

VERSIONS AND SUB-VERSIONS: TRENDS IN *CHIMURENGA* MUSICAL DISCOURSES OF POST INDEPENDENCE ZIMBA- BWE

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ABSTRACT The term *chimurenga* comes from the name of a legendary *Shona* ancestor, *Murenga Sororenzou*. Believed to be a huge man with a head (*soro*) the size of an elephant's (*renzou*), *Murenga* was well known for his fighting spirit and prowess, and legend has it that he composed war-songs to encourage his soldiers to continue the fight against their enemies in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. In the 1970s, African freedom fighters in bases in Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia, and some local Zimbabwean artists struggling for Zimbabwe's independence, derived inspiration from *Murenga's* fighting spirit and composed songs in a genre that they called *chimurenga*. The word *chimurenga* refers to war or the struggle against any form of tyranny, and songs that capture the sentiment of war and the longing for freedom became *chimurenga* music. Blacks in Zimbabwe talk of *chimurenga* in the singular (*chi+murenga*), but there have actually been various (*Zvi+murenga*) fought on different cultural sites during and after colonialism. *Chimurenga* protested the colonial exploitation of Africans and also criticized the oppression of women in African society. Some critics of *Chimurenga* music think that there is only one version of *chimurenga*, and have mistakenly reported its demise in 1980. After Zimbabwean independence, *chimurenga* continued as a vehicle for criticizing corruption, poor governance by new leaders, and delays in redistributing land to the African masses. Post-independence (and invariably male) Zimbabwean singers with various levels of political consciousness, using different linguistic strategies, have created alternative versions of *chimurenga* that attempt to generate a local discourse of freedom in an era of globalization and corporate organizations that, in effect, controls the production and distribution of *chimurenga*.

Key Words: *Chimurenga*; Nationalism; *Ngororombe*; *Sungura*; *Katekwe*.

INTRODUCTION

The term *chimurenga* comes from the name of a legendary *Shona* ancestor, *Murenga Sororenzou*. Believed to be a huge man with a head (*soro*), the size of an elephant's (*renzou*), *Murenga* was well known for his fighting spirit and prowess, and legend has it that he composed war-songs to encourage his soldiers to continue the fight against their enemies in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. In the 1970s, African freedom fighters in military bases in Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia, as well as a number of local Zimbabwean artists struggling for Zimbabwean independence, derived inspiration from *Murenga's* fighting spirit and creative genius and they composed war songs in a genre they called *chimurenga*.

Literature about *chimurenga* musical discourses of post-independence Zimba-

bwe has underestimated audience knowledge of the multiple meanings that can be attached to the genre of *chimurenga* songs. A failure, and sometimes a conscious refusal to confront the musical phenomenon of *chimurenga* as a commercially viable style and as a narrative of struggle emerging from multiple ideological positions has resulted in *chimurenga* being limited to political and economic spheres only. This misconception has encouraged a commonly held belief that *chimurenga* is a protest genre that is based only on visible and organized forms of struggle by African nationalists in the Zimbabwe of the 1890s, 1970s, and in 2002. This parochial understanding of *chimurenga* has precluded exploration of the internal contradictions within *chimurenga* as an amalgam of various aspects of African cultural nationalism, particularly in post-independence Zimbabwe. *Chimurenga* songs have been misconstrued as a monolithic musical formation concerned with political platitudes. This limited definition has compromised the music, in which the actual musical formations or narrative lyrics strive to explore a conflict of values. This has led to closed discourse within *chimurenga* protest music, one that fails to explore its own possibilities.

I have analyzed *chimurenga* in a shorter version of this paper in the 03/03/03 and 09/03/03 editions of The Sunday Mail, but did not examine the traditional sources of *chimurenga* discourse. The shorter paper noted above did not focus on the ways in which black government officials, missionaries, colonial education, and the forces of modernity such as capitalist corporations have influenced *chimurenga* music. In addition, this version, which concentrated on three singers, did not provide textual analysis of the songs. The expanded version here examines *chimurenga* in terms of the influence of official policy on popular music; in addition, it focuses on four singers, and situates the roots of *chimurenga* within the rich cultural context of African oral tradition. This expanded version traces the paradox of *chimurenga* music as an intellectual discourse and explores how four Zimbabwean singers have used different ideological positions and diverse linguistic resources to come up with post-independence versions of this musical form. This paper differs from the shorter one in that it is rooted within a field of cultural studies that recognizes contradictions within *chimurenga* music, produced by different singers, as well as ideological inconsistencies within the genre and even in the voice of protest in the songs of individual singers. Along with scrutinizing these contradictions in the new songs, the goal of this paper was to contribute to an understanding of a form of Zimbabwean popular culture; *chimurenga* music is not a discourse in which the authenticity or purity of the values and belief systems of Africans are unproblematically asserted, nor is it a musical space in which African identities are totally distorted by dominant Zimbabwean discourses. Rather, and as Tony Bennett suggests when commenting on British popular culture, *chimurenga* can be likened to a “force field of relations shaped, precisely, by contradictory pressures and tendencies” (Bennett, 1994: 22). This perspective views a musical genre such as *chimurenga* as a cultural space marked by the double movement of containment and resistance with respect to cultural and ideological elements that emerge in relation to the different types of singer, as well as in relation

to the diverse audience for whom they sing, and those whom they sing about (Hall, 1994: 456).

EXAMINING *CHIMURENGA* MUSIC IN POST-INDEPENDENCE ZIMBABWE

Chimurenga that expresses a political ideology articulated through the military is distinctly *Shona*; therefore it is a sui-generis expression of African nationalism in Zimbabwe. Thomas Mapfumo used the term *chimurenga* to brand his music at the beginning of the armed struggle. As a manifestation of the ideology of African liberation, *chimurenga* represents communal African memory harking back to the time of *Munhumutapa's* struggles against the Portuguese in the early 17th century, and the *Shona's* struggles with the *Ndebeles* in the 1830s.

The African masses fighting both colonialism and post-independence black leadership carried over the *chimurenga* sense of struggle during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The idea of *chimurenga* as a part of everyday politics is a trans-historical phenomenon that acknowledges its own internal instabilities while narrating the equally unstable Zimbabwean nation. Critics who limit the *chimurenga* phenomenon to Mapfumo (Eyre, 2001: 64-74) have gotten into a habit of categorizing *chimurenga* as a musical phenomenon bound by a uniform idea of nationalism. This has led to individuals like Paddy Scannell erroneously representing the *chimurenga* movement as a "taste public" (Scannell, 2001: 23), i.e., as a phenomenon that is false, fostered, and individualistic rather than as an example of collective history, born of conviction and the values underpinning a new nation. In reality, *chimurenga* is articulated through "multiple histories that depend on the subject positions and varied experiences of the actors involved" (Turino, 2000: 17).

The ideological confusion that dominates open and critical thinking about *chimurenga* is also revealed in assertions that confine the tensions addressed in the genre of *chimurenga* to conflicts between the African people and the white colonial system (Kwaramba, 1997). This perception not only credits colonialism with a change in indigenous musical traditions, but also falsely limits the potential of *chimurenga* to a bi-polar dialectic of state versus civilian struggle. It fails to acknowledge that there are continual "lines of alliance as well as lines of cleavage" (Hall, 1994: 456) between the interests of the state and those of the masses. As Antonio Gramsci (1994: 216) has noted, theories about hegemonic struggle presuppose that an account has been taken of the material interests of the ruled, even when those concessions may not in all cases "touch the essential" (Gramsci, 1994: 161) in the economic sphere.

Any political or musical conception of *chimurenga* that ignores internal conflicts among the masses is ahistorical. It fails to recognize that social conflicts mark the lives of the African masses and that these conflicts are often played out in contexts that are not distinctly political but have political connotations. Zimbabwean popular culture, of which *chimurenga* music is a significant aspect,

is not a discourse in which the values of the masses are either completely violated by the ruling classes or simplistically affirmed by the people. The cultural and spiritual space that is *chimurenga* music is simultaneously a private and public space, made up of an organic combination of ideological elements in which, to paraphrase Tony Bennett, the structures of ideological hegemony continually attempt to transform, reorient, and incorporate dissident values, so as to effectively prevent their fruition (Bennett, 1994: 226). This process involves both consent and coercion in the relationships between the masses and the state structure, given that some, if not most, of the interests of the masses that the musicians sing about can be realized by the state. However, the musicians sometimes oppose state economic policies, particularly those that the masses view as not contributing to or working towards fulfilling their understanding of what independence should mean (Vambe, 2002: 80).

Some people with misconceptions about *chimurenga* music suggest, as Jethro Mpofu (in Chikombero, 2001: 5) has done, that whatever the masses sing about amounts to struggle and that anything to do with the culture and traditions of a dominated people constitutes a threat to the culture and existence of those who dominate them. This theoretical discourse, popularised by North American scholars like Thomas Turino, suggests that:

Music nationalism [is] the conscious use of any pre-existing or newly created music in the service of a political nationalist movement, be it in the initial nation-building stage, during the militant movement of maneuver, or after the moment of arrival to build and buttress the relationship between the population and the state (Turino, 2000: 191).

The nexus between *chimurenga* music and an actual political movement, though useful as an analytical tool, assumes a linear relationship between the music and the processes of creating and narrating the nation state. But this characterization of *chimurenga* suppresses or underestimates its potential for repression by the African state at various stages of formation (Samupindi, 1992). It also does not anticipate that *chimurenga* can distort the goals of nationhood by fanning aberrant ideologies of destruction or division, such as tribalism. The reality is that *chimurenga* constantly revises state goals; ironically, that same process of destabilizing dominant values and history sometimes necessitates a preliminary critique of the ways in which *chimurenga* songs construct their own reality. In such cases the music can perpetually interrogate institutional authoritarian structures even as it consistently reflects on the state or conditions of its own possibility.

Understanding the genre of *chimurenga* in the singular is therefore an act of validating urban-based and individually run musical bands that are increasingly taking over corporate images. It excludes the multitude of rurally based musical groups whose uneasy relationship with the post-colonial state often simultaneously confirms and opposes state policies. The discourse surrounding critical appreciation of *chimurenga* therefore requires vigorous processes of theoretic

cal re-evaluation because, presently, it operates on the assumption that there is a single version of *chimurenga* in Zimbabwe. What needs to be confronted is not just the idea that *chimurenga* is a single history of values narrated through song but, as Gramsci writes, the “social forces [that encourage] the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’ in any given epoch” (Gramsci, 1971: 322). There is more than one “common sense” (Gramsci, 1971: 322), and there has been a failure in the discourse on *chimurenga* to distinguish between elite and popular musical nationalisms in Zimbabwe.

CHANGED POLITICAL FACTORS AND CONTEXTS IN THE PRODUCTION OF *CHIMURENGA* MUSIC

The most unfortunate historical incident that occurred in the land between the Limpopo and the Zambezi was the colonization of Zimbabwe by the British-led pioneer column in 1890. Africans initially resisted the process in the wars of 1893 and 1896-97, which became known as the First *Chimurenga*. The temporary defeat of Africans in the First *Chimurenga* led to radical changes in the lives of indigenous people. White settlers prospected land for mining and farming purposes, and through the various restrictive acts passed from 1914 onwards, they appropriated land for their own use. But the most consistent assault on the African personality came in the form of the cultural repression of indigenous religion, dance, music, and history. Father Biehler of Chishawasha Mission implored his superior, Lord Grey, to pursue a scorched-earth policy on the cultural lives of the *Shona* people (Ranger, 1967). This Christian hostility had a lasting and negative impact on the musical traditions of the *Shona* people. Missionaries appropriated African cultural forms such as traditional musical tunes and, with varying degrees of success, infused their own content that reflected their evangelical concerns. In due course, writes Musaemura Zimunya, “a fusion of western hymnal and African melodic styles gave birth to *makwaya*, a popular genre occupying the space between the forbidden ‘pagan’ African music and church music in its perception and emphasis on movement, clapping and call-answer singing” (Zimunya, 1993: 132).

Missionary influence on African musical traditions threatened the communal ethos at the roots of the music. Churches, the army, municipalities, and private companies (Dube, 1996: 99-120) promoted the transformation of African musical traditions into a commodity, and manipulated the music to undermine its potential for mediating radical messages. Almost overnight, musicians who had functioned in the public sphere as the conscience of a community were transformed into cultural workers, firmly in the control of private hands. Capital had the capacity to promote preferred messages; it promoted African-Christian melodic messages that laughed at and mocked African expressions aimed at freeing people from the yoke of colonialism as primitive African music. In Alice Kwaramba’s words:

The *mbira* and the drum which had carried the tradition of the Shona people's music for a long time were often dismissed as unholy. One major change that the choir concept effected was to cut a clear division between those who were "gifted with voice" and those who were not, who consequently became the audience in a society where, before virtually everyone was considered a singer in their own way (Kwaramba, 1997: 3).

This creation of a new class of singer, who frequented beer halls to sing for a fee, or who was contracted by big business to attract customers, redefined the traditional relation of the singer/performer with his audience. No longer was it possible to talk or write glibly of the singer as an unproblematic representative of the voice of the silenced, nor could it be simply assumed that whatever Africans sang about it constituted a protest against colonial rule. Because the musical voice of some Africans has been manipulated by the dominant colonial discourse of modernization, there has begun, among Africans, a process of social differentiation with respect to the singers' perceptions about what *chimurenga* could mean.

Throughout the colonial period in Zimbabwe, South African recording companies dominated the musical scene in Zimbabwe. Colonial agents interfered with African musical lyrics. The colonial status quo had the power to shape and direct music towards preferred meanings that did not threaten colonial values. For example, South African companies operating in Rhodesia had a system by which they could analyse the content of African music, and edit out any politically suspect lyrics or insinuations before any recording was made (Chikombero, 2001: 21). Even after independence, the music scene in Zimbabwe is still dominated by South African companies such as Zimbabwe Music Corporation (ZMC), Gramma Records, Vibrant, and Record and Tape Promotions (RTP) (Scannell, 2001: 15) that monopolize the recording, producing, packaging, and distribution of African music. These foreign recording companies have the financial power to bend local tastes; it is very possible that what has been called *chimurenga*, particularly after 1985 (Vambe, 2002), could actually be a pale reflection of indigenous African spirituality and values. The interference of recording companies has created contradictory voices, not only among African singers in the *chimurenga* genre but also within individual singers. Musicians who started out in touch with the pulse and rhythms of the common peoples' ideas about freedom have turned around and attacked the material aspirations of the very people they had been singing to and about.

One particular area, redefined by both colonial cultural institutions and post-colonial ideological cultural structures, such as private companies, is the meaning of *mbira*, a *Shona* instrument related to spirit possession. In post-independence discourses of authenticity, promoted by private recording companies and government official rhetoric, the *mbira* is magical and mystical, and its mere sound is considered to be culturally revolutionary. Even Alice Kwaramba, an eagle-eyed critic of Zimbabwean music, is taken in by the rhetoric, and assumes

the *mbira* to be an exotic artefact possessing magical qualities. For Kwaramba, *mbira* music in a colonial context became an ideological statement of protest, just as in the 1960s, rock music concealed radical meanings within a conventional popular music format, with the result that the format mediated anti-conventional ideology more than the lyrics did (Kwaramba, 1997: 18). This notion of medium as message is problematic and obscures a clear picture of the relationship of the *mbira* to the musical genre of *chimurenga*. Dumisani Maraire, a *Shona* composer, adapted *Shona* songs to Christianity mediated by the *mbira*. This shows that the church, through its African converts, has worked to undermine the revolutionary sensibility mediated by the *mbira* in the political context of African cultural nationalism.

Some *Shona* musical groups have continued, even after independence, to use the *mbira* to articulate traditionalist worldviews that reinforce gender inequalities. Turino claims that the *mbira* musical and the tonal considerations of celebrities like Mapfumo have been greatly manipulated to suit the musical tastes of his North American audience, who prefer the *mbira* with a reduced buzz (Turino, 2000: 340). The “mediaization” [sic] (Brusila, 2002: 41) or internationalization of *mbira* and *chimurenga* music has been a by-product of colonialism, private companies, international capitalism, and the post-independence black government official rhetoric of authenticity. Even ordinary rural men and women, distant from city-centers, unwittingly assume that *mbira* music is the same as *chimurenga*. That mode of thinking reinforces the myth that other Zimbabwean musical genres like *sungura*, *museve*, and *katekwe* cannot adequately carry the weight of radical messages associated with *chimurenga*. This narrowing of the definition of *chimurenga*, and the imposed tendency toward a singular cultural meaning attached to *chimurenga*, inhibits experimentation.

TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF CHIMURENGA DISCOURSES

One might ask: how has *chimurenga* music survived in the context of change in the production of African music, which is now influenced by urbanization, modernity, education, and Christian theology? To answer this difficult question, it is important to revisit Benedict Anderson’s notion of cultural nationalist discourse as imagined reality. This is not the place to go into detail about Anderson’s (2000) argument, but it is significant that Anderson places a strong emphasis on indigenous languages, music, customs, and values similar to those rooted in a traditional African way of life, in his idea of the creation of a nation as an imagined community. In Zimbabwe, the term ‘musical nationalism’ describes the efforts of urban-based musical groups who have emerged from within the ranks of urban popular culture. These lyrics deal with the tensions of city life, and draw on themes of land, love, and the divorce from rural areas. The musical bands take politics as style, and strive to identify with the open political movements of the day. This is the case with Dickson Chingaira (alias Comrade Chinx), Thomas Mapfumo and, to some extent, Simon Chimb-

etu. Their approaches to style and the thematic arrangement of music are different, but the music is not necessary mutually exclusive of *chimurenga*, which has roots in distinctly African folklore, myths, and oral musical traditions.

Indicating the power the traditional *Shona* oral genre has for shaping present-day *chimurenga*, George Kahari (1981: 81-82) has pointed to the significance of traditional war songs such as “Nyama Yekugocha (Meat to Roast)” and “Gwindingwi (Forest)”. He claims that the formation of a cultural discourse about popular musical nationalism uses all the traditional genres of complaint: the denunciatory or *bembera*, the folktale, and *Shona* dances such as *jerusarema*, *shangara*, *muchongoyo*, *mbakumba*, and *dinha*. Alec Pongweni has described the genre of *chimurenga* music, derived from African orature, as the sum total of the “thoughts, attitudes, strivings, drives and living forces of the people” (Pongweni, 1982: 11). It was often difficult for missionaries to penetrate this traditional musical genre and it survived, to be revived in the 1970s by both oral artists and urban-based musical bands at the height of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. At independence, part of this traditional oral music was co-opted by the dominant discourse and it became the musical status quo.

Ironically, this same music began to serve as the voice of the people. There is evidence that the oral musical genre was being compromised by the economic interests of oral artists and government interference; state agents stalked some non-conforming artists, helped other singers by exchanging the insertion of certain lyrics for the financing of record production, and funded public performances of singers politically inclined to the status quo. Varying levels of political consciousness as to what constitutes *chimurenga* and a desire for state patronage rendered singers vulnerable to manipulation by the state, a trend that encouraged musical censorship (Eyre, 2001). This is why it is important to acknowledge that, in *chimurenga*, every narrative, however seemingly “full” (White, 1987: 10), is constructed from a partial set of issues. As a result, strategies to reintroduce resistance in *chimurenga* need to address the fact that when a singer expresses him/herself, we need to determine whether we are really listening to an ordinary singer’s voice, or whether the ordinary singer is singing from a position he/she occupies within the larger discursive economy influenced by elite sensibilities (Griffiths, 1994: 75). This statement is not an attempt to underestimate the power the singers have to construct narratives in *chimurenga*. It recognizes that sometimes the voices of *chimurenga* singers can be tamed and finally fail to serve the spiritual interests of the people for whom they claim to be singing. This perspective anticipates ideological ambiguities, fractures, and contradictions in the constructions and representations of the discourse of resistance authored by individual singers.

DICKSON CHINGAIRA (COMRADE CHINX): AFFIRMING NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND SELFHOOD IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND

Early in its struggle against the illegitimate regime of Ian Douglas Smith, the

Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), headed by Robert Mugabe, recognized the importance of mobilizing the masses through use of song and dance. Songs appropriated styles from *jit*, *makwaya*, *mbira* music, and the traditional call-response *ngororombe* singing of the *Shona* people. Songs raised consciousness in the masses about the need to fight the war, clarified the goals of the struggle, and encouraged Africans to fight. Pongweni (1982) has called these songs the “songs that won the war” in recognition of their capacity to shape, direct, and transform the political consciousness of Africans towards the goal of political independence. Pongweni does not, however, differentiate between the versions of these *chimurenga*, in that the songs addressed different enemies using different linguistic strategies. For example, the songs of the *Vashandi* military wing within ZANU had a Marxist bent (Samupindi, 1992). They augmented as well as contested the hegemonic tendencies of the political songs of the old guard of African nationalism, which emphasized the need to reclaim African sovereignty from the British. This critical tradition of *chimurenga* as self-reflexivity spilled into the post-independence period.

Between 1981 and 1984, the state’s military aggression towards its own people in Matebeleland called into question the idea of a collective identity for leaders and people. In the 1990s, increasing poverty and a sharp rise in unemployment produced *chimurenga* that protested corruption, poor governance, and the failure to deliver on the land question (Vambe, 2002). Critical moments in Zimbabwean politics after the 1990s were: first, the masses’ rejection of the government-sponsored constitutional reform of 2000; second, the near-defeat of the government in the parliamentary elections of 2000, in which the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party won 57 seats while the ZANU PF garnered 63 seats; and thirdly, the controversial presidential elections in which the ZANU PF narrowly beat the MDC by about 500,000 votes. The government, the opposition MDC party, and individual artists all recognized the significance of using music to mobilize the masses in order to augment their different political agendas. These historical moments helped redefine the notion of *chimurenga* and, in the process, produced music that, on the one hand, confirmed the state land policies as desirable and, on the other hand, interrogated each singer as they competed to create, through lyrics, a new ethos of post-independence national politics. The government openly provided financial support to artists who supported the ‘official’ version of *chimurenga*, its goal defined as taking hold of the fertile white-controlled land.

The most outstanding proponent of government ideology was Dickson Chingaira, alias Comrade Chinx, a one-time Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) soldier. During the struggle for Zimbabwean independence, Chinx composed political songs urging the African masses to reclaim their country that had been colonized by the British. Songs such as “Maruza Imi (You Have Lost)” (1975) recount the history of Zimbabwe, beginning with the colonization of the country in 1890, and the countless acts of white arrogance that culminated in Africans taking up arms. He revived songs from the 1970s, such as “Hondo Yakura MuZimbabwe (War Has Intensified in Zimbabwe)” dur-

ing the land struggle that intensified from the year 2000. When he re-released the song as “Hondo Yeminda (War for Land)” (2002), Chinx produced and supported it as part of the “Third *Chimurenga*” series; in this move, Chinx mediates the government stance that the immediate goal of the series was to help reclaim land. In the song, Africans are pitted against an arrogant minority of white commercial farmers who own large tracts of fertile land.

The 2002 “Hondo Yeminda” version is not a song of protest, but one of accomplishment. The song suggests that Africans have crossed the threshold of political protest, and have affirmed and validated their humanity through taking, controlling, and owning the land. Chinx also revived “Maruza Imi (You Have Lost You Whites)” in the 2002 album as “Hondo Yeminda, Volume two”, reminding whites of their military defeat on the war front in 1979. The song also affirms that the land seizures represent the final economic defeat of individual white privilege. As the song goes, “kubva muna 1980 tikati slow track iri kutora minda, willing buyer willing seller. Vakakwidza mari mangwana yava one million, 10 million, yave billion. Manje veZimbabwe takaramba.” (From 1980 we said the pace of land reclamation would be slow because we realized that the whites would not give up the land without a fight. First the policy was willing buyer willing seller. Then the farmers hiked the price of land to one million, then to 10 million, and then a billion. That was when the blacks of Zimbabwe said no. We will take the land regardless.” Chinx’s 2002 *chimurenga* songs say that in the present historical situation, economic emancipation requires the control of land, the major economic resource in Zimbabwe and in all of Africa generally.

“Shingai Zvenyu (Be Brave),” enjoins the people of Zimbabwe to endure the tribulations of food shortages and the general hardships that come with the historical process of returning the land to black hands. As Chinx narrates, “mari inopera. Nhaka yevhu ndochinhu chete chatingagone kusiira generation yese, mazera, zvikamu kusvika kare (Money is short-lived but land is a fixed and permanent inheritance that we can bequeath to the younger generation of Africans).” Chinx was not alone in singing about the need to restore fertile land to Africans. Andy Brown, Marko Sibanda, Brian Mteki, and other young artists have all in their different ways sung in the vein of the “Third *Chimurenga*,” which is focused on taking control of the land. In particular, Joshua Kurt Sacco, a Zimbabwean singer of European descent, added his voice to the official version of *chimurenga* that narrates Africans’ desire to repossess ancestral lands lost to white settlers during colonization. Sacco’s song “Chenjera (Beware or Be Wise)” is very much within the parameters of the officially defined *chimurenga* discourse seen in Chinx; Sacco sings, “the land issue will never die. Our Ancestors are restless. They know no happiness. For our birth right has been stripped away. We shall fight and fight until the land is ours.”

One way to explain why government-sponsored singers such as Chinx and independent singers including Sacco elaborate the official view of *chimurenga* is that these singers see how some of the material interests of the masses and the leaders intersect. This suggests that the relationship between the masses and

their leaders is not always adversarial and cannot simply be plotted on a narrow dialectic of containment and resistance. Sometimes *chimurenga* artists become complicit by recognizing certain elements of identification with state policies, “something approaching a recreation of recognizable experiences and attitudes [to] which people are responding” (Hall, 1994: 461). In other words, the fact that *chimurenga* artists can be directed, manipulated and, in the process, even restricted as to what they can sing about shows the capacity of the post-colonial state to produce its own type of what Antonio Gramsci calls organic “intellectuals, which gives it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (Gramsci, 1994: 217). The state monitored, and in some cases, censored some of the lyrics of *chimurenga* singers, if potentially radical and alternative narratives of resistance threatened the state’s monolithic narrative of the struggle for freedom. This protected narrow elite interests for the leadership in a struggle waged in the name of the people. Chinx’s version of *chimurenga* music failed to critique the class conflicts within the liberation struggle he had been part of as a guerrilla, and in which he had promoted the need for Africans to own and control land. This suggests that his voice may have been unwittingly used to justify the concentration of fertile lands in the hands of a few blacks. It is to some extent Chinx’s, and by extension, the black government’s version of *chimurenga*, that Mapfumo’s version of *chimurenga* confronted through an apparently paradoxical relationship of approval and contestation.

CONTESTING THE OFFICIAL DISCOURSE OF *CHIMURENGA*: THOMAS MAPFUMO AND THE PARADOX OF ENTRAPPED PROTEST *CHIMURENGA* LYRICS

In an interview with Conrad Nyamutata that focused mainly on the album “*Chimurenga Rebel*” (2001), Thomas Mapfumo reveals that he was never part of the liberation forces fighting for independence, and particularly rejects any suggested link to the ZANU PF: “I have never been one of them. I am a man of the people, of the poor people in particular, the people who are being beaten up today” (Nyamutata, 2002). This is a startling confession from a singer who in “*Tumirai Vana Kuhondo (Send Your Children to War)*” (1978) encouraged African parents to send their children to join Zimbabwe African National Liberation forces within ZANLA and the Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) to wage a war against Ian Smith. Mapfumo not only sang songs that celebrated the coming of independence in pieces such as “*Tirikupemberera Zimbabwe (We Are Celebrating the Birth of a Free Zimbabwe)*” (1980), but he actually had so much respect for Robert Mugabe that he implored the masses through his song, “*Nzwananai (Understand Each Other)*” (1980) to seek whatever they wanted from Mugabe and the ZANU PF government. His “*Gwindingwi (Forest)*” (1981) castigates the dissident menace that rocked Matebeleland in the early 1980s and asks the government to save the *Shona* people from the *Nde-*

bele uprising. When Mapfumo said he was not part of the liberation forces, he let it be known, consciously or unconsciously, that there was no single version of *chimurenga* music, either before or after independence.

Particularly after the 1987 “Willowgate Scandal” exposing shady deals government officials had made while procuring cars, Mapfumo realized that the material interests of the masses and their leaders were diverging, and a rift was widening between the aspirations of the povo and the chiefs. In “Corruption” (1988) and “Varombo Kuvarombo (Poor People)” (1990) Mapfumo lashes greedy politicians who demand payment for services that are meant to be free. Mapfumo further registers his disappointment at the delay of the black leadership on delivering independence promises, particularly on the land issue. In “Maiti Kurima Hamubvire (You Used to Say You Were Good Farmers)” (1993), Mapfumo criticizes and urges the black leadership to honour their promises on land:

Kwapera makore mangani, vakuru we-e?
 How many years have gone by, gentleman?
 Hona takamirira zvamakavimbisa?
 While waiting for what you promised?
 Kwapera mwedziwo mingani, vakuru we-e?
 How many months have gone by, gentleman?
 Hona takamirira zvamakataura?
 While we waited for what you promised?
 Kwapera mazuva mangani, vakuru we-e?
 How many days have gone by, gentleman?
 Hona takamirira zvamakataura?
 While we wait for what you promised?

In the song, time that passes with promises unfulfilled is marked by “makore (years),” “mwedzi (months)” and “mazuva (days),” and the questions are directed to the leaders, “vakuru we-e,” who have failed to deliver. Mapfumo’s voice of protest against the betrayal of independence constitutes a sub-version of the dominant narrative discourse of *chimurenga*. He attempts to create an alternative *chimurenga* discourse of struggle running parallel to, but consistently attacking, contesting, and undermining official truths about the direction of the struggle for economic self-realization. In this way, Mapfumo’s version of *chimurenga* music, especially songs from the 1990s, could be described as the voice of the silenced majority suffering from an imposed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) that has eroded the little material gain made by the people at independence.

The crowning achievements of Mapfumo’s protest narrative in *chimurenga* music are the songs “Disaster” (1997) and “Mamvemve (Tatters)” (1998), in which he criticizes the black leadership for running down the country. Mapfumo’s version of *chimurenga* derives its moral authority from his reference to local endeavours to find solutions to the problems besieging a troubled post-colonial Zimbabwe. Mapfumo was convinced that the new Zimbabwean state

commanded vast material and cultural forces that had the capacity to promote as well as repress the formation of new cultural values. In the 1990s, Mapfumo was at the most overtly political point of his musical career, especially when he lashed out at corruption in the upper echelons of society. He was also at the forefront of criticizing the government for not solving the land question expeditiously.

A contradiction arose when Mapfumo exiled himself in America and began to lambaste the same Mugabe-led government for taking land from minority whites who controlled more than thirteen million hectares of arable land while blacks were confined to seven million hectares in colonially-created rural reserves, typically characterized by poor soils and erratic rainfall. Commenting on the land question in post-independence Zimbabwe, Mapfumo had this to say: "You can't just give land to every Tom, Dick and Harry.... I am not saying land redistribution should not be carried out. It's very important, but it has to be orderly. The white farmers they are chasing away have the expertise and experience" (Nyamutata, 2002). Africans who were tilling the European farms and those who were farming poor soils in the rural areas were his "Tom, Dick and Harry." The myth that Mapfumo promoted, that Africans were not up to the task, has been used in colonial Rhodesia to dispossess Africans of rich fertile land. The ethic of protest that informed his version of *chimurenga* dealt only with struggle in terms of a fight between the state and the masses.

In "Zimbabwe" (2001), Mapfumo sings of an "orderly" land policy, which is a euphemism for the need to restore the "rule of law". Use of the words "mitemo ngaikudzwe (laws should be respected)" was a direct attack on what Mapfumo perceived to be the breakdown of civil society caused by the ZANU PF under President Mugabe. What is striking is the assumption behind Mapfumo's logic, that laws should not be questioned. Questions about whose laws ought to be respected were not answered because they escaped the liberal discourse that Mapfumo embraced uncritically. Zimbabweans fought the liberation war to change colonial laws that supported minority interests. Laws concerning the governance of land, its ownership and control, were bitterly contested during the First and Second *Chimurenga*. In Mapfumo's version of *chimurenga*, he does not want to tamper with the laws.

In "Marima Nzara (You Have Caused Poverty)" (2001), the singer criticizes the Mugabe government for attempting to introduce equity in land redistribution. He takes the process of removing excess land from a white minority as an "invasion"; he sees white settlers as a silent and persecuted group, endowed with a natural capacity to farm. In the song, Mapfumo claims the Mugabe government is misguided in taking away land from those with the capacity to farm: "baba mairasa kudzinga vanorima...baba muchaona, ...baba makaura kudzinga vasevenzi (Father, you have missed the point sending away white farmers and sending away the labour force)." Instead of exploring the democratizing potential of land redistribution, Mapfumo in this song claims that Africans exist to be, and are only validated when they are, "vasevenzi," or manual laborers.

Currently, anyone can go to Zimbabwe and see that thousands of Africans

have benefited from this land reform. To insist, as Mapfumo does in “Marima Nzara” that whites are God’s chosen farmers, shows how he has distanced himself from the aspirations of the people. In this sense, Mapfumo’s *chimurenga* has been entrapped by his desire to garner corporate material interests linked to the Zimbabwean land question. Consequently, the singer’s *chimurenga* after 2000 is reactionary, and the masses consider it to be conservative, even as the songs masquerade as critical realism. In fact, Mapfumo’s “*Chimurenga Rebel*” (2001) shows that he is rebelling against colonial narratives of oppression, against the post-independence black government’s economic policies and, ironically, against one of the real aspirations of the people, which is ownership of land. It seems, therefore, that in “*Chimurenga Rebel*” a genuine confusion pertains between principle and process.

In another song, “Vanoita Sevanokudai (They Pretend to Like You),” Mapfumo warns Mugabe that his advisers are giving him wrong information. Mapfumo’s song is an attempt to resuscitate the old myth that a leader cannot err. Mapfumo’s mode of thinking is self-serving even as it confuses personalities and historical processes. The point is, whether Mugabe is alive or dead, land reform was likely to have taken place. Unfortunately, Mapfumo subscribes to the doctrine of liberal humanism, which implies that white settlers in Zimbabwe will miraculously wake up and give up their economic privileges without a fight. The embittered history of land alienation and the struggle to reclaim it by Africans in southern Africa is too complicated for such an assumption.

Writing about similar black struggles for freedom in South Africa, Njabulo Ndebele (1991) makes a similar argument, pointing out how it became apparent that protest sensibility among South Africans was entrapped when some began to think that Apartheid would dismantle itself, without a political revolution instigated by blacks. In the same vein, when Mapfumo sings that the land issue should be solved peacefully through negotiation with those who own the land, the entrapment of his *chimurenga* musical resistance is revealed. Mapfumo is, of course, correct that it is not in the interests of black or white Zimbabweans to be violent towards each other, but black African nationalists in Zimbabwe started out with a desire to establish a multicultural state, frustrating the white minority, so it is easy to see a disturbing gap in Mapfumo’s memory. For a hundred years, whites in Zimbabwe held onto prime agricultural land, which they did not let go until the Third *Chimurenga* in 1998-2002 persuaded them to do so.

Given this conflicted scenario in Mapfumo’s post 1998 *chimurenga* musical discourse, one is bound to conclude that the tragedy of Mapfumo’s *chimurenga* is that it succumbs to severe corporate pressure to retain the status quo of inequality. In a way, Mapfumo’s songs, especially those in “*Chimurenga Rebel*,” are produced within a liberal discourse that challenges political dominance using the very limiting intellectual resources and premises of modernity on which colonial domination is based. *Chimurenga* does not begin and end with Mapfumo. Another possible reason why Mapfumo’s work is becoming reactionary is that he is no longer in constant touch with the concrete problems and aspira-

tions of ordinary Zimbabweans. These are the people who did so much to elevate him to the position of a *chimurenga* guru, especially through their appreciation of his songs lambasting the government for taking too long to equally re-distribute the land among Zimbabwe's two main races, blacks and whites. Unfortunately, some critics like Leo Hatugari (1999) excessively praise Mapfumo, and overestimate his contribution to Zimbabwe's musical history, refusing to concede that Mapfumo is contradictory, both as an individual and as a public figure.

In an interview with the Zimbabwe Broadcast Corporation in December 2002, Mapfumo conceded on national television that in 1979, he sang in praise of Bishop Abel Murorewa, then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, in order to be released from prison. The Rhodesia Front appropriated his hit "Bhutsu Mutandarika" (1978), which mocks African nationalists, and the Rhodesian Air Force sang it in mock-celebration of the ZANU guerrillas bombed at Chimoio in Mozambique. While this might show the capacity of the dominant discourse to lure, contain, and deactivate a subordinate voice, it also reveals the ambivalence at the heart of Mapfumo's *chimurenga*, since it can so easily be appropriated by any social group for their own, possibly corrupt, ends. Despite all this evidence, critics like Hatugari (1999) continue to create and sustain the myth that whatever Mapfumo sings about is revolutionary. As noted above, this process conveniently smoothes over any ideological contradictions that Mapfumo is genuinely trying to resolve, both as a private person and as a public singer.

Mapfumo's *chimurenga* is neither beyond contest nor free from distorting Zimbabwean history (itself another problematic concept). Mapfumo has indeed popularised the genre of *chimurenga* associated with protest sensibility, and yet that protest now seems entrapped by a liberal discourse that says 'radicalism' but means 'reactionary'. Part of the contradiction in his *chimurenga* has to do with the extent to which he can still sing for the people, even when the protest genre has been commercialized. In short, if Alice Kwaramba (1997) traced a trend within Mapfumo's post-independence *chimurenga* from celebration to protest, she would find a development from protest to radical conservation. The question is, to what extent can Mapfumo as an artist rebel against the people for whom he claims to sing, given that, as Chinua Achebe cautions us in *Hopes and Impediments* (1987), in African culture, no man, however big, is greater than his community?

SIMON CHIMBETU'S *CHIMURENGA* AND THE PAN-AFRICAN AGENDA

In contrast to Mapfumo's *ngororombe*-style *chimurenga* protest genre, Simon Chimbetu's *chimurenga* is steeped in a *Sungura* beat. The *Sungura* beat originated in the fast slams of East Africa. It has roots in the Rhumba style popularised by greats like T. P. Kazembe of the 1970s Kenya Jazz Band. *Sungura* moved to Mozambique from Tanzania by means of the black freedom fighters trained in the Morogoro and Mgagao military camps. The *Sungura* beat finally

made its way to Zimbabwe through Mozambique with the freedom fighters struggling for Zimbabwean independence. These freedom fighters launched military attacks on Smith's regime in Rhodesia from military bases in Chimoio and Nyadzonya.

Initially, *Sungura* was a morale booster during the night vigil or *pungwe*. Its fast beat provided entertainment for weary guerrillas, and its relaxed form was also suitable as a formal medium of communication between freedom fighters and the masses, to raise political consciousness about the goals of the struggle. After Zimbabwean independence, the *Sungura* beat helped provide hard-hitting commentary on the slowness of leaders in delivering on promises of independence to the African masses. In Zimbabwe, *Sungura's* most well known current practitioner is Simon Chimbetu. The theoretical inspiration of his *Sungura*-style *chimurenga* is pan-Africanism. Chimbetu's versatility is revealed through the ways he champions the production of local cultural/musical discourse that shows serious concern about the lives of the common people. A former ZANLA fighter, Chimbetu reveals a political awareness of the difficulties that the guerrillas went through during the armed struggle of the Second *Chimurenga* in 1972-1979. In "Pane Asipo (Somebody is Absent)" (1997), he bemoans the absence of his comrades, the fighters who made independence possible, at the high table of independence celebrations. "Pane Asipo" is about the tragedy of those who have died for independence being forgotten by those who are now reaping the rewards, especially given that some of the self-proclaimed leaders of independent Zimbabwe are nothing but impostors:

Ungano ramaita iri pane vamwe vasipo
 This celebration we are enjoying, there are others who are
 absent
 Mabiko ataita aya pane vamwe vasipo
 This feast we are having, others are not here
 Kuguta kwataita uku pane vamwe vasipo
 We are satiated but others are hungry
 Jojo akasara ko kusango
 Jojo died in the war
 Jona akasara ikoko
 Jona was also left behind (dead)
 Mweya wadzungaira
 His soul is wandering
 Kukanganwa takoniwa....
 We have failed to forget these comrades....

The celebration of independence in "ungano," the material satisfaction of the leadership in "mabiko" and "kuguta" are sharply contrasted with the suffering of the masses and the wandering spirits of the dead comrades. The singer is conscious of his dead comrades and will not forget them. This is, apparently, a reference to the contradictions of the black government's policy of "forgive and

forget” under the reconciliation policy proclaimed by the Mugabe government. The white minority who refused to voluntarily give up land abused this policy.

Chimbetu calls upon the new black establishment to make independence more meaningful to the ordinary people. In “Ndaremerwa (One Week)”, an ordinary worker is saddled with unaffordable transport costs. Where he lives and works are a distance apart, so the worker has to commute daily and the costs are high. He has become a slave to others in his country of birth, and yet he knows no other home. In “Vana Vaye (Those Children)” (1997), Chimbetu implores industry leaders and politicians not to increase the prices of basic commodities, such as “mealie-meal” and bread, which ordinary people depend on. The basic nature of these commodities recalls similar cries in Leonard Zhakata’s hit song “Mugove (The Reward)”. “Mugove” protests the arrogance of black politicians who have failed to control spiralling prices of basic commodities.

Dai ndirini Ndigere paye
 If it was me in that position of leadership
 Ndaishevedzera huhwi kuvamwe vangu
 I would call upon my people
 Huyayi mose munombore
 Come, let us share the fruits of independence
 Chawawana idya nehama....
 What you got or have, eat with your relatives....

This critical message is in Chimbetu’s song “Vana Vaye,” and shows that post-colonial Zimbabwean society has been radically redefined along class lines.

Chimbetu’s song “Newspaper” (2000) confirms that the educated benefit from independence, while those who fought during *chimurenga* are condemned to a life of poverty. Education became a mark of upward social mobility, segregating rather than integrating. The ultimate expression of Chimbetu’s protest sensibility is in the song “Simba Nederere (Keep on Eating Okra)” (2000) in which he reminds leaders that they promised not to betray the masses at independence: “Ingawakataura wani. Kuti munhamo tiri tese, Saka wapanduka sei? Ingawakataura wani, kuti muhondo tiritese. Ko wapanduka sei? Wandisiya sei? Wapanduka sei? Wanditiza sei? Wacheuka sei? (But you said in war we are together. How and why now have you changed, backtracked and left me in poverty?” This song indicts leaders who enjoy the fruits of independence alone, while the poor people depend on a meagre diet of okra, a food that even guerrillas were not allowed to eat during the struggle.

Chimbetu’s songs such as “Pane Asipo,” “Ndaremerwa (One Week)” (2000), and “Simba Nederere” attempt to generate a local protest against black leadership’s betrayal of independence. These songs united the singer with the protest ethos that informed Mapfumo’s version of *chimurenga*, particularly in his songs “Disaster,” and “Mamvemve,” but Chimbetu moves beyond Mapfumo in clarifying what ought to be done. Mapfumo’s music demonstrates symptoms of an

entrapped discourse of protest politics by criticizing the most noticeable betrayals of the masses. Chimbetu passes the threshold of protest politics with his song “Hoko (Peg)” (2002), in which he openly supports the ordinary people’s efforts to acquire land in the Third *Chimurenga*. “Hoko” identifies African control of land as the ultimate goal of independence. The singer warns those who would seek to frustrate the land reform program to desist, for the hoko or peg was from the blood of Africans who died during the war. Chimbetu espouses a vision of Africans controlling their productive land in “Hoko”, ideologically uniting him with Chinx’s “Hondo Yeminda”. Both singers were Zanla freedom fighters during the liberation struggle, and therefore may share a similar vision of a just land-redistribution program.

Chimbetu was able, more than Mapfumo and Chingaira, to transcend the *chimurenga* protest discourse that addressed local inequalities, and project *chimurenga* as a continental struggle. The struggle for land is, according to Chimbetu, a regional as well as a pan-African agenda. The singer claimed that *chimurenga*, or the struggle for land, was a continental undertaking, since colonialists had dispossessed Africans of their land and mineral resources all over Africa. In the song, “Southern Africa” (2000), Chimbetu deploras Hendriki, a white settler, for having forcibly taken land from Africans, parcelling the land among his people, and writing history to promote the fallacy that African land was uninhabited at colonization and that whites were therefore justified in taking control of it. This great fallacy caused Africans to be constrained by poverty, and Chimbetu expresses the sense of helplessness among Africans in “Africa Inaliya (Africa is Crying)” (1997). Suffering among Africans, however, has fostered a sense of collective identity and destiny; in “One Way” (1996), Chimbetu calls upon the black people of Africa to unite against neo-colonialism. In the song, *chimurenga* means a struggle for Nigerians, Ethiopians, Kenyans, Zimbabweans, and Malawians against internal and external exploiters. The song is a culmination of Chimbetu’s attempt to forge a pan-African consciousness that could guide Africans at a time when Europeans are coming together to safeguard their interests in Europe and Africa under the aegis of the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

“Africa Inaliya” appropriates East African Swahili words and diction; its beat is closer to Kanindo, a popular musical genre originating in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). Chimbetu was trained in Mgagao, Tanzania, and it is no accident that his *Sungura* version of *chimurenga* is infused with a pan-African sensibility. In fact, his hit song, “KuState House Kure (You Have to Struggle to Get Into State House as a Leader)” (2003), describes the guerrilla camps in which freedom fighters lived when they were in Mgagao and Morogoro, Tanzania, and Chimoio and Nyadzonya, Mozambique. By naming the guerrilla camps in different African countries, Chimbetu highlights a pan-African sensibility that transcends the physical boundaries imposed by colonialists, implying that the *chimurenga* struggle in Zimbabwe in many ways reflects the heroism of all Africans fighting external and internal aggressors.

In other words, Chimbetu's understanding of *chimurenga* transcends the local. His understanding outlines exploitation connections between local elite interests and international capital. Above all, it offers a comprehensive vision that situates the imperative for African liberation within the continent's people as a whole. For Chimbetu, the broader political consciousness that defines *chimurenga* involves producing an expanded frame of knowledge that links struggles for land and other civil liberties with a strengthening of African institutions, such as the African Union (AU). Chimbetu does not lose sight of the struggles between local African elites and the masses. He extends the notion of *chimurenga* beyond Zimbabwe's borders. He recognizes that in the Zimbabwean land struggle, the independence of all African countries is at stake.

OLIVER MTUKUDZI AND 'KATEKWE': *CHIMURENGA* AS STRUGGLES OF THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

Chimbetu's musical narration of *chimurenga* struggles derive from and openly promote an organized Zimbabwean nationalist resistance narrative. He is aware that his musical intervention is a deliberate attempt to forge a pan-African identity that universalises *chimurenga* as a black man's burden. In contrast, Oliver Mtukudzi's *chimurenga* is concerned with the struggles that go on in the domestic sphere. He expresses these struggles through his *Katekwe* style. *Katekwe* is a word originating from the Korekore people of Zimbabwe, who currently inhabit the province of Mashonaland Central (Bindura, Shamva, Madziwa, Chisimbwi, Mount Darwin, Kanyemba, and some parts of Chiweshe). Korekore is a *Shona* subgroup to which Mtukudzi belongs, and he speaks and sings in their dialect. *Katekwe* mixes musical genres such as *mbira*, jazz, *jerusarema*, *chinyamusarure*, *mbaqanga*, and *jit*, and it alternates between a deep voice and a crescendo into a tenor voice; it appeals to the human conscience to do good at all times.

Musical critics searching for open criticism of the political processes of nation-building in Mtukudzi's songs are bound to be exasperated by a seeming lack of direct attack on the powers that be. This is not to say, however, that Mtukudzi's music is not political. Mtukudzi has an enviable capacity to produce a discourse of *chimurenga* that exists in the domestic sphere, and is seemingly not overtly political but occurs within contexts that have political implications. Mtukudzi's commitment is both to *chimurenga*'s message and its form.

While Chinx, Mapfumo, and even Chimbetu construct a distinctly bi-polar *chimurenga* discourse, of colonialism versus Africans, or African leaders versus the masses, Mtukudzi's songs show that there are deep-seated contradictions in the struggles of ordinary people that need to be exposed. These contradictions exist mostly within the uneven level of political consciousness among the masses. In his songs, Mtukudzi attempts to construct discourses of *chimurenga* that not only question previous ways of thinking about and narrating the struggle, but also question common ways of conceiving political forms

of *chimurenga*. He expects the audience/listeners to recognize how his songs continually question the way they constitute themselves as narratives. The song narratives are open-ended in ways that force the audience to complete the questioning of current social and political reality. The inherent and yet deliberate ambiguity and instability in his songs also enable an interpreter to generate a subversive narrative while being constantly aware of the transgressive nature of its meanings.

On the surface, Mtukudzi's genre of *chimurenga* deals with very ordinary happenings in the daily lives of Zimbabweans within the domestic sphere. There is little effort in his songs to openly link the domestic lives of the people with the political fortunes or misfortunes of the country, either during the nationalist struggle or after it. It is here that Mtukudzi's songs are highly political, but failure to recognize this complexity has misled Turino to conclude that Mtukudzi's hit "Ndiri Bofu (I Am Blind)" (1977) cannot be about struggle because it "was an appeal to Jehovah" (Turino, 2000: 298). The line between the real and the incorporeal is very thin in Mtukudzi's songs; in the same way, the politics of the private domestic sphere reflect and make a statement about what is happening in the public sphere. The conscious and the unconscious self fascinate Mtukudzi; he seems to be aware that people living in an ideology are not always aware of its workings. The distinctively and politically charged contexts, from which Mtukudzi's songs emerge, and about which they comment, are what validate his narrative constructs.

"Yave Mbodza (It's Now a Weakling)" (2002) is an unassuming song describing ordinary parents who are supposed to chew medicine and give it to their child. The song describes the gluttony and the self-defeating attitude of the parents who end up swallowing the medicine. The greed of the parents (*undyire*) denies the child a chance to grow. This threatens the continuity of the clan, for the child's inheritance dies with the parents,

Zvino kurera rudziiko?
 What kind of rearing is this?
 Kusatsengera mwana achimedza?
 Refusing to chew medicine for the child?
 Muri mai rudzii?
 What kind of mother are you?
 Munotsengera mwana ndimi momedza?
 Who swallows the medicine meant for the child?
 Muri baba rudzii?
 What kind of father are you?
 Munotsengera mwana imi momedza.
 Who swallows medicine meant for the child.

In "Yave mbodza," the allegorical political meaning can be interpreted as a story about post-independence betrayal of the masses. Post-independence has been characterized by economic disparities: the mother and father represent the

new black leadership, the new patricians of wealth. This new class of the rich eats alone what is supposed to go to the people, in whose name the *chimurenga* was fought. The “mwana (masses)” are left unprotected, hungry, and emaciated as the politicians take “momedza (all).” Like swallowing medicine meant for a child, the elders refuse to hand over power, life, and knowledge to the younger generation. In Africa’s past, elders nominated their heirs to safeguard the inheritance of a group of people. Modern politicians argue that leaders are not nominated but elected. This is said to be the true essence of democracy, and yet it safeguards the selfish interests of the elite in power. In “Yave Mbodza,” Mtukudzi criticizes the old for not teaching their children and preparing them to take over power. A tradition is created over time, and the parents’ refusal to work towards this has the potential to spell disaster for the country.

By using images associated with the domestic sphere, Mtukudzi is able to offer indirect comment on the public debate about the succession issue in Zimbabwe, whose leaders are intent on holding on to power. “Ziva Nguva (Know the Timing)” (2002) attacks the delays that have occurred in delivering on independence promises. The song uses pastoral images and appears to harmlessly describe the urgency required in farming, and even that in the routine of preparing thick porridge or *sadza*. Although there is never a perfect time for a *chimurenga*, advance planning can lessen the pain that the people will endure during political transitions marked by contradictions. “Ndakuvara (I’m Hurt)” (2002) captures the pain and suffering that results from attempting to redirect the course of history, from a situation of oppression to one of potential freedom. In the song, a man is hurt as he attempts to train an ox to plough, and calls to his wife for help. Anyone familiar with the rural context in which bullocks are trained for the yoke is aware of the potential danger of this process. “Ndakuvara” is a highly metaphorical song; its political resonance can only be deduced from the politically volatile context in which it was sung, recorded, produced, and disseminated. Mtukudzi seems to be alluding to the struggle for political power between Robert Mugabe, the ZANU PF presidential candidate, and Morgan Tsvangirai, the president of the opposition political party (MDC). There was a bitter struggle to gain control of the state machinery, and President Mugabe narrowly beat Tsvangirai. Understood in this context, the voice in the song could be Mugabe who realizes ‘a bit late’ that he underestimated the power of the opposition to beat his ZANU PF at the polls. As the singer narrates, “Ndaichiyeva chiri mumakura. Ndaiti mangwana tingazobopawo. Pidigu mai vemwana chandipfura. Pidigu mai vemwana chandikunda. (I used to admire it when it was growing up until it hurt me when I tried to train/control it. It has beaten me.)”

If “Ndakuvara” metaphorically points to the possibility of the opposition party (MDC) defeating ZANU PF in the 2001 and 2002 elections, it is because the ruling party has become complacent, and has turned a blind eye to the plight of the masses. In the song “Wenge Mambo (You Behave Like a King)” (2001) Mtukudzi satirises new black politicians who view themselves as kings. In traditional *Shona* culture, there were no kings. There was a “*mambo*” (chief),

and social lineage and patrilineal relationships characterized his subjects. Therefore, the *mambo* or chief was supposed to fulfil the aspirations of the masses he led. If he failed to carry out his duties and responsibilities to the satisfaction of those he had power over, he could be mocked and censured in song or through praise-denunciatory poetry. In “Wenge Mambo,” Mtukudzi dips into the spiritual and cultural resources of the *Shona*, emerging with a caustic attack on dreaded leaders and tyrants who abuse communally acquired authority. The leader, who acquires enormous powers, becomes uncontrollable, rejects overtures toward peace and good-neighbourliness, and is subject to ridicule. The leader in “Wenge Mambo” promotes the culture of war, and metes out violence not only on the weak, but also on his own people, who have put him in a position of power.

Mtukudzi’s specialty lies in the capacity of his *chimurenga* to attack village bullies and politicians in the public domain who survive not only through luck, as in “Raki (Lucky) (2000)”, but also by violating other people’s rights. These bullies refuse to be appeased by gifts, nor are they accorded human respect, because their rule is based on the sacrifice of human beings and the drinking of human blood. The voice in “Wenge Mambo” plaintively pleads with the community to intervene:

Wenge mambo
 He behaves like a boss
 Tamupa mari waramba
 We gave him money and he refused
 Kunatsa muroyi, womupeyi, Kumupa mwana adye
 To please a witch, give him human flesh
 Hona zuva riya ranyura
 Now the sun is set (fear)
 Wati hee ndoda ropa
 And he says he thirsts for human blood
 Wona kuvhangedzera ungati irema
 See him, you think he is mad
 Anoda ropa....
 But he insists on human blood....

Mtukudzi uses the images of “muroyi” (witch) and “ropa” (human blood) to highlight the cruelty of a leader who turns against his people and violates the sanctity and responsibility bestowed on him. “Wenge Mambo” is a reminder that the people create leaders, not vice versa. When leaders work in ways that subvert the interests of the people, through molesting them, wishing them ill, ruining the small economic enterprises on which they pin their hopes, and ruining their dreams of a good education for their children, these leaders deserve to be deposed, because they are like the cobra in “Mhakure (Cobra).” Leaders or parents who are not tolerant of the failings of their own family members or country, respectively, and who do not accept their own limitations as human

beings, have the potential to destroy the cultural life of the people. Mtukudzi sings of a moral law that is based on the people's moral economy, and that permits the people to remove such leaders, violently, if need be:

Rova musoro
 Crush the head
 Ndaona zino ndati kunyemwerera inga
 I saw the teeth I thought it was smiling
 Imhakure
 And yet it's a cobra preparing to attack
 Rova musoro
 Therefore, crush its head

The slyness of "mhakure" is not only characteristic of the leadership. Even in ordinary people, cruelty can be reproduced because the masses are fickle, even potentially dangerous, towards each other. In "Sandi Bonde (It's Not Sex That is Important)" (1999), Mtukudzi criticizes a poor, weak man who takes advantage of widows, sleeping with them instead of protecting them. "Neria" (1999) explores the theme of weak members of society who lord it over other, weaker people. In the song, the brothers of her deceased husband disinherit a widow. By focusing on the negative values that ordinary people have internalised, Mtukudzi implies that the marginal cultural space occupied by ordinary people is also a volatile space, with its own internal dynamics and contradictions. If this space is not exposed to scrutiny, it is possible that the *chimurenga* struggle that is waged on political and economic platforms will fail to transform the cultural and spiritual lives of the people. This situation can lead to the entrapment of the protest politics of *chimurenga* within an unreflective rhetoric that can easily become the source of reactionary politics (Ndebele, 1991).

Mtukudzi's own style of *chimurenga* acknowledges conflicts between the leaders and the masses, and conflicts among the masses themselves. Mtukudzi's apparent preoccupation with themes of the private domain stems from a broad understanding of the multiplicity of meanings that the term *chimurenga* can have in different contexts. In Mtukudzi's *chimurenga*, the private sphere is an allegory of embittered politics played out in public political forums. Mtukudzi thus supports Fredrick Jameson's claim that all third-world texts are national allegories in which the "story of the private individual destiny is an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (Jameson, 1991: 86). Mtukudzi's songs offer one major modification of this idea: even the third world is not free from internal contradictions and mental distortions in mass consciousness. Worryingly, this suggests that popular nationalism, and the historical dimension of *chimurenga* as expressed in struggle and music, sometimes fails to protect itself from the lure of the dominant discourses that never ceases to undermine the aspirations toward freedom experienced by the majority of the people in Zimbabwe.

CONCLUSION

The genre of *chimurenga* constitutes a volatile cultural space through which African singers have sought to tell their stories and give meaning to their lives. Male African singers of *chimurenga* have been united in their protest against poverty, poor leadership, and other forms of oppression, but they exhibit ideological differences. Comrade Chinx's music is openly funded by the state; it promotes an official version of *chimurenga* and supports the black nationalist government's land redistribution program, as if to suggest this is one way to fulfil the ordinary people's need for economic emancipation. Chingaira, however, is not able to rise above party politics, and reveal the contradictions in his narrative version of *chimurenga*.

On the other hand, *chimurenga* maestro Thomas Mapfumo had hits in the 1970s urging Africans to go to war against the white settlers. After independence, there was a brief period in which some of his songs supported the new black government, but after 1987, Mapfumo's songs shifted from celebration to protest, and they criticized the new black leaders for betraying the masses. Mapfumo's protest sensibilities intensified after 2000, as inter-political party violence also intensified. The protest sensibility in his *chimurenga* has not run its course; he still sees reality in binary terms, and his songs provide no concrete plan of action apart from identifying areas in which the new government is failing. While this might, ironically, constitute the strength of his version of *chimurenga*, Mapfumo may actually have failed to transcend the protest sensibility. For instance, in "Maiti Kurima Hamubvire" (1987), he urges the Mugabe government to take over white controlled land, but in "Marima Nzara" (2001) Mapfumo blames the same government for taking the white-controlled land.

This ideological inconsistency is a serious problem, because many still consider Mapfumo to be the *chimurenga* guru. Mapfumo's condition of self-imposed exile in the U.S., and the increasing influence of the global corporate world of capitalism on his music, seem to have transformed his protest sensibility into a form of radical conservatism that masquerades as critical realism. In other words, Mapfumo's *chimurenga* simultaneously criticizes the betrayal of the masses even as he sometimes parrots the dominant capitalist ideology by suggesting that Africans cannot farm or run their own affairs without the guiding hand of the white man.

Where Mapfumo's *chimurenga* unravels the local contradictions in the public political domain, Simon Chimbetu extends the same discourse, the only difference being Chimbetu's overriding desire to produce *chimurenga* as a continental agenda. There is a deliberate pan-Africanism in Chimbetu's songs, which aims to function as an ideological continental intervention in a world in which western powers are increasingly coming together to realize their neo-colonial goals through global coalitions such as NATO and the EU. Unfortunately, Chimbetu's attempt to project a uniform continental consciousness does not take into account any contradictions, real or imagined, within the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that he sings about, or within the newly-founded African

Union (AU).

Mtukudzi's songs extend the discourse of *chimurenga* but differ from those of Chingaira, Mapfumo, and Chimbetu, who characterize *chimurenga* largely in terms of the bi-polar struggles of Africans against colonialism, and African masses against their leadership after independence. Mtukudzi introduces a version of *chimurenga* that portrays the marginal cultural space occupied by ordinary people as defined by its own contradictions. He relays the message that political and economic independence without a corresponding cultural revolution in the lives of the ordinary people and their new leaders will probably reproduce the old models of oppression, based on the master-slave relationship. This is because African culture was the first target of colonizers in their bid to take over control of African material resources; indeed, some Africans then fell prey to manipulation by colonizers and aided them in the oppression of other Africans. Mtukudzi's *chimurenga* refutes Amílcar Cabral's assertion that the masses did not need to "return to the source" (Cabral, 1975) during their struggle for independence, because they had maintained an intact African culture. The reality is that some ordinary Africans who had converted to various religious faiths as a result of colonialism became significant factors in undermining their own traditional religions.

In short, there are different strains of *chimurenga* in Zimbabwe. These strains collude, or sometimes collide with each other, as well as overlap in the ways each narrate and describe reality. Different levels of education among the singers can explain some of the differences in ideological perspective and narrative style. Since colonization, the evolution of the Zimbabwean sensibility has been based on a racialized mentality; hence, the tendency for singers to define *chimurenga* in bi-polar terms. The idea that *chimurenga* is a genre with artists singing 'against' or 'for' the state is colonially derived. The same singers do not know what to do when they are faced with reality, which simultaneously confirms and questions state policies. Singers of *chimurenga* sometimes take ordinary people for granted, but Mtukudzi's sensitivity to the lives of ordinary people enables him to depict contradictions within the lives of the ordinary people for whom he sings. It is possible that his idea of *chimurenga* is not limited to organized political movements such as nationalism or pan-Africanism. This should expand our understanding of the potential meanings of *chimurenga* as constituted by both the public and private experiences of the African people in post-independence Zimbabwe, in its political, economic, and cultural spheres.

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