

Settlers, Rhodesians, and Supremacists: White Authors and the Fast Track Land Reform Program in Post-2000 Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Texts written by some white Zimbabweans in the post-2000 dispensation are largely shaped by their authors' endeavor to contest the loss of lands they held prior to the onset of the Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP). Written as memoirs, these texts are bound by the tendency to fall back on colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist ideas in their narration of aspects of a conflict in which tropes such as truth, justice, patriotism, and belonging were not only evoked but also reframed. This article explores manifestations of this tendency in Eric Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006) and Jim Barker's *Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm* (2007). The discussion unfolds against the backdrop of the realization that much of the literary-critical scholarship on land reform in post-2000 Zimbabwe focuses on texts written by black Zimbabweans and does not attend to the panoply of ways in which some white-authored texts yearn for colonial structures of

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power and privilege. This article evinces that the reincarnation of colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist ideas undermines the discourse of white entitlement more than it promotes it. Values and identities of the colonial yesteryear on which this discourse is premised are not only anachronistic in the 21st century; they also obey the self-other binary at the heart of the patriotic history pedestal that was instrumental in the Zimbabwean regime's post-2000 populist deployment of the land grievance to reconstruct itself as the only and indispensable champion of African interests in Zimbabwe.

Keywords

Africa, Hegelian supremacist ideas, land, Rhodesian identities, colonial settler values, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) in post-2000 Zimbabwe occasioned the emergence of imaginative, (auto)biographical, and political-cum-literary narratives of Shona, Ndebele, and English expression in which contestations over land and its ownership before and after the advent of colonialism in the 1890s occupy center-stage. One notable corpus of narratives to emerge in the wake of the FTLRP in post-2000 Zimbabwe comprises memoirs written by some white Zimbabweans whose lands were compulsorily acquired when Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government decided, in the early 2000s, to impose closure on the land question against the backdrop of an unprecedented economic meltdown, civil strife, and mounting political opposition (Raftopoulos, 2006). White commercial farmers who found themselves under compulsion to part with lands they had farmed all their lives fought back to retain ownership of what they felt rightfully belonged to them. Admittedly, quite a number of them had purchased their farms after the advent of independence in 1980 (Buckle, 2001). Their strategies included, among others, making recourse to law courts, availing parts of their lands for occupation by black Zimbabweans, and creating strategic alliances with ZANU-PF politicians. For some, however, writing availed an invaluable pedestal from which they could voice their resistance to their loss. Some of the dispossessed white commercial farmers who fell back on writing to contest the compulsory acquisition of "their" lands have since published memoirs in which they narrate how they acquired "their" farms and toiled to transform them into viable commercial entities.

This article explores the deployment of colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist ideas in *Jambanja* (Harrison, 2006) and *Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm* (Barker, 2007). We focus on the selected memoirs mainly because they display a remarkable “overlap of ideology” (Pilososof, 2012, p. 152) which, as an array of the ways in which the texts resemble each other in their rehearsal of black and white identities and matters of white entitlement and black disenfranchisement in both Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, allows the texts “to be grouped together as the latest evolution of Zimbabwean pastoral ‘white writing’” (Pilososof, 2012, p. 152). Using the “overlap of ideology” between the memoirs as our discursive prism, we argue that it is paradoxical for white authors to feel justified retaining “their” lands while deploying colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist ideas in their conception of place (Zimbabwe), time (1980 and beyond), and humanity (black and white Zimbabweans) in a context where Rhodesia is defunct, European supremacy demystified and Hegel discredited. We also focus on these memoirs on account of the possibilities that they create for a nuanced appreciation of the genesis of what scholars have termed the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis. Bond and Manyanya (2002), Raftopoulos (2013), and Bratton (2016), among others, present this crisis as the direct culmination of the FTLRP which they see as an occasion for the wanton violation of supposedly sacrosanct white property rights. Their studies promote an account of the crisis that mollifies dispossessed white commercial farmers as helpless victims of the Zimbabwean government’s “rehearsed sense of national history that dichotomizes blacks and whites” (Nyambi, 2015, p. 125). While these scholars have elucidated “the authoritarian politics that has been the modality for the land interventions of the Mugabe regime” (Raftopoulos, 2006, p. 203), their representation of white Zimbabweans as victims of the black-white binary understates the complex ways in which white Zimbabweans contributed to the crisis by fixating their gaze on values and identities of the colonial heyday.

Except for Magosvongwe and Nyamende (2013, 2015), Zimbabwean literary-critical scholars have yet to tackle the myriad ways in which white Zimbabwean authors narrate white experiences of the FTLRP. Most of the literary-critical scholarship on land reform in post-2000 Zimbabwe prioritizes texts written by black Zimbabweans (Gonye, Moyo, & Wasosa, 2012; Makombe, 2014; Manase, 2014; Nyambi, 2015, 2016, 2017). In the isolated instances where literary-critical scholarship on land reform in post-2000 Zimbabwe digresses toward narratives written by white Zimbabweans (Manase, 2011; Misi, 2016; Tagwirei, 2016), the tendency is to argue that white Zimbabweans have been victimized and excluded in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The legitimacy of this contention cannot be denied, given the

emphasis that the ZANU-PF regime applied on the FTLRP as “the country’s third and final war (Third Chimurenga) against residual colonial influences and Euro-American imperial control of the country’s land and other natural and economic resources” (Manase, 2014, p. 6). However, part of the problem of this argument is that it minimizes the possibility of coming face to face with the “Rhodesians never die” (Godwin & Hancock, 1993) mind-set that constitutes the centre-piece of white identities in post-1980 Zimbabwe. Javangwe (2016) identifies that mentality in, among other manifestations, “the presence of conceived white spaces and symbols [that] continue to be valorized and celebrated in white Rhodesian writings despite the new political dispensation ushered in 1980” (p. 129). This article “destabilize[s] [such] Rhodesian imaginations of privilege” (Javangwe, 2016, p. 129) as portrayed in the texts under study. It is also important to note that Harrison and Barker only start writing after losing their lands. We utilize the collusion of the *time* in which they write and the *loss* they incurred to engage the ways in which the memoirs speak to their authors’ immersion in colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist ideas.

Brief Overview of the Zimbabwean Land Conflict

The Zimbabwean land conflict is best understood as the culmination of the intersection of historical and contemporary political, economic, and racial factors. Its roots are to be traced back to the Berlin Colonial Conference (1884–1885) at which Africa was carved into spheres of influence that European powers, seeking new markets and raw materials for their industrial revolution, could claim as extensions of their empires using the principle of “effective occupation.” The stampede for the spheres of influence that self-determining African polities would become after the Berlin Colonial Conference saw the land between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers falling under British colonial domination following the signing of the Rudd Concession (1888). In the provisions of that concession, King Lobengula was deemed to have ceded the territory he ruled over to Cecil John Rhodes, the British imperialist whose vision of British expansion in southern Africa thrived, in part, on “exaggerated accounts about the . . . legendary riches of Ophir lying between the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers . . . [and] the myth of the Second Rand, which was linked directly to the discovery of rich gold deposits in the Rand in 1886” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, in Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. 46). Using the Rudd Concession, Rhodes persuaded Queen Victoria of England to furnish him with a Royal Charter endorsing his envisaged adventure across the Limpopo. He amassed an invasion force and armed it with Martini-Henry rifles, seven-pound field guns, and Maxim guns (Martin

& Johnson, 1981, p. 7). Each member of this force looked forward to receiving “a minimum of 15 gold claims, 3 000 acres of land and an enormous reserve of exploitable manpower, represented by Mashona and Matabele labour” (Nkrumah, 1975, p. 18). Africans rose in 1893 and 1896 in military engagements that constitute the First Chimurenga in the pages of Zimbabwe’s patriotic history (Ranger, 2004). In the aftermath of these military encounters, they lost proprietorship over all the land between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers.

As the new colonial administration expropriated all the prime farmland, it also drove Africans into arid areas, known in Rhodesian parlance as native reserves. The first of these, Gwai and Shangani, were designated in 1894 at the behest of a British government Order-in-Council which compelled Rhodes and the British South Africa Company (BSAC) to put aside land for Africans. As Chiwome (1996) notes, these reserves, like all the others that came after them, were generally located in the regions of the country that Africans seldom settled in before the arrival of the colonizers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (in Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. 66) captures the dramatic reorganization of land-ownership patterns following the suppression of Shona/Ndebele Uprisings of the 1890s:

Prior to the conquest, the Ndebele occupied 21million hectares, but by 1894 they had been pushed into only two reserves that measured one million hectares . . . By 1905, the BSAC had created about 60 reserves that occupied only 22 per cent of the new colony; the settler community appropriated the bulk of the land for themselves . . . By 1922, a year before Responsible Government, 64 per cent of all Africans were required to live in reserves.

While land expropriation became the primary objective of the new administration following the realization that there was not much gold across the Limpopo after all, spatial segregation on the basis of race became unavoidable. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (in Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. 66) further explains,

Initiatives for total spatial segregation were formalised with the appointment in 1924 of the Morris Carter Commission to inquire into views about land segregation . . . The recommendations of the Commission were incorporated into the Land Apportionment Bill that sought to legalise land segregation. The Bill became an Act in 1930, and its provisions were implemented in 1931. Under this Act, land was divided into European Areas, Native Reserves, Native Purchase Areas and Forest Areas . . . Besides legally instituting racial segregation, the Land Apportionment Act introduced differential tenure categories for the apportioned land areas. In European areas, land was

considered private property and was accompanied by title deeds, whereas in the Native Reserves, land was held under what was termed "communal tenure" without title deeds . . . Native Purchase Areas were kept as "middle" land between the races within which Africans with money could purchase land . . . Native Purchase Areas were unfortunately characterised by poor-quality soils.

Spatial segregation persisted right through to independence in April 1980 and was compounded by the introduction of the Land Husbandry Act (1951) which sought, among other things, to see to the

limit[ing] of the number and kind of stock to be possessed by registered owners, the removal of the equivalent natural increase of stock from overstocked areas; the culling of worthless or inferior stock and their replacement by better animals to be acquired from within the land unit. (Bhebe, 1989, pp. 29-30)

The background to this Act was that "by 1943, many of the reserves were in a deplorable state" (Bhebe, 1989, p. 20) because of population pressure and overstocking. This came about because

even as the white settlers were forcing Africans into the reserves, no homework was done to study the carrying capacity of each reserve in terms of such factors as waste land, eroded land, pasture and arable land available, rainfall and water resources and the types of crops that could be grown. (Bhebe, 1989, p. 22)

Thus, by the late 1940s, "Southern Rhodesia had 71, 182 potentially homeless families who required 7, 118, 200 acres of land on the basis of 100 acres per family" (Bhebe, 1989, p. 22). This prompted Rhodesian authorities "to do away with many Purchase Areas which provided the only limited opportunity for Africans to hold land on an individual basis" (Bhebe, 1989, p. 23). In the interim, many families were settled in dry and tsetse fly-infested regions of the country. These developments provided a pedestal for the further development of African nationalist indignation toward colonialism, and African nationalist parties would mobilize mass support by foregrounding land redistribution in their propaganda.

The advent of independence in April 1980 could not witness the immediate resolution of the country's land question. Land redistribution would be trammled, on the one hand, by the character of African nationalist leaders as political careerists and hesitant participants in the African liberation movement and, on the other, by the Lancaster House Agreement (1979) which stipulated that in the first 10 years of independence, the postindependence black government could only acquire land on a willing buyer-willing seller basis. In keeping with their identities as political

careerists and hesitant participants in the African liberation movement, the black political elites that replaced Ian Smith and the Rhodesia Front (RF) in the corridors of power concentrated more on “enrich[ing] themselves by leasing state land on favorable terms” (Raftopoulos & Phimister, 2004, p. 363) while meeting people’s land needs through measures designed largely to promote the policy of Reconciliation that was adopted to ensure coexistence in the aftermath of colonial and liberation war hostilities. The same elites “were again the major beneficiaries of the ‘Fast Track Land Reform Programme,’ acquiring the most productive farms under the A2 scheme” (Mhanda, 2011, p. 229).

The ZANU-PF regime in Zimbabwe applies emphasis on the impact that the forces set in motion by the Lancaster House Agreement have had on its handling of the land issue between 1980 and the onset of the FTLRP in 2000. In his speeches on the Zimbabwean land conflict, for instance, Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe (2001) always harks back to the Lancaster House Agreement and the willing buyer-willing seller dynamic that obtained in the first 10 years of independence and constrained his government in that there were no willing-sellers of land from the white Zimbabwean commercial farming community. However, after the expiry of the 10-year interregnum imposed by the Lancaster House Agreement, the responsibility to redistribute land rested on the shoulders of the postindependence Zimbabwean regime that now had the constitutional space within which to finalize the issue. This did not happen, and “by 1997, only 71, 000 families had been resettled, a far cry from the ambitious figure of 162, 000 families set in the early 1980s” (Raftopoulos & Phimister, 2004, p. 362). Meanwhile, an alternative version of nationalism in the form of Morgan Tsvangirai’s Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) would emerge in the late 1990s, emphasizing human rights and the rule of law from a neoliberal vantage point that attracted white commercial farmers who quickly joined the new party in hopes that their property rights would be protected if Tsvangirai’s MDC came to power. These developments placed ZANU (PF) under compulsion to redefine itself as a “people’s liberation movement,” given that after 1980, “the ZANU-PF nationalists who assumed power were transformed relatively quickly into a new petit bourgeoisie elite in a radical departure from the declared goals of the national liberation struggle” (Mhanda, 2011, p. 211). Considering ZANU-PF’s desperation to retain power at the time, the “people’s liberation movement” identity could only be regained through expedient land reclamation for black resettlement.

In the unfolding of the FTLRP in post-2000 Zimbabwe, the ZANU-PF establishment deployed the rubric of patriotic history to portray land reform as “a continuation of the liberation struggle” (Thram, 2007, p. 75),

seamlessly connected to the first (1890s) and second (1970s) *chimurengas*. According to Ranger (2004), “patriotic history . . . proclaim[s] the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition” (p. 215) using terms that undermine opponents of ZANU-PF as agents of imperialism bent on reversing the gains of the liberation struggle. It inscribes a monologic history in which ZANU-PF is portrayed as “the progenitor and guardian of the post-colonial nation . . . the only authentic force with a sacred mission to deliver the colonized people from settler colonial rule” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012, p. 1). Patriotic history became the bedrock of “economies of patronage” (Alexander & McGregor, 2013, p. 749) which ensured access to land and other resources mostly for ZANU-PF members. In addition to patriotic history was the issue of race which, having played a central role in structuring the colonial system, ensured that white commercial farmers easily stood out as obstacles to be cleared in the nation’s purported march toward ultimate decolonization. ZANU-PF political rally speeches in which white Zimbabweans hogged the limelight as aliens opposed to black empowerment and beneficiaries of the unjust system of colonialism who lacked patriotic commitment to Zimbabwe became the order of the day. The ZANU-PF regime that had no problem unleashing the police force on black people who settled themselves on white-owned lands in the 1980s instructed the same police force to pay no attention to black occupation of white-owned farms. White farmers found themselves exposed, while the war veterans and peasants who pushed them off “their” lands had to contend with recategorization of land into “A1” and “A2” compartments to “facilitate the[ir] . . . removal from rich, arable land onto less agriculturally suitable ‘A1 farms’” (Mhanda, 2011, p. 228). Matondi (2012) contests this submission using the figures involved:

Could 16, 386 in the A2 model have all benefitted through some form of corruption or nepotism? Such a very large number of friendships would be unprecedented in the history of state development programmes. (p. 10)

The beneficiaries of land reform defend it as “the final embodiment of empowerment following Zimbabwe’s independence in 1980” (Matondi, 2012, p. 10). Their view is that while the program may have been driven by political expediency on ZANU-PF’s part, what is important is that it delivered the Zimbabwean government’s stated objective of rectifying historical land-ownership imbalances to the advantage of black Zimbabweans. These contending submissions have not deterred the ZANU-PF regime from declaring that the FTLRP settled Zimbabwe’s land question permanently.

Colonial Settler Values, Rhodesian Identities, and Hegelian Supremacy

The colonial encounter in Africa thrived on the binarized conception of phenomena. This involved projecting Europe(ans) as normative and Africa(ns) as other. Armah (2010) avers that this binary enabled colonial masters to see Africans as

creatures of raw nature . . . living fossils, crude mock-ups of humanity arrested in a pristine, undeveloped condition . . . an exotic species of creatures, separate and unequal, forever apart . . . different from Europeans the way children differ from adults. (p. 44)

The dichotomy between Europe(ans) as normative and Africa(ns) as other empowered the European colonizer to establish and maintain *distance* between himself or herself and the African colonial subject. Distance, as Fanon (1967) argues, rehearses and foregrounds *difference*. It separates supposedly civilized Europeans from so-called African savages and functions to shore up the myth of Europeans inducting purported African savages into culture and civilization. Central in the invention of *distance* and its role in the framing of the identities of both colonizer and colonized were the ideas of Hegel (2004) who has it that:

From the earliest historical times, Africa has remained cut off from all contacts with the rest of the world; it is the land of gold, forever pressing in upon itself, and the land of childhood, removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of night. (p. 80)

As a participant in the propagation of these myths, Hegel “helped to establish Eurocentrism as the criterion, indeed the indispensable criterion, for determining and measuring world history and civilization” (Ramose, 1999, p. 24). He denied Africa any measure of historical and cultural agency; refuted the humanity, intelligence, and significance of African people; and helped concretize the illusion of emptiness, darkness, and degeneration that would “inspire” Europeans to take up “the white man’s burden” (Kipling, in Mazrui, 2002, p. 417). By positing Africa as “the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature . . . on the threshold of world history,” Hegel (2004, p. 86) empowered European colonizers to approach Africa from a supremacist vantage point whose hallmark is that “Africans could enter history, but only as a beneficial result of European conquest” (Armah, 2010, p. 41). The idea of Africa that Hegel advances undergirds European visual and psychological resistance to African human and cultural presence. By

undermining Africa with a view to inventing significance for Europe, Hegel furnished the imperialist project of European global supremacy with impetus. His bigoted thesis is reflected in the pronouncements of Christian missionaries working in Africa, among them Albert Schweitzer (in Achebe, 1988, p. 48) who patronizingly argues that “[t]he African is indeed my brother, but my junior brother who with constant guidance and tutelage will grow up one day to be like the big brother in Europe” and Charles Helm (in Zinyemba, 1986, p. 17), a London Missionary Society minister who, having failed to win any converts among the Ndebele in Zimbabwe, would describe them as “a people living in beastly degradation . . . [with] everything in their political economy directly opposed to the will of God.” The hallmark of these assertions is that without the “guiding hand” of Europe, values such as ingenuity, industry, responsibility, and diligence cannot take root in Africa. This myth enables Europeans to avoid encountering themselves as latecomers in the arena of culture and civilization building (Asante, 1998, 1999; Cesaire, 2000; Chinweizu Jemie & Madubuike, 1985; Diop, 1974; Ephraim, 2003).

Hegelian discourse socialized Europeans to see themselves as members of a superior race and representatives of the best civilization in the world. Thus, upon crossing the Limpopo into Zimbabwe, Rhodes and the BSAC could disregard African presence and deploy colonial settler values that enabled them to trample upon the humanity and interests of African people. This is manifest, for instance, in the act of onomastic violence which saw the land between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers being named Rhodesia, in honor of Cecil John Rhodes. By that act alone, Rhodes and the BSAC created a “validating mythology” (Primorac, 2006) in which claims over place and the commitment to settle and exploit were expressed. As settlers, Rhodes and the BSAC denigrated Africans as subhuman, irrational, indolent, and without rights worth respecting. At the same time, they created for themselves identities that projected them as superior and ingenious. Gobineau (in Biddiss, 1970, p. 136) summarizes these identities:

We come now to the white peoples. These are gifted with reflective energy, or rather with an energetic intelligence. They have a feeling for utility . . . a perseverance that takes account of obstacles and ultimately finds a means of overcoming them . . . an extraordinary instinct for order, not merely as a guarantee of peace and tranquility, but as an indispensable means of self-preservation.

The notions of “reflective energy,” “energetic intelligence,” and “instinct for order” that Gobineau accords to white people constitute the flip side of Hegelian views to the effect that Africa is synonymous with apathy in all

areas of human exertion. These notions enabled Rhodesia to keep black people so marginalized that decades after the attainment of independence, they still find themselves operating under the illusion that European names, religions, architecture, rites of passage, dress codes, and languages constitute the epitome of culture and civilization. The emphasis that African-centered scholars (Asante, 1998, 2003, 2007; Chinweizu, 1987; Clarke, 1991, 1999; Du Bois, 1996, 1999; Karenga, 2008; wa Thiong'o, 1981, 2009; Williams, 1987) apply on the need to decolonize the African mind bears witness to the reality of that illusion. What is left unexplored in the Eurocentric discourses cited above, the texts under discussion in this article, and the ZANU-PF regime's emphasis on patriotic history as the indispensable *modus operandi* in determining who belongs and who does not, is that identities are fluid. In his study on colonial settler myths in Southern Rhodesian novels, Chennells (1982) notes that the novels' major weakness is in their tendency to reduce Southern Rhodesia "to a limited number of images which account for the country and at the same time prevent any more ambitious exploration of its complexities" (p. xviii). He further points out that

throughout these novels, there is an emphasis that the settlers are giving shape to the chaos in which Africans previously lived their lives and that not only has the wilderness been ordered but so have been the people of the wilderness. (Chennells, 1982, p. 474)

The reductionist framing of Rhodesia as experienced by both blacks and whites in these novels resonates quite remarkably with the images in *Jambanja* (Harrison, 2006) and *Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm* (Barker, 2007) as well as the ZANU-PF regime's rubric of patriotic history. In these texts, as in their Rhodesian predecessors that Chennells discusses, and the ZANU-PF regime's patriotic history template on the back of which the FTLRP was mounted, the fractured and negotiable nature of identities is overshadowed by recourse to "holistic forms of social explanation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 173) which stress the essentialist categorization of phenomena. This article explores the ways in which the selected texts root themselves in the essentialist economy of the colonial age with a view to demonstrating the inability of neat categories to account for the complexity of experiences, identities, and struggles.

Eric Harrison: *Jambanja* (2006)

Eric Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006) relives what the author describes as the chaotic white commercial farm invasions of the post-2000 period. As an

attempt “at ‘writing to’ both the Zimbabwean official establishment as well as real and imagined clusters of adversaries and sympathizers with a view to demonstrating that the entire land redistribution process in Zimbabwe was a barbaric crusade against white commercial farmers” (Gwekwerere, Magosvongwe, & Nyamende, 2013, p. 125), this memoir comes after Catherine Buckle’s *African Tears: The Zimbabwe Land Invasions* (2001) and *Beyond Tears* (2002) and Richard Wiles’s *Foreshadowed Is My Forest* (2005). In much the same manner as the texts that precede it, *Jambanja* anticipates Jim Barker’s *Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm* (2007) as well as Ann Rothrock Beattie’s *Tengwe Garden Club* (2008) in the wide context of the racial and ideological identity of the authors as “people no longer European, not yet African, but who nonetheless train their gaze to fit European or western epistemological frameworks” (Pilososof, 2012, p. 153). In the memoir, Harrison wakes up one morning to find himself under instruction to leave Maioio Estate within 24 hours. What follows the instruction to leave is the drama of wits between Harrison, his family, and neighboring white commercial farmers on the one hand and Guno Matunda, Morgan Musetwa, and their “disorderly rabble” (Harrison, 2006, p. 6), “bunch of hoodlums” (Harrison, 2006, p. 132), and “hordes of squatters” (Harrison, 2006, p. 209), on the other. Harrison eventually succumbs. In narrating the unfolding of that drama of wits between him and his black Zimbabwean antagonists, Harrison evokes colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist myths to advance the discourse of white entitlement. This is most manifest in his narration of what he had to do to acquire land in Rhodesia. Harrison’s account of his acquisition of Maioio Estate is carefully crafted to create the impression that in Rhodesia, all that mattered in the quest to acquire the kind of land that Harrison loses during the FTLRP was the work ethic. Thus, in recollecting the details of his life before Maioio Estate, Harrison emphasizes that he invested time and energy to mold himself into a deserving recipient of land in Rhodesia. Readers encounter him being offered a job as “a learner Tobacco Buyer on the Auction Floors, a much sought-after job in those days” (Harrison, 2006, p. 31). Although he initially fails to take up this job because he “had to do at least a season’s farming before he could approach a tobacco company” (Harrison, 2006, p. 31) on the Auction Floors, Harrison satisfies this requirement by returning from his overseas trip “just in time to start work on a tobacco farm, grading the present crop in the bulk-sheds as well as starting out the seedbeds for the following tobacco season, working for a grower in the Beatrice area” (Harrison, 2006, p. 31). He recalls how rigorous this job was:

Harry had done many things in his time, but this had to be one of the hardest jobs he could think of. He was everybody’s dogsboy, and had to shoulder most

responsibilities from both sides. On the one side, the assistant had the owner on his back, who was making damn sure that he got every single ounce of work from the fellow. On the other side of the coin, the labour knew very well that the assistant was not responsible for their pay, and they often took great delight in giving the assistant uphill . . . It was the assistant's duty to ring the gong in the compound to wake up the labour at four in the morning . . . The assistant didn't go home for breakfast or lunch; he had his meals in the fields, and only left once the last worker had gone . . . Harry also had to issue rations to the workers once a week, and to check the barns at night. If you happened to be a bachelor, life was not fun, especially if cooking was not your forte. (Harrison, 2006, p. 31)

The desire to learn compels him to relocate to Angola where he finds work as a tobacco consultant. As he reminisces, working in Angola as a tobacco consultant involved moving from farm to farm, introducing the latest methods of tobacco farming and new seed varieties with the aim of improving Angolan tobacco. He concluded this learning curve by winding up in a model tobacco farm where he conducted field days instead of traveling from farm to farm. By the end of his second year at the model tobacco farm, "Harry was producing great tobacco, much better than they ever thought possible" (Harrison, 2006, p. 51). His performance gave his employers "the necessary injection to realise that he was no longer employable and that he would have to go on his own someday" (Harrison, 2006, p. 51). Soon Harrison found his way back to Rhodesia where he joined Mkwasine Estate and "took up responsibility for a large cotton and wheat project under irrigation while he waited to set his other plans in action" (Harrison, 2006, p. 55). Meanwhile, the subhuman conditions in which Africans lived on all the farms where Harrison cultivated the work ethic that would eventually propel him to ownership of Maioio Estate are not accorded any narrative space in the memoir. Harrison makes reference to taking his meals in the fields and says nothing about the black workers who survived on a dreary diet of beans and dried, heavily salted fish. He writes about having to inspect the tobacco barns at night but has nothing to say about the black workers who were often subjected to brutal treatment when the white commercial farmers "discovered that the tobacco barns' temperature had fluctuated especially during the night when fatigue caught up with the tobacco barn furnace attendants, thereby compromising the quality of the tobacco" (Masaka, Gwaravanda, & Mukusha, 2012, p. 496). Harrison's silence on the experiences of black workers who enabled the tobacco farms to thrive is not surprising. Colonial settler colonial values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacy emphasized that "the human *qua* human is the ontological domain of whiteness" (Sithole, 2016, p. 30). This emphasis inspired the colonizers to fail to acknowledge the presence and humanity of the colonized. European filmic narratives dealing with the black experience

also exhibit the same failure. In his study of “the psychosis of whiteness” as expressed in two British big-budget films on the transatlantic slave holocaust, Kehinde Andrews (2016) notes,

One of the most notable features of both films is the distinct lack of black characters in either. Across both movies, there are only three Black characters with speaking roles; in *Belle*, there is the title role and a maid who has a few lines. In *Amazing Grace*, Olaudah Equiano . . . is the only Black speaking character, and gives little more than a cameo appearance. Both these films credit abolition to white agents who emancipate the passive and tortured slaves on their behalf. (p. 443)

Harrison renders the failure to acknowledge the presence and humanity of black people palpable by reconstructing his experiences in a manner that minimizes colonialism’s dependency on coerced black labor. Reading through the memoir, one has to constantly contend with its glaring manifestations of selective amnesia and unbridled celebration of “Anglo-Saxon chauvinism, nationalism, racism and parochialism, all of which meant complete indifference to the plight and suffering of others” (Nyoka, 2016, p. 906).

Upon returning to Rhodesia, Harrison learns that parts of Mkwase Estate and the Middle Sabi Estates “were being offered to young farmers to purchase on an ambitious Government financed program which would eventually allow the selected applicants title to their land” (Harrison, 2006, p. 54). He applies for land and is allocated 187 hectares of farmland in Mkwase-Central under the auspices of a government-financed scheme that empowered beneficiaries with “a bank-guaranteed loan with no collateral” (Harrison, 2006, p. 55). Under the terms of this scheme, he is “allocated . . . \$8,000 for the construction of burley tobacco barns and another \$15,000 for expenses in the third year” (Harrison, 2006, p. 56). All he is expected to present before the Selection Board is evidence to the effect that he had in his savings \$5,000 unencumbered cash. Chaired by Carol Heurtley, the President of the Rhodesian Tobacco Association, the Selection Board approves Harrison’s application for land regardless of the observation that “your deposit of \$5,000, the minimum amount permissible to join the scheme, only reached your new account opened at noon today” (Harrison, 2006, p. 56). While Harrison inadvertently highlights the ways in which the Rhodesian regime supported white land acquisition, this does not eclipse his emphasis on the work ethic as indispensable in the bid to acquire land in Rhodesia. At the same time, it is not lost to the readers that for Harrison and his fellow Rhodesians, the work ethic is an exclusively white value. All the characters committed to self-advancement that readers encounter in the memoir, for instance, are white. The colleagues

with whom Harrison goes to work on the Rhodesian Tobacco Auction Floors and in Angola are white. The other characters acquiring farms and running them as viable commercial entities in the memoir are white. There is nothing in Harrison's memoir to show that Rhodesia had any interest in the work ethic and land-ownership aspirations of black people. Land-ownership meant social, cultural, economic, and political power. Rhodesia was not in a hurry to share such power with black people.

The stress that Harrison applies on the white work ethic downplays the multifarious ways in which the Rhodesian establishment actively supported the productive agency of white Rhodesian commercial farmers that Harrison writes so passionately about. History makes clear that behind every Rhodesian farmer was an intricate network of state and corporate support packages that enabled Rhodesian farmers to be productive. The contradiction is that these financial packages "were rendered to white settlers whose conception of 'home' was always Britain" (Walter Rodney, 1972, p. 164). Although Harrison hints at this in his rendition of how he acquired Maioio Estate, his revelations are piecemeal. Quite tellingly absent in his recollection of state support for the white Rhodesian commercial farmer are the countless legislative implements that were put in place to undermine social, economic, and political advancement for black people with a view to keeping them available for exploitation as un(der)paid laborers on white Rhodesian farms. In addition, Harrison's emphasis on the white work ethic enables him to take for granted the invisibility of potential black landowners in the land acquisition scheme that propelled him to ownership of Maioio Estates. By falling back on the myth that black people are invisible, Harrison affirms the Rhodesian standpoint that "the African's claim to the land he and his ancestors . . . occupied for centuries [i]s as limited as that of the animals that roamed [it]" (Magubane, 1996, p. 166). In that regard, his memoir absolves the Rhodesian regime and helps mollify the consciences of the beneficiaries of racially lopsided Rhodesian policies. As deployed by Harrison, the myth that black people are invisible sustains the illusion that Rhodesians did not rob anyone when they parceled out land among themselves. Invisibility implies insignificance. Positing given groups of people as invisible implies that such people do not have rights worth respecting. When a given people are deemed to have no rights worth respecting, their humanity is placed in jeopardy. Under colonial rule, life without rights is the *sine qua non* of black existence. That Harrison writes about this reality with a seemingly clear conscience portrays him as an archetypal colonial settler and Hegelian supremacist. This comes out in his conviction that black people are satisfied with their station as oppressed and exploited laborers on Maioio Estate:

When they weren't singing, they were cracking jokes amongst themselves . . . The gang would crack up and just carry on working. They could do this for hours and hours, for days and days, each one of them taking turns to lead the singing—which was just as well, since after a couple of days the next layer of ant-heap would be brought in, water added, and the whole process repeated . . . After the dam wall was built . . . they celebrated well into the night, polishing off a drum of beer in the process. (Harrison, 2006, p. 65)

In narrating his commitment to Rhodesia, Harrison overlooks the misery in his workers' songs and laughter. That they account for a drum of opaque beer after building his dam says a lot about their desperation to temporarily escape their status as victims. Harrison's delight in the face of modes of behavior that black people had to fall back on in order to survive the horrors of colonialism, sometimes in ways that affirmed the misgivings that colonialism had about them as childish and mindless, demonstrates how detached he is from black people's understanding of their situation. In his discussion of the African American experience in America, James Baldwin (1963) captures something about the complexity of the identities of black people that Harrison does not concede for his workers at Maioio Estate:

I have great respect for that unsung army of black men and women who trudged down back lanes and entered back doors, saying "Yes, Sir" and "No, Ma'am" in order to acquire a new roof for the schoolhouse, new books, a new chemistry lab, more beds for the dormitories, more dormitories. They did not like saying "Yes, Sir" and "No, Ma'am," but the country was in no hurry to educate Negroes [and] these black men and women knew that the job had to be done, and they put their pride in their pockets in order to do it. It is very hard to believe that they were in any way inferior to the white men and women who opened those back doors. (p. 85)

Where Harrison is generous enough to concede the visibility and presence of black people, he still requires them to act within the confines of the ideas that colonialism holds about them. Yet it is important to note that black identities during the colonial era were largely choreographed and performed to ensure survival. Making such a concession is exorbitant for Harrison because it implies encountering black identities and modes of resistance in their complexity. Thus, Harrison stays faithful to the reductionist framing of African people. In the process, his memoir eclipses the fact that it is on the basis of his whiteness that he could become a learner tobacco buyer on the Auction Floors, an assistant farm manager for established tobacco farmers, or a tobacco consultant in Angola. The colonial system made sure to set aside such opportunities exclusively for white people. Harrison had the leverage to

dream and act on his dreams because he was born on what was considered the correct side of the color line in Rhodesia. In such a context, his work ethic could not only blossom; it was also certain to be noticed and rewarded.

Jim Barker: *Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm* (2007)

Jim Barker's *Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm* (2007) is "the diary of a Rhodesian/Zimbabwean family that were forcibly evicted from their Karoi farm during the highly controversial 'land grab'" (Barker, 2007, p. i). It narrates the author's struggle to maintain ownership of Nyahoa Estate, a sprawling farm measuring 1,328 hectares that he acquired in 1965 at the age of 33. Written in the style and manner of Eric Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006), Barker's *Paradise Plundered* (2007) unfurls against the backdrop of his personal and family history of "a self-confessed impoverished childhood, during which his family moved frequently from place to place and from farm to farm" (Richards, in Barker, 2007, p. v) and the liberation war in which Barker participated on the side of Rhodesia as a member of the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit (PATU). The memoir portrays Barker as a colonial settler, a Rhodesian, and a Hegelian supremacist in a number of ways. Particularly important for this discussion is the author's volition to describe his family as both Rhodesian and Zimbabwean (Barker, 2007, p. i). Writing 27 years after the attainment of independence in 1980, it is quite revealing that Barker has not been able to put Rhodesia behind him. That this is the case is also evident in the manner in which he celebrates Rhodesian political figures such as Ian Smith whose "absolute sincerity and honesty" (Barker, 2007, p. 98) impressed Barker and his friends that "we joined his party soon after its inception" (Barker, 2007, p. 98) and "worked hard in Karoi to get [him] elected" (Barker, 2007, p. 98). The celebration that Barker reserves for Rhodesian politicians who were instrumental in suppressing the aspirations of black people for freedom contrasts sharply with his description of African freedom fighters as "terrorists" and "gooks" against whom he carried out patrols that earned him the Police Decoration for Gallantry (Barker, 2007, p. 143). Barker relishes the killing of freedom fighters such as Mao who "operated in the Centenary and Mount Darwin areas . . . and had built up a reputation with the local population for being invincible . . . foster[ing] the myth that bullets passed through him without doing him harm" (Barker, 2007, p. 177). He scoffs at myths of immortality that African freedom fighters created around themselves, but is most sonorous in his celebration of the perceived valor of Rhodesian soldiers. A case in point here is that of Corporal Colin Welch who, despite having been fatally wounded in a battle, "was spoiling to get back

into the fight” (Barker, 2007, p. 181). Accordingly, Welch is awarded “the Bronze Cross of Rhodesia for gallantry in action” (Barker, 2007, p. 181). This level of commitment to Rhodesia is accentuated by the delight with which Barker (2007) recollects how he availed his farm for use as a military base by Rhodesian security forces:

I was asked if the security forces could set up a mini-JOC, Joint Operations Centre, on the farm, and in no time the Air Force had moved into one of the sheds. The chipping room was used for an ops room, the open shed behind the office for the radio room, and tents and marquees sprouted up all around the yard. Several caravans arrived and these and various other vehicles were scattered everywhere . . . There were three members from special branch under Angus Ross, two fairly senior policemen in situ, and Major Peter Burford in command of the army. The Air Force contingent was commanded by Flight Lieutenant Ian Harvey. There were liaison officers from the SAS and the Selous Scouts, police dog-handlers with their dogs, PATU sticks in and out [and] ordinary police reservists going about their business . . . This then was Tango Base. For the next six weeks, there were never less than six helicopters, one Air Force fixed-wing aircraft, and at least two Praw planes operating from our strip. (p. 177)

Barker recollects his contributions toward the brutalization of black Zimbabweans without compunction. By availing his farm for military use by Rhodesian security forces, Barker facilitated the victimization of black Zimbabweans fighting for their freedom. His meticulous recollection of the details of Tango Base shows his deep involvement in the Rhodesian bid to coerce black Zimbabweans into giving up on their struggle for independence. The Selous Scouts about whom he writes with manifest admiration, for instance, remain infamous for the monumental levels of terror they unleashed on unarmed black people who sided with Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) freedom fighters. In addition to this is the emphasis that Barker places on the astronomical numbers of ZIPRA and ZANLA fighters killed by Rhodesian security forces. When compared with the few casualties that Barker contends were suffered by Rhodesian security forces, readers are left wondering how ZIPRA and ZANLA forces were able to dislodge colonialism if they were such underperformers in battle.

Barker’s grounding in colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist mythology is also manifest in the title of his text—*Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm*. This highly suggestive title conjures up images of a once orderly establishment that has since succumbed to ruin. In his narration of the once orderly establishment’s

descent into chaos that his title suggests, Barker uses Nyahoa Estate to bemoan what he considers the regrettable state of affairs in the commercial farming sector in post-2000 Zimbabwe. The narrative evinces that the *paradise* represented by the Zimbabwean commercial farming sector, a historically white-dominated space in which black Zimbabweans featured as providers of un(der)paid labor, is a product of assumed white commitment to excellence. In keeping with the Hegelian thesis in which Africa is packaged as the land of apathy, Barker weaves a narrative that ascribes agency to Europeans while relegating Africans to the margins as lethargic hordes. Thus, together with industrious mentors such as “Boss” Lilford of Doornfontein Farm and colleagues such as Trevor Harvey who is portrayed in the narrative as “a dynamic, forward-thinking [farmer]” (Barker, 2007, p. 99), the author occupies centre-stage in the memoir as an industrious individual who transformed his farm into a diminutive paradise through sheer hard work:

My days were full—I was working hard on Vuka, while at the same time trying to get things moving on Nyahoa. I was studying for my Private Pilot’s Licence, PPL, and was also subject to call-up at any time. I took the month of August off as my annual leave but we didn’t go anywhere as I needed the time “to get the ball rolling” on the farm. (Barker, 2007, p. 110)

Barker attributes his industriousness in *Paradise Plundered* to his grooming during “those early days [when] all land preparation, ploughing, harrowing and ridging was done by ox-drawn implements [and] the tobacco seedbeds were situated near the river from which water was drawn by hand in watering cans” (Barker, 2007, p. 15). During those days, Barker learnt to drive “and was soon bringing the tobacco seedlings from the seedbeds to the fields by motor vehicle” (Barker, 2007, p. 15). This work ethic would be entrenched through various managerial appointments on a number of tobacco farms, the most notable being with “Boss” Lilford. It would seem from the memoir that Barker’s managerial appointments prepared him for “the long struggle to tame the virgin bush and create an infrastructure whilst at the same time raising a young family and playing an active part in Rhodesia’s bush war” (Richards, in Barker, 2007, p. v). The experience that Barker gathered as a manager on the various farms would be augmented by his willingness to endure frugal beginnings in his quest to transform Nyahoa Estate into a miniature paradise:

Our first home was a tiny four-room shack which had been converted from a small farm-shed. The bathroom was only just big enough for a small bath, a basin and toilet. Our double-bed, small wardrobe and dressing table just fitted into the tiny bedroom, our three-piece lounge suite and radiogram were squeezed into the sitting room with room for nothing else, and the kitchen was

only big enough for a gas stove, a paraffin fridge, a sink and a small table. Lighting was by paraffin pressure lamps. Where did we eat? On trays on our laps. (Barker, 2007, p. 94)

Barker does not only marshal his farm management history and frugal financial inclination to argue that Nyahoa Estate indeed belongs to him; he also claims that prior to his advent, Nyahoa Estate was nothing but “bush [that] had not been touched since time began” (Barker, 2007, p. vii). In making this assertion, he delves into the white superiority complex of his predecessors who disregarded African onomastic presence and imposed European names on places and landforms that African people had, prior to the advent of colonialism, rendered accessible through indigenous nomenclature. Barker imagines Africa as an undeveloped place whose value could only be unlocked by Europeans. He nullifies indigenous human agency in a manner that justifies his entitlement to so much land in a country where the indigenous people have to make peace with patchy and uninhabitable lands. His self-congratulatory description of the crops and infrastructure at Nyahoa Estate speaks to his grounding in the myth that white agency is singularly coterminous with human development:

We drove through verdant pastures where fat cattle grazed contentedly, and soon came to one of the irrigated tobacco lands where the crop was standing high and lush, and about to have its first reaping. Then along the dam wall—this was the largest of the twenty-one dams we had built . . . Then we drove through the workers’ village, their houses ranging from three to five rooms—all brick-under-asbestos with thatched kitchens and blair toilets. Several of these had been electrified in an on-going exercise, and safe water had been piped in from a borehole . . . Then on we drove, to the other irrigated tobacco field, watered by the Israeli drip-irrigation system—every plant a clone of its neighbour—with the first reaping already curing in the barns. We passed the maize field, the plants only ankle high at this stage, but looking quite promising . . . Then back to the homestead—past the tobacco barns, the milking parlour, and the aircraft hangar and workshops. Thirty-eight years earlier there had been nothing—no fields, no buildings, no standing water—just three thousand and three hundred acres of untamed bush. (Barker, 2007, p. viii)

Barker’s assertions about the role of white agency in unlocking the value of so-called vacant and undeveloped spaces that had purportedly stood untouched since the beginning of time are not without precedent in the history of the Afro-European entanglement. Hegel (2004) set the tone for the vilification of Africa with his assertion that “Africa is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature” (p. 97). The essence of this

Hegelian image of Africa is that Africans “have much idle time on their hands . . . [and] cannot improve on themselves without the influence and example of those who are willing to persevere in teaching and encouraging them to work” (Jacobs, Saul & Pell, 1971, p. 42). Through these myths, European colonizers were able to construct themselves as members of a superior race, burdened with the responsibility to induct supposedly benighted Africans into civilization. However, inducting Africans into civilization as defined by Europeans often meant violence packaged as development:

The natives . . . far from owning the natural resources their lands contained, or the intellectual resources their psyches generated, were fated to have their labour and energies used in the extraction of wealth from their lands for the construction of European industry. Native participation in this massive program of spoliation was called development. (Armah, 2006, p. 45)

It is quite telling that having commanded foundational import in both the enslavement and colonization of Africa, the myths about African lethargy should now be given a new lease of life in the 21st century. The fact that Barker falls back on the content and ideology of these myths in his attempt to defend his ownership of Nyahoa Estate shows that he is yet to extricate himself from the hold of the myth of white superiority. His volition to see agency, industry, and ingenuity as “white values” is cardinal in the construction of Africa as *other*. Equally important too is his uncomplimentary portrayal of post-2000 black Zimbabweans as marauding hordes that would attack his workers, force them to strip, roll in the mud, and spend the whole night in the dam shouting ZANU-PF slogans and singing *chimurenga* songs (Barker, 2007, p. 350). The same “mobs” torched pastures, set hay bales on fire (Barker, 2007, p. 359), barricaded white commercial farming families in their homes for days, beating drums, singing and yelling nonstop abuse at them, and defecating on their doorsteps (Barker, 2007, p. 360). After flushing out the white commercial farming families, they would proceed to light fires on the expensive floors, smash porcelain toilets, baths, and basins (Barker, 2007, p. 363). These images of black people remind readers of the colonial vilification of the black person as “the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces” (Fanon, 1967, p. 48).

The onslaught that black Zimbabweans are portrayed mounting on the “paradise” that Barker labored to create over years of sustained commitment demonstrates what the author perceives as the definitive trait of black people: discomfiture with civilized standards. The emphasis that he applies on land-hungry black Zimbabweans as hired thugs and rented crowds depicts land reclamation in Zimbabwe as an undertaking that lacked popular support. In

the process, Barker obliterates the decades-long hunger for land, bread, and dignity that black Zimbabweans have had to live with since the advent of colonialism in 1890.

Conclusion

This article explored the intersection of race, memory, time, and place in Eric Harrison's *Jambanja* (2006) and Jim Barker's *Paradise Plundered: The Story of a Zimbabwean Farm* (2007). It demonstrated that as texts inspired by the FTLRP in post-2000 Zimbabwe, the two memoirs undermine the discourse of white entitlement that the authors seek to advance in the aftermath of their "loss" of the lands they had farmed all their lives. This is borne out by the authors' nostalgia for Rhodesia that is evident in the ease with which they fall back on colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities and Hegelian ideas of European supremacy evolved during the heyday of colonialism. The authors' yearning for Rhodesia points to their reluctance to coexist with black Zimbabweans for whom Rhodesia is synonymous with anti-black racism and cultural, political, and economic violence. Their lack of enthusiasm to coexist is manifest in their fluency with myths of black invisibility, black discomfiture with so-called civilized standards of life, and white ingenuity in unlocking the value of supposedly vacant African lands that are also portrayed in Rhodesian discourse as having stayed untouched since the beginning of time. Thus, it is paradoxical that white Zimbabwean commercial farmers should feel justified to own land in Zimbabwe without purging colonial settler values, Rhodesian identities, and Hegelian supremacist ideas in their conception of place, time, and humanity.

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