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# Interpreting Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga Through Kongonya: Representations of Post-2000 Zimbabwean Dance in Buckle's *Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe's Tragedy* and Mtizira's *Chimurenga Protocol*

Jairos Gonye

Kongonya[1] dance appeared for the first time in rural Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia, a British colony) during the mid-1970s. The dance was performed by the armed guerrillas of the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Liberation Army (ZANLA) of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU-PF) political party and their supporters—especially the *mujibha-s*[2] and *chimbwido-s*[3]—during all-night-long political meetings called *pungwe*[4] in Shona language (Gonye 2013). The swashbuckling guerrillas, who choreographed and introduced kongonya, normally waved their AK-47 rifles in the air or slung them down their sides.

Guerrillas who fought against the Rhodesian colonial forces usually wore satin jeans or khaki outfits and berets or caps, distinguishing them from the ordinary peasants. They also wore jungle boots, whose buckles were sometimes loosely fastened. Together with the kongonya, their outlandish attire and weaponry were enough reason for attraction. I describe below the performance of kongonya as I witnessed it at a *pungwe*:

> The *pungwe* aura, the blazing open ground fires and the emotion-charged revolutionary songs, provide the nocturnal background to the dance. The initiative to perform kongonya is random and spontaneous. This is wartime, and kongonya is neither a professional nor traditional dance. A male guerrilla signals the intention to perform kongonya by pacing up and down the margins of the crackling fire that mark the night's dance arena. In sync with the *pungwe* attendees' loud singing and plosive clapping, the guerrilla bends his torso forward, his arms cupped, like a kangaroo, and performs short bodily jumps forward. The guerrilla hops and heaves, sticks out his backside and stares vacantly in the horizon.
>
> The dancer's wriggling, protruding backside rises and falls with every hop, jump, and twist. He strikes the ground with the soles of his boots and whistles. Dust rises with the dancer's flexing legs as he lifts his body and treads the ground with the flat of his soles, thrusting forward and sideways in sendekera[5] style. The ground reverberates with a thick *booom booom booom booom* sound. Meanwhile, his boots'

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> buckles jingle *kwechere kwechere kwechere*, like metal bottle tops. This metallic jingling resonates with that of the bullet magazines and other war paraphernalia in the bandoliers that hug his upper waist.
>
> The hopping guerrilla maneuvers his body left and turns at the distant boundary. He brings the inner side of his outstretched right leg boot in three successive strikes against the inner side of the left boot, while in midair. This jungle boot clapping—an exaggerated foot-mimicking of a military salute routine, otherwise termed *mujibha* or *nhabo*[6]—produces a plodding percussion reminiscent of the South African gumboot dance. The *pungwe* goers' wild applause reecho into the outlying darkness. Other guerrillas and attendees soon join excitedly in that great fearless performance. The kangaroo-like hops, thrusts, and twirling of countless hips and backsides continue into the night.
>
> The entrance of female dancers in the fray, especially the female guerrillas and *chimbwido-s*, intensifies the provocativeness of the dance. The girls shake and arch their bodies spasmodically as they steal sly glances at the men. Girls' bosoms rise and fall as their youthful bodies undulate across the ground with elastic energy to the tune of revolutionary song, whistling, clapping, and ululation. The excitable girls challenge the male dancers to "chase" them. A female dancer, for instance, turns right round in a provocative posture. She stands with her backside brushing the groin region of an encroaching male dancer. She bends forward slightly, her hands on her knees, swirls her hips and then gyrates forward. She swings her backside rhythmically from side to side with such a hypnotic grip that dancers and watchers alike forget momentarily that it is wartime, teeming with prowling Rhodesian soldiers.
>
> In the next routine, a male dancer, his stamping body vibrating, grips the waist area of a female dancer with both hands from behind. The female dancer, in turn, similarly holds the waist area of the next male dancer who also does the same to the next female. This formation elongates into a moving human chain whose individual components gyrate one into the other, horizontally, before the chain turns inside, forming a complete circle that then dances inwards from the margins . . .

Such a camaraderie-cum-carnival spirit might have helped mobilize young Zimbabweans to join the war against white settler rule (Gonye 2013, 2015). As I have noted before (Gonye 2013), kongonya helped to dispel the fear of death in the guerrillas and recruits, substituting it with a determination to fight for the restoration of their ancestral lands. Such transformative potential is more easily understood from within the spiritual-cultural contexts of kongonya performances. I have theorized how the ruling elites of Zimbabwe manipulated and transformed the benignly mobilizing role of the kongonya of the 1970s liberation war era into a traumatizing and harassing role in post-2000 Zimbabwe (Gonye 2013, 2015). It is against the backdrop of these mutable purposes of dance that I intend to analyze Zimbabwean literary representations of kongonya, commenting on how writers reframe the dance, post-2000.

## Rationale for Analyzing Literary Works

The tense controversies surrounding the reception and interpretation of the post-2000 Zimbabwe land redistribution exercise and her subsequent crises (Raftopoulos 2009) were also resonant in the emerging literary works on Zimbabwe's land question (Magosvongwe 2013; Chidora 2017). Zimbabwean writers appear organized in opposing camps in their representation of the unravelling Third Chimurenga[7], or *jambanja*.[8] Among others, Memory Chirere, Alexander Kanengoni, and Nyaradzo Mtizira write in celebratory tones about the so-called empowering benefits of



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Zimbabwe's post-2000 land reform, whereas Petina Gappah, NoViolet Bulawayo, and Catherine Buckle satirize the same process for exacerbating poverty, inflation, forced displacements, migration, and the marginalization of ordinary citizens. The two selected Zimbabwean writers symbolize the North-South polar dichotomization of post-2000 Zimbabwe's starred literary and political terrain. As Magosvongwe (2013) and Chidora (2017) suggest, critics' mixed responses to Catherine Buckle's *Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe's Tragedy* (2002) and Nyaradzo Mtizira's *Chimurenga Protocol* (2008)—two novels about post-2000 Zimbabwe's vexed land politics, respectively—mirror the controversial international and local reception of the Third Chimurenga, a process oftentimes referred to in binary terms as "violent invasion," "racialized," "haphazard process" on one hand, and "equitable redistribution," "correction of a historical imbalance," and "empowering the landless Zimbabweans" on the other.

My argument is that both writers are significant because of their apparent oppositional portrayal of an increasingly contested national heritage—kongonya—especially their disparate depictions of the nexus between kongonya and the post-2000 Zimbabwe *jambanja.* The European-born farmer, Buckle (2002), and the black Zimbabwean, Mtizira (2008), both harness dance to diversely evoke the post-2000 *jambanja* experiences. The reference to *jambanja* in the post-2000 Zimbabwe context, therefore, acknowledges the often-cited violent and chaotic encounters characterizing that process (Primorac 2007; Raftopoulos 2009; Mlambo 2013; Manase 2011)—a view reflected in Buckle's work, but contested in Mtizira's. Their contrasting perceptions and reconstructions of kongonya, the dance attending *jambanja,* suggest that Buckle and Mtizira view the Zimbabwean land reform program differently. Their largely divergent reconstruction of kongonya thus readies readers for a nuanced depiction of the kongonya-dominated post-2000 Zimbabwe land reform process.

The post-2000 Zimbabwean social history and literature, which captures the proliferation of cultural products such as music galas and dances (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009; Gonye 2013; Mtizira 2008; Gappah 2009; Bulawayo 2013), disturbingly lacks corresponding scholarly analysis of such representations, especially in literature (Gonye 2015). However, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems (2009) and I (Gonye 2013) have critiqued the reinvention and modifications of cultural performances, such as kongonya, as they are performed in the real, lived world at state-funded galas and national commemorations in support of the Third Chimurenga discourse. Scholarly concerns to analyze cultural performances in the lived world, however, as I will show, is little in evidence when it comes to the analysis of those same cultural performances as represented in literary artworks. My current analysis, I suggest, could help modify readers' views on the represented post-2000 period from the vantage prism of dance. I hereby pose the following questions: How do both former European-descended Zimbabwean and black indigenous writers reimagine kongonya as it was being performed during the land invasions, and what values do both writers imbue kongonya with, as either performed live or as mediatized dance motion pictures?

Analyzing representations of the dance trope by Buckle and Mtizira, respectively, enables a discussion on the differing versions and responses to the ideologically termed Third Chimurenga (Muponde and Primorac 2005), a process tinged with crises of cultural representations (Raftopoulos 2009, 201–232). It can be surmised from Raftopoulos's (2009) observation that the controversial land occupations, enacted into law with the 2001 Land Reform Act, gave rise to contestable quasi-historical narratives. In both *Beyond Tears* (Buckle 2002) and *Chimurenga Protocol* (Mtizira 2008), dance appears as a text and performance, eliciting different interpretations. This resonates, ironically, with Barber's explanation of the African art forms' capacity to carry excess meanings, as "texts generate 'surplus': meanings that go beyond, and may subvert, the purported intentions of the work" (1987, 4). Thus, the dance trope introduces possibilities of multiple, and sometimes contradictory, meanings into the overall narratives. Reimagining dance this way suggests how dance sometimes interweaves and infuses both narratives with ambiguous moods and atmospheres.



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## Zimbabwe's Land Question, the Third Chimurenga, and Dance Performances

Zimbabwe's discourse of the Third Chimurenga problematically claims that the Third Chimurenga was bringing finality to the nation's perennial land problem. That Third Chimurenga may be appreciated better through critically analyzing the dance representations that accompany the process. This is in a context in which Gonye (2015) argues that Zimbabwe's history resounds with anti-colonial dance performances spanning from Mbuya Nehanda's[9] defiant dances of the 1890s First Chimurenga to the 1970s Second Chimurenga kongonya by the guerrillas and peasants, respectively.

The Second Chimurenga against the colonial dispossession of the economically and spiritually significant Zimbabwe's ancestral lands, raged in the 1970s and culminated in the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement.[10] That agreement between the Patriotic Front (PF) partners (ZANU with Robert Mugabe and Zimbabwe African People's Union [ZAPU] with Joshua Nkomo), the British, and internal parties led by Ian Smith, Abel Muzorewa, and Ndabaningi Sithole, deferred compulsory land redistribution. However, in the late 1990s, Zimbabwe began to redistribute land because of the increasing pressure on the unyielding lands and the political and economic vicissitudes (Chaumba, Scoones, and Wolmer 2003; Raftopoulos 2009). When the ZANU-PF led government failed to bulldoze a compulsory land acquisition policy through a rejected referendum for a new constitution in February 2000, it clandestinely encouraged demonstrations over land. That process, spearheaded by the veterans of the Second Chimurenga, soon transformed into *jambanja* and then the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (Chaumba, Scoones, and Wolmer 2003; Raftopoulos 2009), garlanded with song, kongonya, and toyi-toyi.[11] These song-dances culturally boosted their political posturing. "Yaingova toyi-toyi mumakomo" (it was military jogging and ambushes in the mountains) and "Simudza Gumbo" (lift your leg high) were some of the reinvented war tunes.

I present a witness account of the performance of the song-dance "Simudza Gumbo"[12] below. It was extremely popular during *jambanja*, its refrain literally echoing the rush into the grab-and-take mood that characterized the process. The underlying message in "Simudza Gumbo" is that the Zimbabwean individual's body—the limbs (particularly the legs), arms, organs, and movements—belong not to the individual, but to the political party, ZANU-PF (Pfukwa 2008):

> Each "land performer" is armed with either a hoe, knobkerrie, machete, axe, or a log, any of which dramatically morphs into a strange stage prop during the group dance performance. The numerous prospective farm beneficiaries soon lose their sense of individuality as they collectively raise, stamp their legs, and swing their arms celebrating *jambanja*. They jog, sing, and dance from one white farm to another, each member wielding high the aforementioned implements. Like a mob, they all chant, "White farmer go back home!" Oftentimes, the buzzing mob stops, congregates, and responds to reinvented wartime slogans and songs. They all sweat profusely. In between bouts of kongonya, members punch their fists in the air and engage in press-ups.
>
> A lead singer clears his throat and leads again in the song "Simudza Gumbo." The dancers interspace kongonya twisting of waists with toyi-toyi jumps. The toyi-toyi routine is performed on the same spot or across space. The excited dancers all lift their legs alternately in the air, above their waists, and even higher, as in physical education sessions. They swing their closefisted lower arms up and down. Sometimes, the toyi-toyi jogger takes short, athletic jogs forward and then retreats, as in backpedaling. All the while, the performers' leg and arm movements mimic those of an army recruit being psyched up for war eventualities. Participants jog-march-dance and merge with the tense emotion and mood of the spectacle they create, seizing the watchers with both awe and apprehension …



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Apparently, in post-2000 Zimbabwe, it seems that the ruling elite reintroduce kongonya in order to manipulate the cultural and jingoist appeal of dance and song to the populace (MacKenzie 1984) and popularize the "ongoing" *jambanja*. Revived 1970s wartime song-dances boost the morale of the new black land occupiers. The songs and dances enable a reinvention and articulation of an anti-colonial discourse that inscribes the Third Chimurenga as a spiritual and historical culmination of the First and Second Chimurenga-s, in that emerging continuum. Mheta (2005), Asante (2000), Gonye and Manase (2015), and Gonye (2015) suggest that dance performances mark most cultural, political, and social activities in the Zimbabwean nation's trajectory, such as *chimurenga* wars over land. However, dance performances, reframed in the context of the Third Chimurenga, could be interpreted differently by different participants or watchers.

## Dance as a Racialized, Coercive Performance in Buckle's *Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe's Tragedy*

Catherine Buckle is a marooned white Zimbabwean farmer who turns to memoir writing to directly capture her traumatic disenfranchisement as she loses her farm and farmhouse during that kongonya-inspired *jambanja* episode. The loss of Stow Farm, after she had purchased it legally in 1990, turns Buckle into a bitter and critical memoir writer—in the sense suggested by Nuttall (1998, 80) of memoir writing as an attempt to capture "an experience of victimhood." Buckle, who conceives of herself as a victim, criticizes political leaders for their manipulation of the *pungwe* dances to coercively exclude white sections of Zimbabwe's otherwise multiracial society. In *Beyond Tears* (2002), Catherine Buckle represents dance as a racialized, coercive performance by the black Zimbabwean "land invaders" as they occupy formally white-owned farms in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Their intimidatory antics resonate with the message in the Mbare Chimurenga Choir lyrics of "Dairai Dairai," whereby the provocative song and kongonya vindicate the ruling party's penchant to rule through *mamonya*[13] or by brute force.

Although Buckle's memoir offers an affected "white victim of displacement" (Harris 2005; Raftopoulos 2009, 218), first person's account of the dance-accompanied post-2000 Third Chimurenga, she struggles to recreate *jambanja*'s cultural face. In her narrative, *chimurenga* song and dance constitute the background of the land reoccupations as stereotypical terrorizing "discor-dances," replete with intimidating chants, thunderous noises of rocks thrown on farmhouse rooftops and through windows, and roaring *pungwe* fires. Buckle recreates the idea of *pungwe* song and dance in one of these rare incidents. She recounts the experiences of Mike, a white farmer from Macheke, who has a midnight visit from twenty-five black Zimbabweans who try to scare him out of the farmhouse. Buckle uses the image of a violent Zimbabwean mob to caricature the land occupiers and discredit their determination to displace Mike and his family.

The mob also turns violent against fellow indigenes who are branded traitors and require reeducation. In a typical invocation of the perceived violence of the 1970s war era (Schmidt 2013), Buckle recreates coercive scenes whereby the "land invaders" force ten Zimbabwean farm employees to join them because "they were going to have an all-night party, known as a *pungwe*, on Mike's lawn . . . to scare him and his family so much that they would leave—and then the war veterans could take over his house" (Buckle 2002, 101). Here, the night *pungwe* "party" conjures scenes of wild noises and kongonya.

The tone in Buckle's description of the nightly song performances is significant in underscoring the ensuing commotion. Buckle observes:

> Drumming on tins, shouting, singing, chanting and ululating, the war veterans partied on into the night. Mike, his wife Rose, and their three children, all under ten, got out of bed, switched on the lights and huddled together. They were hugely out-



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> numbered, the children were already crying and Mike did not dare leave his family, did not dare go out. He called on the farm radio to his neighbours and phoned the police and then he just sat and listened to the madness one thin wall away from him and his family. He could do nothing except wait for someone to come and help; he could not even protect his own wife and children. (Buckle 2002, 101)

Buckle paints an image of rowdy Zimbabwean invaders reminiscent of "primitive" jungle Africa, where the weird, leaping Africans (Conrad 1995) hypnotize the European Christians. An atmosphere of wild nocturnal partying around a fire is ritualistically evoked through the "drumming," "shouting," "singing," "chanting," "ululating," and "partying madness" (Buckle 2002, 101). This symbolizes this twenty-first-century Zimbabwe land redistribution process as equally abhorrent as the scenes of Trevor-Roper's (1963) gyrating primitives. Therefore, the above passage, though isolated and not fully visualized, demonstrates the inherent apprehension and stereotyping informing the European imagination regarding phenomena such as African dance (Edmondson 2001).

Here, Buckle seems to reimagine the so-called curio fascination of African dance (Friedman 2012, 8), thereby similarly pigeonholing Zimbabwean dance as either "spectacle" or "ritual" (Adair 2011, 91). She thus imbues the black bodies of the dancing land occupiers with a terrifying determination that traumatizes the besieged farmer. Similarly, Buckle falls ironically into the racially polarized imagining of the land question, and her memoir seems to entrench negative white perspectives. Buckle's self-narrator harnesses the dance trope to reveal her and other farmers' experiences as their farms are invaded. To highlight the victimization of the seemingly helpless white farmer, the narrator reconfigures the dancing black Zimbabweans as exhibiting subhuman passions embodied in the intimidating toyi-toyi or jogging dances.

In *Beyond Tears* (2002*),* Buckle employs eyewitness-account descriptions of the *jambanja* process and its actors, forcing readers to vicariously experience how the former white farmer encounters kongonya dance as a European *other*, especially as the African land "liberators" (Primorac 2007, 435) perform it near the farmstead. Buckle thus unconsciously suggests the political elites' manipulation of the cultural capital extant in the kongonya (Gonye 2015). Her narrative suggests that ordinary Zimbabweans invade the farms, not because they need land desperately, but because they are coerced by influential politicians such as the base commander in the novel. Although this view might reflect the textual and real-life situation, it should not blind readers to the fact that the colonially created land imbalances had not yet been corrected by the year 2000. As such, various black communities were anxiously waiting for a radical land redistribution program, whose concomitant cultural performances troubled the whites.

Buckle (2002) reminds readers that *pungwe* revolutionary song and dance does not only trouble the white farmer, but "straying" blacks as well. She portrays the *pungwe* as also being resurrected to reeducate all those Zimbabweans who support the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party and sympathize with white commercial farmers. Reeducation camps are set up on the former "white" farms, where excitable "youths, government supporters and shaven-headed men would move in to terrorise the neighbourhood" (137). Buckle conceives the *pungwe* as a political platform on which war veterans lecture the people (Bhebe 1999; Gonye 2013) on the causes of Chimurenga. The farm is thus transformed into a war zone reminiscent of the 1970s liberation war:

> People are ordered onto the trailers and then taken to deserted farms for "re-education".... They are lectured to about politics, and forced to chant slogans praising the government and condemning the opposition. They are made to raise their arms with clenched fists, again and again and proclaim undying allegiance to the government. They are forced to line up and run and chant slogans and when they can run no more, they are forced to do press-ups and star jumps. They are made to sing songs popularised during the war for independence and



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> taught new ones that denounce whites, Britain, America, farmers, the MDC and anyone else who is not wholly supportive of the government. (Buckle 2002, 137)

The passage concretizes Buckle's suspicion of the political *pungwe* and its manipulation in the service of the post-2000 *jambanja*. It can be inferred that kongonya underlies this scene, following Chinyowa's (2001) and Gonye's (2013) descriptions of *pungwe* performances as replete with kongonya dance and politicization. Song and kongonya, both on the farms and on television (Gonye 2013, 2015; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems 2009), enable the party to "play the land and race card." This double song and dance performance repertoire aesthetically and logically presents the land occupations as an ongoing decolonization process. Though Buckle's passage seems to skirt a description of kongonya per se, its performance permeates with the jogging-and-chanting toyi-toyi dances. However, dance's liberating potential is made ambiguous. Unlike in the 1970s, when participation was apparently spontaneous, here, song, toyi-toyi, kongonya, and politicization seem to be harnessed to torture and humiliation in order to convince people of the desirability of a militant confrontation of Zimbabwe's so-called enemies—Britain, America, white commercial farmers, and the MDC.

Overall, Buckle's narrative entrenches dance as an ironically racialized performance, during which African dance traumatizes and excludes the white man from the nation space. She employs the dance trope to re-create the tense atmosphere surrounding the seizure of white-owned farms and farmhouses, and to illustrate how so-called black sellouts were also chastised during the post-2000 land invasions and occupations.

## Spontaneous Dance as a Defiant and Celebratory Performance in Mtizira's *The Chimurenga Protocol*

Nyaradzo Mtizira is an artistic member of the ZANU-PF Commissariat who works abroad. Unlike most post-2000 Zimbabwean work by writers from the diaspora, such as Petina Gappah, Noviolet Bulawayo, and Brian Chikwava, who satirize the ZANU-PF led government's policies for disenfranchising citizens, Mtizira's *The Chimurenga Protocol* (2008) pampers the Third Chimurenga, in Fukuyama's (1992, xi) evolutionary terms, as ushering the end of Zimbabwe's perennial history of the "land question."

Mtizira's novel best represents a panegyric narration of one of Zimbabwe's most controversial programs, in contrast to Buckle's. His novel can be best understood as drawing from, and expanding Primorac's (2007) thesis of post-2000 Zimbabwean patriotic fiction to argue that Mtizira's narrative of the Third Chimurenga both "correspond[s] to what has been called the adventure narrative of ordeal" and further modifies its [narrative] features into a detective political narrative (Primorac 2007, 434). The narrative draws from the rhetoric of the *chimurenga* discourse to produce what Primorac, following Bakhtin, calls "Zimbabwe's master fiction" (434). It blithely rationalizes the farm invasions as acts of final land liberation (Primorac 2007). Mtizira indicts colonialism and reassures "patriotic Zimbabweans that our wars of liberation were not fought in vain" (2008, 11). His narrative thus mimics Ranger's (2005) "patriotic history" where it reimagines Zimbabwean history as teleologically and spatially straddling the precolonial, colonial, and postindependence eras, all characterized by the dance-decorated land wars—wars which the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement leave unresolved.

The land question has remained a node of contestation. Whereas the Patriotic Front parties hoped to quickly resettle landless Zimbabweans on former white farms, "the Lancaster House Constitution stated that land could not be confiscated but would have to be bought on a willing-seller-willing-buyer basis" (Mtisi, Nyakudya, and Barnes 2009, 165). Ever since that irresoluteness on the terms, Zimbabwean history has been marked by contests over land subtending into



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post-2000. *The Chimurenga Protocol* (Mtizira 2008) also dramatizes these contests and reechoes their resolution in Zimbabwe's post-2000 land redistribution. Mtizira harnesses the flag-waving Zimbabweans' celebratory songs and dances (performed within flourishing maize fields) to symbolically acclaim the successful conclusion of Zimbabwe's land question.

Mtizira's video-mediated dances, which resonate with the actual kongonya performed at *pungwe-s*, suggest that Mtizira approves of Zimbabwe's harnessing of dance performances to present Zimbabwe's version of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and thus counteract Western European and American discourses. Mtizira deploys dance to celebrate the finality of the Third Chimurenga and to culturally strengthen his ideological endeavor to counter "the self-serving lies spewed out by the Western media and their surrogates around the world" (2008, 11). He reappropriates the television media, complemented with dance videos, to configure a defiant Zimbabwean nation fighting for political and cultural respect on the global scale. Mtizira's television symbols—especially dance—scoff at how the Western media vilify the Zimbabwean land reform program. He positions dance images on the plasma screen to celebrate Zimbabwe's legacy as a continually self-liberating nation.

The pictures of Zimbabwean dancers on the television screen (which can be tele-replicated) reflect victory and celebration even in the mute mode. According to the narrator,

> The pictures on the screen showed a group of indigenous African citizens as they danced jubilantly in and amongst the furrows of waist-high maize plants. Several individuals wore smart yellow T-shirts that bore a variety of legends. One T-shirt boldly declared "Our LAND is Freedom from HUNGER and a Return to DIGNITY." Another T-shirt bore an imprint of the flag of the Republic of Zimbabwe. Underneath the flag, the words "THE LAND IS OUR PROSPERITY AND DIGNITY" were emblazoned in bold black print. (Mtizira 2008, 83–84)

Mtizira, here, links dance to a celebration of political liberation and economic empowerment. The mediatized defiant dances rejoicing the return of dignity, alongside the land, align themselves to the economic aspect which enunciates freedom "from hunger" and "prosperity" to the indigenes (84). The Zimbabwean organizers of these "land reclamations" maximize on the symbiotic relationship between media and propaganda. This is why these jubilant dancers are dressed in appropriately printed T-shirts that explain and justify the Third Chimurenga. Thus, televised dance carries political messages just like other political paraphernalia such as posters, news, and addresses, suggested in the novel.

Artistically, there is combination and bricolage, whereby contextual performance of kongonya is enhanced and mediated through highly technologized capturing of the moment of performance, dissemination, and replaying. The visual nature of the television channel enables it to foreground the provocative dance moves and gestures depending on camera focus, editing, and zooming. Furthermore, television presents scenes in collage and adds impact through sound, textual, and color representations of discourses printed on costumes employed as stage props. As Gonye (2015) suggests, performing one's dances boldly, despite colonialist denial, constitutes decolonization, as in the return of the formerly dispossessed lands.

Indeed, Mtizira (2008) articulates how Zimbabwe's television broadcaster consciously harnesses kongonya and disseminates it as a cultural weapon that both contests Western propaganda and affirms Zimbabwe's resilient character and identity. In a typical Ashcroft (2001) fashion, in which the formerly colonized subversively co-opts the former colonizers' cultural tools, previously used to construct negative images of the dominated colonial subject (such as literature) into their service to liberate themselves, the Zimbabwean Information Ministry resorts to the new media to repair the damage caused. This resonates with Carey's observation that communication



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symbolically "produces," "maintains," "repairs," and "transforms" reality—verbally, behaviorally, and graphically (1992, 23).

The Zimbabwean dance casts politico-cultural significance on spectators, despite being depicted on muted television screens. The moving images of ordinary Zimbabwean dancers present citizens who are determined to counteract the symbolic silencing by Western Europeans and Americans. The dance scene, as represented on the television screen, thus illuminates the relationship between the foreign powers and Zimbabwe as that of dominance and muzzling as well as that of subversion. For instance, that Western European/American characters, particularly Sedgefield and Crawford, "watched the pictures on the giant screen with interest" (Mtizira 2008, 83), does not mean that they accept African dance. Their scrutiny of the dance reflects their desire to retain control over the bodies of the formerly colonized Zimbabweans. This is evident in the symbolic gagging of the dancers, expressed thus: "There was no sound from the television speakers because someone had activated the mute mode of the television" (Mtizira 2008, 83). However, though the "Westerners" can silence the Zimbabwean voices in *their* boardroom offices, they cannot actually mute all television sets available to Zimbabwean and worldwide viewers. Because globalization renders popular culture increasingly prone to massive and widespread dissemination (Appadurai 1996), it becomes futile for the Europeans to try and imbue the Zimbabwean dancers with emotions they cannot verbally articulate. Messages are, however, guaranteed in the dynamism of the moving screen pictures and also exuded through multichannels: body movement and gesture, costume, printed material, props, and the context of the performance.

Mtizira represents full-scale propaganda warfare, with the Zimbabwean media defeating the specialized Western "weapons of mass deception" which have all the while tarnished Zimbabwe's image. Sedgefield and Crawford both watch and participate in that dance symbolizing their defeat by Africans. Both characters represent the target of the youthful dancers' ridicule, suggested in the following:

> A pre-pubescent young girl danced across the screen holding aloft a big white poster. The poster's message was painted in bright red and read *A luta continua! Nyika ndeyedu! Pamberi ne Chimurenga* (The struggle continues! This land belongs to us! Long live the struggle for our land!). (Mtizira 2008, 84)

The imagined dance is the provocative kongonya. This dance scene reenacts, yet modifies, the 1970s *pungwe* scenario in which similar slogans were uttered during the war, punctuated with the bosom shaking and waist gyrations by *chimbwido-s*. On this occasion, the dance performance is, however, performed with a critical international audience in mind, evident in the carefully chosen participants and deliberately labeled posters. More important is the symbolic passing-on of the Chimurenga war-relay baton to the younger generation, typified in the young girl-dancer from a gender whose participation in all *chimurenga* wars has been crucial but unacknowledged and underrepresented in most male literary representations.

Mtizira puts the dancing youths at the forefront of this ongoing reclamation project shown on the screen. Even on screen, the dance seems to embody the fighting spirit of the Zimbabwean, a spirit that exasperates the imperialist as shown in the following:

> Frustrated thus far, the colonialists had no option but to grin and bear the pain of defeat at the hands of Zimbabwe's brave leadership. Neither man would admit how galling it was to see the proud Zimbabweans defiantly celebrating their victory over colonialists. Land reform in Zimbabwe was now irreversible. (Mtizira 2008, 84–85)

Mtizira harnesses the performance of victory dances to create a feeling that the land reform program was both conclusive and empowering. Through juxtaposition, the imperialist representatives in the



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passage are ironically prepared to listen to "strains of classical music" while they suppress the voices behind the Zimbabwean classics. Though Sedgefield and Crawford attempt to symbolically annihilate the Zimbabwean performers' voices (Tuchman 1978), their "eyes did not leave the screen" (Mtizira 2008, 85). Zimbabwean dance and performance are presented as hypnotizing the imperialist dreamers. These provocative performances send a clear message that the imperialists' desire to forever "establish and maintain Western interests in the third world" was doomed (Mtizira 2008, 85).

Mtizira's narrative, however, only takes a cursory look at the contradictions of the Third Chimurenga. It ignores the Zimbabwean government's transformation of *jambanja* into both a political and cultural struggle, whereby kongonya is reinvented to present the struggle for land as linearly linkable through dance. The dances begin with Mbuya Nehanda's defiant dances of the 1890s First Chimurenga, through the kongonya of the 1970s Second Chimurenga (Gonye 2013), to the post-2000 dances by land beneficiaries of the Third Chimurenga.

Mtizira also struggles to fully account for the Zimbabwean dancers' perspective. It is Sedgefield and Crawford who scrutinize the behavior of the televised dancers and sneeringly predict it as too passionate. Crawford claims that the "delight" of the Zimbabwean dancers "knows no bounds" (Mtizira 2008, 86). Mtizira thus returns his dancing brethren into the Western European anthropological laboratory where the Africans are stereotypically considered as physically and behaviorally more similar to animals than human beings. His screen scene ultimately renders the Zimbabwean dancers as objects of mirth and derision. It authorizes ironically the obsessive desire of the dominant Western gaze to retain the body of the other under constant surveillance, as illustrated in the utterance, "Gazing at the screen, Crawford giggles.... 'look at these people of colour!'" (Mtizira 2008, 87). Overall, Mtizira's work remains more like an annotation to ZANU-PF's land policies despite its artistic representation of the intersection of dance and the media, particularly how new media technology, such as satellite television and YouTube, could be the arena for the contest between Zimbabwe and the West.

Afrocentric theory informed this nuanced analysis of the representation of kongonya. The theory claims to consciously seek the emancipation of the African person from European cultural hegemony (Asante 2006; Mazama 2002). It thus subscribes to Fanon's (1963) thesis of a liberating violence. In Asante's words, active struggle is inevitable: "[But] throwing off oppression is always a violent act; it is a splitting with the oppressor, a separation, and a separation is a tearing away of one part from another" (2006, 650). The adoption of this theory enabled a discussion on how Zimbabwe, a formerly colonized African nation, periodically draws on provocative and frightful "pagan" dances (Gonye 2015) in its wars against British settler expropriation of Zimbabwean land—wars that culminate in the "unprecedented" and "controversial" *jambanja* (Raftopoulos 2009, 212). An appreciation of the implications of dance to participants in the *jambanja* and the watchers thereof, as represented in literature, has been enhanced through a discussion of the ambivalent intersection between violence as liberating (Asante 2006; Fanon 1963) and dance as a mobilizing and empowering tool (Gonye 2013).

Buckle's and Mtizira's representations of dance buttress the notion that African resistance hinges on spirituality (Mazama 2002), whereby African dance is embodied as a "decolonising cultural knowledge" (Banks 2010, 11). The political significance of kongonya during the Third Chimurenga became apparent, suggesting that when the participants of the post-2000 land invasions perform *chimurenga* songs and kongonya, they are invoking the protection and inspiration of the defiant political and spiritual protagonists of the First Chimurenga of 1896 and the heroes of the 1970s Second Chimurenga (Vambe 2004). Yet Vambe cautions against a misconstrued reading of a stable performance of cultural products, such as the *chimurenga* songs, because such a reading promotes a "parochial understanding of *chimurenga*" and "has precluded [an] exploration of the internal contradictions within *chimurenga* as an amalgam of various aspects of African cultural nationalism, particularly in post-independence Zimbabwe" (2004, 168). It therefore becomes problematic to



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assume that post-2000 Zimbabwe cultural performances reflect complementary understandings of nationalism between political elites and the ordinary citizens, and also that oppression is synonymous with the white color of the skin. Such a myopic interpretation of post-2000 sociopolitical relations and cultural performances could have given rise to a manipulation of the purposes and significance of kongonya.

These earlier-noted beliefs could have encouraged the emergence of such dance configurations as caricatured in Buckle's *Beyond Tears* (2002) and glorified in Mtizira's *Chimurenga Protocol* (2008). In her memoir, Buckle reinscribes dance scenes to symbolically reimagine Catherine's vulnerability as she witnesses the land occupiers disempower her as a Zimbabwean farmer and a European descendant who claims citizenship in a former multiracial colony. Buckle configures a haunting dance trope to personally react to the Third Chimurenga displacements in this "new genre of postcolonial 'white writing' that inscribe[s] a sense of victimhood on white identities" (Raftopoulos 2009, 218). As Chennells (2005, 151) notes, the post-2000 white, first-person narrator contrasts markedly from the pioneering European creator of "imperial romances" whose "narratives of control" sought to author and establish colonial control on the stubborn African landscape. Buckle reimagines the resurgence of the frightful cultural expressions and dances that the colonial administration had outlawed earlier (Asante 2000), as performed by the land invaders. Meanwhile, Mtizira benevolently reimagines the dancing restorers of the Zimbabwean land and their high-tech driven dances. Mtizira's televised dance scenes, however, epitomize both the politico-cultural and economic confrontation between Zimbabwe and her Western European and American enemies. He employs dance to decorate the Zimbabwe-shall-never-be-a-colony-again discourse disseminated over the state television broadcaster. Mediated dance enables Mtizira to counteract the Western media houses' propaganda that presents Zimbabwe as a failed state that disrespects human and property rights.

Finally, Buckle and Mtizira represent dance in contrastive shades which mirror the political and cultural complexities of the post-2000 Zimbabwean nation. Buckle's dance episodes anticipate those of Mtizira's narrative, the latter of which evokes Phimister's conceptualization of patriotic narratives as uncritically engaging in a "celebration of a violent past [which] is narrowly self-serving" (2012, 28). In its limited ideological framework, *The Chimurenga Protocol* presumes that the Third Chimurenga confers empowerment on everyone. Both, however, represent dance as a performance to bolster the political interests of the ruling ZANU-PF party. This resonates with Mbembe's assertion that the postcolonial African state and its fanatics harness dance with the purpose to "institutionalise itself" and "in order [for the state] to achieve legitimation and hegemony" (1992, 3). Postcolonial Zimbabwe, as represented in *Beyond Tears*, seems to go beyond utilizing dance in "dramatis [ing] its magnificence" (Mbembe 1992, 4) to using dance to terrify its opponents. But as represented in *The Chimurenga Protocol*, dance could also be the highest form of a cultural expression of independence. However, that both writers' representations of the dance accompanying the Third Chimurenga often diverge could suggest that the narratives of the Third Chimurenga are themselves open and contestable.

## Conclusion

In can be concluded that both writers employ the dance trope in diverse ways, with Buckle (2002) satirizing the traumatizing and racist excesses of the post-2000 processes of the *jambanja* and Mtizira (2008) sanitizing the jingoist cultural maneuvers attending the land invasions. Both writers have captured the changing perceptions, receptions, and purposes of dance within a politically and demographically evolving post-2000 Zimbabwean context. This analysis has thus enabled a discussion on the ongoing contestations over the construction of social memory, belonging and identities, and the ways in which ordinary Zimbabweans employ dance as a way of coping with the dire conditions of what Chatterjee (1993) would call a fragmented postindependence nation-state.



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## Notes

1. Kongonya is a dance born in the 1970s during Zimbabwe's Second Chimurenga, which guerrillas and ordinary citizens performed to mobilize political and military support for that liberation war. In post-2000 Zimbabwe, kongonya was performed to mobilize the support of the landless Zimbabweans to participate in the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (*jambanja*).

2. *Mujibha-s* (pl.) is a Shona (Zimbabwean indigenous language) term for young male couriers responsible for carrying along ZANLA guerrillas' war paraphernalia and scouting for Rhodesian government soldiers' whereabouts.

3. *Chimbwido-s* (pl.) is a Shona term for young unmarried females who cooked food for the ZANLA guerrillas, washed their clothes, and also sang and danced at the all-night political meetings.

4. *Pungwe* is the Shona name for the all-night political meeting where the ZANLA guerrillas addressed the peasants on the rationale of fighting against British colonial rule.

5. A sendekera performance is a way of dancing in which dancers tilt their bodies to one side as they dance (like a breeding cock courting his mate) while they assume a provocative attitude on their faces.

6. A *mujibha* or *nhabo* performance is when the kongonya dancer raises an outstretched booted foot and brings it down to strike hard on the side of the other boot, or, alternatively, the ground, producing a loud *booom* sound.

7. The Shona word *chimurenga* generically means a war of resistance, and in Zimbabwean discourse, *chimurenga* describes, first, the anti-colonial resistance war of the 1890s during which the Africans used spears and rudimentary weapons to fight against British settler forces who used maxim guns, referred to as the First Chimurenga; second, the 1970s liberation struggle during which Zimbabwean nationalist parties, supported by the generality of oppressed Zimbabweans, used mostly AK rifles to fight against the Rhodesian government war machinery, referred to as the Second Chimurenga; and, third, the post-2000 Zimbabwean land invasions (led by veterans of the 1970s war of liberation) of formerly white-owned farms christened the Third Chimurenga Land Reform Programme.

8. The Shona term, *jambanja*, describes the violent takeover of the formerly white-owned farms that was spearheaded by war veterans of Zimbabwe's 1970s *chimurenga* (liberation war).

9. Mbuya Nehanda is a spirit medium of the 1890s, famous for coordinating the 1896 First Chimurenga war against British pioneer/colonial forces. After being captured, she refused to be converted to Christianity and, instead, performed a defiant Zimbabwean dance while awaiting her execution in prison.

10. The Lancaster House agreement stipulated that whoever won the 1980 general elections should ensure orderly land redistribution in accordance with the "willing-seller-willing-buyer option." The Patriotic Front's desire to gazette land for compulsory acquisition had to be deferred until after ten years of independence.

11. Toyi-toyi is to sing and dance as you jog along; reminiscent of the dances performed by army recruits during training.

12. Lead: Simudza gumbo! (*Lift your leg high!*)

Chorus: Haya! (*Higher!*)

Lead: Simudza gumbo! (*Lift your leg high!*)

Chorus: Haya! (*Higher!*)

Lead: Simudza gumbo! (*Lift your leg high!*)

Chorus: Haya ! (*Higher!*)

Lead: Harizi rako, harizi rako! (*The leg isn't yours, it isn't yours*)



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Chorus: Nderemusangano ! Haya! (*It belongs to the Party!*)

Chorus: Nderemusangano !Haya! (*It belongs to the Party*)

All: Toyi-toyi, Haya! x 2

13. *Mamonya* is a Zimbabwean colloquial word that describes brutal, muscular men-bouncers, symptomatic of President Mugabe's obsession with the rule by force.

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