this train of thought is tested and furthered to show how people innovatively construct survival culture within the so-called Zimbabwean crisis.

Another prominent voice in the urban literary hermeneutics is that of the 1970s philosopher and writer, Raban in his book, *The soft city* (1974), which has become a much quoted classic when it comes to literature of the city and urban survival culture. Most important to this study is especially the writer's insistence on the city's "unique plasticity" which enables the urbanites or the city dwellers to be much more

innovative and to capitalise on its malleability and complexity so as to survive, despite all odds.

The present study therefore synthesises and integrates Raban and de Certeau's arguments above and demonstrates that this hypothesis on survival and coping strategies in spite of the odds is provable in Southern Africa, and that writers of our present day can indeed document this scenario. This manner of positively representing the agency and resilience of urbanites goes a long way in challenging Afro-pessimisms and also in the furthering of knowledge creation in postcolonial literary studies.

In this regard it is interesting to note that the work of anthropologists, sociologists and historians in Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe), other than emphasising racial differentiation, colonial ideology and the racialisation of urban space, also offer critical fissures which allow present researchers to explore spaces of popular agency. The present study therefore takes the thread of argument from there, utilizing these non-literary chunks of literature scattered around, to further argue for the positive propagation of the ubiquity of agency within a postcolonial context. The present perspective is further informed by Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni (1999) who have summed up the Rhodesian African (black) urbanites of the period 1890 to 1945 as follows: "through their own decisive economic, political and cultural interventions, African workers confronted the limitations of surveillance and struggled for spaces of creative intervention and in determinate ways began the process, always uneven, of claiming the city as home" (p. 4).

However, when turning to the literary side, the representation of the city in Zimbabwean literature, for example, in Zimunya's fiction, the apparent dichotomies in his *Country Dawns and City Lights* (1985), further illustrates the representational shortcomings which need to be addressed. Whilst Zimunya's fictionalisation is quite insightful in confirming the conflict between traditional society and modernism, the fiction unfortunately fails to capture the positive traits of the city which, as illustrated above, are now undeniably evident in the new millennium. It is an example of the dichotomy that can be likened to what Muchemwa and Muponde (2007) have called "essentialist spaces from which emerge descriptions and distinctions that stress ideologically inflected binaries, polarities and exclusions" (p. xv). This is a remarkable comment that signifies a shift from novels and criticisms that tended to focus on the conflicts between traditional society and modernization. In that form of literature the city is limitedly presented as an antagonist to the rural and an extension of the colonial modernising project, hence evil and entrapping. It is antagonist to the rural in the sense that the view propounded assumes that the rural is more authentic, balanced, African, and without problems, which is an idealism and romanticism almost found in negritude poetry. The present study goes beyond this negative and one-sided view as it points out the potential and creative characteristics which have become a form of practical and ingenious urban survival culture. Whereas Muchemwa and Muponde (2007) are content in naming and giving introductory remarks in general, this study makes a full exploration of the representation of the positive, urban cultural phenomenon mainly using the short story genre and one novel set in the period from 1999 to 2009.

One of the literary critics who has lamented the paucity of academic knowledge on the critical analysis of the city as represented in Zimbabwean literature is Nuttal (2005). In her article titled, *Inside the city: Reassembling the township in Yvonne Vera's fiction* (2005), this is how Nuttal (2005) presents her argument:

Less attention has been paid to the undergirding or underwiring of that selfhood by the objects of urban space as such, or to the ways in which urban subjects and objects mutually constitute each other. Critics have hardly begun to draw out, that is, the assemblages of city and township in Vera's fiction, and the ways in which they constitute, are constituted by or even exceed the construction of subjectivity in her writing. (p. 177)

This is a critical observation by Nuttal with regards to the analysis of Vera's work and how it presents urban space and urban subjectivity and Nuttal's analysis is equally insightful. However, it is worth noting that her analysis is restricted to the fiction of Vera only and the urban spaces Vera presented in colonial Zimbabwe, especially about the city of Bulawayo. Taking cognisance of this need to explore the representation of the city in Zimbabwean literature, since it has eluded many critics, as Nuttal (2005) has argued, the present study also further realises that there is still a gap which needs to be covered. Hence, there is a need to explore the subject of urban representation in Zimbabwean literature using a wider spectrum of writers, as demonstrated through the nineteen short stories and one novel analysed in this study. Thus the present study endeavours to explore a wider representation of urban survival strategies using contemporary fiction as a way of contributing to academic knowledge about the city in Zimbabwean literature.

1.6.3 TRENDS IN ZIMBABWEAN LITERARY CRITICISM

In the history of Zimbabwe literary studies, there have been prominent commentators like Musayemura Zimunya, Rino Zhuwarara, Emmanuel Chiwome, Vimbai Chivaura, George Kahari, Anthony Chennels and Flora Veit-Wild. A critical commentary on these and their contribution to Zimbabwean literature as well as their shortcomings is given by Muchemwa and Muponde (2007) and Vambe (2010). The aim here is not to attempt a literature review of the whole spectrum of Zimbabwean literature but to highlight the literary shift that informed the specific concerns raised in this study. However, mention can be made of two of the most outstanding literary critics. A comprehensive review of Zimbabwean literature in general can especially be found in Veit-Wild's *Teachers, preachers and non-believers* (1993) and Zhuwarara's *Introduction to Zimbabwean literature in English* (2001). These two can arguably be called land-markers in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature in English. To illustrate the latter's focus for example, Zhuwarara (2001) introduces his book as follows:

The writer would be quite satisfied if the critical survey enables the general readers of Zimbabwean fiction ... to interpret the works on the basis of a sound grasp of the texts themselves; these texts have captured the breadth and depth of the Zimbabwean experience and expressed the historical, cultural, social and psychological dimensions of life in the context of a society that is rapidly changing. It is crucial that readers appreciate how the works, written by some of the most sensitive and perceptive writers of our time, explore

issues that have affected the lives of generations and altered some aspects of our ever evolving identities as a people. (p. 25)

Undeniably such well thought and incisive commentary indicates a landmark period in the criticism of Zimbabwean literature. Zhuwarara's analysis, like that of many at the attainment of independence in Zimbabwe, has and continues to inspire later insights in literary criticism within the Zimbabwean context. However, it is noteworthy to be ever cognisant of Zhuwarara's wisdom enshrined in the epithets "of our time", "a society that is rapidly changing" and "our ever evolving identities as a people" as captioned in the above quotation. This study, taking cue from that realisation as illustrated here, captures the changing identities and the moral logics of everyday life as well as the cultural transformation for survival in times of crisis as a way of recognising the resilience of the people and the coping strategies they employ so as to survive. Each generation has its own challenges and the fiction of the time mirrors that particular society's hopes, fears and privations. This study takes up that challenge, stretching the argument further than the colonizer/colonized discourses of the early 1990s as Zhuwarara and others have done, and also going beyond the victimhood mentality, but showing the ubiquity of agency.

Other than Zhuwarara, another land-marker in Zimbabwean literary studies is Veit-Wild. Veit-Wild's, *Teachers, believers and non-believers: A social history of Zimbabwean literature* (1993), offers a critical commentary on the prominent writers to emerge in the Zimbabwean literary circles. Her focus is on the "pioneers" of Zimbabwean literature and their contribution to emergent nationalism, the "lost generation" of the 1970s whose literature was something between protest and despair

and finally about the writing trends in the 1980s, which display a diversity of voices. As a summative voice of Zimbabwean literature, Veit-Wild's seminal criticism of Zimbabwean literature is quite insightful as an introductory text seeking to provide a general trend in Zimbabwean literature.

However, it can also be said that the analysis provided by Veit-Wild is general in nature, aimed as it is to simply give a comprehensive history of black Zimbabwean literature up to the late 1980s. The point of departure in this study is in the sense that there is a quest to offer a continuation of literary analysis. This is in the sense that the present study explores the period stretching from 1999 to 2009, which is a period not covered by either land-markers in Zimbabwean literary criticism, Zhuwarara and Veit-Wild. Furthermore, whilst Zhuwarara and Veit-Wild's analyses focus on cataloguing the general trends in Zimbabwean literature, the present study seeks to pursue in depth, a specific theme which is urban survival and coping strategies, as it is represented by numerous literary voices in contemporary Zimbabwean fiction.

In addition, other than Zhuwarara and Veit-Wild's prominent voices, there has been a slight shift in the pre-occupations of Zimbabwean literature criticisms. There has been an emerging desire at the turn of the century to search for a nuanced and multifarious "deconstructed notion of the African novel that challenges the more conventional views ... and poses new vistas of imaginative, spiritual and psychological space" (Muponde & Taruvinga, 2002, p. xi). In another context, Muchemwa and Muponde (2007) express concern over discussions about Zimbabwe which:

traditionally inhabit essentialist spaces from which emerge descriptions and distinctions that stress ideologically inflected binaries, polarities, and exclusions ... where society is reduced to the functions of oppositions of colonised and coloniser, race and class, sex and gender, poverty and wealth, patriotism and terrorism, sell-outs and party loyalists, survival and death. (p. xv)

Such critical practices as described in the above quotation, deny a full and complicated perception of life and its multi-layered interpretations. The analysis of life and its representations in binaries as lamented by Muchemwa and Muponde (2007) above, result in what other critics have explained as “ pathologising discourses which fail to register the agency of the common people, their heterogeneity and complex and multiple subjectivities” (Lindell, 2010, p. 14). This study thus takes a non-essentialist approach as opposed to an essentialist perspective, which views things as having a set of rigid characteristics which makes them what they are. In adopting a non-essentialist perspective, this study takes cognisance of the versatility displayed by the various characters. For there to be such non-essentialism, the view taken in this study is aided by the wide array of fiction writers who are selected, all representing the nineteen short stories under scrutiny. Such a wide selection of writers helps to capture the fluid nature of life in its various forms as viewed by many writers, as opposed to a study which considers the writings from a single writer. Commenting in the prologue of Hove’s *Shebeen Tales*, a Dutch publisher, van de Werk (as cited in Hove, 1994) also posits that:

The writer is a map-maker. The history of each society is better understood with the help of its artistic products. In hard times the artist will blend images of despair with those of hope. In good times the writer will depict the madness of over-eating at the expense of cultivating other values. (p. 18)

This study has taken a specific scrutiny of the hard times during the Zimbabwean crisis and clarified the visibility of the images of hope, thus culminating in the titular *urban survival and coping strategies* phenomenon. In this study therefore, the desire is to find out the opportunities which are available for the urbanites and ordinary people as presented in the selected fictional works. This is a representational shortcoming that has eluded both fictional writers and critics, and this study has been positioned to fill this void on survival and coping strategies as a way of crediting the resilience, versatility and fortitude of the characters.

1.6.4 THE SHORT STORY GENRE AND THE QUEST FOR RELEVANCE

It is also important at this point to further illustrate the reason for specifically choosing the short story genre. From the fables of the Greek slave Aesop, works of Geoffrey Chaucer and Giovanni Boccaccio, right through to Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, Mark Twain, and James Joyce, up to Dorris Lessing, Louis Honwana, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Nadine Gordimer, the condensed fictional narrative has been able to reach a diversity of readership. The short story has been described by a prominent academic writer as “something infinite that can be held in a human hand and something eternal that can be read in less than sixty minutes” (Manase, 2005, p. 6). Following Manase, this study relies and utilises the fact that the short story reflects the intense, subtle, deeply penetrating snapshots of

life that are our reality. Anthologised as short stories, they can also, at a symbolical level, reflect the forms of collective agency, alliances and transnational organizing in urban Africa and its informal workers. The short story genre which is presented as an anthology is helpful in capturing many voices which offer different perspectives as well as styles. In introducing the anthology, *No more plastic balls and other stories*, Chihota & Muponde (2000) express that, “we wanted each writer to have enough space, some room to display his wares, to develop his presence, to sing to his heart’s delight without the possible risk of being diluted, smothered or lost among other voices” (p. 6). The critical point captured above lies in the fact that the short story genre as presented in the form of an anthology manages to be wider in its representation and also effectively mirrors the variety of perspectives. The short story is specifically chosen in this study because it comes in concentrated form, uses ellipses and generally relies on understatement due to its length.

Furthermore, the very choice of the short story in this study as a major source of primary data lies in the fact that the short story in Zimbabwe has been peripherally considered. For Mushakavanhu (2007):

Critics and commentators in the Zimbabwean literary discourse have paid scant attention to the short story and have treated it as a footnote to the novel, some kind of practice ground for the more serious business of writing novels. And yet, the short story engenders vital issues that have contemporary relevance. (p. 1)

Mushakavanhu’s lone voice has been an ardent advocate for a better understanding and recognition of the short story in Zimbabwean literary criticism and the present

study seeks to add weight to this cause in academia. The short story has had a long history in Zimbabwean literature, capturing the human experience at different historical moments in its distilled essence.

Perhaps the most prominent writer to extensively and successfully make use of the short mode in Zimbabwe is Mungoshi, especially in anthologies like the following: *Coming of the dry season* (1972), *Some kinds of wounds and other stories* (1980) and *Walking still* (1997). The fore-bearers of the short story genre in Zimbabwe, other than Mungoshi, include Marechera and Nyamufukudza. The former, when he published his world acclaimed novella, *House of hunger* (1978), placed the Zimbabwean short fiction genre on the world map.

In post-independence Zimbabwe and particularly in crisis-hit Zimbabwe, the many short story anthologies make this form of literature uniquely accessible to many readers, giving them many flavours and perspectives. Championing this cause includes the publishers / editors Irene Staunton and Jane Morris who have courageously edited anthologies despite the dangers they face from the regime. Moreover, it is worth noting that most of the crop of new writers is different from its predecessors. The old generation of writers and critics had been preoccupied with thematic and historical concerns which are informed by the colonised/coloniser discourse. However, in the anthologies considered in this study, there is a need to register the fact that literary forms, styles and interpretations are contextually produced and the writers respond to their day-to-day conditions – hence there is the use of the theory of chronotope in analysing these stories as will be explained below. The preoccupation in this study is different from the previous challenges; the

exploratory research is focused on survival and coping strategies during a crisis as a relevant focus area. According to the Russian literary scholar, Vassily Novikov (as cited in Mushakavanhu, 2007):

Literature develops along with life as writers try to meet the challenges of their time, tell the readers the truth about themselves, the world and the current events, and voice their concern about the future, the truth without which mankind cannot advance. (p. 2)

The present study seeks to demonstrate these sentiments as raised in literature on the relevance of fiction in dealing with contemporary challenges. Mushakavanhu (2007) further decries how pioneering critical works on Zimbabwean fiction from leading academics like Kizito Muchemwa, George Kahari, Musayemura Zimunya, Ranga Zinyemba, Rudo Gaidzanwa, Flora Veit-Wild, Rino Zhuwarara, Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac have all overlooked the importance of the short story in Zimbabwe. According to Mushakavanhu (2007), there is no single study in Zimbabwean literature that specifically examines the short story genre in general (p. 3). The short stories have not received the detailed academic attention devoted to poetry, plays and novels, and this dearth of literature on the short story has necessitated the concentration on the short story genre as source material in this study.

In addition, it is in these anthologies with diverse settings that this study has put primary focus on, and some of the short stories are from award winning as well as internationally acclaimed writers like Gappah, Mlalazi and Chinodya. The Zimbabwean crisis has paradoxically been a source of inspiration which has

triggered a flurry of creativity and the short story genre has been the pulse of literary creativity in the country. This is corroborated by Mushakavanhu (n.d.) who has argued that:

A generation of writers is emerging out of this rubble of disaster [Zimbabwean crisis] to produce a powerful, evocative body of literary history that will alternatively serve as a primal screen denouncing tyranny, records that will serve as a means of grappling and coming to terms with this national trauma, and a literature that will serve as a vehicle for imagining a better world. (p. 1)

Mushakavanhu's views as quoted above are critical in elucidating the core objectives of this study. The quotation above appraises the role of literature in positively recording the dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis so that, instead of lamenting and agonising about the situation, the view presented has to be that of constructive criticism. The present study therefore seeks to extend such frontiers of knowledge as those proposed by Mushakavanhu. Mushakavanhu (n.d.) has further argued that:

Yes, Zimbabwe with Uncle Bob may be a perfect stereotypical outpost of tyranny for the Western imagination, but Zimbabwe, to these writers, is a country of a people with a capacity to dream, to feel pain, to smile and not mere cholera statistics flashed on every news bulletin in Europe and America. (p. 1)

This quotation further introduces to the present study an area which needs further exploration. This exploration has been done by arguing that even in the midst of the

crisis, the characters presented in the fiction represent survival and coping strategies of ordinary people – the agency, reflexivity and autonomy of human actions as presented in the fiction on the Zimbabwean crisis.

The Zimbabwean author and literary critic Vambe (2010) is one of the recent voices to add urgency and nuance to the literature on creative fiction and the crisis, emphasizing particularly how ordinary Zimbabweans are daily constructing themselves and their lives - not only to survive the crisis that has pervaded so many facets of their lives - but to go beyond it. He further shows how his analysis of creative fiction also records the inspirational way that ordinary Zimbabweans have moved beyond the crisis and are living successfully.

However, in exploring the literary representations of this survival, Vambe chooses the period 1980 to 1999, which leaves out the critical decade that clearly pronounced the Zimbabwean crisis (1999 to 2009), a fact which he also acknowledges. It therefore leaves out a great void which calls for attention. The present study thus endeavours to fill such voids. Yet the study still leaves room for disclosure, debate and ideological flexibility. This study does not purport that its focus is the only way of reading and interpreting the fiction about the Zimbabwean crisis. The present study aims to complement, as well as further clarify, the body of literature on the Zimbabwean crisis. It contributes to answering some questions, filling some gaps in knowledge, and revising the controversies on the representation of the urbanites and their survival strategies. Building on contemporary literature and literary theory, the study ultimately proves “that we are finding new ways to reflect our reality” (Staunton, 2007, p. i).

However, it is of critical importance that the Zimbabwean crisis, which has been the central phenomenon in the foregoing analysis be further clarified. Much ink has been spilt about the crisis in Zimbabwe and the intention here is not to repeatedly echo what is already an over trodden area in literature. Some representative highlights in literature are given in order to put the matter into proper perspective and as a way of corroborating what has already been highlighted in the foregoing presentation. According to Chiumbu and Musemwa (2012), the crisis can roughly be positioned between 1998 and 2009 and it manifested areas related to resource scarcity, namely: “water crisis, health crisis, monetary/cash crisis, fuel crisis, energy/electricity crisis, food crisis and the cholera crisis” (p. x). In other words, according to them, the Zimbabwean crisis cannot be defined in singular terms but it has to be understood as a multi-fold of crises with many causes. Mlambo and Raftopolous (2010), who have become leading authorities in Zimbabwean historical and cultural studies, summed the Zimbabwean crisis in the following words:

Citizens experienced this meltdown directly through crumbling social services and infrastructure, frequent power cuts, factory closures, a worthless national currency, and perhaps the most threatening, intermittent domestic water supplies and the breakdown of the country’s urban water reticulation and the infrastructure supplying clean water to urban households; resulting in the horrendous cholera outbreak in 2008. (p. 5)

What is captured in the above words is a sad situation of a country in limbo and this supports all the more the emphasis in this study that in order to demonstrate the resilience of a people, a worst case scenario has to be selected.

According to Dekker (2009), the Zimbabwean crisis can be regarded as the past decade of political and economic crisis which took place from 1999 to 2008/2009, which is approximately the period this study has also put into consideration. For Dekker (2009), the crisis manifested itself in two-digit negative growth rates, skyrocketing inflation, decline in the rule of law and a disintegration of markets. This consequently resulted in having the “official rate of inflation increased from a mere 15 percentage in 1990, to 525 percentage in 2003, nearly 8000 percentage in 2007 and 231 million percentage in July 2008 (Dekker, 2009, p. 1). There are indeed many voices which have pronounced the crisis in much similar terms but the point here is not to exhaust the literature on the Zimbabwean crisis but to concretise the point of reference in this study. However, what needs to be emphasised is that there is a need to depart from such lachrymal accounts of the crisis though in themselves they are quite insightful. What needs to be emphasised is that it is not enough to catalogue and lament the sorry state of the Zimbabwean situation and the present study veers from such a lamentation of the woes befalling the people – crediting the people’s efforts and resilience in such circumstances and carve a novel forte which empowers ordinary people.

There are indeed short stories which graphically record the ennui, helplessness and crudity of the Zimbabwean crisis. In his analysis of literature in the 21st century, particularly the challenges for writers and critics, Nnolim (2006), sums up African literature of both the 19th and 20th centuries as lachrymal and unhappy. For Nnolim (2006), “It was a weeping literature, a literature of lamentation, following Africa’s unhappy experience with slavery and colonialism” (p. 1). This representation of the

sorry state of the African encounter with colonialism resulted in a strong sense of loss, sadness and dejection in the literature of the day. In presenting the sense of loss and sorrow expressed in 19th and 20th century African fiction, Nnolim is trying to build a foundation for his argument that 21st century African fiction has to take a more inspiring role and present “the best that is known and thought in the world” (Nnolim, 2006, p. 7). Nnolim presents a challenge by calling for future literary criticism to recognise the positive dimensions of life in Africa. The present study therefore extends the body of knowledge that celebrates what is known through its exploration of the survival and coping strategies of the ordinary people as presented in Zimbabwean fiction on the crisis of 1999 to 2009. Instead of hopelessness, the study looks at the vestiges of hope and how a different Zimbabwe is imagined. The literature available calls for literary criticism that takes note of the sense of hope that is presented in the fiction; a recognition of human agency and the representation of urban centres as malleable places where versatile Zimbabweans can make a living and survive the crisis. The last word belongs to Freire whose words give direction to the present study, as he argues that:

Hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search – a search which can be carried out only in communion with other men. Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanisation resulting from an unjust order is not cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of humanity which is denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist of folding one’s arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight

I hope, then I can wait. As the encounter of men seeking to be more fully human, dialogue cannot be carried on in a climate of hopelessness. If the participants expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounter will be empty and sterile, bureaucratic and tedious. (Freire, 1972, p. 64)

The quotation above concludes this section, because of its relevance in justifying the present research. To use a biblical allusion, the words of Freire sound like a great commission for this study. Freire's words as quoted above emphasise the fact that hope, agency, and positivity are critical tools to conquer man's worst nightmares. The present study extends the body of literature on the presentation of hope and human agency through its exploration of the survival and coping mechanisms of the ordinary Zimbabweans as presented through the selected fictional works. This section has demonstrated that there is a paucity of academic knowledge on the literary representation of the city in literature, particularly the critical works which explore the Zimbabwean city in fiction. In addition, the section also demonstrated that the short story in Zimbabwe has been peripherally explored by the leading academics and literary critics, who have instead concentrated on the novel and the poetry genre. The literature on Zimbabwean literary studies has also lagged behind in capturing recent or new voices, particularly those dealing with the crisis, and especially those which credit the resilience of the people. Finally, this section has demonstrated the range of voices which have called on future criticism to concentrate on human agency, hope and the innovativeness of ordinary people to change their circumstances. The section has positioned the present study in the body of literature that is available on Zimbabwean literary studies. Through this positioning, the

present study has been presented as a welcome research which can contribute to the creation of new knowledge as well as extend the frontiers of knowledge on literature of the Zimbabwean crisis, the city, and human survival.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In setting out to evaluate the representation of the techniques needed to make it in the city with its fluid social order and how people reconstruct the city space in the time of crisis, there is a need to make use of a relevant literary theory, cognisant of the fact that new ideas require new concepts and theorisation. This is necessitated by the fact that theoretical work needs to always address the “real world” and not take flight into a stratospheric region beyond actual human societies (Selden, 1989, p. 5). The arts in Africa are serving a central purpose in society, for they are not necessarily patterned in the western concept of art for art’s sake. The writers like the short story writers in question, struggle to create an aesthetic structure which crystallises a complex response to human experiences in times of crisis like the one in question (Zimbabwean crisis), a response which could not possibly be represented in other (non-literary) terms. Therefore, theorising such a complex situation as survival mechanisms and the reconstruction of the city space in contemporary Zimbabwe calls for an ideological shift, for it becomes imperative that a change in vision should direct our critical efforts to address what Vambe (2003) has called the “poverty of literary theory” in the explication of Zimbabwean literature.

Addressing the challenges for writers and critics of African literature in the 21st century, Nnolim once remarked that:

With all humility one might ask how these dry exercises in structuralist discourses are conducive to solving (at least imaginatively) the problems besetting Africans at the turn of the century. How does deconstruction as a critical engagement address life-denying issues confronting Africans at the beginning of this century - poverty, unstable governments, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic? (p. 7)

In quest of relevance and informed by the above, this study seeks to propagate resilience theory in the elucidation of contemporary literary texts, specifically to demonstrate that the characters depicted in these short stories are more than victims who both change and are changed by the city space during crisis times and survive through inventiveness and innovation.

The major theories used and popularised are Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope, trauma theory and resilience theory (Bakhtin, 1981; Marder, 2006; Siebert, 2005). These three theories are applied from a postcolonial perspective, which simply put, is the specific setting of fiction after colonial rule. A critical analysis of the primary texts will be patterned along Bakhtin's theorization of the chronotope, emphasis being placed on what will be coined the "chronotope of urban resilience", just as much as other scholars have innovatively utilized "the chronotope of the encounter" (Best, 1994), "the Rhodesian chronotope" (Primorac, 2006), and "chronotope of the road and chronotope of chance" (Ganser, Puringer, & Rheindof, 2006).

In its original form then, Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope refers to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature (Bakhtin, 1981). The chronotope functions as the centre for concretising

representation whereby the short stories' abstract elements find meaning, permitting the imaging/representational power of fiction to do its work. Explaining the concept of the chronotope and the generation of meaning in novels, thus of necessity, has to hinge on the idea that spatial and temporal dimensions are inseparable, where "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to movements of time, plot and history" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 85).

The most succinct explanation that Bakhtin gives needs to be presented in its original form here because it is the bedrock upon which this study is constructed. For Bakhtin (1981):

Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materialising time in space, emerges as a centre for concretising representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements - philosophical and social generalisations, ideas, analysis of cause and effect – gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope. (p. 250)

To take the thread of argument from the above, what is of critical significance is the introduction of history into the understanding of how life is presented and interpreted within different narrative frames; it is thus important to possibly think of parallels between the literary chronotopes and their real life equivalents. The chronotope becomes a very important concept to inform literary criticism in that it moves narrative away from the heights and depths of abstraction into more concrete levels,

at times intimating towards verisimilitude. Thus there are, in this theory, provisions for interrogating and investigating the space where something happens and examining what comes in and what goes out, and to thinking of how new identities are ultimately formed. This line of thought has been further explored and amplified as a literary theory so that the *temporal* (Zimbabwe crisis of 1999 to 2009), the *spatial* (urban), and the fictional formation will be made manifest.

This theory of the chronotope will be applied in conjunction with resilience theory; a theory that is concerned with clarifying the strengths that people have within them, which enable them to rise above adversity. Resilience theory is in its nascent stage in literary circles, though it has long been in use in the social sciences. Resilience is the capacity for strategically absorbing disturbance and challenges, and for coping with the complex uncertainties in life, so as to survive and move beyond survival (Mlambo, 2011a). The emphasis is on fortitude, how to survive in the midst of adversity and the subjectivity that emanates in a people so as to surmount adversity and meet the challenges in all their enormity and excesses. For Egeland, Carlson, and Sroufe, (1993), resilience is “the capacity for successful adaptation, positive functioning or competence ... despite high-risk, chronic stress, or following prolonged or severe trauma” (p. 27). Whilst for Siebert (2005), “resiliency means being able to bounce back from life developments that may feel totally overwhelming at first. When resilient people have their lives disrupted they handle their feelings in healthy ways” (p. 5). Furthermore, Ungar, (as cited in Doggetti (2012) has explained how in the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals

to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (p. 22).

Resilience, therefore, emphasises the strengths that the people have, rather than their vulnerability, through exploring the coping strategies that they exhibit. It is possible that stressing people's vulnerability, as has been touted in the discourse on the Zimbabwe crisis, perpetuates Afro-pessimisms which have their roots in the "heart of darkness"; images which have been ably explored in African literature and criticism. To illustrate this negative presentation which has sowed seeds of Afro-pessimisms, is Achebe's critical essay "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1977). In his expression of disgust at the negative portrayal of Africa in fiction explains that "the real question in the dehumanisation of African and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world" (Achebe, 1988, p. 12). Achebe (1988) further laments how Africa is presented "as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognisable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril" (p. 12). Having spoken at length about the negative image of Africa in fiction and explained the root of the Afro-pessimisms that dampen the African spirit, Achebe further explains the role of the artist in Africa as that of a teacher who has to educate his people and give them a positive self-image. In Achebe's closing words on his espousal of this duty of presenting a more positive image of Africa, Achebe (1988) says:

Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse – to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. And it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of that word. (p. 44)

The above explanation by Achebe therefore serves to further support the choice of resilience theory as a suitable theory to analyse the fiction on the survival and coping strategies of ordinary people. Emphasis therefore is on the projection of a positive image as opposed to negative Afro-pessimisms which Achebe has decried. Though having a slightly different perspective, Ngugi (1986) also laments the negation of Africa and how this has been implanted in the psyche of the young people such that he decries how those “who went through the school system were meant to graduate with a hatred of the people and the culture and the values of the language of our daily humiliation and punishment” (28). This perspective (about vulnerability, crisis), failing as it does to register the resilience of the people and their subjectivity, can be inaccurate as the short stories in question will demonstrate, often camouflaging and downplaying the strengths, innovativeness and agency of the disadvantaged ordinary people. The view about vulnerability is a perspective that homogenises people and emphasises weakness, victimhood, fragility and inability to act positively for survival. For Siebert (2005), “resiliency is more important than ever in today’s world. The volatile and chaotic period we are going through will not end soon. To sustain a good life for yourself and your family, you must be much more resilient than people had been in the past” (p. 5). In analysing literary texts through the lens of resilience theory therefore means focussing on people’s survival techniques, their

responsiveness in exploiting opportunities, and their capacity to prop up agency even in the worst of situations, like the one in question (urban Zimbabwe during a crisis). J.F. Kennedy once remarked that when written in Chinese, the word “crisis” is composed of two characters - one representing danger and the other represents opportunity (as cited in Mlambo, 2011a). Resilience theory in literature can therefore help open instructive fissures for better elucidating the representation of the inspirational survival tactics of Zimbabwean urbanites as a case study on urban informalities, the restructuring of the urban space, and coping strategies.

The emphasis in resilience as espoused in this study is on the development of competencies, strengths and the ability to adapt and survive harsh conditions where there are limited opportunities. It becomes clear that this type of metamorphosis by urban dwellers clarifies what has been termed survival and coping strategies in this study, and that as the two theories complement each other, a “chronotope of urban resilience” can thus be conceived. The chronotope of urban resilience is a suitable concept to be explored especially when taking note of the fact that resilience is a context-dependent process (Doggetti, 2012) hence the emphasis of the dystopian Zimbabwean crisis in this study. This is further articulated by Doggetti (2012) who has pointed out that “ coping strategies may be understood as cognitive or behavioural efforts to manage situations that are perceived as demanding or exceeding one’s personal resources” (p. 25).

Moreover, it is critical that resilience theory be corroborated by trauma theory as it is used in literary studies. The word trauma comes from the ancient Greek meaning “wound” of late the emergence of ground-breaking new work on trauma in literature

and critical theory has made a profound impact both within and beyond the field of literature (Marder, 2006). Trauma refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society (Caruth, 1995). Trauma theory therefore pertains to the study of literature on and about extreme difficulties and violence as exemplified by the present context of the Zimbabwean crisis. The theory has further been explained to include the trauma novel, which is typically a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual and collective levels. Caruth, (1995) point out that the most outstanding feature of trauma theory in literary studies is its representation of the transformation of the character ignited by an external, often horrifying experience, which illuminates the whole process of coping, surviving and coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and the world (p. 17).

In addition, for Marder (2006), trauma and literary studies is critical in that it is through literature that some of the 'unrepresentable' facets of contemporary life can be expressed, especially that "the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, in its insistent appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time (p. 2). The fiction analysed falls approximately within the 1999 to 2009 period and by capturing this traumatic period, the authors seek to rehearse the trauma faced by the ordinary people. Such a rehearsal, which Caruth (1995) calls "'traumatic belatedness' compels the traumatized person to survive the trauma by finding ways of bearing witness to it – both belatedly and in relation to others" (p. 23). It is in relation to this sense of

finding survival as expressed through trauma theory that this study seeks to explore trauma and apply it to the fiction about the Zimbabwean crisis situation.

Moreover, trauma theory as a critical lens in this study is through how fiction bears testimony to the horrors of life and above all, how people manage to survive such traumatic experiences. On explaining the value of trauma theory in literary studies, Marder (2006) points out that “although living through trauma thus exposes the traumatized person to a seemingly unbearable degree of isolation, the very act of surviving trauma entails discovering new ways of relating and being related to others” (p. 2). Taking cue from such an understanding, this study thus utilizes trauma theory in fiction and emphasises the survival mechanisms employed by the fictional characters presented in the literature. It is by combining the tenets of the chronotope, resilience and trauma theory, that this research found a theoretical framework that is workable and relevant to express the ubiquity of agency even during dystopian times like the Zimbabwean crisis.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

This section presents the method that has been used to conduct this research and also presents the chapter outline of the study.

1.8.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study has been primarily a qualitative, desk top research where contemporary fiction set in Zimbabwe has been the central nerve of the study. Qualitative research was used because it is characterised by its aims, which principally relate to understanding some aspects of social life. Qualitative research is concerned with

gathering and analysing information available in print form and in this case it is the fiction which is set in Zimbabwe during the crisis period of 1999 to 2009. The relevance of qualitative research in this study lies in its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how the characters represented in fiction experience the crisis. In addition, qualitative research provides information about the “human” side of an issue like the survival and coping strategies which are under scrutiny in this study. Qualitative methods are also effective in identifying intangible factors whose role in the research issue may not be easily apparent. Therefore, since a qualitative method was used in this research, there has not been any fieldwork, but rather a literary analysis of imaginative short fiction.

From the chosen anthologies, short stories that deal with survival and coping strategies were purposefully selected and critically examined in relation to their representation of the survival strategies of the urbanites in the face of tempestuous changes.

Critical concepts and issues raised in the short stories have been identified and interpreted, then grouped together according to the similarities they have in theme. Some of the short stories have been discussed under one theme, whilst others, due to the extensiveness and breadth in the coverage of a specified theme (survival and coping strategies), have been analysed under one theme. Works by literary critics, study books from different disciplines, journals, the internet, media sources, and different publications, have also been extensively referenced so as to build knowledge for the interpretation of survival culture within a clear setting.

1.8.2 POPULATION

The research population is the short story anthologies and one novel, which are set in the Zimbabwean urban sphere of the years 1999 to 2009 in particular, and those that represent the survival and coping strategies. Only short story anthologies written in English have been explored since the focus of the topic (study) is on the fiction that is specifically written in English. In each short story anthology there are many contributors cutting across race, age, ethnic and gender lines, and in the course of exploring the representation of urban survival culture, individual stories will be read and analysed.

1.8.3 SAMPLE

The study has been restricted to the critical analysis of nine short story anthologies which are from the specified setting (place and time) as indicated above, which form the core period this study has been interested in – the Zimbabwean crisis. From these nine anthologies, about nineteen short stories have been selected and analysed, and one novel has been studied as well. Poems found in some of the anthologies have not been considered, since poetry falls outside the scope of this study.

The sampling method used is purpose sampling. Purposive sampling groups, participants, or phenomena to be researched according to preselected criteria relevant to a particular research – in this case it is the survival and coping strategies of the Zimbabwean characters as presented in fiction. Thus, the sample selection has been purposive driven, which means that only the short stories which relate to the urban survival and coping strategies have been considered. In addition, the short stories

analysed have also been those only historically falling within the 1999 to 2009 time frame in their content or representation of life during the Zimbabwean crisis. The selection and consignment of these short stories has therefore been content and/or thematic driven in relation to the different forms of urban survival culture as well as the resilience and agency displayed by the characters.

1.8.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Due to the nature of the study, a qualitative approach has been applied. The short stories have been critically analysed using a desk top method. In addition, journals and critical works on literature in the form of secondary books have also been read so as to bring into focus what other academics think about this area of interest. The other critical tools used have been research papers and academic presentations which have a bearing on the study and on the fictional and academic writers' blogs where they post their views on fiction. These instruments assisted the researcher to gather information so that after a critical analysis the researcher has been able to come up with original and well-informed ideas.

1.8.5 PROCEDURE

As a desk top literary study, the data has been collected through a critical reading and analysis of the short stories through applying the specified theories of literature. The major theoretical framework employed to explore this research was through Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope as well as resilience theory. All the short stories have been critically examined, informed by literary theory, and then consigned in

terms of the themes and characters in as much as they relate to the urban survival way of life.

1.9 RESEARCH ETHICS

The research is based on works of fiction whose characters are fictional and/or imaginative creations. Therefore the literary criticism is hinged on the precept that references to real people, events, places, establishments, and organisations in the source material are used fictitiously, thereby enabling the researcher to observe literary research ethics.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This study has six chapters which are subdivided into minor subtitles. The first chapter is an introduction, which gives a broad overview of the study including the orientation of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, and research ethics. A total of four chapters have been dedicated to the presentation of the various survival and coping strategies as represented in the selected fiction (Chapters Two to Four).

Chapter Two explores the literary representation of urban informalities and how the city space is reconstructed as a means of surviving the crisis and enable the urbanites to live in the city with hope. The chapter looks at how, despite all the odds against them, the characters in the selected fiction are full of agency, and that despite the incessant inflation, the urban informalities enable them to dream of a better world and make this dream a tangible veracity. The chapter also explores the contentious

issue of commercial sex, which is another survival strategy used by the characters, as well as how some of the urbanites are presented engaging in street vending as a way to make a living.

Chapter Three focuses on the representation of mastering change, thriving under extreme pressure, and managing to spring up from various setbacks as occasioned by the Zimbabwean crisis. The chapter pays attention to the changing of identities, how the individual who is a resilient victor transforms into a versatile being as opposed to a non-resilient victim. The chapter also demonstrates ways of surviving against all odds and living a hopeful life through forming alliances, friendships, business acquaintances, and formal support groups. The chapter further presents determination, education, and pragmatic morality as some of the survival and coping strategies utilised by ordinary people.

Chapter Four explores migration as a way of negotiating the crisis. The concept of African diaspora in fiction and the role of remittances in assisting the citizenry to remain afloat during tempestuous periods of economic meltdown are further illustrated. The chapter looks at how the characters in the selected fiction escape home through precarious yet ingenious means and how these characters can be understood as agents of change who can survive through migration. Furthermore, the chapter explores smuggling, remittances, and household survival in crisis-hit Zimbabwe, and how this is presented in fiction.

Chapter Five shifts its emphasis to focus on how activism and advocacy are presented in fiction as a possible way out of the crisis. Dystopian hope is clarified as the bedrock to understanding the fiction of resilience and appreciating metaphors of

peaceful means of conflict resolution in hegemonic contexts. The chapter also voices concerns about resource politics and how the writers protest against politically motivated resources, and how the fiction posits means of survival at a macro level.

Finally, chapter Six concludes the study by highlighting the different survival and coping strategies as presented in the analysis of the selected fiction. The relevance of the research topic and the theoretical framework used in the study are recapitulated and emphasised. The chapter also makes a restatement of the research questions and links them to the respective chapters which have explored each of the issues and concerns raised. Finally, some recommendations are made with regards to the future research areas which may be made in relation to the core concerns and theoretical perspectives dealt with in the study. This is followed by the references which have been used in the study.

CHAPTER 2

RETHINKING THE POETICS OF URBAN INFORMALITIES: RECONSTRUCTING CITY SPACES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the literary representation of how city spaces are made malleable by the urbanites as they reconstruct these spaces and make them yield something positive for their survival. The chapter presents the precarious context of a crisis as presented through the short stories and emphasises that despite the excruciating circumstances the people face, the agency, fortitude and resilience which they display is worth noting. The informal economy is presented as particularly visible in the urban setup and thereby appraising the importance of urban centres as hubs of creativity, opportunity and innovativeness, even in crisis-hit and institutionally weak Zimbabwe as witnessed during the 1999 to 2009 period.

The processes of informalisation in African cities are becoming more felt than ever before. Yet despite much writing on the persistence and growth of informal economies, our understanding of the politics of informality has been hampered by deeply entrenched views that tend to deprive people in the informal economy of agency. This chapter seeks to categorically argue that we need to rethink about what Lindell (2010) calls a downgrading, one-sided view of people's efforts to better their lives through engaging in informal activities. This chapter argues that despite the dizzying high levels of precariousness, the urbanites as presented through the selected short stories "A land of starving millionaires" (Chinyani, 2007), "Last

laugh” (Chinodya, 2007), “Universal Remedy” (Brickhill, 2003), “Not slaves to fashion” (Mthimkulu, 2008), “Minister without portfolio” (Chingono, 2007), and “Tables turned over” (Ashley, 2003), are perceived to be actors and participants whose subjectivities see them reclaim the space of the city. This chapter therefore illustrates how such changes and transformations of the city space are reshaping associational patterns and dynamics and the implications for the collective and individual identities of informal actors, whose contours are time and place specific. This recognition of the fact that the way the characters behave is shaped by time and place specifications, which in this study is the Zimbabwean urban setting during the period of economic crisis, becomes relevant in the analysis of the short stories, hence the emphasis on chronotope. Reading the short stories in this chapter using the critical lens of the chronotope results in a realisation that there is a flourish of certain cultural imperatives and outstanding in this new culture is the survival culture.

In so far as culture defines the operative human environment, it sets both maxima and minima on our socially interpretive behaviour, observes Prah (2000). Prah further posits that the centrality of culture to the human condition is so total that it subsumes subcategories that define modes of livelihood and puts in hierarchical values which, under specific socio–historical conditions, serve as a validating benchmark. Based on this understanding, an analysis of the short stories in this chapter is hinged upon the fact that the best way to understand and appreciate survival and coping strategies is through imagining the limitations and constraints that the characters face. It is a crisis period and some of the breakthroughs the characters celebrate cannot be viewed as anything worth noting under normal

circumstances. The tone for the predomination of certain cultural forms over others is consequently derived from the material realities of social life on which social production and reproduction are constructed (Prah, 2000). The material realities and the responses in question here, as have been discussed in the previous chapter, are characterised by extreme deprivation; extreme shortage of foodstuffs, scarcity of local currency, let alone foreign currency; lack of electricity, water, municipal services, and shocking rates of unemployment. These are some of the indicators of the magnitude of the Zimbabwean crisis which call for a reading of the short stories using the chronotope theory, where these fictional narratives have much to tell us about these dynamics. In other words, the study posits the hypothesis that these images and representations of the new forms of city dweller-ship are broached along the epistemologies of how the inhabitants (fictional characters) adapt to new behavioural standards prescribed by the desire for survival. Such a broaching of the fragile socio-sphere needs necessarily to supersede the conventional grammars of good and bad, moral and immoral, such that the tactical manoeuvres within limited avenues and subtle complexities can be appreciated.

The short stories selected here provide rudimentary transformative cultural epistemologies that underline the coping strategies of the urbanites; how they negotiate and manage change as well as espouse novel spatial practices. Despite the restrictions and limitations the ordinary people (who are the characters in the short stories) encounter, the common denominator emphasised in this study, is scripted in African agency and the dynamism and innovativeness the characters under these special socio-economic conditions display.

2.2 A MAN CAN DIE TRYING IN “A LAND OF STARVING MILLIONAIRES”

As the short story opens, the reader is presented with a millionaire who is staggering towards a long line of tuck shops. What is immediately arresting in the story is the use of repetition of the word ‘stagger’. This is a word that has some cultural significance. It emphasises the fact that someone is facing challenges which make walking straight and in a normal manner difficult. However, what is being underlined here is the fact that the person refuses to fall down. The person’s feet remain rooted to the ground and the person continues to tenaciously move forward towards the goal. This use of symbolism is a fit introduction to the short story, as it shows the privations and challenges that people are faced with but still emphasises that they stagger on. After presenting to the reader a scene of staggering, resilience and a never giving up spirit of the so-far-unnamed millionaire (who can represent the million millionaires in crisis-hit Zimbabwe), the narrative continues along the following lines:

‘Mudhara! I said how much is in that bag of yours?’

‘One million three hundred thousand in single notes. And I want a loaf of bread and a packet of sugar.’

The shop-keeper gave a mirthless chuckle, ‘Old man, don’t you read the papers? Or haven’t you got a radio? The prices of foodstuffs quadrupled this morning. Half a loaf of bread now costs one million five hundred thousand. Forget about the sugar, it’s just not for your class anymore. Don’t even ask

how much. It will give you a heart attack, sugar is now strictly for the super-class.’ (Chinyani, 2007, p. 38)

The vulnerability of contemporary urban spatialities and urban livelihoods find ample depiction through this apt quotation from Chinyani’s short story, “A Land of Starving Millionaires”. This is a story about one of the numerous millionaires, the protagonist Mr Usury Chimbadzo or Baba *va*Alphabet, also referred to here as The Old Man (*Mudhara*). He is a fighter of some sorts, a polygamous father of twenty-nine children and through him we see how a nation in crisis tries to swallow and transform the traditional masculinities. As he travels through the city, Mr Usury Chimbadzo meets up with the Shopkeeper, a representative of the resilient entrepreneur who cunningly flows with the current so as to keep afloat.

Through this short story, the mapping of the city space and the ontological ramification of urban culture are made manifest. There is a myriad of variables that are derivative from the material realities of social life which the city slicker has to negotiate for survival. This is a classical marker of the complexities of change in contemporary urban Africa, which require a tactical manoeuvre, thereby bringing about a paradoxical anomie, a culture of citiness in the new millennium. The micro-economics of urban Zimbabwe, interlinked with polarities of the political cesspools that defined the Zimbabwean urban sociosphere stretching for over a decade gone by, witnessed a fermentation of this unique cultural transformation.

The shopkeeper, who gives “a mirthless laughter”, is a classic example of the markers of urban informalities that have characterised the contemporary and shifting urbanities and their cultural forms. Through him and “the long line of tuck shops”

(Chinyani, 2007, p. 38) is depicted the multiple modes of economic and social adaptability with variegated levels of success. These urban informalities that have seen all the shades of “Operation *Murambatsvina*” – the ill-timed urban cleansing project by the government in 2005 - attest to the tenacity and resilience of the urbanities (Mlambo & Chirisa, 2009, p. 9). The fact-value of fiction finds valence in articulating a quintessentially interdisciplinary site of study - namely the city in Africa - and showing that it is indeed a resource rather than a liability. For whilst “The Millionaire” had not eaten anything, “nothing but the national staple they now call air-pie; a euphemism for one big slice of nothing” (Chinyani, 2007, p. 41), the shopkeeper’s critical perceptivity and iconoclasm represents an ideological articulation stretching beyond mundane rationalism. This is an example of the trope of class stratification, but in this study it is the way people reclaim or expropriate the space of the city that is of utmost importance. It is possible to see how perverse agency is restored through the ability of the shopkeeper to respond to the fleeting and fluid economic pronouncements of their daily lives. It is these strategic and tactical manoeuvres in tempestuous economic times that give him and the imagined-invisible “super-class” the ability to remain afloat.

The daily ingenuities of the people as they struggle for a livelihood thus offer us a transgressive culture of survival and city dweller-ship. Despite the various economic upheavals that seriously threaten the contemporary life-forms and the precariousness of urban livelihoods, the protagonist himself is a rich text that is saturated with ambivalent tropes of cultural transformations for survival. In him we see that “Limitations are ... conditions of possibility” (Simone & Abouhani, 2004, p. 3).

Despite the speed and intensity of urban change, it is clear that agency is flourishing and there is transformative potency Mr Usury Chimbadzo. Without downplaying the drudgery of life and the intractable problems that beset the “millionaires”, there is evidence that points to a new tempo of constant revisions of their mode of livelihoods so that they can be active participants in the new political economy; one that operates outside the usually “normal” and “legal” economy. These forms of agency result in shifting trajectories of the self and the other, and equip the individual with the right, tactful, and pragmatic “economic culture” that justifies and rationalises his *modus operandi*. This is because urban imaginative views of the self and the other are now determined by the socio-cultural environment he finds himself in.

Mr Usury Chimbadzo finds himself in essentially a complex lattice-work of constraints and limitations. It is interesting to note the millionaire’s restructuring of his personal and business relationships so that he can paddle across the quagmire that threatens not only him but also his ‘twenty nine’ children, with the triplets also joining the brood. This quandary prompts him into action; to rethink and re-imagine ways of negotiating the complex economic changes that have risen above the wits of “his decades-long career as a no-nonsense money-lender” (Chinyani, 2007, p. 41). In these changing times he has to ponder on the crucial indices of production and reproduction and equate them to bring about Gramsci’s hegemonic culture - where certain cultural values override the others as determined by specific socio-historical conditions. Mr Chimbadzo’s “uncompromising mood” to his two elusive “clients”

resonates with the Raban (1974) concept of the soft city. This is how Raban (1974) defines the soft city and the city dweller's response:

For at moments like this, the city goes soft; it awaits the imprint of an identity. For better or worse, it invites you to remake it, to consolidate it into a shape you can live in. You too, decide who you are, and the city will again assume a fixed form around it. Decide what it is, and your own identity will be relieved, like a position map fixed by triangulation. (pp. 9 -10)

The above quotation emphasises the malleability, versatility and accommodative nature of the city, which when put to use yields positive results for the urbanites. One of these versatile urbanites is Mr Usury Chimbado. Mr Usury Chimbado straddles a tenacious socio-spatial and transgressive cultural discourse, and in the Rabanian concept, he has to work on shaping it so that he can survive. The question of tearing down laid principles as he does is a classical marker of the constantly shifting social dynamics of African city-making. As a performer in this ritual of reclamation, the city walker (Mr Usury Chimbado) meets each situation with a measure of flexibility as a tactical move to remain afloat. Innovativeness, creativity, and language are the tools at his disposal. Within the new economic and socio-cultural terrain of the city, the conventional grammars of traditionalism are pushed to the periphery. The tactical adjustment of even the other urbanites is evident through “the low-key attendance, the low-key ceremony and the absence of food” (Chinyani, 2007, p. 49), indicative not only of the deep-seated deprivation but also the ability to conform to new social rules. After all “everyone knew that funerals were expensive these days” (Chinyani, 2007, p. 41). The mentality of the ordinary people as presented in the story has also

changed. Their expectations have been transformed to fit the situation they find themselves in, so instead of expecting expensive funerals where people feast, the urbanites concentrate on the core issues at hand – assisting the bereaved family to lay their beloved one to rest.

The denouement to the story forms a critical semantic repertoire of the ways in which cultural expressions intersect with political and socio-economic issues. The story takes a wry look at the hegemonic political situation in Zimbabwe and signifies the existence of the complex web of relations of domination and re-imagination of nationalism, patriotism and the post-colony.

Like a fiery bat straight out of hell, the legislator's blood-red luxury Mercedes turned the corner in the typical fashion of a well-fed politician with inexhaustible amounts of fuel to burn. Baba vaAlphabet flew into the air on impact, his sack of money with him, dying long before he hit the ground. (Chinyani, 2007, p. 42)

All the potential, the vibrant agency and innovativeness, meet with a cruel and abrupt end. What has happened is that whilst walking from one place to the other in a bid to make ends meet, he is run over by a car. The writer refuses to let Mr Usury Chimbadzo die of a cause directly linked to the crisis but ends his life in the middle of a quest for survival. The descriptive language, with hellish and vampirish epithets scattered all over, marks sites of political discourse that are equally central to the language of cultural exegesis. The cyclical nature of cultural transformation is further projected along gender lines as it is imperative that the three wives have to revivify alternative urban spatialities.

2.3. MAGNETS OF HOPE: THE URBAN SPACE, COPING, AND RESILIENCE IN THREE SHORT STORIES.

Furthermore, Staunton's 2003 anthology, *Writing Still: New Stories from Zimbabwe* contains twenty three short stories from different writers, providing the reader with a collage that widely represents Zimbabwe during a crisis. The opening story to the anthology entitled "Universal Remedy" by Brickhill. Brickhill is a white mother of three who lived in Zimbabwe for twenty one years, provides the reader with certain unsaid and unrepresentable truth-claims that are found in a postcolonial country with a history of violence; violence of colonialism, anti-colonialism and anti-neo-colonialism (in what was termed the third *Chimurenga*; the final war for economic emancipation that started with farm repossessions in Zimbabwe). The truth-potential in the story, which is a life narrative in its autobiographical leanings, centres on two characters. These two characters are the unnamed autobiographical narrator, and Esilina Sibanda, a black woman. What is particularly captivating in the story is the way the writer gives the power of voice to both characters, as if to balance the black and white racial roles in a new Zimbabwean context. The two women meet at Avondale shopping centre and from there an amiable relationship is established. Esilina ends up occupying a cottage at the narrator's house and their relationship continues to grow as they both rely on one another for mutual benefit.

The story begins with the following words: "I first met Esilina one dusty hot Zimbabwean summer's day as I walked to my local TM at Avondale shopping centre" (Brickhill, 2003, p. 1). What is immediately arresting in the story is the registration of the reclamation of the city space as a social arena. The city walker is

presented here in the form of both women in the story who engage in performances of identity creation, as well as cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions in a street in Harare. Harare is a city formerly polarised on racial lines in the colonial days and which has had this racial polarisation revived with the white farm repossessions during the crisis in question. However, the crisis which has befallen the residents does not respect history and racial differentiation. The two characters presented learn to mix and mingle as well as depend on each other as a way to cope with the crisis. What is also evident is the increasing mobility of the post-colonial populations, with the city offering a platform as a melting pot for multiculturalism. This is articulated in literature like the story we have here, as a way of demonstrating a new vision for the 21st century of a phenomenon which may be called ‘rainbownism’, where racial interaction propels human life forwards, as one family of the human race. The sense of interracial mixing and harmony is therefore proposed as a coping strategy. This is in agreement with the title as well, which is a universal remedy – the story thus presents a crisis situation of Zimbabwe as a case study that can offer a universal remedy to issues of racial discrimination.

The city space is presented as both site and symbol of positive and resilient “chutney” identities which stand to be beneficial to both parties; a mark of post-colonial subjectivity, especially in crisis situations. This concept of chutney identities is specifically located in the city and the role of the city is emphasised here “because the city is a space of movement, collection, aggregation and interaction” (Ashcroft, n.d., p. 5). According to Ashcroft (n.d.), *chutnification* is a metaphor for racial intermixing that allows the readers to understand the city in a more extended idiom,

the heterogeneity of lives juxtaposed in close proximity. This is the sense of chutnification we see in the story “Universal Remedy”. Esilina refuses to see the city as one-dimensional as she walks across its historically cruel economic divides set in place by the colonial setup and now aggravated by the rich-poor divide of post-colonial Zimbabwe. For her limitations are not absolute, as she “greeted me politely and stopped me to tell me that she was looking for a job” (Brickhill, 2003, p. 1), remarks the narrator. In the city, Esilina boldly takes the initiative and then she reclaims her voice as compared to when she was a ridiculed, abused, labelled (barren) and divorced woman in the rural village. As someone who has failed to conceive, Elisina cannot cope with village or rural life where she is viewed to be a failure. However, when she gets into urban Harare, she manages to see herself as a full human being. She can assert herself and she regains her voice, not as a biological half-being due to her purported failure to reproduce but as someone who can be productive.

Esilina is able to embrace the liberating character of the city and from her and the narrator’s street-level intimations we read the city as a lived complexity that can be captured in narratives of wandering like the story “Universal Remedy”. This coping strategy of embracing the complex and liberating nature of the city can be termed the transitivity of the city (Nuttal, 2005, p. 9). Talking about the transitivity of the city is a way of capturing the city as a place of intermingling and improvisation by the urbanites as seen in Esilina and the narrator. They utilise the spatial and temporal openness of the city forged through daily encounters and multiple experiences, resulting in versions of social hope as these two characters display in the whole story.

Furthermore, another coping strategy presented in this story is that of urban informalities at a socio-cultural level as a way of coping with depressing times. The narrator further remarks that “we grew to recognise each other, become gradually more familiar. We started greeting one another when we met on the grassy pavement, each carrying our own shopping or when I was walking my oldest child to and from school” (Brickhil, 2003, p. 1). This is an indication of urban informalities on a socio-cultural level and the trope of wandering/wondering signifies a gender-related city consciousness. From the relationship of the two women, what is also evident is that urban informality does not end with the economic sphere but is multidimensional, and that the public sphere is an area that is subject to re-interpretation. For Esilina, it is also a place to better one’s economic and social status, where she can look for a job - indicative of the ubiquity of agency in her - casting it in terms of black subjectivity and forward-looking resilience for survival.

To cope with the crisis and be able to survive, the story also suggests that there is a need to embrace the new, the unfamiliar, and the yet-unknown; particularly using the urban setting. This form of reclamation of the public space, of “the grassy pavement”, is an enactment of the “unrepresentable” and unsaid truths of life which the city, through fiction, can articulate. This interpretation of the story is specifically in Kant’s (as cited in Ashcroft, n.d., p. 7) view of the ethics of cosmopolitanism, which this paper borrows so as to express how urban space is negotiated through talk. The dialogue between Elisina and the narrator is balanced and mutual, with nothing of the racially connotative “othering” and this dialogue helps to bring a sense of the rainbow-nation discourse that is much talked about in Southern African socio-

political circles. This is a particularly relevant phenomenon in the wake of the recent eruptions and manifestations of racism and xenophobia in many Southern African states and the world over. For Kant (as cited in Ashcroft, n.d., p. 6), cosmopolitanism is a universally philanthropic policy that potentially would ensure peace among nations and grant individuals the right to international hospitality or the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives on someone else's territory. What can further be said is that this welcoming of the other is the beginning of moral consciousness, a willingness to engage with the other, and openness to divergent cultural experiences and needs. It embraces as well as celebrates contrasts and diversity rather than uniformity only. An understanding of cosmopolitanism displayed by Elisina and the narrator implies that this understanding of cosmopolitanism is a coping mechanism in periods of socio-cultural and political turmoil as witnessed in Zimbabwe during the crisis. This is what Elisina and the nameless narrator illustrate at both a symbolical and literal level. It is an illustration that human relations - the ties that bind humanity together - can go beyond circumstances of lack, impoverished conditions and polarised racial and political environments. Yet this does not come in neat packages like Christmas gifts. There is a need to extend a hand, a need for a measure of tenacity, fortitude and resilience; a need to want to better one's condition by any means necessary, as is seen through the presentation of Elisina.

To further clarify this important survival and coping mechanism, we can see that this amiability which works for both Elisina and the nameless narrator, are representative of what the narrator views as the panacea to some of the human social ills faced in

Zimbabwe under the crisis situation in particular, and African in general. The survival mechanism, through forging human relations and cosmopolitanism, can further be understood to be driven by the age-old wisdom enshrined in the *ubuntu* philosophy (humanity, fellow feeling, and kindness). According to former South African President, Nelson Mandela (as cited in Sampson, 1999), the *ubuntu* philosophy means that “a person is a person because of other people or you can do nothing if you do not get the support of other people” (p. 10). Furthermore, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (as cited in Sampson, 1999) defines *ubuntu* as something that “refers to gentleness, to compassion, to hospitality, to openness to others, to vulnerability, to be available to others and to know that you are bound up with them in the bundle of life” (p. 11). The concept of *ubuntu* is therefore presented in this story as one of the coping and survival mechanisms which the urbanites use to network and survive the crisis. Furthermore, Esilina’s sense of determination in this case preaches to the reader loud and clear.

Furthermore, what is more inspiring in the story “Universal Remedy” is Esilina’s resilience for economic self-determination and self-sufficiency. Given the statistics on inflation and unemployment as discussed in the previous chapter, the indescribable shortage of commodities and foodstuffs and hunger and starvation in the historical context of this short story, she becomes an epitome of successful survival of the crisis. Her life is scripted with grammars of rethinking the public sphere as a contested space which ordinary people utilise to their advantage. Existing on the margins of the formal economy or the lack thereof, as crisis hit Zimbabwe

had, Esilina re-appropriates and restructures the urban space for urban agriculture – both for subsistence and as a form of market gardening.

Having failed to find employment and with no means of subsistence, Esilina, now accommodated by the nameless narrator, innovatively uses the resources available in the city for survival and to go beyond survival. She refuses to be swallowed by victimhood and helplessness, but allows the agency in her to dictate the pace. Whereas “most of the gardeners in town only knew about flowers. She knew only about vegetables” (Brickhill, 2003, p. 3). Esilina begins to turn the backyard into a vibrant garden. Where flowers used to grow, she now grows food. This is a tactical adjustment to survive the crisis. Times have changed and growing plants for ornamental purposes has become an unaffordable luxury. Hunger and starvation now dictate that urban agriculture replaces sentimental botany. One has to become versatile and change with the times as Esilina does. The city of Harare is situated in Zimbabwe’s natural farming region two, which receives a lot of rainfall, making it possible for plants to grow naturally. Esilina realises that this is an opportunity to be embraced and decides to start growing vegetables. This adjustment is also evidenced in the narrator herself who, instead of renting office premises in an exorbitantly inflationary environment, now decides to cut costs and maximise on the resources around her by creating a home office.

Moreover, the informal reconstruction of the city space goes beyond the city council’s demarcated area, which is in the confines of the residential stand where Esilina has turned the backyard into a miniature market gardening farm. On returning from work the nameless narrator:

found her [Esilina] walking in the road with a hoe over her shoulder. I asked her where she was going and she told me she had found a piece of unused land nearby where she was growing sweet potatoes and maize. I marvelled at her stamina and her consuming need to grow things. (Brickhill, 2003, p. 3)

The level of symbolism here needs to be clarified. First, symbolism works from the narrator's stating of "sweet potatoes and maize" as Esilina's choice of crops. Sweet potatoes symbolise breakfast and maize, the staple of Zimbabwe, a commodity of scarcity during the crisis that hit Zimbabwe, symbolises the two other meals of the day and thus the completion of a person's basic physiological needs. Second is the fact that the narrator is not given a name but remains the first person narrator, a voice the reader easily identifies with so that one (the reader) can easily utter as well that "I marvelled at her" (Brickhill, 2003, p. 3). This restructuring of the city space by Esilina is representative of a wider variety and versions of urban informality for economic enhancement and self-sufficiency. It could be urban agriculture, car washing, flea markets, street vending, *shebeens* and the *kapanas* found in urban Namibia. What is evident is that the innumerable variety of urban informalities, as represented by Esilina, articulate the multiple social and economic narratives of urban Africa. It is a force to reckon with and with dizzying levels of unemployment and deprivation in Southern Africa, there is a couple of survival and coping strategies that can be learned from the likes of Esilina.

Furthermore, following the theorisation of cosmopolitanism above, the reciprocity of the two women's benefits cannot be overemphasised. The narrator is not simply a benefactress, but learns a lot from Esilina and above all, she appreciates it and

observers that “she [Esilina] was one of those people that some call an angel, one who comes into your life for a season or a reason. Esi came into my life like that” (Brickhill, 2003, p. 2). Whilst this benefit is at a social or emotional level, the benefit is also at an economic level as the narrator remarks that, “she also taught me to save the seeds from fruit and vegetables that I bought” (Brickhill, 2003, p. 4). And finally when the narrator migrates to West Sussex in the United Kingdom, she says, “I bought a spade and a fork and some seedlings. I tied up my hair and I turned to my garden to dig” (Brickhill, 2003, p. 4). This is a statement that closes the story, as if to allow this open-endedness to echo and reverberate in the reader’s mind forever.

Two major points can be made from the above observations. First is that in crisis-hit Zimbabwe, with shortages of commodities and hyperinflation, Esilina innovatively adjusts as a coping strategy. Instead of going all over with her billions of Zimbabwean dollars looking for seeds and being frustrated either by empty shelves in the stores or her billions which may not be enough to buy a sachet of seeds, she makes use of the seeds from the fruits and vegetables she has. And despite the setback that some of the fruits are hybrids (hence the seeds will not germinate), she still is undaunted as if inspired by Albert Einstein’s words that, in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity. The writer presents such resilience as a survival and coping mechanism which is worthy taking note of.

Second is the metaphorical transportation of the restructured Zimbabwean urban socio-sphere mentality of the narrator to West Sussex. What she has learned in Zimbabwe about the restructuring of the urban space for urban agriculture, she applies in the United Kingdom because she has realised the benefits thereof. The

story therefore becomes a form of writing the urban metropolis from a Zimbabwean standpoint. The lessons we can learn from crisis-hit urban Zimbabwe are not for Southern Africa only, but for many parts of the world. We learn how to survive, how to innovatively restructure the city space and how urban informalities have a social and economic dimension that can be fruitfully utilised. Certainly literature sees this possibility. According to Ernst Bloch (as cited in Ashcroft, n.d., p. 9), the utopian function of art and literature lies precisely in the imagination of possibility, an imagination captured in anticipatory illumination. And the city space provides the right setting for such futuristic and hopeful projection, for despite an unpalatable past in the rural areas, as the narrator observes that “instead she had come to town to start a new life away from both her disappointed family and her former in-laws” (Brickhill, 2003, p. 6).

Ultimately, the anonymity which the city offers Esilina, away from the jeers at being thought of as barren, helps her to heal. It also gives her some remarkable measure of independence, autonomy, and finally:

Over the weekends, when she was not digging, she walked around the suburb selling some of *our excess* produce [my emphasis]. We never discussed what she would do with the money but I would see a new fork, a pair of clippers, or a brand new bucket, neatly arranged where she kept her tools in the shed. She spent hours cultivating seedlings in an army of wooden trays that I brought in, from the supermarket. (Brickhill, 2003, p. 5)

That is a mark of creativity and innovativeness and, certainly she may not be rich but her livelihood has been bettered; resilience has paid off. She can sell her excess

produce and the street is her market place. She has reclaimed her life and the city space. Her versatility and innovativeness is one form of coping strategy. What the story illustrates is that agency is ubiquitous. Moreover, the successful coping strategies displayed by these two women in the story demonstrate that despite the challenges besetting people, they are more than victims and there is life outside the Mugabe/Tsvangirai debacle, the political cesspools in Zimbabwe, and all the touted horrors of the crisis in Zimbabwe. Such a response to life is indeed a “universal remedy” as the title of the story intimates.

Having said so, the following section offers postcards or glimpses of the ingenuity of urbanites as they innovatively reconstruct their lives and reclaim the city space through informalities. The story “Tables turned over” over by Ashley (2003) is set at a market place in the high density suburb of Mabvuku. In the story we see Ruth and Mai Jira, market women who survive through street vending. Whereas many are content on lamenting that “we are pressed”, the two women do not accept such fatalism, but act. When the bread delivery van comes and the driver announces yet another trebling in the price of bread, as has become the norm in crisis-hit Zimbabwe, the people at the market cannot accept such price hikes anymore as they are done at will, and they revolt. Ruth, despite being heavy with child, also joins in. Mai Jira is one of the ringleaders as the market people, first topple the bread delivery van and forcefully take bread and then later march to the city centre.

The bulk of this story, whilst illuminating the survival strategies of urbanites as represented through literature, gravitates towards what may be termed an image of transgressive urban carnival propounded by Bakhtin (1981). Even though the

dimension of urban carnival will not be explored in the present study, there are some points from this short story which can be briefly highlighted here as they further expand the survival and coping strategies theme. The relationship between the two women, Ruth and Mai Jira, is something that transcends feminism, which can possibly be described as *stiwanism*; a new term gaining valence in literary circles as an acceptable descriptor in African circles rather than the more general and western-centred, feminism. Stiwanism is from the acronym STIWA – a concept coined by the critic Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie, standing for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. This is how Ogundipe-Leslie (2007) explains STIWA in the context of discussing the relevance of African-centred interpretations of texts:

This new term STIWA allows me to discuss the needs of African women today in the tradition of the spaces and strategies provided in our indigenous cultures for the social being of women. My thesis has always been that indigenous feminisms also existed in Africa and we are busy researching them and bringing them to the fore now. STIWA is about inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation of Africa. (p. 550)

This form of STIWA as described above is the form of relationship we have witnessed between Esilina and the nameless narrator in the story “Universal Remedy”. What ties the two stories together is the fact that the urban setting, rather than being a corrupt place where women tread at their peril as much post-colonial literature has often painted, here the women are often given more prominence and the city offers more possibilities for them (Mlambo, 2011a). The city is a place for

survival and offers women a liberating space which enables them to cope with the pressures piled upon them. To further demonstrate the potential the city has as a place for women's survival, Kurtz (2000) argues that, "because it disrupts traditional social patterns, the city is, despite its nature as a male place, a site where women are at times able to create measure of personal emancipation, however limited, from traditional restrictions" (p. 108).

Furthermore, in the city, there is a reversal of roles as the women take over the roles of breadwinner, often preserved for the men in traditional Zimbabwean culture. And to survive, to make it in the competitive urban market as street vendors, they form some kin associations, alliances, and some rudimentary form of marketing strategies. The city affords them an opportunity to collaborate, work together, and share experiences. Mai Jira, as a senior to Ruth, exhorts her that she has to:

Beautify your goods. Sprinkle your fruit with water. Make them look delicious. And don't be afraid to drop your price if the fruit is bruised. You'll be amazed how much remains unsold if you don't bring the value down. Here, do it this way, rub the apples on your thigh, then splash a few drops like this. (Ashley, 2003, p. 9)

There certainly are light moments in situations like these, for laughter in itself is also a coping mechanism that people use to absorb the shocking effects of the crisis (Mlambo, 2011a). But perhaps more important in the present discussion, is the value of informal education as a resilient tool or survival strategy. The crisis itself becomes a university for life and the urbanites share invaluable business information informally. The street vending stalls are the classrooms without walls and graduates

from this school include Ruth and the professor Mai Jari. This form of informal education is particularly inspirational given a situation like crisis-hit Zimbabwe, where institutions had gone to the verge of collapse and where the bottleneck education system can only favour a few.

The pregnant Ruth also participates in the protest and refuses to be a bystander, who is simply a fragile and passive object. This participatory involvement starts off by a questioning mind which is inspired by her mentor-cum-professor, Mai Jira, and in intrapersonal musings Ruth ponders: “what can I do? Will they catch me if I take some bread? Will they arrest me? Will I give birth to my child in prison?” (Ashley, 2003, p. 13). That form of questioning spirit is a mark of an ingenuous mind and also the beginning of the reclamation of her subjectivity and resilience or responsiveness towards exploiting opportunities in spite of the dangers that the course of action may entail.

What gives the whole story impetus and what sets the various actions in motion is the need for bread, both in the physical and symbolical domain of representation. Ultimately the story ends as the crowds engage in the act of walking the city. The act of walking is central in the ordinary people’s reclamation of the city space, as has been discussed in the short story “A land of starving millionaires”. Historically in Southern Africa, colonial domination was expressed through the curtailment of movement. This was done through instruments which were put in place such as during apartheid, there were the pass laws. Therefore, in this post-colonial context the act of walking presents the city as a place of movement, of change and of crossings. It is a symbolic act of opening up new possibilities which is emphatically

put across in the final line of the story where “with one hand on her slightly bulging belly she [Ruth] began to pick speed. She daren’t lose Mai Jira” (Ashley, 2003, p. 14).

Once again the use of symbolism need not be missed here, for we have the Biblical Ruth, an actor who makes things happen. The writer’s use of biblical allusion seeks to make the story more pregnant with hope and prophetic and also as a way to universalise the agency displayed here. Moreover, the symbolism in the pregnancy can as well be read with multifarious interpretations. The child in the womb is an indication of hope and the bulging stomach can as well symbolise how pregnant the situation is, pregnant with hope despite all the negativity, an indication of how the city space is also pregnant with possibilities. And finally, the pregnancy can also be interpreted as a state of fragility and vulnerability, a state that the urbanite, as epitomised in Ruth, refuses to accept. The adamant Ruth chooses action in spite of the limiting and limited conditions, exerted by her pregnancy, both literally and figuratively. What the story demonstrates therefore is the fact that the public space in the urban sphere is a place of struggle and a sight of contestation.

The story “Tables turned over” falls within the category of coping-strategy literature, showing as it does that the inhabitants of the city space are actors and active participants who incessantly search for ways to ameliorate the worst effects of life-threatening forces. They do this with a measure of success since, as the narrator says that “Ruth was lucky, her fruit sold well” (Ashley, 2003, p. 9). The urban informalities in the form of street vending are thus presented as a reality and a means for survival. The story “Tables turned over” has also shown that despite the

challenges faced, associational alliances and informal activities are useful tools for self-emancipation as well as a means for survival.

Finally, the story “Not slaves to fashion” (Mthimkulu, 2008) can also be briefly discussed insofar as it demonstrates the changing cultural terrain in urban Zimbabwe. The survival strategies are presented through how, particularly the women have fashioned informal alliances in the form of women’s clubs. These are special clubs formed to help others sail through specific challenges or tasks they may have at hand and also for offering financial assistance or interest free credit – which is very important in a country with less than ten per cent of the population being formally employed. “Not slaves to fashion” is a very brief story about the Masuku family that has gathered to arrange a wedding. As the meeting progresses, one particular point is raised that, instead of the family members doing the cooking, they could hire some people, since “there are now women’s clubs who, for a fee, do all the cooking, serving and washing up at family gatherings” (Mthimkulu, 2008, p. 85). Since this does not go down well with the traditional elders, the matter is settled through a vote and the majority votes for the idea. But the idea that is interesting for this study is how the women, to use Rodney’s (1981) words, choose to organise instead of agonising over the present situation. The women’s club is another urban informality which shows how ordinary citizens innovate, organise, and move forward to make ends meet.

Through the story, the reader is made aware of the agency the characters have and the power they have to make things instead of waiting for some proverbial messiah to come to their rescue. Such a club as the one presented in this story, is one of many

that flourished throughout the crisis in Zimbabwe. There were clubs to alternatively carry children to school, which means that one parent would transport all the children of parents within the club, and thereby allow the other parents or club members to have some time to run other errands as well as most importantly to save on fuel. There were clubs for fuel queues (since fuel was so scarce), where one club member would go sleep in the fuel queue, guard cars for the club members and then inform them when the fuel delivery truck comes in. Furthermore, there were clubs to buy groceries (or import from neighbouring countries) so that once per year they could share the groceries and, through the pulling together of resources, they could buy at reduced prices from the dealers. Moreover, there were also clubs for bank queues to withdraw money, since due to cash shortages; one had to spend up to days in a queue at the bank to withdraw money. The point being that where circumstances are limiting, informal arrangements by ordinary people can assist them to remain afloat. The urban setting, instead of being viewed as a problem, is actually a resource to be utilised, and these insightful characters are paragons of resilience; they can organise and are able to cope. It is such informal arrangements which carry the day, and the rest of the world experiencing various forms of crises can learn from phenomena which the short story writer makes available in non-prescriptive terms, but which are rather intuitively suggested.

2.4 FRAGILE CERTAINTIES WITH THE “MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO”

The critical approach to the constantly shifting socio-cultural dynamics of Zimbabwean city-making and human survival today also needs necessarily to

register the contemporary non-essentialist axiom that cultures are not self-contained organisms but social spaces whose edges are unfixed, irregular, and difficult to locate (Bachmann-Medick, 2008, p. 8). Such a broaching of the complex and textured mapping of the city space implies finding ways of positively accounting for the challenges of multiple and simultaneous transitions. The story “Minister without Portfolio” (Chingono, 2007) is read as a semantic marker of sites of metamorphoses, opportunities, and prospects. It does allow us a new way of reading the world and of seeing; a more sensual form that immerses us in the rhythms and struggles of everyday life for the urban poor, an imaginary of the process of the re-invention of Africa struggling under privileged, self-serving and tyrannical regimes. Whilst the effects of war, AIDS, hunger, starvation and conflict have littered development literature, political *indabas* and the media, what is interesting in this story are the positive, often glossed over, ingenuities of the Africans.

In this story, we have a young lady, Agnes, who survives as a commercial sex worker in urban Harare and also her current client, the Minister without Portfolio. The major part of the story takes place whilst together with Mhofu the driver, they are travelling from Harare to Masvingo. What is of critical importance in the story is that throughout the journey, Agnes’s survival instincts come out clearly through her chronicles of conquest, as opposed to the Minister without Portfolio’s sterile political rhetoric.

The survival instinct in the young, especially the women, is particularly interesting. Agnes’s story is scripted with possibilities and significant measures of personal

emancipation, such that she is able to forge a relatively well-off life. As Musila (2007) has observed:

Within a hostile and rough urban environment, with limited avenues for responding to institutionalized violence, the body remains one of the few – if not the only object over which the individual retains ownership ... what seems to emerge is that women [are] better able to anchor themselves in the turbulent city environment, and find ways of coping with their circumstances. (pp.148-149)

This reading of social contexts resonates with vistas of truth in the protagonist (and heroine), Agnes, as she tries to absorb the shockwaves of the complexities of change through the wilful and cunningly calculated “subjectification” of her body. Once again, to understand this without dismissing her actions, one needs to go back to the idea of the chronotope where the time-space is relative to the specific society within which it is conceptualised. Bakhtin (1981) also understood the chronotope as a way of coming to grips with experience, for understanding the very nature of events and actions within specific contexts. In other words, what this implies is the fact that a chronotopic analysis allows us to create a more general and universal artistic experience, while at the same time being grounded in its own time and space like the Zimbabwean crisis which is under scrutiny in this study. This positioning of the text within specific spatial and temporal dimensions alerts us to the fact that new situations give rise to new cultural imperatives that characterise contemporary urban life, and Agnes is exemplary of a chronotopic character: resilient and a survivor. In Agnes we see a metamorphosis of the traditional woman such that in her now is the

versatility which is a critical ingredient in negotiating the ever-changing economic and political terrain. That is why she is able to hop from the Minister of Human Resources and Labour Policing to the Minister without Portfolio. The impermanence of social relations is an imprint of the strategic and tactical manoeuvres that are necessitated by the complexities of change, that require one to always negotiate the variegated time spaces of the city. Consequently, due to the ease and fluidity of the socio-economic arena:

She did not mind that the relationship would not last. The important thing was monetary gain. She also regarded all her sexual relationships as enviable conquests. She recorded the names of the big guns whom she lured into bed in a small notebook. It could come in useful one day. (Chingono, 2007, p. 9)

Hers is an evasion of the political culture of exclusion in contemporary Zimbabwe that tries to control everything one acquires and/or does through the yardstick of one's war credentials. Moreover, in Agnes is a resurrection of Zandile, Getrude and Delive in Vera's *Butterfly Burning* (1998); commercial sex workers who managed to live off their sexuality (Musila, 2007, p. 149). Similarly in Marechera's *House of Hunger* (1978), there is Nestor, also a commercial sex worker who becomes famous the nation over and manages to live an opulent life. Agnes also actively participates in this new socio-economic space of city-dwellership and the only regret she has is the politicians' tedious war rhetoric as she confesses that "this was one thing she found wearisome about her *profession*. She wanted to entertain her boyfriends but some of her *clientele* was too egoistic to let her perform her *duties*" [*my emphasis*] (Chingono, 2007, p. 14). Yet the financial gain is enviable, the "two thick wads of

greenbacks” (Chingono, 2007, p. 11) [US dollars] she gets in crisis-hit Zimbabwe is a true reward for her innovativeness and reformulation of the moral, and socio-economic urban spatialities. The author’s use of language is also more telling, (“profession”, “clientele”, “duties”), urging a linguistic change from the derogatory and insensitive word “prostitute”. Instead there is a linguistic shift to the more euphemistic and appropriate “commercial sex worker”, which is a more linguistically correct and more contemporary term to one of the world’s oldest professions, stretching to as far back as Biblical times.

Furthermore, the remapping of the city is indicated by the reference to “the people’s market” (Chingono, 2007, p. 11). The urban dwellers are capable of re-appropriating the city’s space and restructure it to suit their own intentions and desires (Manase, 2005, p. 102). This urban restructuring is a reference to foreign dealership that flourished in Harare’s 4th Street and in Bulawayo’s Main Street. The story thus valorises African agency in the face of threatening tempestuous changes, whether global or local, to demonstrate that the citizenry is neither a bewildered alien and perpetual victim nor helpless functionary of a completely overwhelming hegemony.

Agnes’s journey from Harare to Masvingo, a mark of de Certeau’s “rhetoric of walking” calls attention to her social commitment. She is an advocate for her own people, their unsanctioned legislator. This advocacy is through her keeping the pressure that the Minister without Portfolio should “tar the Nyabadza Osborne Dam road” (Chingono, 2007, p. 8). She is a survivor who has the luxury of living in the high class suburbs of Sixth Avenue which is close to the CBD. She journeys with a chauffeured Mercedes Benz and drinks expensive imported whisky. She can gladly

see the dawn of a new day and the commercial economy of sex as a socio-cultural conformity shaped by the prevailing economic order, even though “most of them thought that she was naïve. She let them believe so by not talking and pretending to listen” (Chingono, 2007, p. 14). Whilst Mhofu the driver would try to “shame” the Minister without Portfolio, Agnes’s motive instead is to better her livelihood. The survival strategy presented through her is that of a financial endeavour through negotiating her female sexuality for gain, material and immaterial, permanent and impermanent.

At the same time, a closer analysis of this survival tactic is paradoxical as well. The commercial sex work profession has its own disadvantages – the HIV/AIDS pandemic, abuse, and the fact that as one ages the clientele also dwindles. Agnes can survive and flourish during the crisis-hit period but the question is how sustainable is this survival strategy, and what sort of scars will she carry along into the future? In other words, the question is to what extent can the need to survive supersede morality as well as responsibility? Or shall there be a call therefore to make this survival strategy of commercial sex work something that is legal so that those providing commercial sex work can do so under the legal framework of the country and thereby be protected as they exercise their right to work for money in this manner. These are the questions the story leaves hanging in the reader’s mind, but the fact that Agnes manages to survive the crisis using the tactic of commercial sex work still remains intact.

In the following section the study further explores another socio-economic chronotope in Mai George who, like Agnes, is an informal worker who refuses to be a passive victim but an active agent who claims a livelihood from the urban space.

2.5 SCOFFING AT DESTITUTION AND THE MACABRE IN “LAST LAUGH”

As an opener to this section, the following quotations which are found in the prologue of the anthology where the story “Last Laugh” (Staunton, 2007) is taken from can provide more insight into the core issues to be discussed in this section. “‘Laughing Now’ suggests that we are finding new ways to reflect our reality; that however many zeros we add to the rate of inflation, and however hungry we may become, humour is as good a response as any” (Staunton, 2007, p. xi). The Danish physicist and Nobel prize-winner Bohr (1885 - 1962) once remarked that “there are some things so serious that you have to laugh at them” (as cited in Staunton, 2007, p. xi). Laughter as a form of self-rehabilitation, as resistance, and a way of disordering and destabilizing the political assemblages, is markedly scribed in the story “Last Laugh” (Chinodya, 2007). Laughter is therapeutic and cathartic, investing in the urban poor, a new form of communicating and or narrating their socio-political landscape. Chinodya in this story re-establishes culture as sharing and uniting factor, indefatigably marking contours of resilience, rebellion and defiance.

“Last laugh” is a story about virtually everyone who visits the Home Industries Centre during lunch time to buy food at Mai George’s open place kitchen, “motor mechanics, glaziers, garage attendants, electricians, cobblers, plumbers...” (Chinodya, 2007, p. 26). The story also presents the interrelationships amongst the people, which include the butcher, the teachers, and the jealous landlord. Whilst the

story centres on Mai George, more striking are the fearless, nameless characters and their undeterred and unbridled voices whose jokes and subtle observations make Shimmer Chinodya a master of words, satire and humour.

The study's theorization and re-conceptualization of resistance and innovation as cultural markers of agency find further expression in the amplified urban informalities in this story – “Last Laugh” (Chinodya, 2007). The “Home Industry Centre” (Chinodya, 2007, p. 41) and the iconographical representations of entrepreneurship form an idiom of being in the city and capitalizing on its potential. The constantly changing geo-political terrain that has seen the harshest of times still resonates with shimmers of hope and vitality, even in the aftermath of *Operation Murambatsvina*. The industriousness, resourcefulness and sheer determination of the urbanites, despite their lack of well-pronounced, formal education as shown by the mis-spelled iconographic signage, further attests to the ubiquity of agency in the face of the harshest of limitations.

Furthermore, the femininity reconstruction of Mai George and her redefinition of the socio-economic landscape (like Agnes) is a pointer to the dearth of rigid masculinities that invest in men the economic grammar of “bread winner”. Her life for “the past three years was work and work every day to fend for her family and her ageing mother” (Chinodya, 2007, p. 42). With her “open air kitchen” in the industrial sites, Mai George restructures the urban spaces in a bid to reclaim some form of entrepreneurial selfhood; spatial constraints for her are not absolute. And as a result “business was unbelievably good, great, in fact” (Chinodya, 2007, p. 26). To survive she sets up alliances, associations and networks through a range of relationships.

These range from the winking butcher, the friendly garage owner where she stores her kitchenware, the more regular clients to whom she gives meals on credit; through to the adversarial police officer she has to bribe to avoid being raided. She has fashioned a practical and effective way to pursue her livelihood and at the end of the day, “surely Mai George [was] earning enough to pay five teachers every month” (Chinodya, 2007, p. 26) whose household furniture was the envy of many.

The story also offers vistas of reading the “city under siege” through music, a form of popular culture that has in contemporary contexts calcified into a normative shorthand of narrating the ills and evils in Africa as well as how people evade them. The people’s visions, aspirations, and dreams find expression through the popular hit songs as the artists offer people a voice and language to articulate their concerns. The political message in the two songs *Bvuma Wachembera* (*Accept that you are old*) and *Dai ndakadzidza* (*If only I was educated*) are prime examples of how cultural expressions offer an alternative and relatively safer discourse. The use of these two songs offers yet another unflinching attack on the despotic regime that uses the draconian AIPPA (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act) to silence and mull divergent views. What comes out strikingly is the fact that fictional narratives like these are cultural and linguistic ammunition that interrogate the status quo and offer an alternative spectacle to one created by the official, monologic and selectively nationalist discourse (Muponde & Primorac, 2005).

The humorous and decidedly derisive jokes that the ordinary people recite are firstly a record of their daily lives, their struggles, ingenuities and privations. Secondly, they are a socio-political commentary unmasking the social morass and the language

of political deification. Thirdly, they are a form of comic relief, therapeutically giving them the energy to dream of a better tomorrow. For “people loved to laugh and hold the world at bay”, (Chinodya, 2007, p. 26) and “joking, like breathing, made people’s lives easier” (Chinodya, 2007, p.30). Even in the most excruciating circumstances, people still have the capacity to find humour; this is a survival strategy, a show of how people find humanity in dehumanizing situations. In the face of tyrannical and despotic geriatrics epitomized in Mbuya MaSibanda, the landlord who preys on her tenants, it is laughter that registers the marked contours of rebellion and resistance. Laughter becomes a conspiratorial rebuff of oppressive forces and inhibiting factors. Laughter is an explosive form of agency that refuses to be curtailed forever and an ultimate cultural metamorphosis and activism upped by the urbanites as a survival strategy. Like the brave cultural workers - the fictional writers who create these literary works protest against despotism and the story invites the reader to experience the bitter-joy of facing hegemonic regimes. The macabre is scoffed and it is a paradoxical joy for the reader and the cultural critic to altogether join in as:

Bravely following Mbuya MaSibanda to the door and shooing her out almost, Mai George began to LAUGH. She laughed freely now. She laughed and laughed; she laughed at the brazen jokes that had plagued her day, at the sudden future that now glared at her in the face. She laughed and heard the voices of the other lodgers in the adjoining rooms shrieking with hers, conspiring with her against the ageless tyranny of the world. Her ears

drowned in the echoes of her mirth as warm tears coursed down her youthful face. (Chinodya, 2007, p. 37)

2.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion therefore, these six stories amply demonstrate the challenges of a nation in crisis and above all, they show that despite all the odds against them, the urbanites also stand up to the challenge. They are pedagogically inspiring and show that there is a continual struggle that resultantly brings about shimmers of hope. This necessarily entails a metamorphosis of the people's usual perceptions, their re-reading of the world as well as a reorientation of their conception of good and bad, moral and immoral. Ultimately, rather than being a classical marker of foreign invasion (in the exclusionary nationalist discourse) and a source of all ills as used to be portrayed in fiction in pre-independence times and shortly after independence, the city in the new millennium is presented as a site for struggle, which is a wellspring for cultural change and innovation.

The city space has been presented as a place for possibilities and that through the resilient, wilful, and forceful restructuring of this space; the urbanites hatch a remarkable survival culture. In an age of globalisation, the street has become the new locus of employment for the urban poor. From Mr Usury Chimbadzo and the Shopkeeper's ingenuous negotiation of the ever-changing and treacherous economic landscape, Esilina's reformulation of alliances across the racial divide, Mai Jira's united front, to Agnes's rediscovery and reinterpretation of the resources "within" her, up to Mai George's remapping of the cityscape and personal transformation into

energized femininity with high business acumen, what is most apparent is that the people are finding some means of coping. Agency is immensely ubiquitous and the short story writer has the language to capture these complicated and fleeting changes, and manages to render them much more visible.

The next chapter endeavours to elucidate the moral transformation of individuals, how their socially and culturally constructed identities are chronotopically re-birthed within an urban setting during tempestuous times.

CHAPTER THREE

CHANGING IDENTITIES, RESILIENCE AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION FOR SURVIVAL IN TIMES OF CRISIS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

It is important to reiterate that the rapidly changing and turbulent times of the Zimbabwean crisis exposed many people to high levels of vulnerability. The multiple dimensions of the crisis manifested in extremely challenging times which were characterised by change that was happening too fast for many people. Yet amidst all the challenges, the people's resilience prevailed in inspirational ways. The ordinary people's inborn quality of transforming to a different way of being ultimately enabled them to become better and intuitively protean at handling turbulent change, nonstop pressure and life-disrupting setbacks.

The previous chapter showed how urbanites reconstruct the city space and make it their own and a site of struggle and productivity. The chapter also demonstrated how urban informalities find expression in fiction and how this new way of life and agency is ubiquitous as well as inspirational. The people have diverse means of survival which call for celebration and emulation.

This chapter takes the thread of argument from there, by demonstrating the relevant fiction's representation of the rise of the survivor personality. It looks at how resilient individuals transform the everyday, take for granted cultural perceptions, and change their set of laid down values and standards in order to master change. The chapter is about the representation of the capabilities of orienting quickly to the

new realities, and coping with immediate challenges. Moreover, the chapter is about defiant people taking resilient actions to spiral upwards, and also about means of sustaining strong and healthy energy in non-stop change, bouncing back from setbacks and gaining strength from adversities.

Firstly, a short story by Mungoshi, entitled “The hare” (1997) is analysed. Particularly interesting in this story is the individual transformation as well as the reaction and response of the two main characters to become new personalities; one who is a non-resilient victim and the other a resilient victor. Through this story, the effects of disruptive change during a crisis and their fictional representations are explored. In order to maintain this chapter’s titular relevance, which is about “changing identities”, a character analysis approach to the story is attempted, ultimately illustrating that there are some survival and coping strategies that we can learn from the representation of the crisis-hit and institutionally weak Zimbabwean urban situation.

Secondly, the novel *The uncertainty of hope* (2006) by Tagwira is analysed. This is the only novel to be included in this study because of its centrality, breadth and richness in as much as the fiction about the crisis is concerned, and also its resonances to the core objectives of the study. From the analysis of the novel it is clear that the urbanites’ world during times of crisis is made more malleable and protean than most people think. That is why the characters in the novel who are armed with hope, optimism, positivity and coping skills demonstrate an ability to get outcomes in situations that have mesmerised other people’ thinking that there is no way they can survive and prevail. Mainly a character and thematic approach of the

novel is attempted to demonstrate the serendipity of the urbanites - which is, their ability to discover good fortune in times of tortuous crisis and misfortune.

3.2. INDIVIDUAL METAMORPHOSIS AND A RESILIENT RESPONSE FOR SURVIVAL IN “THE HARE”.

She had become a *new* woman: yes. But she hadn't lost her love for her family. In fact, her *new* freedom to leave the house, to be among people, seemed to have given a *new* dimension to their life as a family. She had never had any money of her own to buy anyone in the family anything. *Now* she indulged herself. She bought fancy shirts and jeans for Nhongo – clothes he would never have dreamed of buying for himself. She bought colourful T-shirts for the kids and she occasionally took the family out to eat at some expensive restaurant in town, or some international hotel like the Holiday Inn, the Sheraton or the Monomatapa. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 12)

In the above quotation, the deft use of understatement by the author to register the transformation of an individual and the attainment of a protean personality is striking. What is immediately arresting is the pronouncement of a sense of change as a ubiquitous force, particularly the change that demonstrates the hope and desire for a better future. It is this betterment of oneself that is aptly captured here. A juxtaposition of the now and the then by the author is equally telling. A “new” and metamorphosed individual is presented – a survivor in times of crisis. It is about this resilient person who has transformed her identity and become a better individual that this study takes a special interest in, as this form of transformation is one of the coping strategies utilised for survival.

In brief, the story “The hare” dramatises a couple’s movement from good times to terrible times, and then finally to uncertain times filled with both pain and hope. It is a story about resilience and amazing dimensions of survival culture. Nhongo is an urbanite who married at the age of 27 and his wife Sara married at 16 before she could even finish secondary school. She falls pregnant and Nhongo, being a prepared man who has made significant savings, agrees to marry her. However, many neighbours are mesmerised by how she managed to convince him to marry her, because they think that she ensnared him. Timid, young, hitherto self-effacing and domesticated, Sara settles into the life of a housewife who is seemingly content to be looked after by the husband. However, Sara’s mother, Kariwo is not happy because in Sara she had hopes to have an educated child who was going to carry on the dreams which she had to fulfil herself. Sara is presented as “an unusually bright child, she had promise, unlike the rest of her children. Kariwo never recovered the blow”, (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 7). It is noteworthy that from the beginning Sara is described as “quiet, obedient but with a subtle, stubborn streak that only a husband would discern, [and] had understood her mother’s dream and wept quietly, while making herself impossible promises” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 7).

For many years Nhongo plays the role of the traditional male bread winner. The times are constant and calm with little if any disruptive changes. He rises to the position of a section manager in a textile factory in the sprawling and promising town of Harare. Things go pretty well for the couple; they now have four children, two are in boarding school and the other two stay with the parents, and they are all well looked after. Nhongo is rising in the community and manages to buy a car and a

house and hopes to buy an even better one in the more affluent part of the city. For “Nhongo felt that nothing could ever touch his family. He had risen to the position of section manager in the textile company that he worked for in Harare. He was not one to take risks” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 6). Sara, on the other hand, is seemingly content, playing the role of a rather passive housewife.

However, things turn terribly bad when all of a sudden Nhongo is retrenched, “seemingly out of the blue” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 9). This is a huge blow to the family. Change starts to spiral them to dizzying heights of uncertainty and difficulty. Nhongo is baffled and finds it difficult to accept as well as understand it all.

A year later he was home. A loaf of bread cost three times what it had two years previously. He had bought a car the year before the liquidation, and he owed the finance house a suicidal amount of money. He had to be very careful with the little they had given in terminal benefits. (It was criminal!) This wasn't the time to think of going into private business. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 9)

Yet whilst Nhongo sees impossibilities and all doom, the wife Sara transforms her identity from that of a victim wallowing in passivity, into that of a survivor personality. It is at this point in their lives that the writer demonstrates the literary representation of today's disruptive realities and how people respond in different ways.

Having illustrated the axiom that life is full of changes which people respond to, the question then is how this story can be understood as an illuminating metaphor of

resilience during times of crisis. Critical from the onset is a need to understand that in the story “The hare” there are two parts in the lives of these urbanites - Sara and Nhongo. The two parts, simply put, are “before” and “after” the liquidation of the company and Nhongo’s subsequent retrenchment. These changes and disruptions in their lives happen unexpectedly when they do not have other sources of income, let alone the ensuing highly inflationary environment that threatens to engulf the family, with seemingly no way out. Out of this turbulent and threatening situation is born the non-resilient victim who fails to change identities strategically (Nhongo) and also the resilient victor who is able to transform and bounce back from setbacks (Sara).

An understanding of how and why Nhongo fails to rise from his downfall is important. He is not born a failure. Neither is he improvident and shortsighted. In actual fact Nhongo is hard working and an organised man. He is “a careful, security-conscious, family man [who] strongly subscribed to the old dictum: God helps those who help themselves” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 6). This means that according to the day’s standards, Nhongo is certainly a hardworking and focused man. In addition, being a “Party card-holder” (Mungoshi, 2007, p. 7), he is a calculative man who realises that in the politically volatile Zimbabwe of his days, one needs to be correctly connected and aligned to be able to “make it”. What it means to be a party holder is that one belongs to the ruling party ZANU PF, and with the membership to this party it means that one is protected as opposed to being non-partisan or being a member of the opposition. In addition, even when Sara falls pregnant Nhongo does not embarrass his parents by failing to pay the bride price. “He seemed to have been prepared. He had been saving money for such an occasion. And in less than a month, Sara’s people

and Nhongo's people had become brothers- and sisters-in-law" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 7). Therefore Nhongo is indeed an above-average person who is capable of making it, provided all is well, constant and unchanging. Yet still a catastrophe befalls him. What the author shows is that in Zimbabwe the crisis was not selective and the same applies to any one whatsoever. In the previous chapter it was argued that agency is a ubiquitous quality and what may be emphasised here also is the all-pervasive prevalence of setbacks in crisis-hit Zimbabwe. Moments of misfortune and extreme setbacks are inevitable.

How does one respond to these extreme setbacks? This question is important to understand Nhongo's failure to be resilient and thus survive during times of crisis. His failure provides appropriate background to understanding and appreciating Sara's response as that of a protean and resilient survivor.

Firstly, Nhongo falls into the trap of the victim reaction. This victim reaction makes him fail to transform positively. He becomes a rigid, uncompromising and anti-protean victim. He plays the blame game and feels other people are to be blamed for ruining his life. When joblessness befalls him, prices of basic commodities skyrocket and his terminal benefits become fast eroded; all he can voice is that "it was criminal!" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 9). Nhongo becomes an enraged man who emotionally explodes and spirals downwards, mired in unhappy thoughts and feelings. He loses his balance and the once capable planner is transformed into a blamer and reactionary victim. He fails to rise to the occasion but engages in fruitless witch-hunting escapades and directionless anger. Faced with situations which demand a responsible response, instead:

Then Nhongo became angry. There was no specific, immediate object at which to direct his anger but it seized him, a burning in his chest. The whole point was: *it isn't my fault*. He felt, vaguely, that this wouldn't have happened at all if Sara had been there. Somewhere deep within his tangled unexamined feelings; it was all Sara's fault. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 6)

Resultantly, Nhongo, in this frame of mind, cannot take steps to cope with what has happened and thereby overcome the difficulties facing him. By getting stuck in this frame of mind he perpetuates a victim reaction and the author demonstrates to us some of the handicaps resilient people need to avoid. Victim-thinking like this keeps him feeling helpless, and by blaming others for his bad situation, Nhongo blocks himself from bouncing back. This non-resilient victim state in which he does not take resiliency actions is what the story warns us against. This is further corroborated by Baxter (2010) who has also notes “that a resulting sense of betrayal can lead to a traumatic worldview, which perceives the world suspiciously as operating in ways of which we have no knowledge and over which we have no control” (p. 20). Negative emotions such as fear, anger, anxiety, distress, helplessness and hopelessness decrease Nhongo's ability to solve the problems he faces and they weaken his resilience capacity.

Nhongo, the non-resilient victim, is guided by reaction rather than response. Reaction implies that one acts in the form of a reflex that mainly happens without any conscious thought or feeling of choices. On the other hand, a response (seen in Sara) is what makes a resilient survivor. A response indicates that your actions after a threat or setback are guided by conscious choices (Siebert, 2005, p. 3). To

demonstrate the reactionary character of Nhongo, this is how the story “The hare” begins:

Later that evening, after Sara had left for Johannesburg with her friends of the *combis*, Nhongo had driven angrily back home to Chitungwiza, and had packed a few of his clothes into a bag. He told the housemaid, Ella, to put the children into clean clothes and get them into the car. They were going home to the country, he said. So the two girls, Sekai, six, and Netsai, four, were bundled into the car in their street-dirty clothes, their dusty faces creased into moon-grins. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 1)

This is an outcome of the reaction by Nhongo - one that does not yield any positive results. The economic challenges demand calculated responses rather than a reaction that is bereft of conscious choices. Instead, what prompts it further is “a strange, irresistible nostalgia to revisit the scenes of his childhood [that] had assailed him, to walk once more through the tall dewy grass, hunting for wild fruits such as *matufu*, *hute*, *nzviro*, and *maroro* (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 1). These are wild fruits which Nhongo used to eat as a small cattle herder in the rural areas. Certainly this is by no means the survival culture that one needs to cultivate during the present crisis. Nhongo hides behind nostalgia, one which no longer seems viable because the wild fruits he dreams of is a typical hunter-gatherer form of existence which cannot sustain modern existence. As he journeys from the urban setting to the rural areas, a description of the travel is littered with morose epithets like ‘regretted’, ‘storm’, ‘menacing’, ‘haunting’, ‘monotonous’, ‘grotesque’, ‘deathly’, ‘maddeningly’, ‘ghostly’, ‘surreally’ and ‘unearthly’ (Mungoshi, 1997, pp. 5-6). These epithets

indicate that this reactionary, spatial escapade is not appropriate. The town that he wants to run away from is where he can possibly get solutions.

What the above analysis shows is that the dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis are multiple and varied. By first focussing on Nhongo as a non-resilient victim, ample background is given to clearly present the survivor personality in his wife, Sara. It is in Sara's response that this study takes special interest, and through contrasting her with her husband Nhongo, one can easily recall Wilhelm Nietzsche's famous statement, "that which does not kill me makes me stronger" (Siebert, 2005, p. 5).

The resilience response we see in Sara is not an easy option but really worth the effort. When her life seems as if it is collapsing into ruins, Sara manages to spring back in an inspirational manner and survive from the devastating circumstances threatening her family. She is only in Form Three when she falls pregnant; actually she is still a teenager. When she discovered that she was pregnant she was not amused and felt that her body had betrayed her. "Yet no thought of abortion or suicide ever entered her mind. From an early age, Sara had learnt to face her problems head on" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 7). Through this presentation we learn about how to survive life's crises which come in different forms and sizes. Given the fact that Sara is a precocious child full of potential and in whom the mother had all the hope to see her become an outstanding professional, falling pregnant certainly should have meant a lot. This is an issue that has devastated many youths and which social workers grapple with on a daily basis in many communities. And the determined, resilient and focused response from Sara is an avenue of learning for today's troubled generation. Options are there and these are given as abortion and suicide; social ills

haunting many contemporary African societies, but Sara does not go that way. She chooses to be a resilient survivor.

When faced with life's challenges and crises, Nhongo, the husband, plays the blame game and victim reaction as has been illustrated above. Yet for Sara, there is more to be hoped for and she chooses to be a happy survivor. She embraces her changing identity from being a teenage school girl to being a mother and wife. Whereas Nhongo remains rigid and stuck to the past of patriarchal superiority and domination, Sara's transformation enables her to see a better tomorrow. Whereas Nhongo is seen to be resisting change, Sara is embracing change. Whereas Nhongo wallows in self-depreciation after losing a job, Sara's self-appreciation is a positive survival mechanism which speaks volumes to us as readers.

Sara's unceasing and unwavering determination is equally celebrated by the author. She avoids self-pity and blaming Nhongo for the pregnancy that results in her dropping out of school. Where others could possibly crumble, she manages to cope; instead of becoming bitter she becomes better. This unwavering determination is seen when she decides to continue with her studies, better herself and be a self-fulfilled individual. "After their first two children, she had done a secretarial course, had even passed her intermediate exams, but had then abandoned the idea of ever getting an office job because she couldn't stand managers who would 'look at my breasts all the time they are interviewing me'" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 8). Out of the single-mindedness of purpose, Sara is now able to make choices. She is not disabled by what has befallen her. A resilient survivor therefore is one who dares dream, and one who takes action to see the fulfilment of that dream.

Most outstanding in the presentation of Sara, a resilient survivor as portrayed here is how she responds to the loss of income in the family following Nhongo's retrenchment. Instead of nagging, whining, playing the blame game and running away, Sara chooses to act. It is the serendipity and protean character of Sara that the writer celebrates. She is protean and versatile in the sense that she continues to embrace change, adapt to varying circumstances, and reconstruct permeable boundaries. According to Siebert (2005, p. 17), the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton created the word "protean" to describe people whose form changes according to the situations they are in. He derived the word protean from Proteus, the Greek sea god that is able to take many forms. The protean self therefore seeks to be both fluid and grounded, however tenuous that combination. Survival is the ultimate goal.

This protean nature in Sara is therefore a survival mechanism. At a time when many people yearn to return to a life of stability, constancy and little change, Sara embraces change and a new identity. Sara accepts the fact that constant change is real, necessary and desirable. She steps into her husband's shoes and takes up the role of bread winner. Sara begins to sell second-hand clothes at the local market, makes new friends and joins those who commute regularly to Johannesburg, South Africa, shopping for goods to sell. For Zhuwarara (2001),

she becomes the family breadwinner and Nhongo is unsettled by the fact that he is dependent on her. Even more galling to Nhongo is the fact that she has established a network of friends and acquaintances and is living an adventurous life that is well beyond his reach. (p. 96)

Sara cultivates her unused resources and the potential that is in her. She is unfazed by the seemingly unknown and impenetrable world she is to venture into. Therefore she searches for a way out until “someone had told her about *mupedzanhamo* [which literally means to put poverty to an end], the second hand clothes market in Mbare – on the other side of town. And one day, Nhongo came home to find Sara going through a pile of women’s clothes. “‘I would like to help,’ she had said” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 10). These are the true marks of a survivor. Sara allows previously unused, inner capacities to develop, become stronger, more complex, wiser and skilled at handling challenges as they arise under turbulent circumstances.

One way of explaining Sara’s ability to discover good fortune in setbacks and misfortune to rise above life’s challenges is through an articulation of the concept of serendipity. Serendipity is a major concept to illustrate resilience and survival during tempestuous periods. Siebert (2005) describes serendipity as something that comes from using wisdom to convert an unexpected event, accident or mishap into good fortune. For this to happen, Siebert says that first something unexpected or accidental happens to you. This is what happens to Sara and her family since they lose their livelihood when Nhongo the breadwinner is retrenched. The second aspect in serendipity is that your perceptiveness, good sense, and wisdom (sagacity), lead you to discover the third element – an unexpected benefit, gift, or blessing in what happened. The self-confident, sociable and business-minded personality that comes out in Sara is a coping strategy born out of serendipity. The adversity and life-disrupting experience is converted into one of the best things that have ever

happened to her. It creates an opportunity for taking her life to a different and better direction than she had expected.

Sara's response (serendipity) is actually more than bouncing back and mere survival; while struggling to cope with the life-disrupting events in the Zimbabwean crisis, she finds new strengths and discovers new and unexpected opportunities. It allows her to discover her unexplored talents, as the narrator observes that, "it seemed that Sara had been born with an instinctive sense of business" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 12). Even Nhongo, despite his disapproval, also concedes that "the worst of it was that Sara seemed to thrive" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 11). Highly resilient people like Sara therefore have a knack for finding a hidden gift in adversity. Mungoshi's "The hare" demonstrates that serendipity is a powerful, self-created antidote to misfortune, despair, and feeling like a victim. This ability explains how some people like Sara (as opposed to Nhongo) not only recover and survive but transform themselves into a better way of being because of the bad experiences they have gone through. The starting point for converting misfortune into good fortune as Sara's life demonstrates starts off with resilience and fortitude. Sara's life in the institutionally weak and crisis-hit Zimbabwean urban-space is inspirational and represents some of the survival and coping strategies. She is resolute and sharpens her problem-solving skills against all odds.

When Nhongo begrudgingly and bitterly complains that "is it just the money?" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 10) and "it's your bloody money" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 12), she calmly responds that "someone has to work" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 10). What this teaches us is that when one becomes highly resilient, one has an advantage. Like

Sara, one can turn adversity or a disruptive event into a desirable development. The moral of the story is that when hit by an unexpected crisis, as witnessed in Zimbabwe and presented through these fictional works, there is no need to let feel victimised. In the midst of such a crisis there is a possibility to go from being upset to coping, to thriving and gaining serendipity with amazing speed. This brings about depth of understanding, inner peace and wisdom – a new cultural being is born and this rebirth is shaped by the survival culture necessitated by the need to survive a crisis. Sara transforms into the survival identity and she manages to make ends meet as she caters for the family's needs and wants:

As always, she would be loaded with goods for resale and clothes or toys for the children. And always a tie, a shirt or underpants for Nhongo. And it was on this last trip that she had bought him these fancy shoes. Very expensive by the look of them. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 13)

Above all, the trauma that has befallen her has led to wisdom, and it has become a door to a new and fulfilling life. Sara's resilience is a heroic path of pain but one that is necessary for survival. Late at night, after a long journey from South Africa, "there she would be standing in the doorway with her bulging bags, all smiles, tired but jubilant, smelling of new perfume" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 13). This statement illustrates the paradoxical nature of thriving under pressure. It is an oxymoronic mode of existence, one of pain mixed with joy, and this is what spells out the urbanites' coping strategies and survival tactics.

Furthermore, another strategic principle enabling one to cope effectively with many pressures and live a healthy lifestyle is personal transformation. Accepting change is what differentiates Nhongo from Sara and Nhongo's static perception and this reaction by Nhongo needs to be explored further here. Nhongo cannot accept the reversal of roles that is taking place in their lives as dictated by the crisis. Nhongo is a rigid, uncompromising and, consequently, vulnerable man: "he belonged to a proud tradition that said the hunting is done by the man of the house" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 13). This is a static identity that fails to take note of the fact that times are changing. Even the people around Nhongo can do better than this former section manager and "they called it jealousy. A husband's jealousy because a wife is proving that she can beat him at his own game, providing for the family" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 12). Nhongo subscribes to rigid boundaries and constructed realities instead of embracing strong, permeable boundaries as well as discovered realities which are determined by the now and present situations. Nhongo aims at being fixedly socially compliant where situations demand him to conform and also call for social involvement.

To further illustrate how Mungoshi lampoons this sorry state that does not allow one to be resilient and transform to a better being and protean survivor, the anecdote from the story "The hare" is quite illustrative:

An example of what Nhongo and his friends believed lay in the story of Jokonya. Jokonya was headmaster of the primary school which Nhongo's children attended. His wife was also a teacher at a nearby secondary school. Jokonya had sent his wife to University to do her B.A. and later her B.Ed. Now she was teaching. When she brought her first pay cheque, Jokonya took

it and tore it in half. “I can manage my family very well without a second cheque in the house”, Jokonya had told his wife. This was a bit extreme, Nhongo and his friends agreed, but Jokonya was only making a statement. A man should be allowed to have pride in his own home. The burden of running the household, the financial burden, should lie squarely on the husband’s shoulders. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 8)

The static viewpoint of ascribing the role of breadwinner strictly to the man of the house results in Nhongo being humiliated by his retrenchment and embarrassed by his having to depend on Sara for survival. This vulnerability is a result of economic factors that are characteristic of the Zimbabwean crisis and are compounded by the rigid adherence to conflicting values and beliefs in a society that is continuously changing. In such a context, the likes of Nhongo find themselves economically redundant and emasculated and Mungoshi cautions that this is not the way to go if one has to be resilient and survive the crisis. According to Zhuwarara (2001), times have changed and so are some of the conventional social and economic roles that men and women play in life, but Nhongo finds it extremely difficult to adjust and cope with changes. The socio-economic realities during times of the crisis call for conformity and personal transformation. If Nhongo, therefore, is a case study of this failure to transform, Sara comes out as an example of the opposite.

An amazing quality in Sara, which is an extension of her protean character, is that she is willing to transform herself and her environment. As a transformed individual, she leaves Nhongo bewildered, “trying to come to terms with a new Sara” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 8). Whereas in the past, “as far as Nhongo could remember,

Sara had never had any real friends, people who would visit them, spend time with them and vice versa” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 9), she now has “her friends of the combis” (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 1). She is no longer the ordinary Sara, but a new, resourceful and strong-willed individual, a characteristic that is missing in Nhongo. To clarify what transformation is as used in this context; Siebert (2005), explains transformation as:

rethinking your purpose in life and the basis for your identity; looking for meaning in tragic, senseless loss; allowing yourself to have both painful and positive feelings about your loss and become able to choose which feelings you focus on; allowing yourself to discover that your struggle has led you to develop a stronger, better version of yourself than you expected could exist.
(p. 178)

These are qualities Sara now possesses and she forms alliances and associations, networks which enable her to make it when the situation becomes too challenging for too many. For example, whereas Nhongo guesses that it might have taken her at least six months to process a passport, she on the contrary says that it took her only two hours. Her new acquaintances make things better for her and this is a coping strategy that works for her. Sara thus comes across as an imaginative person, resourceful and resilient in difficult economic circumstances. The very tortuous difficulties which suffocate Nhongo transform her and create opportunities and enough space for her to redefine herself and to cater for her individual needs and those of the family. This metamorphosis which makes Sara malleable, resilient and change-proficient leaves Nhongo the non-resilient victim always wandering. He realises that:

he hadn't bothered to discover whether she might have preferred an adjustment to their lifestyle. He had never really thought of her alone, independent, without the children. Someone with her own individual needs. This new game, from which he was completely excluded, amounted simply to a new hand of cards, which differed from the ones he had dealt her only in that she was now the major player. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 11)

These words from her own husband, despite the fact that they are said in anger, show that Sara is a changed person altogether. She has a new identity, a cosmopolitan and modern personality. She typifies a cosmopolitan personality in the sense that she is now always "talking of Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa. And even Mauritius" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 10). The repetition of the word "new" further emphasises that Sara now has a new identity, that of a purposeful and resilient victor. Instead of crushing her, the crises in her life, just like for many Zimbabweans has propelled her to better heights. Instead of revelling in her new found independence alone, Sara further says to Nhongo, "why don't we go south together?" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 13). The family is still important to her, so much so that she even invites Mr Magaso, the one who usually travels with her to her house to meet Nhongo. Nhongo has had raised suspicious questions and she takes it upon herself to set the record straight. The moral of this story is to further demonstrate that through Sara's survival and coping strategies, the writer still insists that these tactics are not without an air of responsibility. Sara tries as much as possible to bring the family together. Sara is not a reckless, wanton and uncaring mother and wife but she tries to have the husband involved so that her marriage can as well survive.

Whereas previously it was men who used to travel to South Africa, she dares challenge that perception because the new dispensation calls for more involvement by both sexes. VaJumo, Nhongo's father, is shocked to hear that Sara has travelled to South Africa. For VaJumo, *Janana* (as he called South Africa) was a place of death, "and those who finally made it back home brought nothing except their battered bodies, demented minds and crashed manhood" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 17). Yet the crop of women, the resilient ones like Sara now tread into the formerly forbidden ground and make things happen, even better than the men before them. The women of such calibre are able to master change, thrive under pressure, and survive the crisis.

As Nhongo reflects on Sara's transformation, he observes that "the change hadn't been sudden or revolutionary. No: it had been slow, and almost imperceptible The process had been so slow, so apparently natural, that Nhongo hadn't noticed" (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 21). In other words the process of surviving a crisis is not a miracle that happens spontaneously but takes time. Survival is a demanding task that requires energy and effort. Ultimately it can be argued that the story of Sara's resilient journey amply demonstrates how literary texts, like this story, manage to participate in narrating, representing, and reflecting coping strategies for survival. Even the non-resilient victim and sceptic Nhongo, eventually begins to think deeply about Sara's coping strategies. Nhongo begins to ask himself:

Was everyone right and he wrong about Sara? What about the children? And the clothes that she bought him? And the shoes? And everything she did to make them a happy family? The cheap pictures and coloured prints she

brought home, to cheer up the place they lived in? They touched him more than they embarrassed him ... he tolerated them in that he felt she wanted to improve their lifestyle. They seemed to mean a lot to her. And to him, they meant that she meant, even wanted, to stay. (Mungoshi, 1997, p. 21)

From the above, we can see that whilst the Zimbabwean crisis was mainly an economic and political one, its effects permeated to the socio-cultural sphere of people's lives. Therefore Sara has to be resilient in fighting the economic crisis and also the cultural challenges shaped by rigid patriarchy. At the end, through Nhongo's thoughts above, he begins to see sense in Sara's survival and coping strategies. Survival strategies, embracing change and adopting a resilient outlook, can indeed shake off some dimensions of the crisis but not without another cost as demonstrated by her many detractors like Nhongo. The change in Sara however begins to seep through to Nhongo and despite the fact that he still has a lot to contend with, he is beginning to credit Sara's tactics. Whilst Sara does not act in a socially compliant manner, she acts in socially responsible ways which result in her taking good care of her family.

Mungoshi's story "The hare", therefore, shows the wisdom enshrined in the adage, good sailors are not made on calm seas. From Sara's resilient journey the story demonstrates that there is a marvellous blessing which resides in many human beings, and through this story such a blessing is that people can learn how to cope, adapt, resile, and even thrive in new and difficult circumstances. The heroic resiliency journey back from a crisis, like that of Sara, is rough and has setbacks, but it is possible and desirable. Transformation into a life that is better after a crisis like

that which hit Zimbabwe during the post-independence period and that leading to the 1999 to 2009 tempestuous years is often an unexpected outcome that demonstrates the survival and coping strategies which can be used by the ordinary people. Sara is a protean character; her serendipity and resilience in the face of challenges make her a survivor. She changes her identity and emerges a better, more fulfilled and enviable character. In the next section, more dimensions of resilience and the power of positive expectations (and hope) are further explored as they find representation in the novel, *The uncertainty of hope*.

3.3. SURVIVING AGAINST ALL ODDS IN *THE UNCERTAINTY OF HOPE*

She thought of her mother engaging in unlawful foreign-currency dealing to put her through university, and build a dream home. She thought of mainini Onai struggling to raise three children within an abusive marriage; of Melody, trading her innocence for university fees and groceries. How far was she from promiscuity? She thought of all the many Zimbabwean women flouting socially and lawfully acceptable norms to fend for their children ... she recognised that she had choices and determined to make them wisely. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 82)

Livelihoods are important to people's material and cultural wellbeing, as well as constructed and under-construction social identities. The deeply rooted, cultural sensibilities which have been passed from generation to generation and the constructed identities (those that are still being transformed) of the people are threatened in periods of crisis as people adopt different strategies in the pursuit of viable livelihoods in response to the constraints occasioned by the crisis. The lived

experiences and resilience of the ordinary people in negotiating, responding to and coping with the main political crisis as well as the series of other micro-crises engendered by the former is what Tagwira's *The uncertainty of hope* represents. Central in the novel and interesting to this study is how the characters in the novel demonstrate the power of positive expectations and how they are resiliently hopeful against all odds; that they have the power to change things in order for them to survive. The reflexivity and autonomy of Tagwira's major characters make them paragons of the survivor personality whose lives are springs of inspiration and hope to many in Africa and beyond. Therefore the following will focus on the people's resilience as demonstrated through hope, optimism and pragmatic morality among others.

Whilst "The hare" centres at the onset of the Zimbabwean crisis, *The uncertainty of hope* is set at the peak of the harsh crisis in 2005, a few months before the notorious operation *murambatsvina* (Mlambo and Chirisa, 2009). Described by Charles Mungoshi as "an astonishing debut" (Tagwira, 2006, p. ii), the content-rich novel of 368 pages catalogues the difficulties facing many Zimbabweans, especially the urbanites. Life is precarious and difficult and through the rich and complex life of Onai Moyo and her family, the author immerses the reader into the vortex of the crisis in its multifaceted dimensions. Onai is a Mbare resident, a high-density suburb in Harare which is a colonial creation formerly meant for the black community in white Rhodesia (Mlambo & Chirisa, 2009). Onai is a market vendor and resident in the city of Harare. She is a hardworking mother of three children, determined and resiliently optimistic lady who fights against all odds to survive and make it. She is

married to Gari, an abusive, improvident and promiscuous drunk who is later retrenched from his job and finally dies because of an HIV/AIDS-related illness. When Gari dies, his young brother inherits all that he has - the house and Gari's pension - kicking Onai out of the house they had lived in since they got married. An embodiment of hope and optimism mixed with self-critical pessimism, Onai ultimately survives and moves beyond hope. Despite the pervasive and overwhelmingly threatening multiple dimensions of the crisis, the novel ends with the relieving and inspiring words:

Onai felt more keenly than ever before that her destiny was now in her own hands and that at last her children stood a chance of being able to fulfil themselves. She would do her best for them. They would not be oppressed by a system beyond their control. She looked out the window and smiled to herself. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 363)

The novel is also about Onai's best friend, Katy Nguni, who is also a market vendor and a black-market foreign currency dealer who is married to a supportive cross border haulage truck driver. They have a precocious child, Faith, who is a university student who they support, doing all they can to raise her school fees, thereby opening up another survival strategy, namely investing in the education of children. Through Katy and John's support and friendship to Onai and her family, Tagwira manages to further demonstrate how the formation of strategic alliances can be yet another survival strategy. Above all, through this couple, Tagwira manages to explore the necessity for the transformation of everyday values during a crisis so as to survive; what I will alternatively call pragmatic morality.

The novel is also about Faith's boyfriend, Tom Sibanda, a young businessman who buys a farm for himself (as opposed to the controversial land-redistribution acquisition) and he works hard for himself. Tom also has a young sister, Emily, who is a health professional and activist. Through Emily, Tagwira explores advocacy, activism and both formal and informal support groups as a means of survival. Finally another notable character is Mawaya, the ostensible beggar who turns out to be a rich business man. Through Mawaya and Onai, Tagwira shows the readers that despite the crudity of life, acts of kindness and humanness (*unhu/ubuntu*) can still be a valid life giving force that sustains the vulnerable members of society. These issues are fully explored below to ultimately demonstrate how literature represents the various ways people living in urban areas form and devise to innovatively reconstruct the world around them so that they can survive and live in the city with hope.

As the title of the book connotes, transforming "the uncertainty of hope" occasioned by the multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis into veritable drinkables calls for an enhancement of the power of positive expectations. The central message in the novel is about hope, determination, positivity and living a purposeful life inspired by resilience. This is all enshrined in Onai's long and tortuous journey in life and she comes out like Sara in "The hare" as a resilient survivor.

Onai is not one to rise from moderate social standing to the level of firm certainty witnessed at the end of the novel as she lives in the plush suburb of Borrowdale. Instead, Tagwira allows an inwards and deep glance at her life as the novel begins. She is staying in Mbare, the oldest and most dilapidated township in Harare. Thieves have broken into her house and despite the fact that she is awake; there is nothing she

can do to fight them off. It is midnight and her husband is not yet back from work. When he comes in at dawn, he is dead drunk, his shirt has smudges of lipstick, his shoes are encrusted with a thick layer of vomit and his trouser zip is undone. She gets a fine beating by this very husband because he accuses her of selling the stolen television set to her boyfriends. The beating leaves her with a concussion, a couple of stitches and hospitalisation for a couple of days.

Onai's problems are compounded by the fact that she is a woman in a patriarchal society and "she could not protect her children from the life they were destined to live" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 3). Such is the apathy and despondency that spells out her life and her future seems so bleak that "of course, she would never be able to replace the [stolen] set. Not in a lifetime" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 3). In order to provide ample background to this case study of hope, Tagwira shows an initially hopeless and pitiable Onai who believes that "there was nothing else she could do. She was, after all, only a woman. How could she fight against fate?" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 5). A strong belief in fate and destiny are the blinkers which stop her from being hopeful enough to seek a way out and be a survivor. Therefore it is interesting to later realise her transformation to becoming an optimistic and resilient victor. Further crippling is her adherence to traditional values which dictate that a woman can never think of leaving her marriage. In other words, Onai is burdened by a double yoke, that of a political and economic national crisis and that of being a woman in such a crisis-hit and patriarchal society that condones wife bashing and emotional torment. This is how she perceives her situation:

But she stayed for the sake of her children and because marriage was not something that one could just walk away from. “Once you get in, you stay. *Kugomera uripo chaiko mwanangu* [groaning whilst remaining there my child] ... no matter how hard it gets. Always remember that a woman cannot raise a good family without a man by her side”. This was the essence of a true African woman ... perseverance in the face of all hardship, especially for the children. One always stayed for them. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 7)

Onai’s problems, therefore, are larger than the already complex economic and political crisis as it is known in its generality. This is a situation common in the contemporary African world and many fictional works have decried this situation. It is from these dregs and many other challenges that Tagwira, instead of condemning them to perpetual misery, inspires the victims to hope, positivity and resilience. According to Siebert (2005):

From ancient times, people have recognized that a spirit of hope helps them bear times of great suffering, illness, disasters, loss, and pain. They learned that the spirit of hope could lead to being healed. And it makes sense. Hope is meaningful when people are struggling to survive bad conditions. Without bad conditions, there is no need for hope other than hoping that good things will continue to happen and bad things will not occur again in the future. As long as humans experience diseases, tragedies, and disasters, they will also feel hope. (p. 107)

Siebert’s analysis therefore qualifies our heroine, Onai as an inspirational model of hope. Like Onai, many people find themselves in similarly difficult situations; the

attainment of a better life by Onai at the end of the novel is motivational. The novel teaches that it is possible to survive and instead of being passengers passively riding in a huge and hegemonic mechanism controlled by external forces in absolute terms, they can steer life's ship in ways that lead to a betterment of life. Speaking at his re-election victory in November 2012, the American President, Barack Obama spoke of the hope akin to what Tagwira propounded in 2006 through this novel. Obama, also the author of *The audacity of hope* (2007) says in the victory speech, that he has:

always believed that hope is that stubborn thing inside of us that insists despite all the evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us, so long as we have the courage to keep reaching, to keep walking, to keep fighting. (Obama, November 7, 2012)

This is the universal message that speaks to all that are faced with a crisis, whether national or personal, major or minor. Like the United States citizens to whom Barack Obama reaches out at a time of an incessant economic depression, Tagwira through Onai also preaches about the Zimbabwean crisis and how resilient, hopeful and optimistic people manage to soar high. The message explored through fiction such as these and how resiliency and survival are presented, has a universal appeal and it is such relevance of this message which further adds to the significance of this study.

Onai's hopeful journey is not simply wishful idealism or blind optimism but that of fortitude and sheer determination. Like Sara in "The hare", she is an actor and practical person. For hope that feeds the mind only is useless, the hope that produces results has to be acted upon as is illustrated below:

But Onai had been optimistic enough for all of them. Refusing to admit defeat, she had juggled her vegetable vending and her dressmaking lessons with remarkable dexterity. And, at the end of it all, she had triumphantly passed her finals. [National Diploma in Dress Making]. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 59)

This is goal-oriented action that has a specific focus for positive results. As Siebert (2005) cautions, having hope will not necessarily beat the odds, but without hope you are lost. Without hope one has no courage and no resilience but a hopeless person entertains fatalistic thoughts. However Onai, even when her market stall is destroyed by operation *murambatsvina*, still hopes and acts upon that hope. She reclaims the city space and utilises it for a better life:

Onai claimed her own territory in the city centre, selling fruit and vegetables to city workers and people in fuel queues. On days when it seemed as if there were police officers patrolling every street she took to making door-to-door sales in the high-density townships. One had to be constantly watchful; in readiness to run away should the figures of authority appear, as they did habitually. It was like an intricate game of hide-and-seek. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 180)

This is not an ideal life but given the magnitude of the crisis, Onai is able, through hope, to survive. However, hope is not an autonomous and constant human quality that grows on its own. First it must be realised that at times Onai herself is filled with moments of pessimism and dejection, though she chooses not to allow these moments to overwhelm her. Through these moments where the hope levels run low

in Onai, the author argues that a person who has true hope will still have fears and will run through the gamut of emotions. A hopeful person also understands that things may not work out for the best, but must have the courage and the resilience to try and move forward through all difficulties and against all odds, as Onai does.

Furthermore, for hope to be sustainable it takes another very important survival strategy which is that of friendship and alliances. As Onai concedes, “she needed Katy for the practicalities of surviving life with Gari. And for surviving life in Mbare. She would be lost without her friend” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 17). Survival is made possible through friends like Katy who stand by her, fanning her waning hope back to motion and giving her a helping hand in a reciprocal manner. To survive and keep on being hopeful, one challenge is that the emotions and actions of the important people around her need to also accept this reality. Where this fails to work the less hopeful people may have to be side-lined and this is exactly what Onai does to Maya, the pessimist and loud-mouthed loser.

However, Katy’s focus is kept in check as the author presents times when she is encouraged that: “all you need is a bit of practice and you will be back in top form. *Uri shasha* [You are an expert]. Just because you haven’t found a job doesn’t mean that you are not good. *Ndiyo Zimbabwe yedu* [This is our Zimbabwe] and jobs are hard to find, that’s all” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 167). Onai’s spirits are raised by her friend’s words and to some extent one can sense a twinge of authorial intrusion seeping through Katy’s voice. John’s words of advice are also equally inspiring and they are prophetic. For John, “anything is worth a try Mai Ruva. In time, you ladies can even rent a shop in town for your business. There are lots of buildings in the city

centre where self-employed tailors are making a killing” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 167). These are motivational words which militate against Afro-pessimisms and demonstrate that African urban centres are indeed hubs of opportunity. Through this presentation therefore, Tagwira has illustrated the value of the arts, particularly fiction in the area of advocacy. The lived realities enacted in such lively dialogues as shown here are enthused with verisimilitude, that aura of reality which speaks better than dry statistics and expert advice. The wisdom coming through these informal alliances and friendships are useful tools that can corroborate expert driven solutions to the problems haunting the contemporary world and which call for various perspectives.

Similarly, to survive against all odds, formal structures of support groups are also very important. Onai’s problems are social, economic and cultural as well as health related. Living with a ruthless, reckless and improvident husband is an enormous micro-crisis she has to contend with. Through Emily, the activist medical doctor who attends to her at the hospital, Onai is introduced to formal support groups which can possibly assist her to survive the bashing she receives from Gari. Realising that Onai’s problem is a typical case of domestic violence, Emily persistently implores Onai to seek help as she says: “I don’t know what you are afraid of, but I can refer you to an excellent support group with whom I work. They will take care of you and help you through, whatever” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 45).

However, Onai is not keen at first but Emily is insistent. One can easily link Emily’s ideas to an exhortation that comes from such formal organisations like Musasa Project, Project Hope, Women Action Group, and the fictionalised Kushinga

Women's Project. These are formal support groups which are meant to provide intervention programs for women in abusive relationships who are threatened. One, therefore, thinks of murders, passion killings, maiming and all sorts of gruesome acts which go uncurbed in our societies. To survive therefore, such formal structures are important, as this novel illustrates.

Cruelly evicted from her matrimonial home by her brother-in-law who wants to inherit everything, including her, Onai's need for accommodation is real. Her waning hope is ignited through the Kushinga Women's Project as Emily facilitates her meeting with Mr Ndlovu at the municipal office, and her dreams to own a house become a tangible and time-bound fact. Reflecting on the prospect of Onai owning a house, this is what John, Katy's husband, had once said:

This is Zimbabwe. A poor woman will always be a poor woman. *Hazvichinje!* [It does not change] Onai will never own a house. She is an unemployed dressmaker who works as a vegetable vendor. How can you even imagine that she could buy a house? Where would she get the money from?" Katy stared back at him and did not answer. He was right. The notion of Onai ever owning a house was ridiculous. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 19)

In a society where women's support groups are viewed as nothing other than divorce machines and radical feminist clubs, Tagwira gives the readers an alternative view. This is a subtle campaign further illustrating the role the arts play to educate people in a non-coercive manner. At last all that Onai has to do is to go to Emily and say, "I've just come to say thank you. My application was approved. My new house will

be ready by the end of November” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 311). Impossibilities can certainly be made possible.

Furthermore, the formal support groups are not only female-centred though. Tagwira strikes a balance by involving another formal structure, the New Start Centre. As Onai goes to this free walk-in clinic, she is encouraged never ever to lose hope, no matter the results. “There was a treatment available, and support groups to join. Life would go on; it could even improve, as with knowledge, came control” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 339). An HIV/AIDS free generation and zero infections is the outcry for Africa. Where HIV/AIDS is a reality and formal mitigation measures are in order, this advice is highly called for and fiction like this is filling this void in a positive and progressive manner.

Moreover, maintaining and practising acts of kindness and *ubuntu* are yet other survival strategies. Tagwira refuses to accept the fact that the Zimbabwean crisis reduced everyone to non-humans and criminals. Onai still strives to maintain integrity in her household and rebukes the children saying that “Ruva, I will not have such language in this house. What an awful thing to say to your brother. And I will not have you making those comments about your father” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 114). Times may have reduced people to the poorest millions in the world but not the worst and most horrible humanoids. Tagwira’s moralising message is further illustrated when Mr Mawaya, the “mad man”, observes that he certainly would have died were it not for the kindness and generosity of Onai who would give him her food. He is a rich man who is undertaking the *kutanda botso*, a ritual where one has to live the life of a beggar for some time to appease an offended spirit. As he goes back to his

normal life Mr Mawaya observes that, “bizarre as it had been, it had taught him a lot about the value of life, about compassion and about having an open hand, despite being poor. How else would he have survived?” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 342). Therefore, to survive, some acts of kindness from the likes of Onai become some of the coping mechanisms the author seeks to put across. This is further illustrated through when, as fate has it and in so forms of a reversal of roles, he is the one to employ Onai and give her a glorious life and certain future.

One of the most touching acts that Onai performs, one that is necessary for ensuring that public institutions also survive is that of honouring one’s debts. Survival is not only in human terms but also at an infrastructural and institutional level. It is not enough for Onai to be a role model who is resilient, determined, optimistic and kind. She also has to show that she is honest and faithful and she does this by paying off in kind what Katy and John did for her and she also pays to the hospital, all that she owed. A touching scene indeed it is, as:

she wrote a letter to the hospital’s accounts department. She would pay a third of the money she owed at the end of January, and the remaining balance over two months. She apologised for the delay but explained that she had no previous means of paying. She advised them of her change of address, in case they needed to contact her again. It felt good to have her own address again. The contrast between her past and her present was something constantly in her mind, as if reality itself had turned on its head. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 362)

It is true that given the inflation rate of more than 600%, the debt could have possibly been reduced to nothing. With the rate of inflation during the crisis-hit Zimbabwean

situation, the debt she owed the hospital would have been seriously eroded in such a way that it would have been worthless by the time of repayment. However, it is the principle of honouring one's debt which carries the day. Survival for public institutions is possible if efforts are made to support them.

Another major act of hope for survival is demonstrated through how education is valued. It is a form of investment born out of the vision one has that one day things will become better, and when that happens, one must be found standing and well rooted. Against all odds, Onai goes to school and it pays off during moments of the depressing crisis, as she manages a clothing manufacturing shop, equipped as she is with a Diploma in Dressmaking. Tagwira is not content in reductionist statistics which neither decry how the crisis resulted in massive school dropouts nor those who commend Zimbabwe as having the highest literacy rate in Africa. She practically demonstrates the value of education even in tempestuous times. She has faith in how formal education is yet another survival strategy which can enable one to cope with crisis.

Furthermore, even though Faith's fees stand at a shocking fifteen million, her father is unfazed as he vows and says, "don't look so worried. I'll do everything possible to pay up. There is no way you're going to miss out on your final exams!" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 25). John is determined to sacrifice his all to make sure that his daughter finishes school. John strongly believes in the power of formal education to stave off destitution and poverty and as a means to climb the social ladder. Moreover, he has the focus to realise that even in times of crisis, one's education cannot be eroded by inflation, and the knowledge gained through one's education does not lose value.

Instead, the adage education is power is illustrated through the way education is changing the young people. As a result of getting tertiary education, “University had changed Faith from a gawky, insecure schoolgirl to a confident young woman” (Tagwira, 2006, p. 117). Despite the fact that she is a girl child in Africa, Faith deserves an education and she is given one. She is the hope of the family and through her, Ruva, Onai, and Melody, the author’s voice is that of an education ambassador. Education opens doors and even in times of crisis it is an age-old tool for survival.

Finally, another very important survival strategy portrayed in the novel is that of pragmatic morality where the urbanites transform and also devise new codes of morality. In situations where survival is top priority, the people transform traditional beliefs and cultural traits which are no longer tenable. The surrounding reality calls for a change in perspective because the norms and values of old can no longer cohere and or make sense in the present context. On many occasions the author points the reader to the need to be protean, versatile and adaptive to survive. The dialogue between John, his wife Katy and their daughter Faith is quite illuminating. John’s pragmatic argument is that, “these are hard times. We must do everything possible in order to survive, *vadzimai*”[my wife] (Tagwira, 2006, p. 29). This is the new rule which governs crisis-hit Zimbabwe; it calls for practical actions even if it violates the legal and moral parameters. One has to survive against all odds, and periods of crisis like this call for some daring transformation of one’s moral perspective and code of conduct. John and his wife, guided by pragmatic morality, engage in “illegal” foreign currency dealings, bribing authorities and smuggling foodstuffs that are in acute shortage in the country both for personal consumption and resale. Resultantly they

survive and move beyond survival as they begin to live a relatively better off life - they can pay for their daughter's fees and they can compassionately give practical assistance to the likes of Onai.

This is how John explains this new, necessary and pragmatic code of conduct to her daughter Faith; "My daughter, the legal limits are not important. How else do you think we can raise your university fees and set aside money to start building? The line between what's legal and what is not has never been as blurred as it is now. *Hakuchina* [There is nothing]" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 27). However, Tagwira is not an advocate for a free-fall loosening of morality and code of conduct. Her voice, through the characters, is ever questioning to what extent people have to allow themselves to sink simply because of a need to survive. Tagwira concedes that from traditional folklore and proverbs, Zimbabweans have had sayings like "a clever bird uses other birds' feathers to build its nest" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 51), as just like in traditional orature, times of crisis have always been there and the "hare" and "tortoise" characters survived through cunning and wit. However, there is always nagging at the back of many that as Onai says, "sometimes I have a feeling that we are slowly turning into a nation of thieves" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 26). Even Katy is also perturbed and asks, "I know we have to survive. But at what cost?" (Tagwira, 2006, p. 29). The costs are evident in some of the characters, like Gloria who sold her body for sex but is now at the verge of dying of AIDS; Police Inspector Nzou the illegal foreign dealer who is finally arrested, and John who is forced to flee the country because of the foreign currency dealership. The scars are there to see and such are

the contradictions and paradoxical consequences of survival in a situation that has horrors like the Zimbabwean crisis of 1999 to 2009.

Another interesting dimension of pragmatic morality is expressed through the brave acts of Katy and Onai so that they can survive the threat of HIV/AIDS since they are at high risk. Married to a reckless philanderer who does not care about her, Onai takes bold steps so that she can survive. These are steps hardly ever heard of in an African traditional setup and she changes her identity from being a submissive and cultural wife to being a resolute and cunning wife. What many could have considered the greatest betrayal, unbecoming of a woman and an unforgivable sin, she sees as a necessary evil for survival - and survive she does. This is how she thinks over the choice she makes:

Her biggest failure as a wife lay in refusing Gari his conjugal rights ... unless he agreed to use condoms. In a rare moment of rebelliousness, she had told him clearly no condoms, no intimacy. She felt a twinge of guilt, then immediately forgave herself. What was a woman supposed to do with a philandering husband when the risk of HIV infection was so real? She was consumed by a burning desire to stay alive for her children, and stay alive she would. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 26)

Survive she surely does whilst Gari and his girlfriend finally succumb to the disease. She goes to the New Start Centre and when she discovers that she is indeed HIV negative, thanks to the drastic survival choices she has made, Onai that night sleeps dreamlessly and when she wakes up, she feels that a burden has been lifted and as a happy survivor she is all smiles.

Furthermore, Tagwira continues to argue that despite the fact that she trusts her husband, Katy also knows that as a haulage truck driver John is at a high risk to get infected. As John prepares to go to South Africa after Gari's burial, Katy packs his bag and puts condoms in his bag, telling him that if ever one day he is tempted, he has to be prepared. Despite John's protests, she insists because for Tagwira, it is pointless to be an economic survivor yet lose one's life. As she puts it:

Any other woman would have told her that her mind was unhinged, and that she was sanctioning infidelity. She chose not to see it that way. These were not times when one could rely on naive assumptions and sit back complacently. One always had to be on guard. Out of her own volition, this was her way of protecting what she held close to her heart. (Tagwira, 2006, p. 245)

Rules and cultural values have been changed here. Katy accepts the reality that she is faced with. The economic crisis has pushed her husband to get a job that demanded that he travel long distances to other countries in search of livelihood, yet this has its attendant dangers. This therefore calls for cultural transformation. The norms and values she has been socialised into need to be twisted to suit her specific situation and as a resilient survivor she makes sure that the rules, norms, values and code of behaviour, are informed by the situation on the ground. Certainly she may not desire to share her husband with another woman but she does not want to take that chance of assuming that her husband will never cheat on her. That is the true mark of a survivor - times are changing and she also has to change, transform to a different level of morality and construct new codes of behaviour to live by. The challenges

facing people are varied and the coping strategies need to be equally relevant. At the end of the day, Katy survives and copes with the challenges she faces - she is about to be re-united with her husband and she is healthy on most fronts – which are economic, physical, emotional and cultural.

3.4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter has looked at one short story, “The hare” by Mungoshi and one novel, *The uncertainty of hope* by Tagwira. “The hare”, set at the onset of the Zimbabwean crisis, illustrated that the crisis has multiple dimensions and through the two characters, Nhongo and Sara, it has been made clear that survival is possible. The two characters are examples of a non-resilient victim who fails to survive and a resilient victor, respectively. The qualities which qualify Sara to be a survivor include her acceptance of change so that she can work on it, her resilience, protean nature as well as serendipity. Despite the cultural barriers that threaten to stifle her, Sara fights, masters change, manages to thrive under pressure and bounce back from the setbacks occasioned by the multiple dimensions of the crisis. Her challenges can be understood from an individual, family and national level, and the fact that she rises above them makes her an inspiration to the readers who also face different crises in their lives.

In *The uncertainty of hope*, the power of positive expectations has been explored as one of the major coping strategies urbanites devise to survive the crisis and live in the city with hope. Starting from vulnerable livelihoods, the characters embark on a tortuous journey, and what gives them sustenance is their hope, resilience, optimism and a positive attitude. Onai and Katy transform the titular “uncertainty of hope” into

concretised hope. From informal alliances, formal support groups, education, purposive living and determination, right up to devising a code of pragmatic morality, the uniting factor is survival. Against all odds, people journey purposefully and resiliently, refusing to allow the external circumstances to condemn them to a life of misery. They are hopeful, meet life head on and the fiction here offers liberating and breakthrough stories to strengthen the reader's own innate resilient capacities for a happier, more successful, and better life. As such, reading and interpreting this fiction in such terms opens up and clarifies the dimension of applied literary studies. Applied literary studies in that line of thought implies an analysis of fiction in relation to how it can be used to clarify human problems and be suggestive of how human problems can be practically ameliorated.

The next chapter looks at how fiction demonstrates the ways people negotiate the crisis through seeking alternative spaces. This has been a recurrent feature in Chapters Two and Three - by focusing on the diasporic communities, the remittances and livelihood strategies, the literary representations of urban survival can be furthered.

CHAPTER FOUR

METAPHORS OF MIGRATION, THE DIASPORA AND SURVIVAL:
NEGOTIATING THE CRISIS THROUGH SEEKING ALTERNATIVE SPACES

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The foregoing analysis has furthered the critical idea that imaginative (fictional) literature has an apt capacity to represent the complexities of change and the common man's urban dweller-ship. In the selected fiction some people are represented as being so inventive and crafty that they are able to reconstruct the city space, and make it their own site of struggle and productivity through urban informalities and their sense of agency, as has been demonstrated in Chapter Two. Building on the ubiquity of these survival strategies and coping mechanisms in fiction, the previous chapter explored the capacity of ordinary people to change their identities, their resilience and their absorption of the process of cultural transformation for survival during times of crisis. Particularly striking is the metamorphosis and emergency of the survival personality in the fictionalised experiences of urbanites. Through an analysis of the story "The Hare", a succinct Manichaeian dichotomy of the reaction versus response personality has been shown, as well as the dichotomous non-resilient victim versus the resilient victor. Ultimately the story demonstrated that against all odds, survival is possible and the short story writer can and has captured this experience, and fossilised it for the reader. In the novel *The uncertainty of hope*, Chapter Three has also shown how the urbanites' world is made more malleable and protean so that a new form of pragmatic morality can be utilised in order to survive, prosper and escape the myriad levels of insecurity.

This chapter stems from and is partly informed by some of the characters from the fiction analysed in Chapter Two, namely Sara who is Nhongo's wife in the story "The Hare", and John, Katy's husband in the novel *The uncertainty of hope*. These two characters, as an ingenious avenue for survival, seek livelihood beyond their national borders. Sara is a constant traveller whose sojourns are necessitated by a need to make it. Though urban Harare is her permanent home, she always travels to South Africa and, through the travelling to worlds beyond her national border; she manages to rescue her family from the fangs of economic collapse. In other words, some of the descriptors of her protean nature and serendipity are couched in this ability to move beyond the national borders of crisis-hit Zimbabwe, whose stifling crisis is a threat to her family and the nation in its generality. Whilst for Katy's husband, John, the means of survival as a professional driver is through driving from the cesspools of the economic as well as the political crisis that characterised Zimbabwe in the years 1999 to 2009 by going beyond borders. The forms of survival strategies as displayed through these two characters' coping strategies will be revisited and furthered in the present chapter.

This chapter is therefore about the representation of migration, the diaspora and survival, and the chapter ultimately culminates in an exploration of how the ordinary people negotiate the crisis through seeking alternative spaces. First, some more grounding of the concept of migration, the diaspora, remittances and survival in the context of Zimbabwe is attempted. Thereafter, the literary representation of this coping tactic will be explored ideally through two strands of thought. These are an exploration of the representation of how the people are escaping home, personal

circumstances and domesticity by any means necessary in search of a better life and then the issue of smuggling, remittances and household survival in crisis-hit Zimbabwe as it is expressed through the selected fiction.

It is an axiom that the history of migration is essentially an account of the variegated struggles of people who seek to survive, to make ends meet and thereby escape the incessant crises occasioned by various factors which include natural disasters, drought, war, as well as economic and political turmoil. The last two aspects outstandingly typify the Zimbabwean crisis. In the words of the Canadian economist and Harvard professor, John Kenneth Galbraith:

Migration is the oldest action against poverty. It selects those who most want help. It is good for the country to which they go; it helps break the equilibrium of poverty in the country from which they come. What is the perversity in the human soul that causes people to resist so obvious a good?
(Galbraith, 1979, p. 69)

The action of migration abounds in canonical and literary texts, and goes as far back as biblical literature as it was taken by Jacob the founding father of the nation of Israel. Because of a famine in Canaan, Jacob and his extended family moved to Egypt, where they stayed for a very long time as it is recorded in the book of Genesis. In periods of crisis, what is significant is the fact that spatial and physical dislocation in the form of internal and external migration is often pervasive, as people facing difficult situations move away from their places of residence to seek new livelihoods and other forms of survival (Chiumbu & Musemwa, 2012, p. xiii). It is this phenomenon that does not escape the literary artist's eye, therefore in response

to the research question in this study concerning how literary texts participate in narrating, representing and reflecting coping strategies for survival; this chapter carves a novel niche in contemporary literary studies. Significant is the fact that when modern states go into terminal decline due to a myriad of tempestuous causes or fail altogether as evidenced by the Zimbabwean case study in question, the most predictable response of the ordinary people is to get out - as soon as they can and to wherever they can. People exploit any available space, including the urban space as has already been demonstrated in Chapter Two and a particularly interesting strategy here being the occupation of international borders, which in other terms is called mass out-migration. This has been the most prevalent form of migration in crisis-hit Zimbabwe.

Whilst migration is not a new phenomenon both in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe, the pattern of the 1999 to 2009 period saw a sharp increase which has caught the eye of many academics, like Crush and Tevera (2010), Gaidzanwa (1999), McGregor, (2007), Tevera and Zinyama (2002), to mention but a few. Yet the general consensus in academia is that there is little knowledge about the lived experience of these migrants (Chiumbu & Musemwa, 2012, p. ix). The present research and the current chapter particularly take cognisance of the general paucity of academic data on the literary dimension, hence the reason all the more to look at this phenomenon here. The imagined existence of these tactics of survival, the fictionalisation of how spaces are reconfigured and “owned” as people negotiate the national borders to seek alternative livelihoods is a worthy cause in Afro-centred literary circles which finds representation here.

4.2. ESCAPING HOME BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE

This section looks at the making of global citizens as metaphors of survival, and contributes to an understanding of the lived experiences of the ordinary people as they “escape home” in search of better livelihoods. It demonstrates the critical idea that, as shaped by the crisis, Zimbabwe’s social, economic and political spaces are not confined to the territorial or geographic space within the Zimbabwean borders, and that to survive a crisis one of the tactics is certainly to move.

It may be dangerous, uncertain and life-threatening, as well as life-taking, but the journey out of the crisis-hit environment still remains one viable option available to the ordinary people; however, this might have paradoxical results. This paradox of migration as a curse and blessing is graphically captured in Mlalazi’s short story which is aptly titled “The border jumpers”. Through the use of simple, ordinary and unpretentiously descriptive diction, the reader is carried into a vortex of the chilling, tranquil and eerie atmosphere of an escape route used by illegal immigrants into South Africa. The story begins *in medias res* and through this literary style Mlalazi manages to inject a sense of urgency and life into the narrative; an urgency which by extension also spells out how the ordinary man urgently needs to escape home and seek alternative livelihoods. The panoramic view presented to the reader is equally enchanting in Aristotelian terms of tragedy, where the reader both fears and falls in love with the horrific incidents.

In the short story “The border jumpers” (Mlalazi, 2008), as a group of thirteen men are guided through the dangerous and crocodile-infested Limpopo which is an escape

route for those who want to cross illegally into South Africa, a freak incident takes place. The only names which are mentioned in the story are those of Mbedzi the paid-for guide who is leading them and those of Zenzo and Vusa, whilst the other characters remain nameless. Some of them are just described as if the author Mlalazi wants these unnamed characters to be representative of the vast majority of people who have illegally crossed the Limpopo into South Africa. As they are crossing the river, the omniscient narrative voice only records how Zenzo panics whilst midway across the river and feels as if something has gripped him. The scream from Zenzo causes pandemonium as the group thinks of crocodiles which find easy prey in the border jumpers. After they have managed to cross, a head count is ordered by Mbedzi the guide and they discover that two men who were at the rear have gone missing and it is not clear to the group whether they have been eaten by the crocodiles or they got scared and returned to the Zimbabwean side of the river. But despite all the doubt and uncertainty, Mbedzi urges them on so that they can get at the rendezvous in time as he says:

“Whatever happened back there, just forget about it”, he told them. “Your way lies only forward, and while we are standing here like the opposition discussing the Party, time is moving, and if we are late to the pickup point, the van won’t wait for anyone. I don’t have to mention to you the kind of shit you will be in should that happen”. (Mlalazi, 2008, p. 20)

One critical observation that can be made from this short story is that Mbedzi is one of the survivors of the crisis who accepts the reality of life and sees a niche that he exploits as a coping strategy. Mbedzi becomes a “professional” guide who gets paid

to lead the migrants across the borders through secret routes during night time. In this story, this is just one of the groups he is ushering into South Africa with a success rate of 11 out of 13. From the quotation above, what is clear is that this is possibly a lucrative syndicate that works together as there is a designated pickup point and there is also a van so that they can beat the notorious “border patrol” which tries to stop illegal immigrants. The process of border jumping may sound haphazard and rudimentary, but there is a sense of organisation in the operation and with these basic structures, people manage to escape home. Therefore, Mbedzi represents one form of a set of survival tactics and the crafty coping mechanisms devised for survival. Despite its illegality and crudity, the trade he plies leaves the reader justifiably guessing that Mbedzi can manage to see another day due to the earnings he gets from this activity and this is despite its precariousness as a trade.

One more important observation that can be made from this story is that despite the vulnerability of the border jumpers, Mbedzi does not prey on them and dump them in the midst of nowhere. There is a twinge of empathy that flavours the story, and Mbedzi’s concern is registered in the tone of the narrative voice in the story, which goes all the more to show that despite the terrible and dehumanising dimension of the crisis, some people still remain humane. The African concept of *ubuntu*, African humanism and togetherness, still persists and this is the spirit that binds people together despite all the odds. The previous chapters have borne testimony to this. The fact of recognising something positive out of all the troubles faced by the people as in this case, is one of the core objectives of this study as such a reading illustrates the survival and coping strategies which the people utilise during periods of crisis.

This Afro-centric lens of reading the short story, therefore, goes a long way to fight and dispel Afro-pessimisms, and shows that there is hope expressed through African literature. The artist, like Mlalazi, becomes a raconteur, whose duty is in true classical *Achebean* terms (1988), a teacher to the community.

Furthermore, another seemingly mundane but necessary point to make in this short story is on the spiritual dimension. Not only is the spiritual dimension symbolised by the snuff which Mbedzi the guide, pinches and sniffs, but also from the incantation he pronounces in case the missing two border jumpers are dead:

Wherever you are my two brave sons. Let it be known that it was not through your friends here that you got left behind. I plead with you to grant them a safe journey to Johannesburg, where you also headed. Also to grant them a safe haven from the poverty from which they are fleeing. (Mlalazi, 2008, p. 21)

This prayer, uttered in a sombre, sincere and serene tone, closes the short story, “The border jumpers” as Mbedzi leads the border jumpers onto South African soil and their intended destination is made clear – it is Johannesburg. Like the biblical Israelites led by a pillar of cloud and a star by night, this group also seemingly travels through the guidance of the supernatural; the spirits of their colleagues have been pleaded with to be guides and not to be haunting spirits in quest for vengeance. The group has crossed the river and jumped the border to the metaphorical Canaan which is Johannesburg. The critical argument to be made and emphasised from this story is that national borders become meaningless to the poor yet determined people in times of serious socio-economic crisis (Duri, 2012). The border jumpers do not merely sit

idly while hunger and extreme lack tear them to pieces. They are active participants in determining their destiny as they refuse to play the helpless victim – they devise ingenious ways of escaping and thereby seeking means of survival. The border patrol, national governments and immigration officials may criminalise such activities, yet such informal and “illegal” pursuits assist the poor where the state has failed. Denied the opportunity through bureaucratic processes to go to where they can sell their labour where it is needed, the ordinary people devise new ways and routes to escape home by any means necessary; this short story highlights that such a survival strategy works for some of them.

This short story brings to the fore the predicament of those ordinary people who could not raise enough money to acquire a national passport in Zimbabwe, a document which has stopped being a right but has become a privilege for those who have some money and connections. During the crisis-hit and institutionally weak Zimbabwe, affording and obtaining a passport was a nightmare to many people as the printing paper for the passport was almost always out of stock. To make matters worse, even if one was fortunate enough to acquire a passport, another stumbling block was the South African government’s conditions to get a visa which were prohibitively stringent. Therefore, the surest escape route available was through the act of border jumping.

Yet still, from Mlalazi’s characterisation, a quick reference to onomastics indicates that Mbedzi, Vusa and Zenzo are Ndebele names, hence, historically pointing to a South African origin of the border jumpers in the story. Therefore, given the life threatening circumstances in their present country, the national boundaries set up by

the colonial regimes can but only be ignored. The artificial, man-made border becomes a barrier to be circumvented. The need to survive dictates the *modus operandi* and border jumping is the surest way to escape home. Hopefully, the eleven who survive the Limpopo waters and crocodiles as well as the border patrol will manage to survive the poverty they are running from.

In the story “Crossroads” by Tshuma (2011), the idea of escaping home and crossing the national border is furthered and the representation of survival tactics is also extended. Whilst the previous story, “The border jumpers” gives the reader a glimpse into the lived experiences of those who use illegal or informal entry points, in “Crossroads” the emphasis is on the legal or formal entry points. Narrated from a first person point of view, the reader is easily entrapped in the literary world of the plight and - most importantly - determination and ultimate success of the protagonist. The nameless narrator in the short story journeys to the South African embassy in Harare for a visa, and the story takes us through the road trip to South Africa and finally to Park Station in Johannesburg. The escape from home is complete and this happens despite the challenges the narrator faces and in addition to that, the author’s economical use of characterisation makes the story more involving and easier to understand. Just like Mbedzi in “The border jumpers”, in the short story “Crossroads” there is another survivor of sorts who sees an opportunity that exists in those masses trying to escape home. First the narrator takes note of how, at the South African embassy in Harare:

Hawkers march up and down with their wares, pens and cigarettes, *freesits* and cool drinks, bananas and *mabhanzi* [buns]. There is even a photographer,

who points at a makeshift studio under a tree and yells, “Passport size photos, visa photos, any photo that they want I take, cheap-cheap photos. (Tshuma, 2011, p. 67)

The above scenario can be looked at with two lenses of interpretation. First is the tourist-like gaze which only sees the pitiful and desperate situation of the urbanites. Second, and the one propagated in this research, is the gaze that sees and gives credit to the efforts of the urban poor to better their condition. The spatial location of these actors, the city of Harare, is a hunting ground of possibilities, and despite the meanness of the conditions, survival is possible through such entrepreneurial activities.

Given the gravity of the situation, those attempting to escape home, whilst waiting in snaking queues, are desperate for food and also for such utilities as a simple pen to use for filling in a form, hence the reason why some enterprising urbanites capitalise on such situations. This all the more goes to show that agency is ubiquitous and the survivor personality of the people comes in a plethora of forms. This is further corroborated by the narrator’s observation of how:

The most amazing type of hawker approaches you the moment you join the tail of the queue. “Sista, it is obvious from your place in the line, that you will not make it. They only take fifty people a day”. A dramatic pause. “But I can help you sista, my place is number twenty three. I will happily sell it to you.” (Tshuma, 2011, p. 67)

This is by no means an exaggeration in the crisis-hit Zimbabwean chronotope as the reading can ring a cord of verisimilitude to someone who has had first-hand experience of life during the Zimbabwean crisis. This “amazing type of hawker” has no intention of escaping home but certainly has found a rich ground for making it through those who are trying to escape home. This type of survivor personality, as sure as the sun sets, goes to the embassy to sleep at the gate, so that when other people come in early in the morning the hawker already occupies a couple of positions in the queue which he/she sells off to those whose position is after the fifty mark, the maximum number of those who are served by the visa authorities per day.

When approached by the hawker for the first time, the narrator is shocked that the amount the enterprising hawker charges is a hundred Rand, which is a very significant amount in crisis-hit Zimbabwe. However, after a couple of days of failure to make it in the top fifty, the narrator accepts the offer and one can imagine how much the hawker who sells her places in the queue makes per day, let alone per week and ultimately per year. Even professionals could probably not get that amount of money. This is also a further demonstration that whilst the crisis may have made making ends meet almost impossible, for the determined and inventive urban sleaker, possibility abounded. The lady hawker in the story ensures that she “owns” some of the fifty places every day which makes it a sellable commodity and becomes her own form of employment. Even the narrator, through a discernible authorial intrusion which permeates through the story, concedes that as much as the crisis in Zimbabwe has multiple dimensions, the people are also protean and crafty. To attest to this, there is wry commentary which is made about this action the hawker that:

Another ingenious method of making a living. Sleeping outside the embassy, queuing for those who do not have the means to be here early, charging a fee for 'services rendered'. There is nothing that one cannot do here anymore. One's ability to make money is limited only by the scope of one's creativity. (Tshuma, 2011, p. 67)

The creative artist, the writer of this short story, is hereby expressing the value of creativity, innovativeness and resiliency, especially when applied to make ends meet. This apt quotation illustrates that survival is possible in spite of the impossible circumstances. Those escaping home, like the protagonist, also provide opportunities for others to survive. This is in the same manner as Mbedzi's case in "The border jumpers". People make things happen for themselves instead of waiting for a messiah from somewhere else to come and help save the situation.

Furthermore, the narrator's travails did not start with the scenario at the South African embassy in Harare. Whilst in the short story "The borders jumpers", to escape home without a passport is the viable option, in "Crossroads" the idea is that against all odds a passport has to be obtained. In crisis-hit Zimbabwe getting hold of the passport to get out of the mire was a difficult and almost an impossible task. However, the people devise ways of getting the document and the narrator's way of getting the passport is one of the few means that will be discussed. The narrator recounts how she produced all the required documents for she was aware of the fact that at the embassy she had "heard the most horrific stories about these people, how they will find practically any excuse to turn you away" (Tshuma, 2011, p. 68). Hurdles are lying everywhere for the ordinary citizen and given such circumstances

it can never be emphasised enough that the selection of the Zimbabwean situation of 1999 to 2009 as a worst case scenario for the study is befitting the purpose of this study.

Given such difficulties which have been explored above, therefore, it becomes interesting to note how the protagonist not only observes and comments on how others like the hawkers survive, but also how she herself manages to cope with the crisis. Determined to escape home and its attendant problems, the narrator approaches the visa counter with everything in order because she has managed to acquire all the documents:

Police clearance. Seduced out of an officer old enough to be your father. A phone number had to be proffered, fake promises of a get-together made. You intend to be long gone by then. Two thousands Rands worth of traveller's cheques. Money borrowed from Mi, your aunt who lives in South Africa, which you must give back upon arrival. A valid passport. Palms greased for this one. Corruption grins at every stage of the hierarchy. (Tshuma, 2011, p. 69)

Out-migration is, therefore, a survival mechanism for the urbanites that cannot stay in crisis-hit Zimbabwe. Whilst the South African government puts stringent visa mechanisms in place like that of requiring one to have two thousand Rands worth of traveller's cheques, people devise ways to surmount this as we see happening between Mi and her niece, who is the protagonist in the story. Similarly, as a way of curbing the mass exodus of people, the Botswana authorities during the crisis-times demanded an immigrant to produce a hundred pula to the immigration officers as

proof of self-sustainability when in their country. However, those escaping home would go as far as to hire a hundred pula from “money hawkers” and give it back once across the border, for a small fee of course. These are the various coping strategies devised by the ordinary people who want to go beyond their borders in search of better livelihoods.

Moreover, the fictionalisation of coping strategies is further presented through the journey into the proverbial “promised land”. As a graduate of the university of life called experience, the narrator, whilst in the bus prepares for the unexpected. As a novice and initiate into diasporic life, the narrator forms friendships and alliances with those who have been there before. That is why she talks of a new found friend for strategic reasons and she reminisces, “Tari is a friend I picked up on the bus, a friend I will drop when we get to Park Station in Johannesburg. Somebody to show me the ropes at the border” (Tshuma, 2011, p. 63). In the novel *The uncertainty of hope* as discussed in the previous chapter, friendships and alliances are critical tools necessary for one to make it in times of crisis. Similarly, in the second chapter of this study, the same point is observed in Mai Jira and Mai George and how separately they had to devise kinship associations so that together they could stay afloat. Conversely, the friendship in the present story is a momentary one made in order to see the person survive a momentary hurdle, as opposed to a lasting relationship. The narrator’s survival instinct also guides her to benefit from Tari, whilst not compromising herself, for instance like when she seduced the police clearance from a police officer with fake promises. This is the pragmatic morality that assures her a

safe crossover; such situations call for wisdom, wit and a cunning mind, lest one gets run over by the forces at play in tempestuous and ever-changing Zimbabwe.

Tari himself is yet another metaphor of the diasporic survivor personality; a typical global citizen. He refuses to allow the fate of one country to be his as well. Therefore, he becomes a transnational personality who enjoys the global connectivity of countries, which is a reality of the 21st century. To understand Tari's personality in terms of survival, Mbiba's concept of global citizenry can be useful here. For Mbiba (2012):

The term "global citizen" is used in an effort to imagine and bring into being a person whose social, economic and political life is not bound by the confines of a single country's political boundaries. He or she can settle and contribute to the welfare of any place on the globe, and make home anywhere without restrictions. In reality, legal and social prejudices often constrain the development of this kind of citizen, but the term is used here as a way of stressing the dignity and positive contributions of displaced Zimbabweans. (p. 97)

Though this definition was used for a slightly different setup, the core sense of the definition is of great relevance to the present literary study. Tari typifies this definition of a global citizen and also shows that for the sake of survival one does not have to forsake the home of origin. Survival as a coping strategy can be further understood to include straddling the national borders and malleably embracing the complexities of change. Tari brags about his coping tactics as he flows with the current, and as the crisis trends shift Tari as well in a versatile and protean manner,

follows suit. Tari's coping and survival strategy is through crossing the border. Under such circumstances the idea of home becomes blurred as one becomes a global citizen. He explains it thus:

My dear, I pass through here every two to three weeks. Two weeks in South Africa, two weeks in Zimbabwe... I am into buying and selling, I do everything and anything. It used to be petrol, even rands for forex. That is until those bastards top-up-there made forex legal tender. (Tshuma, 2011, p. 63)

As a typical survivor, Tari does not rely on only one form of survival strategy as if programmed, but has the plasticity of character to change and adapt. Given the phenotypical and linguistic semblance between some Zimbabweans and the majority of South Africans, this choice of destination is most ideal. Tari deciphers the laws of supply and demand so as to chip in where there is a niche and his survival is made certain through the cunning observations he makes, then taking the necessary steps.

In his research paper entitled "Linguistic negotiation of the Zimbabwean crisis", Kadenge (2012) discusses how talking about the crisis figuratively became an imperative survival strategy, mainly to "save face" or to protect oneself against victimisation and/or possible arrest. Such metaphorical and stylised communication that is distilled to make acceptable the otherwise unacceptable in strict social settings is also exemplified in this short story. The narrator uses the word *greasing palms* or *hands* when referring to bribery or corruption as if this is literally making the hands more lubricated so as to release whatever the other party wants. When in the short story there is a girl who attempts to get into South Africa with an almost expired

visa, she is denied entry and pleads with the immigration officer loudly and those who are used to the system tell her:

You went about it the wrong way. How can you expect to change her mind when you are pleading so publicly? Are you trying to make a fool out of her? You need to talk to someone, one on one. *Grease a few palms*. (Tshuma, 2011, p. 65)

The linguistic register of the day is a descriptor of the new code of conduct occasioned by the crisis. The constant use of the substitute and more acceptable metaphors is also indicative of an adopted pragmatic morality. The concept of *greasing the palm* being referred to in this short story ceases to be a Zimbabwean phenomenon only, but a trans-border phenomenon which has to be and is being practised by South African officers as well. When the narrator sees graffiti admonishing travellers to use pure toilet paper in the toilet and “NO ZIM DOLLARS”, she takes a photo of the inscription as “a keepsake, to show my children one day, when my country is no longer lying on its back with its legs spread apart, in an act of incest with its fathers and their children (Tshuma, 2011, p. 69). This statement further reminds the reader that these are not normal circumstances; therefore, the moral logics of everyday life have to be adjusted accordingly. It is a crisis situation and for people escaping home, the line between what is legal and illegal is quite blurred. The determining factor in what one does is couched upon the desire to survive and make it.

Leaving a country where food shortages are acute, with shops virtually empty and foodstuffs on the black market are beyond reach and rarely available, incessant

power cuts and erratic water supplies, the narrator sighs in great relief as she crosses into South Africa. Her perorations justify the reason for escape. Even though she has not acquired any money, the joy at being able to spend the little that she has is satisfactory. It has been worthwhile escaping home and in a state of euphoria she marvels thus:

Even the lights here seem brighter, more cheerful. It's amazing the things that will make one leap with joy. No more power cuts. No more water shortages. No more queues. Joy is an emotion that never matures. I buy in a frenzy. A packet of Simba chips, Cadbury chocolate, a can of coke, bottled water, a chicken and mushroom pie. A packet of pinky sweets. Haven't had those since I was a child. I feel like such a kid. (Tshuma, 2011, p. 69)

If in the short story "The border jumpers" the story teller left the story cliff hanging to allow the reader to imagine how the escapees feel, in "Crossroads" the reader is allowed a peep into the inner contentment and relief of the successful escapees. The long-buried emotions of joy and exhilaration are not pent up anymore but find full expression.

The uses of contrasts by the writer are quite illuminating as "the promise of auspicious beginnings" (Tshuma, 2011, p. 70) take root and sprout in the narrator. A world of possibilities has been opened up for the narrator and she can dream big. Even the street posters urge her to think outside the box, whereas "where I come from, we've learned to think without the box" (Tshuma, 2011, p. 70). Tari, the friend, also urges her to be on Facebook, which is yet another illustration of progress; potentialities abound and both can be seen at the practical and metaphorical level, as

survival and hope are beginning to hatch. Despite the caution from Mi, the narrator is adamant that “after a year or so, I should have saved up enough money for university” (Tshuma, 2011, p. 72). Certainly Mi is right in saying that without papers it is difficult but at least one can afford to dream and with the strong will of the narrator, she refuses to bow down.

The mark of a survivor personality is discerned, when against all odds and where others falter, the person pulls through. Mi’s words are dampening the spirit of the faint-hearted as she says that “school and all that crap, my dear, forget it. I came here, as naive as you are, with nothing but a pocketful of dreams. But look at me” (Tshuma, 2011, p. 73). Mi represents another breed of the diasporans who, though they have made it across the border, are content with only existence. However, according to the protagonist, in a world of possibilities, it is worthy moving beyond existence into flourishing mode. Ultimately the story ends with her vowing that she will be different and undeterred; “that’s you, I want to say. It’s not gonna be me” (Tshuma, 2011, p. 73). That is the audacity of hope in a narrator who escapes home in order to make it beyond borders. As the story comes to an end, she has set her goals and says “I keep smiling” (Tshuma, 2011, p. 73).

The eleven men who cross over to South Africa in the short story “The border jumpers” as well as Tari and the nameless narrator in “Crossroads” are, therefore, a representational fragment of the many people whose coping strategy is through escaping home. These fictionalised lives represent Zimbabwe’s exodus and their lived experiences bring another important dimension to survival through out-migration. Statistically, the number of people who left Zimbabwe is mainly based on

estimates which range from the barely plausible to the totally outlandish. Some of the original estimates are from the former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, “who reportedly told Commonwealth Secretary General Don Mackinnon in October 2003 that ‘he has three million Zimbabweans in South Africa, Chissano (Mozambique) has 400 000 while Botswana hosts up to 200 000 of them’” (Crush & Tevera, 2010, p. ix). Whilst, on the other hand, the South African Department of Home Affairs, cited in the same article, contradicts Mbeki by saying that there is no way they can know exactly how many Zimbabweans are in the country because many of them do not cross legally but enter the country clandestinely by jumping the borders, swimming through the river and bribing their way through (Cruch & Tevera, 2010, p. 3.). This all the more goes to corroborate what the short story “The border jumpers” has presented. Whilst there is lack of clarity and some disagreements with regards to the statistics, the importance of fiction is illustrated. Fiction goes beyond mere numbers and represents the flesh and blood of the people, the pulse of their lived experiences and this is what the short stories have demonstrated. The reader metaphorically experiences the trials, tribulations and triumphs of a people who are trying to survive through escaping a nation under siege.

In addition, to show the multiplicity of these coping strategies in relation to escaping home, a look at the short story “My cousin-sister Rambanai” from Gappah’s award winning anthology *An elegy for easterly* is of critical importance. The story is about Rambanai who has been in America but who has returned for her father’s funeral. Her brother, who is in the United Kingdom, does not come back but instead sends the cherished pounds in crisis-hit Zimbabwe. Rambanai comes back a changed person

and the envy to many, but after the funeral she does not go back to America. Later it dawns upon the narrator that Rambanai cannot actually go back to America because she no longer has a valid visa. Rambanai's passport has been crossed out as an illegal immigrant possibly because of her overstay. But she does not give up and sets on a shrewd mission to get herself out of the country so that she can escape the misery around her. She manages to surmount the challenges she faces and goes to an alternative destination, the United Kingdom, whilst the narrator (Rambanai's cousin) and her husband also follow suit.

Rambanai is a typification of the "been-to" personality whom the prominent African writer Armah writes about in his celebrated novel *Fragments* (Armah, 1971). She has been to the diaspora, to the United States of America and for that she has a lot to show off with - two suitcases crammed with clothes and an accent being at the top of the list, let alone a venerable status in the society. This is evidenced when, "Having been in America for five years without coming home, she was the star at the funeral; everyone wanted to look at her" (Gappah, 2009, p. 211). To survive, she chooses to join the diaspora community and instead of the traditional trend of going to South Africa, she goes to the United States of America. This illustrates the fact that the Zimbabwean exodus as a coping strategy is not limited to regional destinations but the people virtually make the whole globe their potential destination. Whilst the previous short story talks of South Africa as a metaphorical symbol of a perfect choice for outmigration of all regional destinations, in "My cousin-sister Rambanai" the destination is beyond the seas. For the sake of survival, one therefore does not need to be limited by regional or continental boundaries but needs to think beyond

the immediate and intermediate environment like what Rambanai does. Instead of the typical Booker T. Washington adage in classical African-American literature, that to make it in life one has to “cast your bucket where you are”, in this instance, we see a different worldview altogether. At times there is a need to realise that people are not trees, they can move from one place to another in order to embrace a better livelihood.

To attest to the idea that where agency abounds, opportunity is equally plenteous, this is what Rambanai says:

Our housemaid *SisiDessy* worshipped Rambanai and could not get enough of her stories. “America is the land of opportunity, *SisiDessy*,” Rambanai told her. There you can be anything you want, anything at all. Someone like you can be a housemaid today, and before you know it, you have your own TV show. (Gappah, 2009, p. 218)

For people who are in a crisis, opportunities are certainly limited and some have to cast their bucket where they are as the previous two chapters have shown. Yet for the likes of Rambanai, opportunity lies in far off places and she goes for these greener pastures. What needs to be underlined is the fact that this is a crisis situation, so whatever the world has to offer one has to grab with both hands. The underlying fact is that survival is made possible and through the short story writer the coping strategies are presented. The dream of escaping home is not limited to the Rambanais of the world but even the downtrodden masses from the “ghetto” like the Mbare hairdressers who are keenly aware of the value of being in the diaspora. That is why Rambanai’s hairdresser pleads with her, “I have a cousin-brother who is willing to

do anything, please help him if you can', and Rambanai gave Manyara her number in America and said she would definitely see what she could do" (Gappah, 2009, p. 217).

After being denied entry into the United States of America, surely there is "the death of her American dream" (Gappah, 2009, p. 212), but survival in a cruel world with its multiple constraints like the one Rambanai lives in, means that she also has to devise multiple strategies. First, Rambanai has to accept the reality of her circumstances of the present so that she can map the way forward. Initially she has lived a delusional life, pretending that she is only taking long to go back to America because of problems with connecting flights and she even shops for her friends in America. However, to survive a crisis, it may be at personal, family or national level to come up with practical solutions; one has to face the present reality. Finally Rambanai decides to face the truth, which also liberates her both metaphorically and practically:

America is a non-starter, she said cheerfully. They will never give me a visa now. I will go to London. At least we don't need visas for England, being in the Commonwealth. In England, I can get an office job. I will continue my dancing. Or maybe acting, I have always wanted to be an actress. I will get a proper job, go to school at night. I will do something. (Gappah, 2009, p. 225)

Rambanai is a resolute and resilient individual who has a strong-willed determination and once she purposes in her heart, she does something. Resigning oneself to fate is not an option at times like this and Gappah created a resolute character like Rambanai to communicate the myriad of opportunities which await those determined

to escape home and survive. Rambanai looks at life full circle and explores all the alternatives in search of the most viable niche. She confronts her problems head-on and claims her place in the world. Yet, it is still not enough to just discover a niche. There must be the means to get to that desired goal of being once again in the diaspora. With her passport endorsed she has to get a new one. This is yet another nightmare she has to contend with and her resourcefulness in this regard is worth celebrating by the author.

Significant to note in Rambanai's tactics is the value of realising that despite stifling circumstances, the human spirit to resiliently pursue multiple options and possibilities is a survival and coping strategy of note. Unlike the 13 men in "The border jumpers", who swim their way across the river, she cannot swim across the Atlantic waters to the United Kingdom, nor can she smuggle herself into the country, given the sophisticated border controls of the first world, yet there has to be a way. Rambanai devises a way out of her problems and this is what she says, "exactly. I can't go as me; they have records, you know. I need another passport in another name. That is what lots of people do when they have been deported; they just get new passports" (Gappah, 2009, p. 225).

This is yet another celebration of pragmatic morality by the author as has been discussed in the previous chapter. She just has to choose another name she really likes and for Rambanai the opportunity of choosing her own name is a joy – it is a symbolical marker of self-determination. After all, her own name which is in the vernacular, when translated means divorce each other, or disunion, or break up; yet now she can decide her own name. Whilst she is of the ruling Shona tribe (and

possibly tired of being associated with the ruling tribe which is blamed for the crisis, after all), Rambanai, by changing her name, can afford to be “transported” to another tribe as she says:

I know, I will choose a Ndex name. They have some really cool names. Nonhlanhla. Busisiwe. Sihle. Gugulethu. I know, Langelihle, that means a beautiful day. You can just call me Langa for short. I can be Ndebele. Oh, I could even be a Ndebele princess. (Gappah, 2009, p. 226)

Indeed she has the power to make her day beautiful and Rambanai goes on to do just that, remarking at the fact that even Oprah Winfrey is part Zulu. The Ndebeles are a splinter group of the Zulus and Rambanai is proud to choose her own name and change her identity as well as determine her future and destiny. She is equally unfazed by the fact that her Ordinary level and Advanced level certificates are in her original name. She will simply explore other interests. This is an indication that to survive, one has to be protean enough to be able to adapt and explore virgin territories. Limitations are never absolutes and in the diaspora one can have a better chance to start afresh.

However, as has been indicated, one cannot escape home only through bright ideas, like the one Rambanai has of changing her name. A lot of money is needed to smooth the whole process and that is when the narrator and her husband Jimmy decide to assist. They sell some of the shares that Jimmy’s father had left for him and also postpone the buying of a new refrigerator so that they can help Rambanai. A significant amount of money is needed for “greasing” the many palms that are involved in acquiring a new birth certificate, identity card and finally, a new passport

which is crispy new and untainted by any endorsement. This aspect of the narrator and her husband Jimmy helping out Rambanai further illustrates the concept of *ubuntu* and the role of the extended family in Africa as a support mechanism to help out those in need.

From another angle of analysis, instead of seeing it only as pure and unadulterated *ubuntu* and a benevolent gesture, this can also be read as a calculated move, meant to make Rambanai reciprocate and invite them to the United Kingdom as well. For later on the narrator searches all over for Rambanai, including searching on the internet sites like ZimUpdate as well as ZimUnite, which are used by the Zimbabweans outside the country who are homesick and want to reconnect. Finally, despite the fact that Rambanai does not at all communicate, they find their own way out of the country:

Two and a half years after, Jimmy and I decided to join the three million who had left the country. It was an economic decision, we explained to everyone who asked, it is an economic decision, we said to ourselves, but in our hearts, we knew that leaving our families was the only way to save our marriage. The time had come for our families to expect something, translucent ears, a bulging stomach, an aversion to strong scents, anything that could be evidence of a baby on the way. (Gappah, 2009, p. 233)

The economic meltdown has bitten hard and surviving it requires ingenuity that culminates in leaving home thereby escaping the fangs of poverty. However, other than the national crisis, the clichéd scapegoat which is measured in economic terms, there is also often a private or personal one which faces the couple. Being married

and taking long to have children, Jimmy and the narrator are pelted from all angles by relatives who see procreation as the ultimate goal in a marriage. Their marriage is heading for the rocks and the only way to save it is through escaping home and also the people at home and their mentality. The crises of life are therefore presented as multi-fold, and the means of surviving are equally multiple, with the idea of going into the diaspora being one of them as has been presented here.

Furthermore, it is necessary to emphasise that another look be cast on how Jimmy and the narrator buy their way out of their country which is facing pronounced economic and political difficulties. Like Rambanai they have some challenges. During the time when Rambanai was planning to emigrate, there was no need for a visa, but now the British have put in place some stringent measures for granting a visa. Zimbabwe is no longer in the commonwealth, and the easy route to the United Kingdom is now curtailed, but for one bent on surviving there is always a way into the diaspora. This is how the narrator explains it:

In the end, we got our visa the same way Rambanai had got her passport, we used the Harare way – someone knew someone in the British embassy with whom we exchanged envelopes stuffed with cash. I gave up teaching and Jimmy engineering to be in England, where the curse of the green passport condemned us to work in the unlit corners of England's health care system, in care homes where we took out the frustrations of our existence by visiting little cruelties on geriatric patients. (Gappah, 2009, p. 235)

Leaving for the diaspora has been made possible for both of them. The easiest way could have been through the links with Rambanai, but Rambanai having vanished

into thin air in the United Kingdom, the narrator and her husband, Jimmy, have to find another alternative and it is “the Harare way”. This metaphorical statement, like “greasing” shows that the urbanites, the urban sleekers in crisis-hit Zimbabwe, do not wallow in apathy but learn to find means and ways of making it in life. By saying that they had to use “the Harare way”, what becomes clear is that the urban character is by all means a survivor. Even Rambanai, once in the United Kingdom, is not limited to a single place, but explores all the cities, hopping from Birmingham, to Newcastle, to Leicester and London. If the international borders cannot limit her, then the town boundaries cannot at all curtail her adventurous spirit, all in the name of survival.

One of the diasporans in the short story “My cousin-sister Rambanai” is Rambanai’s older brother, Thomas. Through Thomas the value of the diaspora as a survival mechanism in crisis-hit Zimbabwe is made even clearer. Thomas has been away for five years now and instead of coming for the funeral, “Thomas wired seven hundred and fifty pounds through Western Union from Manchester, England where he lived” (Gappah, 2009, p. 208). This is the tactful adjustment that is required in the diaspora, especially if one does not have the required papers to stay in the host country. Rambanai chooses to come, and it results in her passport being endorsed such that she cannot go back. But Thomas is wise enough to realise that he would rather send money than come in person for the funeral. As a result, through the effort of the diasporan, Thomas, the remittances he sends:

enabled the family to bury my uncle in the splendour of the Paradise Peace Casket, a gleaming white coffin with golden handles and a gold frame on the

surface into which my aunt put a photograph of my uncle in his University of Leeds graduation cap and gown. (Gappah, 2009, p. 208)

The diasporan is making things happen, as testified in this short story. The situation in crisis-hit Zimbabwe and its attendant economic-meltdown are so dire and a funeral spells a mini-crisis for an ordinary family. Yet for those with a family member who is abroad, things are much better. They do not just use a coffin like everyone else but stand out even through death and mourning as the mourners observe that “it is a *casket* Vatete, not a coffin. A *casket*” (Gappah, 2009, p. 208). Also noteworthy is that the late (who is Thomas and Rambanai’s father), was educated at the University of Leeds. Therefore, despite Jimmy being an engineer, leaving home for the diaspora is not always an indication of brain drain. It can as well be a form of brain gain. In colonial Zimbabwe and shortly after independence, crossing the national borders in search of education was yet another form of seeking a livelihood through investing in education but now it is through going to sell one’s labour, whether skilled or unskilled.

What has been made clear in the foregoing analysis is that when times are hard, one way of surviving is through leaving the boundaries which define the crisis. This manner of leaving or escaping home is in the form of using the illegal means of border jumping, through manoeuvring past the hurdles of visa applications and also getting legal travel documents as well as buying one’s way out of one’s country. In the next section, an endeavour is made to amplify and clarify the fact that through smuggling and remittances, another survival strategy is made visible through fiction.

4.3. SMUGGLING, REMITTANCES, AND HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL IN CRISIS HIT ZIMBABWE

Having looked at how people flee from the failed state of origin due to a crisis, it follows that one of the most outstanding aspects to be further explored is whether emigrating is really worth it. Whether through the extremely hazardous border jumping or through the legal channels, what is made clear in these short stories is that when times become difficult, one of the survival options is that of going to the diaspora. Leaving the country may be for a short period of time, as Tari does, or it may be for an extended period of time, like what Thomas and Rambanai do. Yet, the question still remains, which is whether emigrating is a survival and coping strategy of note. This section of the study will look at some two aspects which are strongly associated with the people who utilise the national borders in search of livelihood. These two aspects are namely, the role of smuggling and the value of remittances, not only as a survival strategy but also as a developmental tool that can be used to reconstruct failed political states and their economies.

When it comes to smuggling, what needs to be emphasised is that smuggling is a basic survival strategy and coping mechanism, especially where the national government has put in impediments that threaten to suffocate the smooth flow of goods from one country to another. The citizens therefore decide to use non-confrontational means of bypassing these stringent measures or highly prohibitive processes of clearing goods. This also includes the exorbitant tax bands imposed on imports and the corrupt customs officials. Nonetheless, the state apparatus seems to

perceive the issue of smuggling ambivalently. Smuggling is informally legitimised and shunned at the same time, as the short stories under discussion will demonstrate.

It is important that some conceptual grounding of smuggling as an important informal activity in the context of the Zimbabwean crisis be further clarified so that the fictionalisation of this activity may be better appreciated. In some circles the term smuggling is frowned upon as an inappropriate term that criminalises a necessary livelihood strategy for the poor (Pasura, 2008). Instead, some alternative terms, like “second economy”, “underground economy” and “informal economic activity”, have been suggested (Pasura, 2008). All these are terms seeking to euphemistically describe the system of income generating activities that, however, may be depriving the state of taxation income. Where the border becomes a barrier or a prohibitive obstruction to the smooth flow of goods, the people resort to smuggling as a survival strategy, and they do this with a significant measure of success. The value of fiction in elucidating smuggling as a survival and coping mechanism can stem from Gaidzanwa (1999) (as cited in Pasura, 2008), who has pointed out that:

observation of actual traders in action could be more illuminating and a better basis for generating explanations and solutions for the issues that perplex governments and academics where cross-border trade is concerned. (p. 2)

This is where the literary artist, the short story writer, comes in to remedy the paucity of relevant data in this area. One short story that elucidates the phenomenon of smuggling and brings it graphically to the concerned reader is by Wilson (2000), entitled “The twelve *chitenges*”. It is the story of a white Zimbabwean man who has gone to Zambia to see if he could possibly get a job there and immigrate so as to

survive the crisis. On his way back, he prefers to use the ordinary buses which the vendors use as opposed to the luxury coaches. In the bus, being the only white person, he learns about survival and cross-border smuggling. He is asked by some of the passengers to carry some items for them duty free, but he refuses. When he goes to the immigration officials, he is grossly overcharged for the twelve *chitenges* (pieces of clothes) he has because of the fact that twelve is considered a commercial number. This is much to his disappointment and shock because the bus is full of cross border traders who are smuggling their wares across, yet none of them is made to pay import duties.

One of the interesting dimensions to this story is the fact that it is written by a white person and the narrator is also a white person. The story all the more shows that the Zimbabwean crisis cuts across the racial divide. It is made clear also that looking for a job across the border is indeed a survival strategy which many people like the narrator employ. In addition, the complexities of change in the Zimbabwe of the day also dictate that one changes and or adapts to the situation. The narrator realises that things are no longer the same, the crisis has eroded his pockets and the appetite for luxury, therefore his choice is determined by the crisis. When it comes to the choice of transport to and from Lusaka in Zambia, driving is certainly out of the question but he uses the same bus to and fro, “not the luxury Trans Zambesi Express which he once would have been able to afford, but the more downmarket Dzimiri Bus (Wilson, 2000, p. 243). The narrator is an active agent who carefully reads the situation around him and makes the necessary moves and adjustments to his tastes. From an

analysis of this story and also the crisis situation the country is facing, this is a practical and wise decision to make under the circumstances.

While getting into the bus, the observation he makes is quite important, one that shows that when the country has dried up in terms of goods, then the alternative left is to go beyond the border using the available transport, even the public transport to grab the most basic of commodities for resale back home. The bus itself becomes a hive of activity as:

The aisle was blocked with piles of stuff. Everyone, it seemed, had their bags and suitcases open and removing things from one and putting them in another. What was going on? The bus was full of women sorting and swapping things. “Here, you take these and I will take your *pata pata*”. (Wilson, 2000, p. 243)

It is a genuine question that the narrator, being uninitiated in the business of the cross border traders asks what was going on. The traders, as a way of beating the system and smuggling as many goods as they can without being caught, have to devise ways of smuggling the goods in a subtle manner. They rearrange and re-pack their wares in such a manner that the customs officials cannot detect the fact that they have goods with commercial value. Therefore, as an answer to the narrator’s question, one of the passengers says to him “if you haven’t could you take some through for me? I have got twelve pairs of shoes. You are allowed six. Can I give you half? You just tell them they are for friends or your family” (Wilson, 2000, p. 244). This is exactly how they beat the system, through making sure that their goods or products which they have bought from the other country are not above the maximum amount allowed. For

any similar product that is more than six in number, the customs officials make the person pay. Therefore, they have to make sure that each set of products they have is less than six in number, for them to be exempted from paying duties. Where they have more than six, they make sure that they give out the excess items to the other party who will be a fellow passenger, until they cross the border. Otherwise, given the prohibitive duty charged by the officials, the cross border traders know that they will not be able to sell the products at a profit. That is the reason why they are cunningly smuggling the goods across the border duty free.

The narrator agrees to take the shoes for the lady but later changes his mind and gives the shoes back to her, which is a big mistake. When his turn comes at the customs, he is made to pay duty after an embarrassing scuffle with the officials. Ultimately after the humiliation, he pays the duty, waits for the customs official to laboriously write for him the receipt, and then painstakingly look for the narrator's change. To the narrator's amazement this awkward situation happens only to him, while "the entire building full of professional smugglers tittered with glee. They all knew the ropes how to get through scot-free" (Wilson, 2000, p. 248). The narrator has learnt his survival lesson: when crossing the border, it is best to collaborate with fellow passengers so that together they can rise above the officialdom that is ruthlessly sucking them of their hard earned money. The other passengers, the ones the narrator now realises are professional smugglers, get through without any hustles. For Pasura (2008), the state itself is to blame, for it inadvertently fuelled smuggling across the borders through the idea of protectionism even when the local industry and supply chains had completely failed during the times of the crisis. Therefore, the

imposed duty charges which the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority collects with sadistic pleasure on behalf of the state, becomes also an incentive for the smuggling option. The people have to survive and through Wilson's short story, it is shown how smuggling becomes a viable option and a coping mechanism.

Furthermore, other than smuggling, a more critical coping strategy is that of the remittances which the people in the diaspora send back to their home country. There is a general consensus in academia that despite their obvious magnitude, accurate data on remittance flows to Zimbabwe and is unavailable or inaccessible (Crush & Tevera, 2010). However, what is clear as well is that earning money to remit is clearly a major motivator for migration in the first place. The remittances are either in cash or in kind. For Crush and Tevera (2010), remittances from those who do leave are key to unlocking some of the ways people use to survive the crisis. Other than money, some of the items remitted include foodstuffs (such as maize-meal, sugar, salt, and cooking oil) as well as consumer goods like bicycles, radios, television sets, solar panels, sofas, clothes, agricultural inputs and building materials (Crush and Tevera, 2010). The volume of remittances has actually been credited to having made the economy of the whole country survive complete collapse. The way this phenomenon is presented in the short story about the Zimbabwean crisis is quite illuminating.

In Tshuma's short story "Arrested development" (2008), the use of the journey motif presents the reader with an avenue to explore the role of the diaspora as a coping and survival mechanism. The narrator boards a vehicle that transports her from Bulawayo to Beitbridge and during the journey a lot has been learnt about the diaspora and

remittances. The narrator reminisces on how most of the people who want to survive in crisis-hit Zimbabwe are always waiting for the results of their actions. They wait at the internet cafe “to see if a nifty little website has found us a job in Dubai or a scholarship to an obscure foreign university, or anything really to get us out of here” (Tshuma, 2008, p. 1). Staying at home is no longer a viable option for many people and life outside the country is more promising.

However, what is more interesting in this story is what the driver and the passengers say to the narrator who is equally taken aback by the amount of remittances they bring in from South Africa, and the magnitude of their flourish. What immediately catches the reader’s attention is the *malayitsha* (transport operators). These are drivers who connect the migrants with their home communities, as these *malayitsha* ferry the goods and cash on behalf of the migrants. Instead of using established courier companies and registered money transfer agents to carry their remittances, the migrants or diasporans make use of informal means and these are the ones called the *malayitsha*. This is how Tshuma (2008) defines them:

They carry contraband between Zimbabwe and South Africa. He is a *Malayitsha*, which means he carries groceries and property sent by Zimbabweans working in South Africa to their families back home. Then on the return leg he carries people; a couple of hundred rand if you have a passport, a couple of thousand if you don’t. Business is brisk and he is making a decent living. He can afford to send his three children to good schools, has a great homestead in the communal areas and just bought a property in Bulawayo. (p. 2)

The driver, who is the *malayitsha*, is by every means a survivor who flourishes off the remittances. His business is established, and the fact that he sends his children to good and certainly very expensive schools, instead of the cheap, government schools in various stages of dilapidation, means that he is flourishing. Moreover, he can stand on a pride pedestal and firmly confirm that business is flourishing. Attesting to that fact are the property acquisitions he is making. What needs to be kept in mind is the fact that for him the trade is all about transporting the remittances, and not going to work in South Africa himself. What it also means is that there must be a huge base of diasporans who remit to their families back home to justify the existence of such lucrative business for the *malayitshas*. Their cars, designed in the same manner as the ones for courier companies, are not meant to ferry passengers but only goods. Another dimension which comes out as well is that of him (the *malayitsha*) smuggling humans to South Africa, the border jumpers. As has been demonstrated, some people do not have the means to get passports and instead of using the illegal and dangerous routes like crossing the crocodile-infested Limpopo, through the *malayitsha* they buy their way into South Africa. This is also coupled by the fact that in crisis-hit Zimbabwe there are acute fuel shortages as is evidenced by the narrator who has spent ages by the road side failing to get any lift/hike to Beitbridge.

In addition, just in the few minutes of the ride, the narrator gets another breath-taking revelation from the lady passenger who is also travelling with her, all the more attesting to the fact that, despite the excruciating dimensions of the crisis, human agency carries the day. The passenger who is en route to South Africa as well, in the typical fashion of temporary exiles or circular migration, brags as follows: “she is not

to be outdone though. Her contraband of choice is cigarettes, and she is raking in fifty thousand rand a run. Fifty thousand!” (Tshuma, 2008, p. 2). These are the typical fruits of migration as well as smuggling and the lady smuggler in the story is definitely unfazed by the so-called crisis, she can make it and even flourish better than if there were no crisis. To prove that she is flourishing, the lady catalogues that “she has a townhouse in Johannesburg, one in Pumula and is building in Mahatshula and Selborne Park” (Tshuma, 2008, p. 2). Despite the fact that the narrator thinks that there is a possibility of exaggeration, the bottom line is that the lady is making something out of her life so as to survive the crisis.

However, this lucrative business is not without its own headaches. It is not smooth sailing but the important thing to remember is that a smooth sea has never made a skilled sailor. They nevertheless share ideas on the challenges they face and how they are managing them. What is of critical importance in this sharing of ideas by the passengers and professionals is that the short story allows the reader to see the fissures which need to be fully exploited; legal survival is possible if the structures are made available and easy to penetrate by the general man on the ground. This idea is what the narrator captures as the passengers discuss the dangers they face:

They talk of payment defaulters being sold off to Nigerians in Johannesburg, strip searches and muggings by bandits in the farmlands of Limpopo Province, swimming across the Limpopo and hoping that if there must be a crocodile attack let it be the next person to you that is eaten because you really need this to work out. They talk of paying off border officials, highway

police, farmers, magistrates, anyone and everyone. There isn't a palm that can't be greased, apparently. (Tshuma, 2008, p. 4)

This quotation is quite sobering and arrests any undue romanticism about the ability of the diaspora to bring about a dramatic change. The level of optimism surrounding the ability of the cross border traders and smugglers, as well as household livelihood remittances, must be tempered with the realistic acknowledgment of the limitations desperate people and the poor face during periods of crisis. It is not an easy life but the fact that the people in the story manage to make life liveable under such gruesome circumstances is an illustration to the fact that despite all of life's challenges, there is always hope; survival is possible.

Finally, in the story "Arrested development" the narrator celebrates the value of the lived experiences of the people. She remarks that she "came here for statistics and figures on irregular smooth operators but these figures have names and faces" (Tshuma, 2008, p. 4). The survival tactics of the poor man, when fictionalised, are given the flesh and blood that make them more relatable. The reader is allowed a moment to partake in this life with its entire vicissitudes, but ultimately the story demonstrates that agency is aplenty.

In addition, the aptly titled short story "Something nice from London" by Gappah (2009) brings closer to home the idea of remittances as a survival mechanism. The first-person point of view by the author brings the reader closer to the story and it makes the story more emotive as well as more felt. Started in *medias res* as it is, the reader quickly jumps into the action and the stage is set for an appreciation of the power of remittances for household livelihood. This is how the story begins;

The little boy in the orange shirt tells me that his grandmother says that his mummy is bringing something nice from London. “Your mummy will bring you something nice from London too,” he asserts, with all the gravity of a child whose voice coincides with those of the world. (Gappah, 2008, p. 75)

The expectations of the people are all on the diaspora. From the young to the old, all they hope for is that, though unknown and nameless, something nice will surely come from London. The titular message is clear: the diaspora is a source of something of value and that something is anxiously anticipated by the people who have some diaspora connections.

The story “Something nice from London”, just like the story “My cousin-sister Rambanai” by the same author Gappah, is about a funeral that has befallen a family in Zimbabwe. The dead person is the narrator’s brother who had gone to the United Kingdom to attend university but once in the United Kingdom he becomes improvident, irresponsible and a drug addict. However the story centres on how the people in Zimbabwe go through the process of the funeral as well as the role of the diaspora in making things happen.

As the narrator goes to the airport on a couple of trips in the hope of receiving the remains of her brother, it becomes clear that the remittances are a huge source of livelihood for many families. The narrator’s family may have a bereavement but this does not at all obliterate the joy of those surrounding them at the airport; “for these passengers bring with them more than their loved selves, they bring something nice from London, the foreign money that will be traded on the black market and guarantee a few more months of survival” (Gappah, 2008, p. 76). The author’s

diction in this quotation needs to be emphasised. First is the clichéd phrase “something nice from London”. Through the use of repetition, the message is put across that remittances are important in the crisis-hit nation that Zimbabwe has become. Other outstanding words are *guarantee* and *survival*. Through such use of diction, the artistic mastery of Gappah lies in how she salvages hope and positivity and also makes a point out of the most sombre and serene of atmospheres. The author manages to mix hope and sorrow in the same story. The London remittances seem to tower even above the funeral in question as well as the anti-British Mugabe rhetoric (Makamani, 2010). While the national radio blasts songs of histrionic patriotism and sovereignty, screaming how the country will never be a colony again and how the land is theirs, never to be taken away - the prized song is that of stomach politics which the remittances can certainly cure.

The narrator’s aunt, MaiLisa, has a daughter who is in the United Kingdom and MaiLisa cannot stop bragging about the daughter’s latest exploit. The daughter is living in a world of possibilities which is far better than the crisis-hit Zimbabwe. MaiLisa’s daughter proves that it pays to be in the diaspora as she is always flying all the way to America, Canada, Italy and France. The emphasis on flying is meant to bolster the fact that being in another country which is better off than Zimbabwe, the daughter is able to enjoy life. However, it is the remittances that she sends that stand out:

She has sent money just today, two hundred and fifty dollars she sent, it is only two hundred pounds, just imagine. She insists that I go on a holiday, but I told her, no, my child, not on four teachers’ annual salary. I said a new stove

is more important. Can you believe that she sent more money, five hundred billion dollars? Just imagine. I will buy a new fridge from Radio Limited. (Gappah, 2009, p. 85)

The above quotation emphasises the magnitude of the remittances and how much they go into alleviating the problems the urbanites face. As the saying goes, a one-eyed man is king in the land of the blind; the money sent by Lisa may not be that much in the United Kingdom but when it is converted in crisis-hit Zimbabwe it is worth four teachers' annual salaries.

When the narrator and her brother realise that the body of their brother is taking too long to come from the United Kingdom, they decide to go to the British Embassy so that they can get a visa. Despite the fact that they do not succeed to get the visa, what is most eye-catching is the jocundity from one of the ladies who has been granted a visa to go to the United Kingdom. Her joy is therefore, best understood in the fact that when granted permission to go and visit relatives in the United Kingdom, there is a guarantee that remittances will also flow from her to the family back home in Zimbabwe. The queue outside the embassy is snaking and faces of disappointment are many as the majority are denied a visa to the United Kingdom. So when she gets her visa, our potential remitter loses all the sense of observing public dignity but shouts:

Her shouted thank you, Jehovah as she sees the magic words in her passport is infectious, people crowd around her to see and marvel at the visa, to touch the passport, and maybe transfer some of her good fortune onto themselves.

Her joy suggests that she is not just a tourist exulting at the thought of seeing the changing of the guards at Buckingham Palace. (Gappah, 2009, p. 94)

This show of joy and excitement can therefore only be understood in the context of how MaiLisa, being a constant receiver of bountiful remittances is able to live a better off life in spite of the crisis. The jubilant woman certainly must be eyeing going to the United Kingdom not only for a better livelihood but so that her family back home may as well enjoy her fruits through the renowned power of remittances. In his award winning novel entitled *Harare North* (2010), Chikwava further amplifies this concept of Zimbabweans whose aim is to go to London to eke out a living. What the author means by “Harare North” is actually London. For London is metaphorically viewed as an extension of the city of Harare, due to the huge number of Zimbabwean immigrants who have gone there as a means of seeking a breathing space to survive. The main character in Chikwava’s *Harare North*, is a brain-washed, parasitical anti-hero, who exploits people. He is a staunch Mugabe supporter, but one thing he knows for sure is that if he goes to London, he can find work, get money and solve some of his problems. Though the novel is not going to be analysed here, the critical point to make is that as a destination of choice, owing to the historical connections between Harare and London, the United Kingdom is presented as a major source of remittances.

The final point to note in the story “Something nice from London” is couched on the power of brain gain. For there to be significant remittances, it means that the remitter must have a stable and professional job, let alone the required papers that allow the person to stay and work in the country. For that to happen in the first world, it means

that one must have the skills and competencies so that the skills shortage in the host country can be met. This is where we find Lisa, our heroine and pacesetter of remittances in the short story “Something nice from London”. In the discourse on diaspora and migrant labour, many academics concur that the reason why Zimbabwe boasts diasporans virtually all over the world is because of her (Zimbabwe) exportable manpower. This is due to the British legacy of competitive education which the Robert Mugabe regime also raised. This is further corroborated by Tonini (2005), who posits that, “by 2000, Zimbabwe came close to achieving ‘Education for all’ with literacy rates at 93 percentage for males and 87 percentage for females, primary school enrolment rates at nearly 100 percentage for males and females (p. 96). Many scholars have pointed out that education is a crucial factor in the emigration patterns of Zimbabweans and that Zimbabwean migrants tend to have higher education qualifications than no-migrant populations (Bloch, 2006; Kirk, 2004; Macgregor, 2007; Ranger, 2005). Furthermore, as an example, this is what Ranger (2005) has observed:

Zimbabwean asylum seekers [in England] are very different from any others. Zimbabwe is the most literate country in Africa and the most familiar with English. The overwhelming majority of Zimbabwean refugees speak and write excellent English ... In many ways they are more British than the British. (p. 407)

From a literary critic’s point of view the above sentiments are certainly hyperbolic, yet still they raise a critical point that has been raised by many and which is supported by the short story explored here.

The narrator's father, acutely aware of the demand in skills like nursing abroad, urges his sister (MaiLisa) to urge her daughter to benefit the family through her professional skills as a health professional which are in demand in the United Kingdom. This is how the narrator explains it:

As she boasts of Lisa's accomplishments, my aunt chooses not to recall that it was my father who said to her, "Sister, your daughter has finished her nursing diploma. Instead of rotting in some rural outpost, why does she not try her fortune where others have gone?" (Gappah, 2009, p. 87)

Others have gone to greener pastures and there is no reason why she should not go as well and benefit her family. Lisa is not the first to leave the country, neither is she the last, but one thing which is certain is that the common denominator for them all is that they are exportable material due to their professional skills. This allows them to remit a lot more so that their families back home can survive the crisis. In cases where unemployment and joblessness is high and the skills of the people are competitive, exporting such labour may not be seen simplistically as brain drain. Brain gain is demonstrated through the fact that some like Peter in this story, go to the diaspora in search of education. There are important skills and expertise which can as well be learnt from the diaspora. Furthermore, even those who have the skills like Lisa and Jimmy in the short story "My cousin sister Rambanai" can as well sharpen their skills in the diaspora if they are able to pursue their career. In other words, what has to be realised is the fact that when they go into the diaspora their skills are further developed and they get more experience. When they come back to their home country the nation benefits from the skills they get. Instead of viewing

skills movement as brain drain, fragile states need to also consider the paradoxical nature of this phenomenon, as it is also a brain gain. There is a possibility of brain gain remittances and the Government of National Unity formed between Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai is more than aware of that fact as illustrated by their outreaching to those in the diaspora as critical agents who have a major role in the reconstruction of Zimbabwe.

4.4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, therefore, in as much as the Zimbabwean crisis has multiple dimensions, the coping strategies of the people are equally multi-dimensional. Given the fact that the country has over an estimated three million of its citizens in the diaspora, the role of the diaspora in sustaining the collapsing state cannot be underestimated. The idea of escaping home as narrated in the short story “The border jumpers”, demonstrates the fact that no matter how dangerous, precarious and altogether life taking border jumping into South Africa is, people still find a way out using this age-old method. Their means of crossing over to new spaces beyond their national border include the one chronicled in the story; crossing the Limpopo at night, with the aid of a paid guide like Mbedzi and his connections that see to it that transport is arranged for them to reach Johannesburg, thereby escaping poverty.

Alternatively, as a way of surviving, some of the ordinary people, as illustrated in the short story “Crossroads” escaping the embattled space and its attendant problems through the designated points of entry; but for one to get the required documents is not an easy task. In this short story, the ingenuity of the narrator, who succeeds through her wits and cunningness, is salutary. Needless to say is the thrifty

personality of the hawkers who utilise the city space next to the South African embassy in Harare to survive out of the diaspora-bound urbanites. Human creativity is celebrated through such survival tactics, let alone the “greasing concept”, which shows how during times of crisis when the line separating the legal from the illegal gets blurry, the urbanites ease their conscience through linguistic coinages.

Moreover, in the short story “My cousin-sister Rambanai”, the international dimensions of the Zimbabwean diaspora are explored, with a particular emphasis on the ingenious means the people employ so as to escape home. The people’s choice of destinations are not limited to the regional ones but such afar fields like the United States of America and the United Kingdom are some of the possible destinations. Through Rambanai, the reader is convinced that for one to survive a crisis situation anything is possible; restrictive border controls, deportations and corrupt systems can all be surpassed in order for one to survive the different fronts of the crisis.

In addition, what needs to be underlined also is that the choice of escaping home cannot be equated to one escaping from a burning hut; there is a huge reward in the form of pull factors as well. The reward is immense and for this to be attained, as indicated by all the short stories, one has to make use of the national borders. Another critical observation that comes out through the short story “The twelve chitenges” is that the breadth of the crisis knows no racial boundaries and the survival mechanisms are the same. Another dimension added to the debate through this short story is that of cross border smuggling as a livelihood strategy, particularly how the ordinary people avoid excessive taxation by the state.

Furthermore, the true benefits of remittances are made clear through the story “Arrested development”. Instead of relying on statistics and figures, the writer gives flesh and blood to the figures and makes it more real and felt by the reader. Property acquisition, satisfying the needs of the family, investing in education and moving beyond the hand to mouth life are some of the facts which are made clear through the lived experiences of the characters.

Finally in “Something nice from London”, as the title itself intimates, remittances are a critical source of household livelihood which contributes in the sustenance of the economy so as to avoid a total collapse. MaiLisa, through her daughter Lisa, a nurse who is working in London is able to live a far better off life. Her daughter remits every now and then and through that, the mother is able to buy goods and she can show off to the whole community. Lisa is an educated and competent professional whose skills are in demand, so through her the paradoxical nature of brain drain is made clear, culminating in the realisation that in essence this is also a positive survival mechanism that can be seen as brain gain.

Therefore, the common thread that binds these short stories is that there is a survival mechanism that is based on how foreign spaces are and can be used for sustaining oneself, the immediate family and the failing state as well. The short stories, touching as they all do on the global facet of lives, bring to the fore an important role of the diaspora, the cross-flow of labour and the value of remittances as a survival and development tool. Through the short story that uses the different characters, the cultural worker, who is the writer, brings the readers closer to the lives of the people; an intimate reading of the stories is made and insight into the survival tactics also

attained. However, yet another important dimension of the Zimbabwean crisis needs to be emphasised, which is the political. Given the political dimension of the crisis, the next chapter therefore seeks to find out how the urbanites survive the political dimension of the crisis, as represented in the short stories.

CHAPTER FIVE

SALVAGING ACTIVISM, VOICING CONTESTED TERRAINS AND THE RESISTANCE OF REPRESSION DURING A CRISIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the ingenuous means employed by ordinary people to survive through outward migration and the reliance on remittances. Times of crisis have been presented as opportunities to test how porous and negotiable the political boundaries are, and therefore demonstrated how the borders can enable one to embrace global citizenry by hook or by crook. The chapter clarified the value of the diaspora and remittances in the 21st century, particularly in countries where the economic meltdown is severe; migration is presented as one of the surest means to an end – survival. The short stories in the chapter demonstrated that a human being is not like a tree but can move, especially in the modern world of technological advancement and global interconnectedness. Human mobility and transnational citizenry have been represented as weapons against claustrophobic existence and any phenomenon which is economically stifling.

However, even though there were many reasons that made people leave Zimbabwe, there were also many reasons to make them stay and make life work as best as one could. Despite the mass exodus evidenced in the short stories analysed in the previous chapter and the attendant benefits, it is not everyone who can or wants to leave. This is a further testimony that there are indeed a myriad coping and survival strategies. The present chapter further brings about another variant of these survival

tactics. The emphasis once again is that, despite the harsh conditions faced, people still manage to live, and they have triumphs and tribulations just like anyone else in any part of the world - the Zimbabwean example is only an illustrative case study. To put the present chapter in a clearer perspective about the survival and coping strategies explored in the short stories, a further explanation is given below in order to give more background and to buttress the analysis of the seven short stories analysed in this chapter.

This chapter is about the literary representation of the persistence of hope under political repression and ways of negotiating survival, as well as coping with a tyrannical regime. As a form of rhetoric of hope and a way of imagining a peaceful future, the chapter assumes an ideologically progressive strand that questions the status quo and yet invites the reader through exposure to the short stories, to consider alternatives to the existing order as a means of coping. The chapter explores how short, imaginative narratives mirror the desirability of peace, the innovative ways to prevent violence and the democratisation processes ordinary people hope for. The axiom which states that the pen is mightier than the sword finds home in the form of literary analyses like the one attempted in this chapter. This remark is particularly insightful in the wake of the Arab spring uprisings that have rocked North Africa, the Kenyan postelection violence and the incessant wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, to mention but a few. The present analysis can be understood to be falling into the realm of progressive literature, which is a way of interrogating life and its attendant contradictions in a hopeful manner. This form of literary analysis is

ultimately valorising peaceful and peace-oriented coping mechanisms, though at the same time without silencing activism, as these short stories demonstrate.

In the words of a renowned critic of Zimbabwean and African literature, Ngara (n.d.), creativity and responsibility are Siamese twins in art. Taking the thread of argument from Ngara, therefore, the submission being made here is also that in the literature explored in this chapter, what we see is a commitment by the writers to boldly and critically examine the political ground in Zimbabwe and to do so with plausibility, passion and responsibility. The underlying principle is couched on how people devise mechanisms to survive, which can be summed up by the popular expression of the day *tofira mutrial*. This is a popular colloquialism which, when literally translated, means “we will die trying”. This has become the *defacto modus operandi*. In this chapter the central concern is on how the people cope with and survive the political onslaught they face.

The chapter is subdivided into two main sections. The first section analyses three short stories namely “At the sound of the last post” by Gappah (2009), “Hands” by Ndlovu (2006) and “They are coming” by Mlalazi (2011). In this section the analysis is on how urbanites cope with tyranny, whether real or imagined. Political unrest and unease is another constant in the ever-changing sea of Zimbabwe’s turbulent circumstances and how the weakest and vulnerable members of the society survive is the literary artist’s concern. The section also takes a closer look at the resilience of activism, which is a positive survival mechanism inherently omnipresent in the ordinary, despite their perceived powerlessness which may often and erroneously be mistaken for docility and apathy. In other words the major concern in this chapter is

on protest literature and its relevance in times of political crisis as the Zimbabwean one in question, inviting the reader to experience moments of recognition, revelation, protest and rebellion alongside the characters, and thereby participate in that rebellion through the act of reading.

The second section of the chapter looks at three short stories namely “The ugly reflection in the mirror” by Kanengoni (2003), “Notes from Mai Mujuru’s breast” by Mwanaka (2012) and “The chances and challenges of Chiadzwa” by Chinhanhu (2007). First the section forecasts a future-bound society with amiable interracial relations and also how the process can be represented in words as a precursor to real transitions. The section further takes a critical look at the potentialities the country portends and how this is imaginatively represented. The aim is to explore how the artists imagine a better Zimbabwe and how the stories attempt to shape the consciousness of the reader towards a peaceful reconciliation as the surest means to survive the injustices meted against the ordinary citizens. There is also an attempt to point out the critical questions on natural resources distribution as one sure way of ending the various crises in Zimbabwe in particular, and Africa, in general.

However, to fully explore and appreciate what these short stories are communicating in the context of the political survival and coping mechanisms of the ordinary people, once again there is a need to make a recap of the theory of the chronotope as discussed in the first chapter. The chronotope, which emphasises the interpretation of texts as determined, shaped and informed by the time and space interplay in the story, is of great relevance here. The guiding principle in this chapter is a Zimbabwean setting of political upheaval which can also be described as a dystopian

chronotope. A literary representation of a dystopian chronotope therefore in this study is captured here and this is corroborated by a concept that will be termed dystopian hope.

To clarify and justify these two concepts (dystopian chronotope and dystopian hope) in relation to this chapter in particular, first there is a need to capture the basic tenets of what dystopia in fiction means. A form of negative utopia, dystopia is characterised by a community or society that is in some way undesirable or frightening; where dehumanisation, totalitarian governments, poverty, political repression, societal collapse are evident, and where humanity suffers from a lack of true freedom and liberty (Baccolini, 2004). In light of Baccolini's explanation, the short stories discussed in previous chapters and the novel *The uncertainty of hope* embody such features which to some extent qualify the Zimbabwean crisis under discussion in this study as a form of a dystopian society. The short stories analysed in this chapter also add voice to this dystopian hope description of such a specific period (temporal) as the 1999 to 2009 Zimbabwean situation (spatial) in dystopian terms. That is why it is fit to analyse these stories under the emblem dystopian chronotope.

However, it must be emphasised that what is particularly important in this chapter and in the study as a whole generally is to explore to what extent the rendering in these short stories, and using the resilience theory, how far it can be argued that there is a form of dystopian hope. Dystopian hope means a positive interpretation of the representation of nightmarish societies, hegemonic and totalitarian governments in a hopeful manner (Baccolini, 2004). It is a recognition that in the midst of these

terrible fictions is a powerful message that an enlightened populace would best not leave unheard. Again, in the words of the social critic, Baccolini (2008), how utopian hope works in literature is critical and must be appreciated:

One might say that the novels promise doom and gloom, the perpetuation of a downward slope for humanity, and ultimate bondage rather than final liberty. But the true message of these classics is quite the opposite. By giving a warning, by exposing the dangers hidden in the world, dystopian works implicitly promise that mankind can avert this fate and work toward a brighter destiny. The very act of sounding the alarm presupposes that a rescue can be made. (p. 1)

That is the hope and also the coping mechanisms this chapter looks at, the idea that if society would look at it' self, honestly and realistically, it could fix the problems it has and survive the crises it meets incessantly. Having laid the ground for this specific chapter and having illustrated the desirability of such fiction, now an analysis of the short stories is presented.

5.2. SURVIVING HEGEMONIES: FICTION, THE FEMINIZATION OF POLITICAL SURVIVAL AND THE RESILIENCE OF ACTIVISM

The short story “At the sound of the last post” from Gappah’s award winning anthology *An elegy for easterly* (2009) offers a solid, intimate, yet complex and engaging critique on politics and the cunningly non-violent survival instinct of the weak. This version of political survival is presented through the form of the narrator – a woman who has been exploited, abused, chided and finally widowed. The woman

is of foreign descent, having married her late Zimbabwean husband during exile as they are both bound by love, they have the same political vision and a sense of hope for the future. The only glimpse into her origins is encapsulated in the statement, “I forgot about the fight against apartheid in my own country as his battle seemed more urgent” (Gappah, 2009, p. 9). What that could possibly point to is that either the person is from South Africa or possibly Namibia if one considers the history of apartheid in these two countries. They get married, leave exile for independent Zimbabwe where the wife realises that her husband was formerly married and the first wife is unceremoniously divorced, and because of the traditional custom of being offered *gupuro* (formal token of divorce through a pittance of possession given to the wife) she peacefully packs off, leaving her children with the husband.

However, what the story succinctly captures is a scene at the husband’s death and the concern with political survival during the years 1999 to 2009. The narrative adopts a banal, graphic and no-holds barred depiction of “the President” speaking at a funeral. The author’s blunt, yet lyrical and poignantly truthful narration of the scene before the funeral is captivating, though it has also raised rancour and controversy in some who view the story as anti-patriotic and a vilification of President Robert Mugabe. The position taken here is based on the fact that the writer, Gappah, has shown a courageous artistic commitment and responsibility to reality as she perceives it. Therefore, to bring about the core issues in this study, the analysis here agrees with and leans towards Marima’s 2009 commentary in his article “Silencing Silence and resisting repression”, which posits that stereotypically reading the story as simply

about the patriotism and anti-patriotism rhetoric is not enough. According to Marima (2009):

This would be a gross misreading of the novel and the middle-ground needs to be drawn between these two camps. A sensible, impartial reading of this novel is necessary; all agendas aside and an appreciation of the fictional struggles faced and overcome, assessing the varying ways in which they mirror real life in present-day Zimbabwe. (p. 3)

What is important, therefore, is to analyse how this story affords the reader a futuristic gaze, calling one to extract the wisdom therein and think deeply about what the writing is communicating in veiled literary terms.

The first and most important point to take note of is that the story discusses physical survival. The story is alive and available to us because of the fact that the narrator has defied death, remained alive to see a better tomorrow, and that she can even plan and talk about that tomorrow to the rest of the world. The setting of the story is at the national Heroes' Acre where the "Orator at the Funerals of Dead Heroes" (Gappah, 2009, p. 3) gives his graveside speeches. What is much more important to the reader's keen eye is that "close to him in the widow's place of honour, I am aware of his every movement. I watch him without moving my eyes" (Gappah, 2009, p. 3). The didacticism that is replete with subtleties and innuendos in this statement is a mark of artistic mastery in the writer. Reading between the lines, given the mood of the story, one can see a special emphasis on the phrase "widow's place of honour". Despite all the odds, as the saying goes, every dog has its day; so this present day marks the narrator's day of glory. The badge of widowhood and the label of being

the bereaved here becomes a paradoxical triumph. It becomes a blessing in disguise to be a widow and the fact that she is holding a place of honour is not the author's understatement. Her position affords her the ability to "watch" (the president) and in this particular diction one can sense some form of biblical allusion, as Jesus talks to his disciples repeatedly about being watchful. The narrator does not allow bereavement and widowhood to condemn her to vulnerability, metaphorical blindness and pittance, but like an eagle she becomes alert and watchful so as to survive beyond the funeral. Digging deep into Shona wisdom there is a saying that *nherera inoguta musi wafa amai vayo*, which literally means that an orphan eats to the full the day the mother dies. The narrator is keenly aware of this and takes this wisdom to extend the day of the death to her life ever after. In other words, unlike the orphan referred to in the proverb, she purposefully makes it her resolution that her days are full of contentment from the present day onwards and not pride in momentary bliss.

In addition, the aspect of the narrator, the bereaved woman in the story "watching" the President can further be interrogated so that its meaning can come out clearly. In his paper, "Mugabe's graveside orations: Collective memory and nostalgia", Kangira (2010), argues:

that Mugabe cunningly exploited the rhetorical situation existing at that moment in such a manner that made the audience experience and understand his speeches the way he wanted them to do, that is, to sympathise with his political party ahead of the March 2002 presidential elections". (p. 27)

Kangira (2010, p. 29) further analyses the rhetorical strategies Mugabe uses to woo the people to his side and how he uses “funeral diplomacy” to win the hearts of the electorate. However, in as much as Kangira has made that keen observation, the protagonist in this story has also made a realisation and refuses to be a bystander. That is why she is ‘watching’ the president in a calculated manner aimed at enabling her to manoeuvre tactfully.

Furthermore, another important point to be noted here is how exactly she managed to survive and cope with what many heroes and mighty men have succumbed to. In a tone that is rather above sadistic overtones, the narrative voice lampoons how “They are all culled, all of them, age and Aids will do its work even among the most gallant of heroes” (Gappah, 2009, p. 6). Compounding the socio-economic and political crisis is the scourge of HIV/AIDS and the question is, how does one survive, given the extramarital escapades of the spouse? In this instance, Gappah gives this challenge a political dimension. Political in the sense that the challenge is not presented as a challenge of the poor only but one that takes no boundaries. The powerful, prominent and “fathers” of the nation are the topics of discussion. What we see in the narrator is one of the most crucial avenues of fighting by those who are physically, politically and culturally weak but know the value of their sexuality in a modern context. This is enshrined in the statement that “He died, leaving me relieved that it had been years since I was wife to him in any but the social sense” (Gappah, 2009, p. 18). The critical survival tactics being touted here are an echo of the Onai and Garikai situation in *The uncertainty of hope* (Tagwira, 2006) as discussed in Chapter Three. When Onai realises that her husband, Garikai’s promiscuity has gone

beyond reprieve, she vows to only allow him his conjugal rights if they use condoms. At the end of the day when Garikai dies of HIV/AIDS related illnesses, Onai survives and lives HIV/AIDS free, for that matter. The same applies to the narrator in the present story; she survives also and can afford to deride the late husband and others that:

Like the worthless dogs that are his countrymen, my husband believed that his penis was wasted if he was faithful to just one woman. He plunged himself into every bitch in heat, even that slut of a newsreader, the ruling party's First Whore, who lends the services of her vacuous beauty to their nightly distortions. (Gappah, 2009, p. 12)

Setting the possible stereotyping in the above statement as well as the uncritical understatement aside, the point made in the above quotation is clear. Other than rising above the economic, political and social crisis, it is first and foremost important to survive physically, that is health-wise; and the narrator here is yet another survivor whose life story touches more than the head but the heart also. This is a further indication of the value of fiction, in that it connects the reader to the lived experiences of the people. Gappah, as a modern writer, does more than merely reflect and catalogue the despair and deeply entrenched ennui characterising crisis-hit Zimbabwe but takes on a critical perspective on this situation, thereby revealing positive possibilities beyond it – which is a mark of the dystopian hope under discussion in this chapter.

In addition, another critical point to make is that in order to survive one has to adopt a never-give-up spirit, stick to one's principles and, as in classical African American

wisdom, to begin to bloom where one is planted. In the previous chapter, the conclusion made was that a person is not like a tree but is capable of moving from one place to the other if survival is threatened at the present place of dwelling. That is yet another variant of the multiple modes of survival and the one being emphasised here is that of taking root and anchorage at a particular place so that one can cope with life's challenges. The adage that a rolling stone gathers no moss finds meaning in this story as we see how the narrator, a "foreigner" and just a "woman" is chided and ridiculed to such an extent that at one time she threatened to leave and go back to her own country. Later on, sticking to her guns, she decides to make the best out of her circumstances. When she threatens to leave and go back to her country of origin, this is what her sister-in-law, Edna, says of her:

Ngazviende (let it go), she said, and good riddance. Real women were divorced to make place for a *mhanje* such as this one. Thus my introduction to the word *mhanje*; their word for the lowest form of woman, womanhood without womanliness, *mhanje* being a barren woman, a woman without issue, unproductive, a fruitless husk. (Gappah, 2009, p. 9)

At this point it is important to recap and refocus this analysis. This story is set in the chronotope of a national crisis and the challenges that the people face are dire. However, what is noteworthy and quite critical to note here is that over and above the socio-economic and political crisis which is faced by the generality of people, there is another incessant crisis along gender lines. This is the double burden of womanhood in a cultural setup that is patriarchal and whose social constructs and perceptions are discriminatory, biased and severely diminutive of the woman. The

narrator therefore has to fight and triumph the crisis of the 1999 to 2009 in its generality and yet still fight more battles like the one in the quotation above (see Mlambo, 2010 on the double burden which women face and survive, as compared to their male counterparts).

In order to cope, the narrator adopts a leaving and cleaving attitude towards marriage. She adapts, instead of running away from the challenges. The cliché, winners never quit and quitters never win, also finds a reinvigoration and relevance in this instance and it is indeed another survival strategy. One of her first tools for survival is a linguistic one whereby she learns the language of her adopted country including the subtlety of intonations such that “in the end I did not need him, as he had done at first, to explain words to me” (Gappah, 2009, p. 11). The narrator lingers on, perseveres, and even when deserted by the husband, she still carries the day as evidenced by her pitying Edna, the cantankerous and rancorous aunt that “she really should start investing more money in shoes; her unshaped peasant’s feet require something stronger than cheap *zhing-zhong* plastic leather shoes to contain them” (Gappah, 2009, p. 9). This is a mockery of the substandard shoes of Chinese origin which are mainly worn by the poor and some non-resilient characters. The critical point here is that the narrator can stand on such a privileged position because she never gave up. So now even when the economic and political crisis claws have a vice-like grip on many people, as an independent woman who has persevered, she is much better off than her former detractor, Edna.

Another critical point that is noteworthy in this story is that of gaining a voice in a politically volatile and plagued society. The narrator survives the stifling silences of

the day by criticising the society she lives in and protesting against the perceived injustices and social ills of the day which rightly or wrongly are categorised as life under Robert Mugabe. The narrator's voice is protest in tone and content, offering constructive and corrective criticism. In other words, this manner of reading the story moves from what the people do to survive, but veers more towards what the writer and the people as well hope for. The writer captures the vision of the people and what they aspire towards and also exposes the hopes and impediments faced, which are a contemporary reality. The act of writing in itself becomes a therapeutic measure and by the mere fact of writing, Gappah assumes a position of authority, a voice of the voiceless and also an assumption that a woman's voice can and must be heard. Through authorial intrusion, Gappah's voice is both advising and chastising in one breath. Her rod of chastisement paves a way for a better Zimbabwe as she feminises the political landscape. Through presenting a protagonist who is a woman in a male dominated political landscape, Gappah further demonstrates that for a people and country to develop, there are some vices which the people need to do away with. The personal aggrandisement of office bearers in African political circles and political patronage is shown as one of the greatest impediments to the survival of African countries. This is coupled by the donor syndrome which the narrator lampoons. To demonstrate the facade and hypocrisy of some charity work she draws the reader's attention to how the first lady once remarked that "'if only I could', she said to the nation's orphans, 'I would really, really adopt you all'" (Gappah, 2009, p. 17).

The point in this analysis is that, as a form of expressing dystopic hope, protest literature is the writer and the reader's coping mechanism against perceived

hegemony. The writer ridicules and derides the various disorders in the society in order to evoke feelings of contempt, moral indignation and scorn so that ultimately human vices and folly can be corrected. To further attest to this, the narrator at the Heroes' Acre recalls how "it is known that one of the heroes we buried recently was not the fine upstanding family man of the presidential speech but a concupiscent septuagenarian who died from a Viagra-induced heart attack whilst inside [having sex] with an underage girl" (Gappah, 2009, p. 24). What the narrator hints at is the limit of pragmatic morality which has been discussed in previous chapters, showing that such coping mechanisms have limits. This is exemplified in the possible horror and psychological torment this underage girl possibly may have, all in the name of surviving the crisis. In other words, the writer here becomes society's moral compass, directing the society towards moral supremacy in spite of all the odds.

In addition, perhaps the most outstanding survival tactic in this short story is through the narrator's regaining of her voice and adopting a trickster method for political and economic ascendancy. This is done through non-violent means of attaining one's goals through calculated, well thought-out and well executed coping tactics. When the husband dies, the one who is politically connected and a powerful man, the narrator does not see her own demise as well but rather an opportunity to be seized and used to catapult her to greater heights. In the midst of adversity she sees an opportunity for survival and regains her long lost voice. For the narrator, the ruling party has to gain political mileage through her husband's death since her "husband was from the restive tribe in the south that sleeps and feeds and knows not the President" (Gappah, 2009, p. 22). Therefore, to survive the political crisis, the ruling

party has to use the narrator's husband's death to their advantage in the name of altruism and patriotism. "Think of how good it will be for his region" (Gappah, 2009, p. 22) they say, meaning if the late politician is buried at the Heroes Acre then that would mean a satisfactory representation of the poverty stricken region – a typical opportunism which others use in order to survive politically and reap the economic benefits thereafter.

However, the author positively brings about the fact that to survive in a dystopian situation, one has to schematically and courageously use one's voice as the narrator does. Her voice of defiance and protest is made clear as she thinks to herself that "they did not tell me, his widow, of this decision and I had to hear of it from his whore on the evening news" (Gappah, 2009, p. 20). This is when the animal trickster mode of survival comes into play. The animal trickster is replete in African tradition and folktales. It expresses the invincibility of the weak in the midst of major crises or hegemonic dispensations. In African folktales this takes the form of a weak and despised animal that eventually tackles a challenge. Some of these archetypes include the tortoise, chameleon, an ant and other small and weak animals. These folktales were used to bolster the story teller and the audience's confidence in their ability to survive and eventually to overcome the inhumanities and challenges they face, no matter what magnitude these difficulties can be. The wisdom enshrined in the animal trickster folktales include the principle in the Shona proverb which says that, *matanda makuru mazungunuswa*; which literally means that it's worth the effort to try and shake huge logs, because you can meet one whose roots have been eaten by termites and at your fickle push the tree will fall and you get all the firewood.

This is what the narrator does, she does not succumb but dares rise to the challenge, a coping strategy which even biblical literature in the gospels preaches when it talks of knocking and it shall be opened for you, as well as seeking and it shall be found.

The narrator tricks her way into political power, economic emancipation and the regaining of her voice to also become a voice of the voiceless. She refuses to allow the death of her husband to be her end but in the midst of catastrophe she sees opportunity aplenty. She does this by simply refusing to have her husband buried at the heroes' acre – in other words even at a time of bereavement she doesn't throw away her brains. Instead she resiliently thinks of an overture and she recounts that:

And in that realisation, I saw my future. I have no home in my own country to go to; everything that I have invested in is here. I could choose to be an official widow to be trotted out at every commemoration of the heroes. Or I could choose my own path. (Gappah, 2009, p. 23)

Such is her plight and she has to find means and ways of surviving as well as make life worth living. She cunningly uses her wit and refuses to budge, threatening the emissaries sent to her with *ngozi* (deadly avenging spirit of a wronged dead person) and also going to the private press to expose political secrets which are purportedly damaging to the ruling party. She pools all the resources around her, real or imagined to survive; under such circumstances the lesson the readers learn is that at times it is not the survival of the fittest but of the wisest. Mental agility can indeed triumph over physical prowess.

Realising the opportunity before her, she makes her position clear, “I want my husband’s farm”, I said, “and I want it registered in title deeds in my name. I also want an uncontested seat in the new Senate” (Gappah, 2009, p. 23). Here we have the coping strategies of a survivor supreme. A woman of foreign descent, who is widowed, is without a job, has no investment in her country of origin, and also has no children of her own to possibly assist her to sail through as well as even offer her some form of comfort – but ultimately she is a survivor and victor. She is possibly not included in the late husband’s will if ever there was one and living in a country undergoing a horrifying political and economic crisis is no easy at all; but she is a survivor indeed. She is resilient, schematic and unyielding. The uncontested seat affords her an opportunity to make a difference, to make her voice heard and be a voice of the voiceless, thereby contributing to national development instead of being on the periphery of national developmental issues. Emphasis is also on the point that this senatorial seat has to be uncontested, to make it certain that really she gets the senatorial seat without any doubt. Furthermore, the fact that the senatorial seat is in the new senate implies that she has approximately five years to prove her worth. In addition, getting a farm with title deeds in her own name assures her a home for sure. The story becomes representative of survival tactics not only for marginalised women but also citizens by marriage; a minority whose voices are seldom represented in literature and social science research.

Critical to note is exactly how the heroine manages to creatively craft a coping strategy which makes her carry the day. The narrator, as a paragon of survival, pulls off a grand plan by using the trickster method; beating the powers that be in their

own game of political survival. The authorities survive political demise through singing praises to fallen heroes like the narrator's husband, especially if the death happens to fall in the strategic month of August when heroes' celebrations are held. So inasmuch as the death of her husband is political mileage for the regime, she decides to make the cause worth her personal gains as well. This is how the author explicitly puts across this survival master plan:

So the bargain was sealed: for a seat in the new Senate, and a farm in my own name, I would close my mouth and let them bury wood and earth in his name. They jumped at this; how could they not, when my husband had died early in August, that they could have a real funeral in the month that they commemorate men of the ruling party who have died still in agreement with the President. And so the spokesperson arranged everything, the coffin, the service, the switch after the lying in state at Stoddard Hall. (Gappah, 2009, p. 22)

Desperate moments call for desperate measures indeed as the above illustrates. During tempestuous moments it does not help to be whining and grumbling, whilst looking for someone to come and help you to overcome the crisis situation. Instead, there is a need to rise to the occasion as the narrator does, and use pragmatic morality, wit and courage to survive. As the saying goes, only dead fish flow with the current; the narrator decides to swim in an oppositional direction and rise up when vexed by threatening circumstances. Writing in almost similar dystopian contexts of apartheid, the renowned author, Athol Fugard in his celebrated play *Sizwe bansi is dead* (19913) demonstrates the same principle. Gappah here further

suggests and corroborates that to cope and also survive; one has to cheat the system. Buntu in Fugard's play says to Robert Zwelinzima, "all I am saying is be a real ghost, if that is what they want, what they have turned us into. Spook them into hell man!" (Fugard, 1993, p. 185). In the same manner, Gappah's narrator also spooks the system into hell and this is a version of the Shona colloquialism of the day called *kukorokoza*; which literally means gold panning but now means scavenging around in order to make a fortune in spite of all the mishaps.

Ultimately, what stands out in the short story "At the sound of the last post" is the fact that politically the Zimbabwean crisis as presented in such imaginative narratives is dystopian in nature. Yet still such stories as the above are rhetorically effective in that they are hopeful. The story has demonstrated that escape is possible and the very act of writing is therapeutic as well as demonstrative of the human capacity to resist, resiliently imagine a way out of the 'den of lions' and also politically manoeuvre one's way into survival mode. Despite her numerous problems which are compounded by her position as a woman, the narrator remakes the world around her, defines her own destination and her life becomes a testament of how impossibilities can be made possible.

A further testament of how the Zimbabwean short story represents survival and coping mechanisms during times of crisis is found in Mlalazi's short story "They are coming" (2011). What is outstanding in the story is the author's representation of the coping strategies and his provocative imagination of how change can be made more visible. Known for his protest fiction, Mlalazi writes to purposefully commit to the truth by pointing out and promoting the possibilities of positive changes and

suggesting practical survival mechanisms out of the political malaise the people find themselves in. The story “They are coming” is about how Mr Nkani, a local school teacher intends to be voted into power in the following elections. Because of the fact that he belongs to the opposition party many people intend to vote for him. However, the state machinery – the police, who are nicknamed “green bombers”, cannot have any of it. So when the story begins, the police are chasing him but the omniscient narration quickly shifts to an ordinary township family which gets engulfed into the scuffle involving the police and the township dwellers. This scuffle includes a ten year old boy, Lungisani, his mother and father and Lungisani’s brother whom we only hear about but never meet. So when Mr Nkani is chased by the police, he runs past their house and a few minutes later he comes back with a group of people, now chasing after the police who are now running back in defeat.

The first coping mechanism that can be raised here pertains to protest that comes out through metaphorical terms. This is presented through the names which are given to the characters in the story. First, the township street also becomes a character whose name carries a lot of meaning. When the young boy, Lungisani, gets out of his parents’ house, the panoramic view meeting his eyes is that of Khumbulani Street. This is an important street name which speaks volumes within the political context of Zimbabwe as it is situated in the Matabeleland town of Bulawayo, the second capital of Zimbabwe. Literally translated, *khumbulani*, means “remember” or “recall”. This is a clarion call to the citizenry of Bulawayo to remember how their past has been – and one of the political events that the people of the town can easily remember is that of *Gukurahundi*. This [*gukurahundi*] is an historical massacre which took place

shortly after the independence of Zimbabwe and resulted in thousands of civilians being brutally killed. Therefore the reason why it should make sense in this instance is because on one level of interpretation the author is advising that for people to cope with the present crisis they need to remember such historical pains and thus be able to map the way forward.

Similarly, the name *nkani* means to be unwavering, being stubborn and tenaciously soldiering on. As a way to survive this crisis in question, the writer is calling for such resilience and tenacity as we see in the bearer of this name, Mr Nkani. He is resolute, unmoved and strong headed, and this is in spite of how the state machinery is all bent on squashing the likes of him. However, the point that comes through him is that when times of political crisis like this come and when dealing with dystopian and hegemonic regimes, one has to be firm, courageous and resilient so that the whole nation can survive through that person. Furthermore, the name of the small boy who joins in chasing away the police is *Lungisani*, which means, “make right that which has been made wrong” or “correct and make things better”. It is therefore not a coincidence that we have such names in a story that is about a crisis of such a magnitude as the one considered in this study. It is a symbolic name which emphasises the people’s desire for survival and making their lives better and therefore it is a call to the authorities to do something for the people. This is sharply contrasted with the derogatory name given to the police officers – Green-bombers. This is an allusion to the very big houseflies which are green in colour and which quickly lay white eggs whenever they land on food. The idea created by the author through using such a name is to create a nauseating feeling and revulsion towards the

state machinery used to silence people. Ultimately the point made here is that if the previous section and chapter concentrated on showing how people cope with a crisis like the one in question, in this short story the analysis is extended to show how the authors of commitment like Mlalazi also grapple with that question and make their voices heard. It is not enough to discuss how the characters themselves interrogate the situation around them but to also interrogate how the writers themselves grapple with the concerns of the day.

Mlalazi also imaginatively forecasts the possibility of coping with the difficult times of the day through political involvement. In the previously analysed short story (“At the sound of the last post”), Gappah’s main character resolutely decides to join the political senate so that she can bring about positive change which can enable people to survive and cope with the challenges they are facing. Mlalazi also brings about the issue of political involvement. Instead of wallowing in apathy and having a *laissez faire* attitude as objects of history, the way to cope with troubled times is through taking up a position in the future government and make a positive difference. The story tells of how, “Mr Nkani’s face is plastered on posters all around the township, posters that are tied to trees, to electricity and telephone poles, and stuck on the walls at the shopping centre where his father works. People say he belongs to the opposition, and that they will vote for him in the elections next week” (Mlalazi, 2011, p. 103). This statement is illustrative of the author’s vision of survival when the political situation seems unfavourable. This can be done through the democratic means of taking part in elections so that the people’s voices can be heard and ultimately bring about means of escaping the crisis that is gripping the whole nation.

In addition, in this vision of coping with a political crisis, the author adds another very important dimension when it comes to the person who takes political office. Not only is Mr Nkani a stubborn, strong willed and determined man, as his name implies, but he is the Grade 7A teacher at Lungisani's school. The fact that he is a school teacher also adds another dimension to the author's vision of survival mechanisms – he is not just an ignorant political opportunist but an educated person with some sense of enlightenment. This implies that being a respected member of the community and fairly educated, Mr Nkani has the potential to lead the people, represent them in government and courageously transform the political terrain - which is a true mark of democratic processes desirable in 21st century Africa.

Moreover, the story also insightfully and with measured wisdom represents some ways to cope with political repression – through resistance. When Mr Nkani is chased after by the “Green Bombers”, the picture painted is that of a dystopian society indeed and Mr Nkani is momentarily presented as an insignificant individual who cannot dare challenge the hegemonic regime with its mighty state apparatus like the unflinchingly ruthless police force. However, the author refuses to cultivate such a pessimistic, cynical and helpless situation. Instead the story is indeed one of dystopian hope as we see how the proverbial Goliath is now retreating as the masses charge after them – this is a possibility the author touts loud and clear. In order to survive, the people need to face their situations head on and take charge of their lives instead of timidly being bystanders as the story suggests. This we see as:

The group is comprised of a mixture of men, women and children, and tagging behind, is the township stray, Ginger, normally a timid dog, but now

barking and chasing with the others. Mr Nkani, still in his torn and blood-stained shirt leads the group, snatching up stones from the ground and throwing them in the direction of the Green Bombers, as if he is lobbing grenades. (Mlalazi, 2011, p. 105)

Two points need to be emphasised here. First is that this group has a leader who is Mr Nkani and the group, with an advantage of numbers, is all inclusive as it has the men, women and children of the township, hence it is fully representative. The “Fanonian” wretched of the earth take up a speaking position to challenge the status quo. Second is the interesting observation by the author that even the stray dogs like Ginger have also joined in the protest and fight for justice. Despite the fact that Ginger is normally known for being timid, the situation (crisis) has grown into such proportions that timidity and apathy can no longer be accommodated. Hearing of how the Green Bombers were defeated by the people, the representative voice of Lungisani’s mother rejoices as “They were defeated then. Good. There is exultation in MaNdlovu” (Mlalazi, 2011, p.107). Even the ten year old Lungisani cannot be an onlooker forever. His proverbial childhood innocence is cast aside as “Lungisani joins the chase. Even though he is small, he overtakes some of the crowd” (Mlalazi, 2011, p. 105).

Furthermore, it also needs to be underlined that Mlalazi does not blindly preach tactless confrontation as the best way to cope with a political crisis. He presents this survival tactic with a lot of wisdom, guarding against rubble rousing and senselessness. The author therefore shows the possibilities the masses have to change their lives but warns against war. According to this story, as a country which gained

independence through bloodshed, the Zimbabweans are keenly aware of the destructive nature of war, especially in the present day which is now different from the days when they were fighting for independence. Some form of authorial intrusion is discernible when Ngwenya, Lungisani's father, regrettably observes that, "Because then we had a common enemy, the white regime. Now it is our government versus the people, the war has changed complexion. What about our children" (Mlalazi, 2011, p. 107). The implication being that the survival tactic of confrontation to the point of civil war is not the best according to the story. This is further clarified by the fact that Ngwenya's own son, who is Lungisani's brother, is now on the side of the government, as one of the Green-Bombers. Lungisani swears that he saw his brother, Persuade, amongst the Green-Bombers and the parents cannot stomach it. Persuade is their own son and now the prospect is that their two sons are engaging in a war in which they support different sides, fighting against each other. This is the wisdom enshrined in this short story and through the concluding paragraphs; we can discern the value of artistic responsibility as the author refuses to commit the reader to a desire for war as a coping mechanism. Coping with hegemonic crises can take many forms including confrontation, as we see in this story, and the masses do have what it takes, but fatalistic survival tactics which end up in pyrrhic victories is not what the responsible writer wants to propagate. As the saying goes, a fly that has no one to advise follows the corpse into the grave, therefore, the author seeks to advise against any confrontational survival mechanism as the best way out. Physically confronting the regime can easily result in another Egypt, Iraq or Syria, and such coping mechanisms are quite retrogressive and undesirable, the story seems to suggest.

In addition to the above, Ndlovu's short story "Hands" (2006) brings other interesting dimensions of how the survival and coping mechanisms during a political crisis are represented through fiction. Set again in the second capital of Zimbabwe, Bulawayo, the story is about the way the urbanites try to solve the challenges they face during the crisis. It is a story about the discord between father and son who occupy opposing viewpoints when it comes to the challenges facing the country and the proposed ways of solving these challenges. The emphasis in the story "Hands", just like in "They are coming", is that the way out of the situation is to do something about it rather than simply complain with folded hands - taking action is the way out. Bongani, who is the son to Ndlovu retorts to his father's disapproving interrogations and says that; "No, Baba, it's not like that. We are trying to solve our problems; it's not easy" (Ndlovu, 2006, p. 37). In other words this is yet another reiteration of the colloquial *tofira mutrial* (we die trying) which has been popularised during the period of the crisis. Instead of waiting for a messiah, outside help or hand-outs, the urbanites like Bongani act; they have to resiliently make meaning for themselves, explore alternatives and find a possible way out. Therefore, one way of surviving is through protesting against the status quo (regime) which is perceived to be the sole cause of much of the problems. This comes out when Bongani argues with the mother and says:

Can't you see, that's exactly what I am fighting? Things are all wrong. Your generation messed everything up – no food, no jobs, no rights to anything. We have to fix it. Who is going to fix it if we don't? We can't even imagine having families and homes; those are for the big thieves who want to be

called chefs. Do you want all of us to run away to South Africa to live in the streets there, or do you want some of us to do something? (Ndlovu, 2006, p. 3)

The golden statement which colours this whole study therefore is in one doing something, taking charge and arising to make sure that in the midst of the crisis one can salvage something and be a survivor. Survival at national and political level is presented as something which needs to come through the young generation as we see through Mlalazi's presentation of Lungisani and now also through Ndlovu's Bongani. Arrests and persecution come Bongani's way, just like Mr Nkani's beatings and torment by the state apparatus, but with resilience and fortitude there is a possible future for the nation.

However, what needs to be further explored is the fact that the political, economic and social crisis gripping the urbanites is at a macro level, but at a micro level and mostly importantly as occasioned by the national crisis is also a family crisis. In "They are coming" by Mlalazi, we already saw a family crisis as the son Persuade has become one of the Green Bombers who is fighting against his own family. In the present short story ("Hands"), the fight is directly between the son and father but the positive voice that is celebrated is the voice of wisdom coming through the pacifier, Bongani's mother. The chasm between the father and son is quite disturbing but the mother has a way out as she advises:

No, Ndlovu, that's not the way. This is a time of understanding, not for temper and violence. Surely it's a time to reflect and consider what has gone wrong here. The boy is the same as you: headstrong but brave. We need to

find out what he is doing and why. My guess is that you will find he has not strayed as far as you think (Ndlovu, 2006, p. 39).

Here we see the role that women can and do play in the quest to solve a national and family crisis - they are a voice of reason which prefers reconciliation, engagement, dialogue and progressive effort over violence. Bongani's mother advises her son, Bongani to go and apologise to the father for the sake of progress and family unity; she advises him to "just apologise and then do whatever you think you have to do" (Ndlovu, 2006, p. 41). Whilst at the same time she is admonishing her husband to try and understand the changing times and not live in denial of the fact that things are bad and the young have to do what they think is the best, just like he (the father, Ndlovu) previously had to go into exile and come back as a freedom fighter for independence. Finally, the husband also concedes that the time for the gun is now past; shedding blood so as to solve a crisis like this is not an option to consider at all. "All he knew was that his wife spoke the truth", (Ndlovu, 2006, p. 41). Therefore, the value of the short story is further amplified here as one of the innovative ways to prevent violence. Such reconciliation and reconstruction mechanisms are highly welcome in the highly volatile and polarised world we live in today, characterised by religious extremism, terrorism, xenophobia, civil unrest and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, covert and overt political domination, to mention but a few. Peace-oriented mechanisms are therefore not solely found in the highly politicised *indabas* of international organs but are also found in simple stories like these ones. With peaceful conflict resolutions starting at family level like this, positive avenues are created for national and international harmony as they are already imaginatively

presented in this short story. To attest to this, in practical terms, it is such peace-oriented mechanisms which prevented Zimbabwe from total collapse in the year 2009 when there was a formation of a government of national unity between arch-rivals Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai.

The argument above can therefore be summarised with the idea that protest fiction opens locked doors and does not condemn the reader to futility and disgruntlement but moves the reader to a higher level of consciousness. It is not simply an “unbeliever’s journey” or “a dry season” which results in a “house of hunger”, “nervous condition” and “a harvest of thorns”; to string together some fictional titles in Zimbabwean literature. Instead of simply “waiting for the rain”, the people resolve to act, they go to fetch water, metaphorically dig deeper wells and aim at surviving against all the odds as the three stories so far analysed in this chapter have demonstrated. To echo the late Chinua Achebe, there will always be some “anthills of the savannah” which can survive the horrendous bush fires of the hot summer time and this is the wisdom enshrined in this fiction - resiliently surviving against all the odds.

In the next section, the study takes a further step as it critically looks at how some of the short stories present an imaginative and suggestive view of what Zimbabwe and indeed Zimbabweans need to address in order to survive the political and socio-economic malaise besieging the country. The section breaks new ground in that it further explores constructive fiction which is both corrective and motivating in the way it represents not only what people do or are doing but also what they need to do

– these are the myriad possibilities which go beyond the current problems and challenges.

5.3. FICTIONALISING RESOURCE POLITICS AND THE IMAGINATION OF A BETTER ZIMBABWE

In Kanengoni's short story entitled "The ugly reflection in the mirror" (2003) we are faced with suggestive writing that expresses the aspirations of the people, with a particular emphasis on the critical resources of the country. The story "The ugly reflection in the mirror" is not so much about a narrative with a lot of action and a chain of events but about a few minutes of encounter between two characters. One is the narrator, a black war veteran who has newly acquired a farm, and the other a white commercial farmer. The brief encounter which they have is highly suggestive of how the author imagines survival and coping strategies inasmuch as the story dwells on the sensitive and contentious issue of resources and interracial relations.

The first point that needs to be raised from this story is how the author presents multiracial harmony as a critical ingredient in the making of a better Zimbabwe. The first illustration on interracial harmony as a coping tactic comes through the title itself – "the ugly reflection in the mirror". This is a metaphorical title which speaks volumes about how interconnected the human race is, and that for the country to move forward there is a need for true reconciliation. This is particularly significant in the wake of the unrest which followed the land invasions/repossessions which took place in the country of Zimbabwe and how violent the process became. This violence was mainly along racial lines. In this story, by presenting two men, one white commercial farmer and the other a war veteran, the author is explicitly drawing the

reader to the idea that racial harmony is desirable for there to be progress - this is a survival and coping mechanism which needs to be put into practice. The war veteran is the narrator of the story and as the story draws to a close, after an enchanting dialogue with Mr Flemming, the white commercial farmer he realises to his utter amazement how they are both human beings who can relate in a civil manner. "And then I also noticed the stoop in his old frame and I thought, My God, how like my late father he looks" (Kanengoni, 2003, p. 108). This is the ugly reflection in the mirror, the encounter with the truth of the cords that bind humanity together despite the racial differences; when one looks in the mirror the reflection that comes out is that of the neighbour who can be any colour. This reflection urges the Zimbabwean citizenry and the reader at large to embrace this reflection so that together they can swim across the tide with a united and stronger front.

Furthermore, to cope with the crisis in its many forms, the story also calls for the people to confront the critical resource of contention which has partly been blamed for having been one of the causes of the Zimbabwean crisis - the land issue. Kanengoni, through this story, is suggesting that for the country to move forward and for the people to cope with the land issue's attendant challenges, there is a need to face reality so that solutions can be found. Avoiding the issue does not seem to help at all and Mr Flemming has thought deeply about it and critiques how, "my friends don't talk to me anymore," he said, and laughed carelessly "because I tell them that no matter who comes to power, if he doesn't resolve the land issue, the people will chase him out of office" (Kanengoni, 2003, p. 106). For the sake of progressing towards a better Zimbabwe the author through Mr Flemming urges that some

historical issues which are always resurfacing need to be bravely faced and embraced so that lasting solutions can be found. This is the invaluable didacticism of the story and through the institutionally weak and crisis-hit Zimbabwean story, a lot can be learnt. The historical contentions need to be ironed out and this cannot necessarily be done through the political way or the SADC tribunal which has already had challenges in this regard. Mr Flemming is quite analytical and perceptive when he reiterates, “how am I expected to avoid this confrontation when Tony Blair disowns his past?” (Kanengoni, 2003, p. 107). In other words, for one to make informed decisions with regards to the crisis at hand, some historical connections have to be made so that, informed by the past, one can safely manoeuvre through the various landmines which have been exposed by the crisis.

To survive the resource politics which compounded the crisis, Mr Flemming decides to strategically make linkages with the community around him. “But that day, as we stood in the middle of my twenty-acre field of beans that he had helped me to plant, the man looked away into the distance and said there was nothing in the country as close to the hearts of the people as the land” (Kanengoni, 2003, p. 105). Significant is the fact that Mr Flemming realises that “this is the war we will never win” (Kanengoni, 2003, p. 107) and in order to survive and protect his interests, he begins to extend a hand to his neighbour who has been resettled next to his farm. That way he manages to keep his farm from repossession and also forge some acquaintances, especially considering that his own friends no longer want to talk with him. Moreover, he also ploughs back into the community around him as he speaks of “how he helped communal farmers from Musana and Masembura to grow paprika;

how as a result, he had been issued with an EPZ certificate to enable him to export paprika to Spain” (Kanengoni, 2003, p. 106). The EPZ (Export processing zone) certificate is a form of certification which authorises someone to export the produce from his/her farm whilst those without the export processing zone certificate are not allowed to export but have to sell the produce locally. Whereas many other farmers are being chased out of their farms, Mr Flemming survives the invasion. The point is not to condone the chaotic land invasions and lawlessness that took place but to point out that in a dystopian state of affairs these are realities which cannot be ignored. However, what is salutary in the story is a presentation of the survivor personality through the likes of Mr Flemming. Furthermore, it has to be emphasised that, the EPZ certificate which he gets is a certification for his farm to be regarded as an export processing zone - an authorisation that sees him sell his products outside the country thereby making him get the much needed foreign currency. The foreign currency he gets is the life blood of the companies in crisis-hit Zimbabwe and Mr Flemming pulls off this deal through realising that to survive during such political unrests one has to engage the communities so that everyone becomes a winner - he is a survivor indeed.

Furthermore, another outstanding coping mechanism is presented through the characters' acceptance of change. This change comes through self-evaluation, a critical reflection on the transitions happening in the society around and a rethinking of preconceived ideas and prejudices. These prejudices cut across racial lines and Mr Flemming manages to surmount these – he embraces a black war veteran, gives him advice and shares ideas about farming, politics and ways to survive. Similarly the

narrator also re-evaluates his preconceived ideas and stereotypical views of the white race. The narrator talks of how:

Right from the outset, the farmers always assumed a domineering attitude. You saw it in the elevated look in their eyes; you saw it in the arrogant way they wanted to control the discussion, reducing you to a mere listener. The most exasperating thing was their indifference as they put you through the humiliation, as if this was the only way there was to deal with blacks. That was how I had known it to be with the white commercial farmers. Perhaps it was my imagination. Perhaps I was seeing things that were not there.
(Kanengoni, 2003, p. 105)

The above quotation marks a transition in perception by the narrator. The desirability of peace and harmony during a crisis is demonstrated to be the best way for fostering togetherness. The repetition of the word “perhaps” is a mark of change in attitude and this change in attitude is in both the narrator and Mr Flemming. The crisis in question in this study calls for concerted efforts from all racial and ethnic groups. For one to imagine a better tomorrow there is a need to join hands. Mr Flemming and the narrator begin to build an enviable relationship. The story also uses repetition of how the two characters looked into the far distance, as if to imply that lasting survival and coping mechanisms are couched in building lasting interracial relationships. To reinforce this idea, the author ends the story with some symbolism which marks the furthering of a brighter future for the two characters. “And then heavy drops of rain began to hit the ground and I continued walking across the field. We had never come this far before” (Kanengoni, 2003, p. 108). The confrontation marks the breaking of

new ground in their quest for survival and the rains which are beginning to fall symbolise the cultivation and flourishing of their relationship and the country's new beginnings as well.

Finally, looking at the last two stories to be analysed in this chapter, the reader further meets with an admonishing voice that seeks to give direction to what needs to be addressed in order for the country to survive the crisis. The mineral wealth of the country has to be well taken care of and made to benefit the citizens. The short stories "Notes from Mai Mujuru's breast" (2012) by Mwanaka and "The chances and challenges of Chiadzwa" (2007) by Chinhanhu talk about the grapple by the ordinary people to also get the newly found diamonds in the Chiadzwa area of Zimbabwe. Looking at the titles themselves, one can see a lot of significance. In the later, what stands out clearly is the fact that indeed there are challenges which are associated with the hunt for the diamonds in the area of Chiadzwa but amidst all the challenges there are chances. These are the chances which others exploit, therefore, emphasising the core message of this study, that no matter how tough and unbearable the situation, there is always a way out and a lesson to be learnt. In the former story, it needs to be pointed out that Mai Mujuru is the Vice President of the country and by talking of her breast, the author metaphorically brings to the fore the idea of life, sacredness, a strong willed desire and also intimates to issues pertaining to the heart. The breast gives milk, which is life to a child and through this connection the author demonstrates how the diamond as a natural resource is akin to a breast. When talking about "notes" the idea can be that these are ideas, some advice or piece of information and to interpret it that way also means that the author seems to highlight

core issues which need to be addressed in order for the people to survive. Paradoxically it may mean so bank notes, which still emphasises the key concern with material wealth as a means for survival and that the ordinary people are pining to lay their hands on these notes.

A tone of dystopian hope pervades the whole story by Mwanaka (“Notes from Mai Mujuru’s breast”) as we see how lives are lost whilst trying to look for a way out of their troubles. “It was at the height of the political problems in the country. People were still scuttling all over the country trying to eke an existence”, the story begins (Mwanaka, 2012, p. 195). The story is about Daniel and Chris who decide to try their luck in the hunt for diamonds in the Chiadzwa/Marange area. The area is heavily guarded but the need to survive makes them throw all caution to the wind. The repetition of the word “survive” in the story is telling. Even when death is threatening him, “some would have given up, but Chris had to survive to tell the story, for Daniel and the other people who had died at the hands of the police here in Marange” (Mwanaka, 2012, p. 193). Furthermore, to illustrate the resilience of the young man, the writer speaks of how “he had survived before in this place” (Mwanaka, 2012, p. 193). The reason why Chris becomes such a daredevil, risking his life, is because of the need to survive. The natural resources of the country afford him a way out, especially if he were to manage to pan for diamonds at the lot nicknamed “Mai Mujuru’s breast” because as he reminisces, “a breast to a little kid or even to an old man represents life, living, loving” (Mwanaka, 2012, p. 197). So Chris and his friend Daniel strong headedly find their way to the volatile diamond mine with the conviction that, “if you were to lick a bit of that breast, you would go

home smiling yourself out of the Mufakose township into the lush, leafy suburbs of Harare” (Mwanaka, 2012, p. 198). Whilst the story ends on a rather sad note, with the tragedy of Daniel’s death, the point has been made. The natural resources are a key to the survival of the country and the ordinary citizens also deserve them to cope with the crisis. By using a metaphorical title and linking it to the vice president of the country, Amai Mujuru, the story is a direct indictment of the politicians; it is a protest form of writing that is highly suggestive. The story gives direction and searches for survival paths in a crisis hit country like Zimbabwe. In the final analysis, the story demonstrates further the value of dystopian hope and protest literature in that it powerfully and intimately exposes the shortcomings of society so that corrective measures can be thought of and thereby bring about a brighter future.

In addition, Chinhanhu’s short story “The chances and challenges of Chiadzwa” (2007) further demonstrates the resilience of the ordinary people in their bid to survive the crisis through the utilisation of the natural resources available to them. When the diamonds are discovered all over the area, the people think that their prayers have been heard and they will avert the crisis. However, the government swoops in, sealing the whole area, mounting roadblocks and thorough searches of everyone who leaves or enters the area of Chiadzwa in Marange district. However, this only curtails but does not extinguish the people’s desire to survive. The people, using the trickster method manage to outwit the hegemonic authorities. The elders of the village meet at night to plan and the elder advises thus:

So everything is in your hands, to be brave and save your fellowmen, or be cowardly and watch them die one by one as before. A lot of my

contemporaries died without witnessing these diamonds, and I consider myself privileged to have at least seen them. It is God-given wealth. God has heard our cries over the years, and gave these stones to us. But now look. (Chinhanhu, 2007, p. 20)

This is the honest truth they are confronted with and instead of sitting down and watch, the people decide on a plan to trick the authorities and smuggle the diamonds. This plan is hatched in connivance with the traditional authorities and it is a plan to feign the death of one of the villagers who has to be buried outside the district of Marange. When the “corpse” is being transported to the burial place, they hide lots of diamonds and later meet up with an arranged buyer. The buyer gives the village men accompanying the corpse an amount of US\$500,000 and also Z\$44,000,000. As the story comes to an end we see how “the villagers took their money, to be shared equally among themselves later, before each thought of where to spend the next few nights. But first they had to bury the empty coffin, which they did with a pomp and glee rarely seen at a ‘funeral’” (Chinhanhu, 2007, p. 22). This is another representation of the fortitude ordinary people have, their inextinguishable desire for survival and the resilience of hope. Instead of being bystanders succumbing to the wills of a hegemonic regime, the ordinary people demand a piece of the national cake and they do this through careful planning, use of their wits and cooperation. They “spook” the authorities to hell, to use Fugard’s terms (1993), and manage to lay their hand on the natural resources which according to them are a God given gift and rightfully belong to them instead of a few members of the regime.

5.4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, therefore, the aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate the literary representation of political survival and natural resource utilisation, how the ordinary people resist repression, and also about the resilience of hope. The chapter's main concern has been to show how the writers imagine possible coping strategies which are peaceful, non-violent and futuristic. The short stories analysed have represented the Zimbabwean crisis under discussion as a form of dystopia - with authoritarianism, the dehumanization of the ordinary people and the oppression of the weak. However, the ultimate idea that carries the day is that this is a form of dystopian hope; beyond the gloom, the outrageous and the horrific is a world full of possibilities and it is this potential that needs to be celebrated. The short stories analysed here are hopeful and suggestive; the act of protesting and sounding the alarm is an act of didacticism, directing the reader towards the realisation that survival is ubiquitous and a possibility, thereby spurring the reader onwards.

In the story "At the sound of the last post" by Gappah, the heroine defies all the odds and ends up being the last woman standing. She outwits the political authorities, regains her voice and ends up with a farm delivered to her on a silver platter and a senatorial seat is awaiting her without her having slaved in campaigns and voting processes. Whilst in Ndlovu's short story, "Hands" the value of protest literature is valorised. The story admonishes that in order to survive the political crisis; the ordinary people have to protest, take control of their destiny and courageously challenge the system. The woman's voice is given more prominence in the story as a voice of wisdom, which pacifies the father and son and also calls for reconciliation.

The short story “They are coming” further emphasises the value of political engagement and physical resistance to harassment as a coping strategy. Through Mr Nkani, the story advises that apathy will not help the situation but capable people must get into government so that they can bring about positive change. The story further illustrates the power which the masses have to drive away the state apparatus like the “Green-Bombers”, whilst at the same time cautioning against civil war since it pits brother against brother hence it is not the best survival mechanism the country needs to utilise.

In the second section of the chapter the short story “The ugly reflection in the mirror” by Kanengoni suggestively presents some of the issues that need to be confronted in order for the country to survive the crisis. The story calls for multiracial harmony and a peaceful resolution of the contentious land issue as well as community engagement as well as community upliftment. This is ably done through the presentation of Mr Flemming and his encounter with the narrator who is a war veteran and as the story comes to a close, these two people are headed towards a better Zimbabwe and they have sailed past the crisis. Whilst in the stories “The chances and challenges of Chiadzwa” as well as “Notes from Mai Mujuru’s breast”, the writers grapple with resource politics. The goal has been to show that for the nation to sail past the crisis, this issue has to be addressed and if handled well enough the economic crisis may be contained. In the former short story, the people’s ingenuity and resilience is celebrated as the author presents how they outmanoeuvre the authorities and manage to survive off the proceeds of the God-given diamonds.

In conclusion therefore, through this chapter it can be concluded that fiction can foster innovation and change which is peaceful and non-violent. The short stories analysed here are vehicles of emancipation which bring about hope, growth and an awakening as well sensitisation to the fact that despite the dystopian nature of the crisis there are always coping mechanisms and survival strategies. Instead of solely concentrating on what the people do so as to survive, the pedagogical value of this analysis is discerned through how the writers imaginatively present what needs to be done in order to survive. Through protest, admonishing and ridiculing in some instances, the reader is left with optimism, courage and energy to face challenges in life.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study that has been carried out to explore the literary representations of urban survival and coping strategies in contemporary Zimbabwean short fiction in English. The chapter gives a summary of the findings and recommendations that are critical in illustrating how the study contributes in the breaking of new ground in the literature (fiction) of the Zimbabwean crisis.

The chapter is divided into two sections - conclusions and findings, and recommendations. In the conclusions and findings sections, an attempt is made to synthesise the relevance of the topic as well as the theoretical framework. A recapitulation of the research questions is made to conclude and summarise the findings in relation to the ideas raised in each chapter, thereby demonstrating the larger significance of the study. In the final section recommendations are made with regards to what needs to be looked at in further studies and future research.

6.2. CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the conclusions and findings made in this study. Firstly, concluding remarks are made on the relevance of the topic and theoretical framework. Secondly, as a way of concluding the findings made in the analysis of the nineteen short stories and one novel as discussed in the preceding chapters, a restatement of research questions is given as they are linked to the discussions made in each chapter.

6.2.1 THE RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study, through the preceding chapters, has demonstrated that imaginative literature is a vital tool for articulating the innovativeness, resilience and capacity for survival of the ordinary people, even in difficult and trying times. The importance of the research topic lies in the unique recognition of the fact that human agency is ubiquitous; instead of agonizing, grumbling and magnifying the problems the Zimbabwean state faces, the literary artist champions a hopeful gaze that aims to empower and inspire.

Whereas some writers and academics are content in bemoaning and enumerating the pitiful state of the Zimbabwean state in particular and African states in general, this study, through an exploration of the survival and coping strategies as presented in fiction, thus fills a gap in knowledge on innovation and resilience by recognizing and celebrating survival and coping strategies. The characters depicted in the short stories are ranging from the urban dwellers in Chapter Two who reconstruct the city space to make it their own through urban informalities. The survival and coping tactics also include the cultural transformation and adaptation of identities for survival's sake as presented in Chapter Three. The way some characters migrate and use the diaspora as a way to negotiate the crisis has been presented in Chapter Four. Finally, the study explored how some characters are presented whilst engaging in activism, resisting repression and imaginatively reclaiming their God-given resources as in Chapter Five. These chapters all attest to the relevance of this research topic. Previous writers have summarized the situation in Zimbabwe at various historical stages as a *Coming of the dry season* (Mungoshi, 1972), as a stasis as in *Waiting for the rain* (Mungoshi,

1975), as *A house of hunger* (Marechera, 1978) and the people's efforts simply culminating to a *Harvest of thorns* (Chinodya, 1989).

However, the title of this study recognizes the multi-fold ways of viewing the situation facing the people and it has demonstrated that life for the characters, despite a myriad challenges also has major indications of positivity and hopeful management of the crisis. The study therefore corroborates what Muponde and Primorac (2005) aptly discussed as the "versions of Zimbabwe". The further dimension particularly asserted in the preceding chapters is the fact that the ordinary people are actors and agents of change and hope.

The theoretical framework used in this study has been a combination of resilience theory, trauma theory and Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope. As a comprehensive study aimed at recognizing the resourcefulness of ordinary people as they manage change and ingenuously reconstruct the world around them, an emphasis of the crisis had to be made. It can therefore be concluded that the use of Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope in African literary studies has been quite insightful. This study has demonstrated that it is possible to confirm the possibility of utilizing the concept of the "chronotope of urban resilience", a phrase which has been coined in this study to capture how an interpretation of fiction needs to be placed within specific temporal and spatial parameters. In order to make sense of the pragmatic morality, cultural transformation, dystopian hope and the resistance of repression as discussed in the preceding chapters, it has been important to appreciate the magnitude of the crisis in question and this appreciation has been clarified through the application of trauma theory. This understanding and textual interpretation, therefore, has been established

through an appreciation of the temporal and spatial (chronotope) aspects of the stories so that meaning can be made relevant. If Vambe (2003) lamented about “the poverty of theory in the study of Zimbabwean literature”, it can further be concluded that this study has made a significant contribution in tackling this problem through its utilization of the theory of chronotope, which hitherto had remained largely unexplored in Zimbabwean literary studies

Furthermore, it can also be concluded that the use of resilience theory in the explication of Zimbabwean literature has proven to be an invaluable exercise in this study. It is clear from the foregoing study that reading the literature of the crisis using this critical lens has remarkable benefits and is a ground-breaking achievement in literary theory which is of relevance to the African situation. Resilience emphasizes the characters’ fortitude, adaptability and ability to survive, as well as to thrive under excruciatingly challenging circumstances. By combining resilience theory, trauma theory and the theory of chronotope which contextualizes the stories within a dystopian and crisis situation and also the resilience theory, the study has demonstrated that agency is ubiquitous and the short story is able to capture such survival techniques as the ones explored in this study. This emphasis on the strengths of the people and how people move beyond the crisis corroborates Vambe’s (2010) conclusion also that the ordinary people presented in Zimbabwe’s creative literatures in the interregnum are daily constructing themselves and their lives, not only to survive the crisis but to go beyond it. Whereas Nnolim (2006) laments the lack of relevance in the literary theories applied in African literature, the use of resilience theory in this study has filled a gap in literary studies and also provided a solution to

theoretical shortcomings in the field of African literature. The trauma faced is undeniable yet it is also paradoxical to see how the traumatic experiences result in the development of protean characters and serendipity – critical aspects which are peculiarly captured in fiction.

6.2.2 RESTATEMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The conclusions presented above on the relevance of the topic and theoretical framework as presented in this study also informed findings as they have been explored in Chapters Two to Five. To further conclude and illustrate the major findings, the research questions will be restated and a connection made between each research question posed and how each respective chapter responded to the question. The aim of the study was to investigate how creative literature represents the various ways people living under a crisis situation characterized by political, economic and socio-cultural meltdown and malaise, manage to innovatively survive and live a hopeful life. Therefore, using the Zimbabwean crisis as a case study, the following research questions were used:

1. How does literature, particularly the short story, represent the common man's survival and coping strategies?
2. What can we learn from the crisis-hit and institutionally weak Zimbabwean urban situation?
3. How do literary texts participate in representing and reflecting the versatility and resilience of the ordinary people?
4. How can imaginative short fiction and literary theory allow readers to imagine ways of negotiating the crisis in a globalizing world?

5. How can an understanding of dystopian hope inform attitudes and interventions which recognize and complement the inventive potential ordinary people have to direct survival at a macro level?

In relation to the first research question, the overall conclusion made in this study is that despite the drudgery of life and the hardships faced by the characters in all the nineteen short stories and one novel analysed, the uniting factor is survival. All the short stories and the novel explored in this study ultimately paint a world of hardship, lack and ennui; however, what stands out strongly is the survival instinct the people have, which is their ability to remake the world around them, be masters of their destiny and live a better life. On a general level this is the idea running across all the chapters and the titular words “survival” and “resilience” colour all the chapters, thereby filling a gap in knowledge, seeking to challenge Afro-pessimisms that downplay the inventive potential and agency which the ordinary people have.

The second research question puts an emphasis on the urban landscape in crisis-hit Zimbabwe and asks whether there is anything positive that can be learnt from such literature. Chapter Two of this study, in response to this question breaks new ground on Zimbabwean literature in the way it highlights the ingenious ways the urbanites reconstruct the city space and engage in fruitful urban informalities. In Chinyani’s “A land of starving millionaires”, the multiple modes of social and economic adaptability are illustrated, which demonstrate that when the socio-economic terrain changes, tactical manoeuvres are also called for. This was seen in Mr Usury Chimbadzo, the main character who decides to resiliently adopt and take his business a step higher than what normal circumstances would require. In Brickhill’s short

story “Universal Remedy”, the utilisation of the city space for making social and business acquaintances to enable survival has been proven to be a critical coping strategy. The value of urban agriculture and the process of *chutnification* are all survival and coping strategies which result in self-determination and self-sufficiency. The story “Minister without portfolio” further extends knowledge on how women in particular find the city a place for survival and a place where they can bring about positive change in their own lives. This idea corroborates what Musila (2007) concluded as well, when she looked at some fiction set in Zimbabwe, and what the present study through the character of Agnes managed to illustrate is how the city, even in crisis-hit Zimbabwe, is a place malleable of opportunities where the disadvantaged members of the society can claim their subjectivity. Furthermore, through Mai George, in “Last laugh”, urban informalities have been presented as a viable survival strategy. With the inflation rate spiralling into millions, salaried work scarce and an unemployment rate hovering above 80%, let alone the fact that the salary itself was worthless even amongst the professionals; the case of Mai George has been insightful. The study demonstrated a flourishing woman who despite the crisis and a husband who has deserted her, manages to survive because she claims a place in the home industries area and sets up her own informal business. The chapter has demonstrated that the city is a hub of opportunity and those who are resilient and focused can indeed make a life even without the necessary support from the authorities.

In this study, it has also been found that another survival and coping strategy is that of applying pragmatic morality as dictated by the crisis; this means to change one’s

cultural identity and views and also endeavouring at being resilient as well as protean. The versatility and resilience of the ordinary people as demonstrated in Chapter Three is an analytical response which provides an answer to the third research question. It can be concluded that in Mungoshi's short story "The hare", life is presented as precarious, ever changing and unpredictable; but options are always available - some are for the better whilst others are for the worse. The dichotomous presentation of Nhongo as a non-resilient victim and Sara the wife as a resilient survivor in the story shows that personal transformation is a survival tool. It can be concluded that it is Sara's protean nature and serendipity that the literary critics must amplify, as opposed to the husband's victim mentality and grumbling without action. This agrees with the literature on trauma theory in literary studies where Baxter (2010) also concluded that "the experience of trauma increases for those they are perceived as overreacting or responding in an unreasonable way (p.20). The study has explored these two dimensions of life as represented by Sara and Nhongo in order to show life's variegated opportunities but ultimately emphasising that survival tactics and coping strategies are available and can be used for the better. The reversal of roles which takes place when the wife now becomes the breadwinner is one of the ground-breaking findings which the study unearthed through this short story. The reversal of roles and appraisal of the woman's critical role in catering for the family constitutes some of the realities of the 21st century which need to be embraced in order for modern families to make ends meet and thereby survive.

In addition, through the novel *The uncertainty of hope*, it has been found that the power of positive expectations is one of the major coping strategies the urbanites

devise to survive the crisis and live in the city with hope. Starting from vulnerable livelihoods, the characters embark on a tortuous journey which has many hurdles. However, what gives them sustenance is their hope, resilience, optimism and positive attitude. Onai and Katy transform the titular “uncertainty of hope” into concretised hope. From informal alliances, formal support groups, education, purposive living and determination and up to devising a code of pragmatic morality, the uniting factor is survival. Against all odds the characters journey purposefully and resiliently, refusing to allow the external circumstances to condemn them to a life of misery. They are hopeful, meet life head on and the fiction here offers liberating and breakthrough stories to strengthen the reader’s own innate resilient capacities for a happier, more successful, and better life.

The fourth research question has been concerned with how imaginative short fiction and literary theory allow readers to imagine ways of negotiating the crisis in a globalizing world. In this study, Chapter Four aptly responds to this question and the conclusion reached is that the fictionalized metaphors of migration and the diaspora are coping strategies which had till now, not been explored in Zimbabwean literature. The chapter demonstrates that one of the ways to negotiate the crisis is through seeking alternative spaces, which is through migration. Through using some classical and biblical allusions, the research highlights that whilst migration has been regarded as the oldest form of action against poverty, dating as far back as biblical times, its relevance here is given prominence because of the magnitude that it took during the Zimbabwean crisis. The representation in fiction of these migratory patterns highlights the fact that fiction can imaginatively represent the realities of life in a

more intimate manner than statistical data. The fictional narratives explored give these realities more blood and immediacy as we see through the characters and their experiences. In order to survive, the ordinary people escape home by any means necessary. The forms of escape include border jumping which, though precarious and dangerous, is at the same time an avenue for a better life. The tenacity and fortitude of the human spirit in this regard has been demonstrated through the short story, “The border jumpers”, with the ultimate conclusion that survival is a possibility. In the story “Crossroads” the resilience of an individual who wants to escape to greener pastures has been explored as well - and the conclusion reached is that migration is indeed a survival mechanism at the disposal of the people.

Moreover, Chapter Four of this study also explored the multiplicity of coping strategies in relation to escaping home through the story, “My cousin-sister Rambanai”, where the main character, despite the fact that she cannot go back to the United States of America, devises a plan to go to the United Kingdom. Through her, the chapter demonstrates how porous the international boundaries are. Finally, after resiliently grappling with the challenges, Rambanai becomes one of the diasporans whose remittances enable those back home to also survive the crisis. The paradox of the lamentable brain-drain was also explored and the conclusion reached is that in times of crisis, for the diasporan and even the country which receives remittances, brain-drain can be viewed as brain-gain. The remittances enable those back home to survive the crisis and when remittances are made in kind, the ordinary people devise ways of avoiding prohibitive tax brackets through smuggling. In an endeavour to survive, the line between what is legal and what is not becomes so blurred. Once

again, like in Chapter Three, pragmatic morality dictates how one needs to behave. The role of remittances is emphasized in the short story “Something nice from London”, the remittances are critical for household survival and it can be concluded that possibly the reason why the Zimbabwean economy did not utterly collapse was partly because of these remittances.

The fifth and final research question in this study has been aimed at exploring how an understanding of dystopian hope informs attitudes and interventions which recognize and complement the inventive potential the ordinary people have to direct survival at a macro level. The fifth chapter of the study responds to this question and the conclusion that can be made is that through the short stories analysed in the chapter, activism and political involvement as well as reclaiming a share in the country’s resources are coping strategies. The chapter highlights the value of dystopian hope, which is a form of protest literature where artists move beyond decrying the problems people face and seek ways to rectify the problems and concerns, as well as imagine a better Zimbabwe. The dystopian state of the Zimbabwean situation has been clarified and this further illustrates the role of chronotope in literature. In the story “At the sound of the last post”, the graveyard of Zimbabwean heroes, where President Robert Mugabe is the main actor, we are given fresh dimensions to the idea of survival and coping strategies in Zimbabwean short fiction. In his analysis of Mugabe’s speeches at the Heroes’ Acre, Kangira (2010) came to the conclusion that it is a form of funeral diplomacy whereby Mugabe takes advantage of the funeral set-up to peddle a political motive. In this study however, another dimension is highlighted, whereby Mugabe is not the main actor but rather

the bereaved widow who seems to be voiceless yet actually is the protagonist and teller of the story. The widow becomes a watcher of Mugabe and plays him at his own game, ultimately reclaiming her voice, dictating what she wants and ending up with a farm in her own name and an uncontested senatorial seat which will allow her to advance national development on her own terms and as she sees fit.

Furthermore, another coping strategy which the study unveils is that of political involvement, protest and the uniting of the masses to fight hegemony in its various forms and the various traumatic experiences it brings about. This has been illustrated in Mlalazi's short story, "They are coming". Through the story, the chapter has shown that the people have the potential to fight and change their circumstances. The story also cautions against dissipation into civil war since it results in bloodshed, pitting as it does brother against brother. This has been demonstrated through Lungani and his brother, Persuade who are supporting opposing sides. The chapter has also projected the aspirations of the artists, who envision a better Zimbabwe with racial harmony and prosperity, as the story "The ugly reflection in the mirror" illustrated. There is racial harmony between a white commercial farmer and a resettled farmer who is a former war veteran. According to the context and setting of the story, these two characters should have been the worst enemies. Resolving the land issue is at the core of the story and the conclusion made in this study is that the economic and political coping strategies at macro (national) level have to be linked to this inescapable, contentious and unresolved issue in many African states – the land issue. Finally through the short stories "Notes from Mai Mujuru's breast" and "The chances and challenges of Chiadzwa", the findings made are that the ordinary

people also clamour for the natural resources of the country. The critical point here is at a metaphorical, as well as a didactic level. The stories demonstrate that for survival at the macro level to effectively take place, there is a need to rethink the way natural resources are shared. Furthermore, the stories also emphasise the value of the people's wit, courage and resourcefulness as the ordinary people armoured capable to outmanoeuvre the authorities.

Finally, this study has shown that fiction of the Zimbabwean crisis, if read through the critical lens of resilience theory, trauma theory and also theory of the chronotope, does not condemn readers to gloominess, ennui and apathy. Instead it inspires the people into action and the fiction becomes a fountain of hope. The stories explored here have illustrated the ubiquity of agency. The survival and coping strategies are many, in as much as the crises which befall people are many. However, constructive literature explored in this study offers corrective criticism and this is an area which had not been fully explored in the previous studies on Zimbabwean literature.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study outlined above, the study recommends that:

- African literary critics utilize the theory of the chronotope, trauma and resilience theory in analysing literature, as these theories have proven to be relevant in elucidating the problems facing Africa. Analysis using these three theories can also be made in comparative literature as well as in creative writing so that the fictional works can be responsibly produced and analysed

in a manner that equips and empowers, rather than sow apathy, despondency and a perpetuation of victimhood.

- Further studies can also be conducted on the subject of survival and coping strategies, discussing how the representation in fictional works compares with media representations, especially the print media, since fiction and the print media use the same mode of communication.
- Using the same themes of survival and coping strategies, further studies can extend the exploration and analysis of texts to include the important field of literature for development, as well as explore how fiction can be used to foster and cultivate methods of peaceful conflict resolution.
- Moreover, stemming from the findings made that the female characters exhibited a better capacity to cope with the crisis; future studies can also specifically explore survival and coping strategies along gender lines with a particular emphasis on how women manage change.
- Finally, comparative studies consisting of two or more countries can be conducted, to find out the similarities and differences in survival and coping strategies as they are presented through fiction.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1988). *Hopes and impediments: Selected essays 1965-1987*. New York, NY: Anchor books.
- Achebe, C. (1977). "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of darkness*. *Massachusetts review*. 18
- Anyidoho, K., Busia, A. P., & Adams, A. V. (1991). *Beyond survival: African literature and the search for new life*. London, England: African World Press.
- Armah, A. K. (1971). *Fragments*. Accra, Ghana: Heinemann.
- Ashcroft, B. (n.d.) *From Bombay to Istanbul: Reading the post-colonial city*.
Unpublished manuscript.
- Ashley, B. (2003). Tables turned over. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Writing still: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 8 -19). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Baccolini, R. (2004). The persistence of hope in dystopian science fiction. *Modern Language Association*, 119(3), 518-521.
- Bachmann-Medich, D. (2008). *New directions in the cultural sciences*. Hamburg, Germany: Blackwell.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Austin: University of Texas.

- Baxter, K.I. (2011). Memory and photography: Rethinking postcolonial trauma studies. *Journal of postcolonial writing* 47(1), 18-29
- Best, J. (1994). The chronotope and the generation of meaning in novels and paintings. Retrieved from www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-15435238.html
- Bloch, A. (2006). Emigrating from Zimbabwe: Migrant perspectives. *Social Policy and Administration*, 40(1), 67-87.
- Bond, P., & Manyanya, M. (2003). *Zimbabwe's plunge: Exhausted nationalism, neoliberalism and the search for social justice*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Bracking, S., & Sachikonye, L. (2007). *Remittances, poverty reduction and informalisation in Zimbabwe 2005-6: A political economy of dispossession*. Retrieved from www.bwi.manchester.ac.uk/resources/working-papers/bwpi-lp-2808.pdf.
- Brickhill, P. (2003). Universal remedy. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Writing Still: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 1-8). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Caruth, C. (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Chihota, C., & Muponde, R. (Ed.). (2000). *No more plastic balls and other short stories*. Harare, Zimbabwe: College Press.
- Chikwava, B. (2010). *Harare north*. London, England: Vintage Books.

- Chingono, J. (2007). Minister without portfolio. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Laughing now: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 7-15). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Chinhanhu, E. (2007). The chances and challenges of Chiadzwa. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Laughing now: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 16-22). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Chinodya, S. (2007). Last laugh. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Laughing now: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 23-38). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Chinodya, S. (1989). *Harvest of thorns*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab books.
- Chinyani, E. (2007). A land of starving millionaires. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Laughing now: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 8-16). Harare, Zimbabwe Weaver Press.
- Chirisa, I. (2009). Informality, deceit and the conscience: A survey on ethical dilemmas in Harare. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 11(2), 257-280.
- Chiumbu, S., & Musemwa, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis*. Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Crush, J., & Tevera, D. (2010). *Zimbabwe's exodus: Crisis, migration and survival*. Cape Town, South Africa: Southern African Migration Programme.
- Dangarembga, T. (1988). *Nervous conditions*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.

de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dekker, M. (2009). *Livelihoods and economic crisis: The case of a smallholder farmer in Zimbabwe (1999 – 2009)*. A paper presented at the Economic development in Africa conference at the Centre for the study of African economics, University of Oxford on 22 – 24 March 2009.

Doggetti, C.J. (2012). *A narrative study of the resilience and coping of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC) arriving in a rural local authority (LA)*. Birmingham, United Kingdom, University of Birmingham Press.

Duri, F. (2012). Negotiating the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border: The pursuit for survival by Mutare's poor, 2000-2008. In S. Chiumbu & M. Musemwa (Eds.), *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis* (pp. 122-142). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.

Egeland, B., Carlson E., & Sroufe, L. (1993). *The development of the person: The Minnesota study of risk and adaptation from birth to adulthood*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Emenyonu, E. N. (Ed.). (2006). *New directions in African literature*. Oxford, England: James Curry.

Emenyonu, E. N. (2006). New directions in African literature: Building on the legacies of the 20th century [Editorial]. In E. Emenyonu (Ed.), *New directions in African literature* (pp. xi-xiv). Oxford, England: James Curry.

Frederiksen, F. (1991). *Cultural struggle and development in Southern Africa*.

Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

Fugard, A. (1993). *Township plays*. England: Cambridge University Press.

Galbraith, J. K. (1979). *The nature of mass poverty*. Harvard University Press.

Gaidzanwa, R. (1999). *Voting with the feet: Migrant Zimbabwean nurses and doctors in the era of structural adjustment*. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute.

Ganser, A., Puringer, J., & Rheindof, M. (2006). Bakhtin's chronotope of the road: Space, time and place in road movies since the 1970s. *Linguistics and Literature*, 4(1), 1-17.

Gappah, P. (2009). At the sound of the last post. In P. Gappah, *An elegy for easterly* (pp. 3-24). London, England: Faber and Faber.

Gappah, P. (2009). My cousin-sister Rambanai. In P. Gappah, *An elegy for easterly* (pp. 207-238). London, England: Faber and Faber.

Gappah, P. (2009). Something nice from London. In P. Gappah, *An elegy for easterly* (pp. 75-102). London, England: Faber and Faber.

Gappah, P. (2009). *An elegy for easterly*. London, England: Faber and Faber.

- Gunner, L. (2003). *Writing the city: Four post-apartheid texts*. Paper presented at Witwatersrand Institute of Social and Economic Research. Retrieved from [wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF Files-gunner.PDF](http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files-gunner.PDF).
- Harlow, B. (2009). (Ed.), Protest and resistance. In *The Cambridge companion to the African novel* (pp. 51-68). United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Hove, C. (1994). *Shebeen tales: Messages from Harare*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books.
- Irele, A. F. (Ed.). (2009). *The Cambridge companion to the African novel*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, D. E., Palmer, E. & Jones, M. (Eds.). (1994). *Critical theory and African literature today*. London, England: James Curry.
- Jones, D. E., Palmer, E., & Jones, M. (Eds.). (1983). *African literature today: 13 recent trends in the novel*. London: James Curry.
- Jones, J.K. (2010). Nothing is straight in Zimbabwe: The rise of kukiya-kiya economy 2000 – 2008. *Journal of Southern African studies*, 36(2), 285-299.
- Kabwato, L. (2012). Imagining a different Zimbabwe. In S. Chiumbu & M. Musemwa (Eds.), *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis* (pp. 268-275). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Kadenge, M. (2012). Linguistic negotiation of the Zimbabwean crisis. In S. Chiumbu & M. Musemwa (Eds.), *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis* (pp. 143-160). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.

- Kanengoni, A. (2003). The ugly reflection in the mirror. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Writing still: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 105 -109). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Kangira, J. (2010). Mugabe's graveside orations: Collective memory and nostalgia. In D. O. Orwenjo & J. O. Ogone (Eds.), *Language and politics in Africa: Contemporary issues and critical perspectives* (pp. 27-49). Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Kirk, R. (2004). *Skills audit of refugees* [Home office online report]. Retrieved from www.rose.nhs.uk/sitecollectiondocuments/rdsolr3704.pdf
- Kurtz, R. (2000). Post-marked Nairobi: Writing the city in contemporary Kenya. In D. Gover, J. Conteh-Morgan, & J. Bryce (Eds.), *The post-colonial condition of African literature*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Lindell, I. (Ed.). (2010). *Africa's informal workers: Collective agency, alliances and transnational organizing in urban Africa*. London, England: Zed Books.
- Lunga, B. V. (2002). Between the pause and the waiting: the struggle against time in Yvonne Vera's *Butterfly Burning*. In R. Muponde & M. Taruvinga (Eds.), *Sign and taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic Vision of Yvonne Vera* (pp. 191-202). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Makamani, R. (2010). 'Brown is saying nonsensical things, much more idiotic than Blair': An analysis of hate language in political discourse used in Zimbabwe. In D. O. Orwenjo & J. O. Ogone (Eds.), *Language and politics*

in Africa: Contemporary issues and critical perspectives (pp. 2-25).

England: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Mamdani, M. (2008). *Lessons of Zimbabwe* [London review of books]. Retrieved from <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n23/mahmood-mamdani/lessons-of-zimbabwe>.

Manase, I. (2005). Mapping the city space in current Zimbabwean and South African fiction. *Transformation*, 57, 88-105. Retrieved from www.transformation.ukzn.ac.za/archive/57

Manganga, K. (2007). *Street vending in post-operation Murambatsvina in Harare: The case of female vendors at Machipisa, Highfield township*. Paper presented at the 'Living on the margins conference at Stellenbosch University on 26-28 March 2007.

Marechera, D. (1978). *The house of hunger*. London, England: Heinemann.

Marder, E. (2006). Trauma and literary studies: "Some enabling questions". *Reading on I*(1), 1-6.

Marima, T. (2009). Silencing silence and resisting repression: A commentary on Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and Petinah Gappah's *An elegy for easterly*. Retrieved from www.mazwi.net/essays/silencing-silence-and-resisting-repression

Mbiba, B. (2012). Zimbabwe's global citizens in 'Harare North': Livelihood strategies of Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom. In S. Chiumbu, S. & M.

Musemwa (Eds.), *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis* (pp. 81-100). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.

Mcgregor, J., & Primorac, R. (2010). (Eds.), *Zimbabwe's new diaspora: Displacement and the cultural politics of survival*. Oxford, England: Berghahn Books.

Mcgregor, J. (2007). Joining the BBC (British Bottom Cleaners): Zimbabwean migrants and the UK care industry. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(5), 801-824.

Mlalazi, C. (2011). They are coming. In J. Morris (Ed.), *Where to now? Short stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 102-108). Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: amaBooks.

Mlalazi, C. (2008). Dancing with life. In C. Mlalazi, *Dancing with life: Tales from the township* (pp. 35-44). Bulawayo: amaBooks.

Mlalazi, C. (2008). The boarder jumpers. In C. Mlalazi. *Dancing with life: Tales from the township* (pp. 18-23). Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: amaBooks.

Mlalazi, C. (2008). *Dancing with life: Tales from the township*. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: amaBooks.

Mlambo, A., & Raftopoulos, B. (2010). *The regional dimensions of Zimbabwe's multi-layered crisis: an analysis*. Paper presented at the Election processes, liberation movements and democratic change in Africa conference in Maputo from 8 to 11 April, 2010.

- Mlambo, N. (2012). Rethinking the poetics of urban lives in fiction: Reconstructing the city space in times of crisis. *Journal of Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 129-139.
- Mlambo, N. (2011a). Urban lives and the complexities of change: Cultural transformation for survival in contemporary Zimbabwean fiction. *Nawa Journal of Communication*, 5(1), 199-210.
- Mlambo, N. (2011b). *Familial Relations in the economics of slavery: A literary exploration of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs' autobiographies*. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Mlambo, N. (2010). *The paradox of modernization in African literature: Progress or retrogression in the contemporary Zimbabwean short story*. Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Mlambo, N., & Nyambi, O. (2010). Emasculated by the crisis: Representations of struggling fathers in selected Zimbabwean literature. *Nawa Journal of Communication*, 4(2), 291-302.
- Mlambo, N. & Chirisa, I. (2009). Accommodation crisis, obsolescence and the morals debate: Case for Matapi hostels, Mbare, Harare, Zimbabwe. Retrieved from Polytechnic Ounongo Repository:
<http://hdl.handle.net/10628/180>.
- Mougot, J. A. (2006). *Growing cities: Urban agriculture for sustainable development*. Canada: International Development Centre.

- Moyana, H. V. (2002). *The political economy of land in Zimbabwe*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.
- Mthimkulu, M. (2008). Not slaves to fashion. In J. Morris (Ed.), *Long time coming: Short writings from Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: amaBooks.
- Muchemwa, K., & Muponde, R. (Eds.). (2007). *Manning the nation: Father figures in Zimbabwean Literature and Society*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Mudekweya, T. (2012). Enduring the crisis: Remittances and household strategies in Glen Norah, Harare. In S. Chiumbu & M. Musemwa (Eds.), *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis* (pp. 42-61). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Mungoshi, C. (1972). *Coming of the dry season*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- Mungoshi, C. (1980). *Some kinds of wounds and other stories*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.
- Mungoshi, C. (1997). The hare. In C. Mungoshi. *Walking still*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab books.
- Mungoshi, C. (1997). *Walking still*. Harare: Baobab books.
- Muponde, R., & Primorac, R. (Eds.). (2005). *Versions of Zimbabwe: New approaches to literature and culture*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Muponde, R., & Taruvinga, M. M. (Eds.). (2002). *Sign and taboo: Perspectives on the poetic vision of Yvonne Vera*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.

Musemwa, M. (2012). Perpetuating colonial legacies: The post-colonial state, water crises and the outbreak of disease in Harare, Zimbabwe, 1980-2009. In S. Chiumbu & M. Musemwa (Eds.), *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis* (pp. 3-41). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.

Mushakavanhu, T. (2007). A critical perspective on the Zimbabwean short story in English. Retrieved from <http://www.mazwi.net/essay/zimbabwean-short-story-in-english>.

Mushakavanhu, T. (n.d.). Was 2009 a year for Zimbabwean literature? Retrieved from <http://www.mazwi.net/editorials/is-this-the-year-for-zimbabwean-literature>.

Musila, G. A. (2007). 'A man can try': Negotiating manhoods in colonial urban spaces in Dambudzo Marechera's *The House of hunger*. In K. Muchemwa & R. Muponde (Eds.). *Manning the nation: Father figures in Zimbabwean literature and society* (pp. 142-155). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.

Musoni, F. (2010). Operation Murambatsvina and the politics of street vendors in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African studies*, 36(2), 310-317.

Muzondidya, J. (2008). *Majoni-joni: Survival strategies among Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa*. Paper presented at the international conference on political economies of displacement in post-2000 Zimbabwe, University of Witwatersrand (9-11 June). Retrieved from <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/research/output/outputdocuments/5566>.

- Mwanaka, T. R. (2012). Notes from Mai Mujuru's breast. In *The Caine prize for African writing: African violet and other stories* (pp. 193 -201). Johannesburg, South Africa: Jacana Media.
- Ndlovu, M. (2006). Hands. In J. Morris (Ed.), (2006). *Short writings from Bulawayo* (pp. 36-41). Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: amaBooks.
- Ndlovu, T. (2012). Escaping home: The case of ethnicity and formal education in the migration of Zimbabweans during the Zimbabwean 'crisis'. In S. Chiumbu & M. Musemwa (Eds.), *Crisis! What crisis: The multiple dimensions of the Zimbabwean crisis* (pp. 100-121). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press.
- Ngara, E. (n.d.). *Artists must be responsible beings*. Retrieved from: www.mazwi.net/essays/artists-must-be-responsible-beings.
- Ngara, E. (Ed.). (1996). *New writing from Southern Africa: Authors who have become prominent since 1980*. London, England: James Curry.
- Nnolim, C. E. (2006). African literature in the 21st century: Challenges for writers and critics. In E. N. Emenyonu (Ed.), *New directions in African literature* (pp. 1-9). Oxford, England: James Curry.
- Nuttal, S. (2005). Inside the city: Reassembling the township in Yvonne Vera's fiction. In R. Muponde & R. Primorac (Eds.), *Versions of Zimbabwe: New approaches to literature and culture* (pp. 177-192). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.

- Obama, B. (2012). *Transcript: Obama's victory speech*. Retrieved from www.politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2012/11/07/transcript.
- Obama, B. (2006). *The audacity of hope*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. (2007). Stiwanism: Feminism in an African context. In T. Olaniyan & A. Quayson (Eds.), *African literature: An anthology of criticism and theory*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing.
- Olaniyan, T., & Quayson, A. (Eds.). (2007). *African literature: An anthology of criticism and theory*. Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing.
- Pasura, D. (2008). *Towards a multi-sided ethnography of Zimbabweans in Britain*. Paper presented at the international conference on political economies of displacement in post-2000 Zimbabwe, University of Witwatersrand (9-11 June, 2008). Retrieved from <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/12309>.
- Pieterse, E. (2008). *City futures: Confronting the crisis of urban development*. Cape Town, South Africa: Zed books.
- Prah, K. K. (2000). *Africa in transformation: Political and economic transformation and socio-political responses in Africa*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Organisation for Social Science Research.

- Primorac, R. (n.d.). *Displacement, identity and Fictional formation in selected recent Zimbabwean novels*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe. Retrieved from www.britain-zimbabwe.org.uk
- Primorac, R. (2005, May). *Future in the past: The city and "patriotic history" in the Zimbabwean novel*. Paper presented at the AHRB Urban Futures conference. Retrieved from <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/26521169/THE-CITY-AND-LITERATURE>
- Primorac, R. (2006). *A place of tears: The novel and politics in modern Zimbabwe*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Pryer, A. J. (2003). *Poverty and vulnerability in Dhaka slums: The urban livelihoods study*. London, England: Ashgate Publishing.
- Puter, A. (2012). Movement, Memory, transformation, and transition in the city: Literary representations of Johannesburg in post-apartheid South African texts. *Kritika Kultura*, 18(12), 146-151.
- Raban, J. (1974). *Soft city*. New York, NY: The Harvill Press.
- Raftopoulos, B., & Mlambo, A. (2009). *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Raftopoulos, B. (2009). The crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008. In B. Raftopoulos & A. Mlambo (Eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.

- Raftopoulos, B., & Yoshikuni, T. (Eds.). (1999). *Sites of struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe's urban history*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Ranger, T. (2005). The narratives and counter-narratives of Zimbabwean asylum: Female voices. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(3), 405-421
- Rodney, W. (1981). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Dar-Es-Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.
- Rutherford, B. (2000). *Zimbabweans living in the South African border-zone: Negotiating, suffering, and surviving*. Ottawa, Canada: Carleton University Press.
- Sampson, A. (1999). *Mandela: The authorised biography*. London, England: Harper Press.
- Selden, R. (1989). *Practicing theory and reading literature*. London, England: Prentice Hall.
- Siebert, A. (2005). *The resiliency advantage: Master change, thrive under pressure, and bounce back from setbacks*. San Fransisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishing.
- Simone, A., & Abouhani, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Urban Africa: Changing contours of survival in the city*. Pretoria, South Africa: UNISA Press.
- Simone, A. (2001). On the worlding of African cities. *African Studies Review*, 44(2), 15-41.
- Staunton, I. (Ed.). (2007). *Laughing now: New stories from Zimbabwe*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.

- Staunton, I. (Ed.). (2003). *Writing still: New stories from Zimbabwe*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Tagwira, V. (2006). *The Uncertainty of hope*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Tevera, D., & Zinyama, L. (2002). *Zimbabweans who move: Perspectives on international migrations in Zimbabwe* [Southern African Migration Policy Series no.25]. Cape Town, South Africa: IDASA.
- Tonini, D. C. (2005). *The breadbasket goes empty: Zimbabwe – a country in crisis*. Retrieved from www.tc.columbia.edu/sie/journal/Volume_2/Tonini.pdf
- Tshuma, N. R. (2011). Crossroads. In J. Morris (Ed.), *Where to now: Short stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 63 – 73). Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: amaBooks.
- Tshuma, S. (2008). Arrested development. In J. Morris (Ed.), *Long time coming: Short story writings from Zimbabwe* (pp. 1- 6). Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: amaBooks.
- UNCHS-Habitat, (2001). *The state of the world's cities*. Nairobi, Kenya: UNCHS.
- Vambe, M. (2010). Zimbabwe's creative literatures in the interregnum: 1980-2009. *African Identities* 8(2), 93-113. doi:10.1080/14725841003629567
- Vambe, M. (2003). The poverty of theory in the study of Zimbabwean literature. In R. Muponde & R. Primorac (Eds.), *Versions of Zimbabwe: New approaches to literature and culture* (pp. 88-103). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- vanBreda, A. D. (2001). *Resilience theory: A literature review*. Retrieved from www.vanbreda.org

- Veit-Wild, F. (1993). *Teachers, believers and non-believers: A social history of Zimbabwean literature*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Baobab Books.
- Vera, Y. (1998). *Butterfly burning*. New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.
- Wa Thiongo, N. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Nairobi, Kenya: Heinemann
- Wilson, C. (2000). The twelve *chitenges*. In I. Staunton (Ed.), *Writing still: New stories from Zimbabwe* (pp. 243-252). Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press.
- Zhuwarara, R. (2001). *Introduction to Zimbabwean literature in English*. Harare, Zimbabwe: College Press.
- Zilberg, J. (2007, March). *Revisiting country music in Zimbabwe to reflect on the history of the study of African popular culture*. Paper presented at University of Texas Popular Cultures in Africa conference. Retrieved from <http://www.utexas.edu/conferences /africa/07conference/2007>
- Zimpundit. (n.d.). *Coping with tyranny*. Retrieved from: www.thenewblackmagazine.com/view.aspx?index=666.
- Zimunya, M. (1985). *Country dawns and city lights*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Longman.