



## Zimbabwean Unrest in Graham Lang's *Place of Birth*

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### Pour citer cet article

Stummer Peter O., « Zimbabwean Unrest in Graham Lang's *Place of Birth* », *Cycnos*, vol. 24.2 (Éclats d'Afrique du Sud/South African Literature), 2007, mis en ligne en 2021.

<http://epi-revel.univ-cotedazur.fr/publication/item/915>

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### *Cycnos, études anglophones*

*revue électronique éditée sur épi-Revel à Nice*

ISSN 1765-3118      ISSN papier 0992-1893

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# EPI-REVEL

Revue électronique de l'Université Côte d'Azur

## Zimbabwean Unrest in Graham Lang's *Place of Birth*

Peter O. Stummer\*

“Isn't that what is most important about fiction:  
that it takes us out of ourselves, into other lives?”

J.M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*<sup>1</sup>

The year 2006 saw the publication of the portrait of a country: *Zimbabwe: The Rise to Nationhood*<sup>2</sup> by the economist Jacob W. Chikuhwa. He emphasizes the dependence on weather conditions with regard to the success of farming. Earlier on, the British journalist Martin Meredith had put his hope on die-hard white Rhodesian farmers who were resolved to stay<sup>3</sup> in his *Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe*. In the same year the expulsion of American journalist Andrew Meldrum occurred, who had lived in the country for twenty years, but had to leave because he “calumniated the president.” He recently published his memoirs<sup>4</sup> *Where We Have Hope*. Unfortunately, one of the most promising narrative voices of the land, Yvonne Vera, died in 2005 at the early age of forty-one. Instead we have now two novels where the writers seek to combine an inside view with an outsider's perspective: Christina Lamb, *House of Stone*<sup>5</sup> and Graham Lang, *Place of Birth*<sup>6</sup>. The former somewhat schematically contrasts the struggle of a (white) ostrich farmer with veterans who, in his absence, seized his farm under the leadership of his former (black) maid. It is therefore the more complex latter, which is the object of this essay. Its analysis tries to proceed from a sketch of the fable and the love of the land to the Rhodesian masculinity syndrome, the narrator's inbetweenness and, at long last, the representation of Robert Mugabe and the overall situation of Zimbabwe.

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1 Vintage édition, 2004, p. 23.

2 Author House (2006).

3 Public Affairs (2003).

4 Grove Press (2006).

5 HarperCollins (2006).

6 Johannesburg & Capetown: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2006.

# I

The fable of Lang's novel hinges on a family reunion of three siblings, Angela, Angus, and Vaughn, in the country of their youth after more than twenty years. The Bourkes are "old Rhodesians", fourth-generation settlers, who own their farm Hopelands, in Matabeleland near Shangani, since 1897, just after the Chimurenga Rebellion (p.13). Angela, a gay wildlife painter, lives a prosperous life in England, whereas Vaughn, the youngest, in 1978, fled to Australia to become a disillusioned painting lecturer at the College of Fine Art at Hunter Valley University in Newcastle. Disheartened by his broken-up marriage and disgruntled by the sway of post-structuralist theory in particular and the decline of the Humanities in general, his life has disintegrated and has landed him in a severe depression. He has come to Zimbabwe for the reburial of his forbears; since his robust brother Gus intends to exhume six ancestors, – parents, greatparents, great-grandparents, – at Long Cross Hill on his farm and have them transferred to an Anglican church cemetery in view of the doubtful turn things have taken in the country after 2000. His is the last white farm which has not yet been seized by 'veterans' in the course of President Mugabe's land reform. His wife and two daughters already live behind security gates in a house in the Bulawayo suburb of Burnside. More stubborn than desperate, he seeks to guard his property with the help of his Ndebele friend Saxon Ncube, who has agreed to act as his frontman.

Angus Bourke's farm is constantly under siege by "vets" who are led by hothead Victor Mtumzi, an educated man with a city background, who speaks English fluently and who turned the neighbouring farm into a squatters' camp after he oversaw the killing of the Afrikaner owner Tienus Gerber. As the novel progresses, tension increases more and more, only to erupt into open violence, first against animals and then against people, With the butchering of Gus's bull, Wellington, the gratuitous cruelty is brought out into the open:

They have slashed the hock tendons. They have gouged out its eyes. One eye still hangs like a squashed grape from its socket.

They have built a fire alongside its rump and butchered the meat as it cooked. (p.184)

The gruesome details are programmatic, they prepare for the wounding of farmhands, the burning alive of an old loyal servant couple in their kraal, the killing of Angela in an ambush and the torture of Vaughn in the attempt to find out the whereabouts of the heavily armed Gus and his foreman Witness. Gus arrives in time to save his brother with the help of Witness and Saxon Ncube; without mercy they kill the vets in the style of a paratrooper commando. Vaughn is declared an undesirable alien and, partly recovered, leaves with his new wife, Isabella Gerber, for Australia. With the obvious intention of poetic justice after all, Vaughn sees on television

Angus and Saxon accused of murder; they are incarcerated and face a doubtful trial.

Formally, the novel is divided into four parts: *Between Places*, *Remnants*, *Unspeakable Freedoms*, *Waiting For Birds*. Of which the first three are of roughly the same length, whereas the fourth appears like an afterthought in its brevity. In an ironical twist the accusations of black Zimbabweans are shown to have been well-founded: the attack on the farm becomes news to the world (p.275). Angela's and Vaughn's battered faces become synonymous with Zimbabwe's violence. Prime Minister Blair is quoted as describing the incident as "an act of unspeakable barbarity". But there is no mention of the black victims:

There are no photographs of Joseph and Anna [sc. the old loyal servant couple], or any of the injured workers. Their lives slip beneath the shadow of Angela and me, the white Africans. Ordinary people, remembered only by those who one day may seek to settle old scores. So it goes with Africa. (p. 275)

Structurally, the reader learns later that the prologue-like first page is in fact the bare information which Angus put before his brother in a letter, in 1979, to tell him of the violent death of their parents by terrorists. With the open grave before him, Vaughn is overwhelmed by his memory, envisages the scene in detail and recalls how "he tipped over into the void and never stopped falling" in view of the irrevocable finality of the sudden demise of their parents (p.172). In the last short part of the novel, Vaughn the narrator, ties up loose ends and tries some emotional stock-taking: back in Australia, he feels that "his thoughts and dreams remain trapped behind in his place of birth" (p.285); he fears that belonging will always elude him in "this limbo of places" (p.283), where depressive grieving for his sister wrestles occasionally with "an impotent fury against his brother" (p.285).

## II

The infatuation with Africa is primarily expressed by Angela's and Vaughn's wildlife enthusiasm. The academic brother looks down on his sister's naïve rendering of wild animals, but – life's irony – eventually will have to acknowledge that it is the fortune made by this art in England which, through her inheritance, enables him to enjoy a highly welcome material independence. During an excursion to the Matobo Hills, where they visit Cecil Rhodes's unpretentious grave, they admire the breath-taking landscape and both try to draw what they see. The most romantic version of this strain is represented by the repeated encounters with a leopard, a species which everybody had thought long extinct. Vaughn sees the fine animal once together with his brother Gus, who reassures him and allays his fear, and a second time with Isabella, when, without anxiety, he just admires the

predator's majestic calm and awe-inspiring indifference. Her father had asked him to rescue her and take her with him to Australia. They go for a night picnic at the family graveyard on Long Cross Hill, they compare Afrikaans and Strine (lekker/ bonza, p.209), have fantastic sex under the stars and – in true D.H. Lawrence fashion – Vaughn feels 'Authentic Man' (p.211) at last.

Another instance of fascination with the land is the excursion to Victoria Falls (p.244 seq.). The four-hour drive down the Gwaai River Valley is described in loving detail. Vaughn and Bella are lucky, the Zambesi is in full flow. They book in at the Victoria Falls Hotel and comment with some nostalgia on the visible collapse in tourism; for the former Mecca for travellers now appears run down and empty of visitors. They cannot help reminiscing:

In its colonial heyday, this grand old Edwardian building, with its archways and columns, hosted prime ministers and royalty, and it still carries an air of quiet stateliness. (p.245)

The admiration of the scenery is interleaved with references to David Livingstone, because of his statue near the Devil's Cataract. The inscription on the base is reproduced: Explorer, Missionary, Saviour, without reservation. On the contrary, quotations from the first white man to have laid eyes on this wonder float back from memory verbatim: "scenes so lovely they must have been gazed upon by angels in flight" (p.246). They are overawed by this "deep eternal roar from the open mouth of Africa", and, overwhelmed, Vaughn marvels at the terrific sight:

Gigantic, fearsome – for me, it's a sight that has lost none of its gut-lurching magnificence. We sit there in the spray above the eerie black gorge, mesmerised, silenced. My father always said it's good to be humbled by nature, and that the Falls could cow the heart of the bravest man. When the old romantic poets and painters tried to evoke the sublime terror of nature, they might have killed for a spectacle like this. The colossal plunge into the dark, whirling cauldron below, the roar and the billowing spray Mosi-oa-tunya is its African name. The Smoke that Thunders. Why would David Livingstone have called it anything else? (p.246)

However, Vaughn does not content himself with breathless admiration alone. In a moment of self-searching reflection, he combines the possession of land with the honest conception of racial equality. It is here that the comparison between the Australian perspective and the Rhodesian point-of-view fulfils its most important function in that the argument cuts both ways. He begins with the obviously transforming effects of Australian egalitarianism, when he wonders about the subservience of their domestic servants, Joseph and Anna, which he had taken for granted as a child and which now, in their old age, they are not prepared to abandon. He remembers his student days in South Africa, where it had dawned upon him that to question this state of affairs within the security of dominance, the

security of empowerment, did not amount to all that much. He then refers to the different situation in Australia, where to claim the moral high ground in matters of race, against him and his colonial upbringing, requires the passage of surrender and loss, and few Australians can claim either. "In Australia", he claims, "where the indigenous population has been reduced to a powerless minority, it is too easy to claim the moral high ground. One doesn't have to give up anything to atone for the past. There is no test that involves surrender or loss." Then he tells a story, which he gleaned from hearsay, about a farmer in Queensland who gruffly denied a group of aboriginals access to the land where their ancestors were buried. He repelled them like invaders for fear of some sort of ensuing land claims. Although the issue of land rights in Australia is thus much simplified, the conclusion drawn is certainly not completely off the mark:

This story suggests that when it comes to the question of land Australians are not all that different from white Rhodesians or South Africans. Would my academic colleagues, so fond of reducing issues of race to sentimental theory, have behaved any differently from the farmer? Only by standing in his shoes could they know. True atonement for the colonial past comes through the surrender of land, and therefore of place. That is the hard reality whites in Africa have had to face. (p.123)

### III

From another important angle, the comparison between Rhodesia and Australia is not made, neither by the narrator, nor by the text, at least not explicitly. But given the emphasis on Gus as a paragon of Rhodesian maleness, the comparison between the Australian concept of mateship and Rhodesian male prowess is unavoidable by implication. It is not for nothing that we are confronted with references to several wars. The Chimurenga Rebellion is mentioned (and the vet Terror Yengwa sports a T-shirt emblazoned with *The Second Chimurenga*, p.83) and there is a reference to the Matabele Wars with Lobengula's warriors wiping out the entire Shangani Patrol (p.147). The meaning of Bulawayo is given as 'the place of killing. Oom Jasper, Bella's father, recalls WW II where he knew "some Aussies up in North Africa' rough as hell, but good soldiers. I always wondered what kind of country made blokes like that." (p.154). In the same war, Vaughn's father and Uncle Rex served in the same battalion in North Africa as well. As boys they fought so fiercely that they had to be separated by buckets of cold water (p.53). Rex was a loner, loved hunting and died when he drove his fancy car, drunk, off the bridge into the Shangani River. It was him who pushed the young Vaughn towards the ritual of "bleeding":



Being blooded was a farm tradition started by my great-grandfather where all the Bourke boys would be anointed by the blood of their first kill. (p.57)

When the nine-year old Vaughn hits an impala, he wants to comfort the animal when it bleats in agony. After the kill, he refuses to have its blood smeared all over his face. Being an avowed atheist, Rex is the only one of the Bourke family whose grave remains on Long Cross Hill, when the loved ones are “moved to safer ground (p.192)” and the Bourkes are literally “ripped from the soil (p.209)”. Moreover, there are repeated references to the Rhodesian war during the Seventies.

Vaughn uses the Australian term piker in the sense of wimp, whereas Gus usually addresses him as “Chickenheart.” Drinking bouts are often started as challenges. Gus is sturdy and rebukes his brother for being no great help in digging up their parents. He is tough and enjoys being called a “barbarian” (p.110). Exactly like in Australia, the role of rugby is underscored. At the funeral service for the reburial of six members of the Bourke family, there is also Big Bull Durnford amongst several other farmers who have already been pushed off their farms. He used to be in the same rugby team as Gus, “looks as beefy and prosperous as ever”, and – characteristically enough – runs a twenty-four-hour armed response security firm in South Africa, “apparently a booming industry these days”, as the narrator sarcastically remarks (p.190). Gus likes using dismissive terms like kaffirs, gooks, and munts; sometimes he is quite happy to call himself a kaffir, too (p.179). His thinking is extremely antagonistic:

Don't lecture me professor. You don't have to deal with these people. All those years in university and you still haven't twigged there're some pretty fundamental differences between us and them. (p.29-30)

It is presumably subliminal that whenever he passes a truck abandoned on the road, he stops to urinate on the wreck, in accordance with his staunch belief: “You've forgotten how fatalistic munts are” (p.178). But what had undoubtedly stamped him with undeniable brutishness had been his eight years in the army as a member of the Selous Scouts who were engaged in counter-insurgency activity. Reluctantly Gus reveals to Vaughn the background of the bond that exists between him and Saxon Ncube. Saxon, who is presently a member of the oppositional MDC (Movement for Democratic Change), fought during the war as a follower of Nkomo on the Zipra side, whose valour Gus praises well beyond the faintheartedness of Mugabe's Zanla adherents. He further explains what was hidden behind the euphemism tame terr. It transpires that Saxon after having been taken prisoner was forced to change sides. As ‘tamed terrorist’ he formed an effective commando unit with Gus and, on the basis of a false identity he had used during the war, was later able to make it back successfully into the Zipra ranks (p. 88/103). Both Gus and Saxon fall back on their war

experience, not so much when they come to the rescue of Vaughn in the nick of time, but in the relentless way they “dispatch” all the assailants in no time.

#### IV

It is typical for Vaughn to entreat his brother and his friends not to become like their enemies. His lack of resolution almost endangers his sense of self-preservation. His self is torn not only between identities, but also between thought and action. Twenty-six years he has existed between being Australian and what amounts to a “ghost nationality” (p.5), since he resents that his passport gives Zimbabwe as his country of origin, while his real place of birth, Rhodesia, no longer exists. As he explains in an exchange with his sister, his feeling is that of an existence in some “limbo between identities” (p.150). In his youth, he learnt from the servants the ways of the veld. He understands Afrikaans, but in contrast to his brother (boet, braai), he does not speak it; he is fluent in Si-Ndebele still, but does not make a great fuss about it. To the surprise of his family, he has not acquired an Australian accent. He yearns for the cultured middle-class taste in music displayed by his mother who played Chopin on the piano, when he suffers under the taste of his brother in popular music as demonstrated by the tapes he plays in his car. He looks down on the pigheadedness of Gus, but envies him for his guts. He got out of his depths when he was confronted with the sudden death of his parents. He quarrelled with his tumble-down lefties lofty attitude regarding the issue of land rights, when he learnt about their neighbour Tienus Gerber’s fate and recoiled from the gory pictures of his bullet-riddled body in *Newsweek*. He baulks at the idea of having to admit ideological bankruptcy (p.17).

His life falls apart, when he is disillusioned with his career in Australia, splits from his wife and despairs about his son. Gus and his mocking tone hits home when he refers to the land down under as “a nation that sees the world through the bottom of a beer glass” (p.101). He easily feels miserable and loses himself in self-pity, “it pains me to see my self-respect peeling away to reveal a tawdry clown” (p.163). Small wonder that he lands himself in a fully-fledged depression and becomes dependent on anti-depressant medication. Seeing the farm of his childhood days again makes him realize that he “shut out the past all these years ” and, what is more, that it appears as the “last tangible remnant of their togetherness” as though the farm itself was a grave they would not ever be able to visit again (p.134). Vaughn feels trapped, he has lost all certainties. Bella, whom he likes, repels him because of her insurmountable hatred; and Gus, whom he is fond of after all, shocks him with his racist attitude.



His liberal pose is threatened. An abstract position is difficult to maintain against the emotional onslaught of his surrounding. Desperately, he seeks to stick to his arguments against the seducing whisperings of his emotions. "Whites have no divine right to Africa." (p.32); "The time for whites in Africa has gone" (p.141); settlers are "slaves to a dream that turned into nightmare" (p.147); "too much hope is not good for you in this place" (p.227). As a member of the "lost white tribe", he finds himself in an "existential dilemma" (p.149). Only to accept at long last that, though born in Africa, he is entirely *unAfrican*. The longing, he acknowledges with a pang in his heart, was really for Europe's Africa, for a time when the Europeans owned Africa. Africanness without a concrete basis, he tells his sister, is null and void:

We were Europeans who owned a piece of Africa. Did we ever call ourselves African then? No. But now that we've lost Africa, we lay claim to Africanness! The brutal fact is we can't be African unless we have a place in Africa that we can call our own. (p.151)

The novel is a First-Person narrative. This constitutes its attraction to a large degree. For the battleground for many arguments one way or another is the very soul of the narrator. It takes the reader some time to understand that the occasional tendency towards pompous verbosity is born out of his "existential angst" (p.5); like a child singing in the dark, the intellectual academic thus seeks to gloss over his disorientation. There is only one instance where the borderline is transgressed (p. 274). Here, in its lament over the vicious circle of cruelty and the brutal domination of one group by another throughout history, the narrator's voice verges on the sententious of an all too generalising proposition, when it begins: "Such is the random lot of humanity".

## V

A limited point-of-view can pose a problem when it comes to the question of how detailed and reliable the narrator's observations on the situation in Zimbabwe really are. As we shall see, there are several attempts to counter-balance individual impressions by more objective sources.

Drought and veld fires are mentioned (p.27), international sanctions, as put forward by Mugabe in his our-economy-is-under-siege speech to journalists in Harare<sup>7</sup> are not. On the contrary, there is the argument that black dictators get away with much which would be immediately criticised by the Western public if it was white leaders committing these savage acts (p.141). In the novel it is made clear that by 2002 all white farms had been taken over. In this respect, Hopelands of the Bourkes is the exception. When

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<sup>7</sup> 13 July 2006; cf. Boateng/Gore, p. 28.

Vaughn lands in Bulawayo, he instantly stares into the eyes of the “violent Father” (p.6), who sternly looks at him from a huge billboard. His elder sister, who left the country in the mid-eighties, sums up the situation for him: “What a bloody mess he’s made of this place. When he took power in 1980, people were dancing around the streets singing about freedom. Little did they know what lay in store for them. The poor suckers would never have dreamt of the unspeakable freedoms that Mugabe would bestow on himself.” (p.253) It is then that Vaughn begins to see like the ordinary Zimbabwean: “Through a fog of fear.” Gus overstates his case in his usual ‘pitbull’ way: “Get one thing straight, those kaffirs back there are just plain thugs and thieves. Terrorists, like Mugabe himself. Most of them weren’t even born in the ‘past’ you’re referring to. Veterans! It’s a bloody joke, man! Mtunzi himself was four years old when the war ended. Don’t fucking glamorise these munts, Vaughn!” (p.30)

Vaughn cannot dismiss this lightly. He realises that Zimbabwe is in “perilous straits” (p.75). The police cannot be relied upon anymore. The telephone system is in shambles (p.24). The country is bankrupt and ruined (p.11). Inflation is such that “would you change currency you’d need a wheelbarrow”. He is unable to shrug off Mugabe as “a deranged bigot, blinded by hate”, because “he calls the shots in this country” (p.151). He has to accept that “Mugabe’s power comes from terror and intimidation” and that he “perceives power as something attained by force” (p.74). He is shocked when Gus compares him to Pol Pot (p.73). The vets, Mtunzi’s mob, appear as pawns in a greater game. Here it is noteworthy that they are not only armed with AK and FN rifles, but also sticks, pangas, knobkerries, and, above all, the old symbol of oppression, sjamboks (p.267). That the symbolism is intentional is proved by Terror Yengwa’s T-shirt which trumpets the slogan “The Second Chimurenga”. Vaughn begins to learn how to differentiate between strategies. It is true that for Gus Mugabe or Nkomo does not make any difference, but his friend Saxon is an adherent of the latter; and what is more, it becomes apparent that the Shona Mugabe (a fact which is not pointed out explicitly) has been “starving Matabeleland ever since he took power” and is keen on “screwing the Ndebeles” (p.8). Moreover, he particularly targets the oppositional MDC, which Saxon also supports, and persecutes the urban poor – the clearing of Harare’s slums, p.279, and Operation Murambatsvina ridding the nations’ cities of their ‘trash’, p.284 – since they are, in their majority, supporters of the opposition. The president seems to divide the country as he obviously favours the Zanu-PF people.

Although the reader realises that Vaughn’s project is primarily a nostalgic searching for his roots – as symbolised by the actual roots at which they hack while sifting through their parents’ graves – one fears throughout three quarters of the novel that the narrator might be won over to his

brother's outmoded white Rhodesian ways. In the end he owes him his life, but grieves that he was unable to change his brother's principles. Together with Oom Jasper it is Gus above all who voices the old prejudices. In this sense, it is only "mealy-mouthed" that Vaughn tells Bella, that "Mugabe's greatest crime is that he has proven Ian Smith right" (p.164). More or less consciously he reproduces here an earlier remark of Gus': "Every prediction Ian Smith made about this country falling into the hands of the kaffirs has come to pass." (p.140) Like Bella's father, he is deeply convinced of the total incompetence of black people to organise their own community: "How many Mugabes does it take for you to realise these people cannot run a chicken raffle, let alone a country?" (p.141)

There are three instances where this racist pessimism is mildly relativised. The first is a critical statement by the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and is worth quoting in full:

Land reform, universally agreed upon as a matter of utmost urgency, has been twisted into a fast-track to further the self-aggrandisement of the ruling elite. What should have improved the lot of every Zimbabwean is now viewed as irrevocably partisan, and is associated with disorder, violence and displacement. Collectively, all of this has left the average Zimbabwean on the verge of utter destitution and hopelessness. All of this points to a very obvious deficiency in the leadership and governance of our country. Those who have been entrusted with authority have abused it. The various arms of the state have become rotten with corruption, nepotism and self-interest. The law has become a farce, used only to further the interest of a selected few. (p.59-60)

This is both taken up in a highly defused form by Reverend Dlomo in his funeral service (p.189) and its societal impotence is demonstrated when Mtunzi's mob not only enter the church to disrupt the service, but when their leader later declares, with reference to Gus' reburial of his family, "that the church is the rubbish dump for whites in this country" (p.219).

Further reservations have to be made in view of the fact that the Bourkes hear this piece of news on the radio broadcast by the BBC Africa service. The second instance is the exhibition with the title *Bygone* organised in the National Gallery of which, Vaughn finds, the displayed photographs are without exception a record of happier times. In his tendency towards over-elaborate expressions, he stresses the favourable comparison between the people inside these pictures and "the miserable Breughelian processions outside in the streets" (p.163). The third instance are five lines of Mugabe in the original. When Vaughn, while driving in the car with his brother, wants to have the radio switched on to avoid Gus' tapes. They hit on the broadcast of a speech by the president, where he castigates Zimbabwe's whites, calls them "crooks", and chides them for "being uncommitted to the national cause" (p.165). If nothing else, this seeks to prove that Mugabe victimises the remaining whites as scapegoats for the general hardship. Here

his lament over international sanctions, by the US and the UK in particular, mentioned above, would have well fitted in.

In a discussion with his sister, Angela resignedly complains about the world's indifference with regard to the Zimbabwean predicament, but tries to explain to her brother the overriding importance of the politics of revenge. This she sees as the reason why Mugabe has his admirers in Africa; because he hates whites and vilifies Britain and America, he's seen as a noble fighter for the African cause – as some kind of latter-day Shaka Zulu" (p.252). This opinion tallies with the assessment by Schneider<sup>8</sup> and Lamb<sup>9</sup>. Lamb writes: "He is responsible for the hunger, homelessness and exile of millions – black and white – yet neighbouring countries still dignify him with a hero's welcome." She quotes the editor of the *Financial Times* in South Africa, Barney Mthomboti, as arguing that Mbeki cannot take on Mugabe openly, as this would be seen as allying with those backward-looking people who still use the term Rhodesia and waffle about those days when blacks did not walk on the pavements and knew their place. She sees Mugabe as plugging into a growing sense of anti-imperialism in the third world, finds the ruling party divided and the opposition inept. She sums up the argument in the words of Brian Raftopoulos from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in Capetown, who maintains: "To criticise Mugabe is to be seen as pro-Western and anti-African". In his meeting with journalists in 2006, Mugabe admitted hardships in the food area, but insisted that inflation was going down and that the country was peaceful and stable, conducive for business and foreign investment. He rejected comments by Britain as "dishonest and disgraceful lies".<sup>10</sup> It is not without interest that the *New African* authors completely side with African-American Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Atlanta, Georgia, who opposes the Bush Administration in its policy towards Zimbabwe:

Cynthia McKinney was right. The "sanctions nature" of the Act is what is now bedeviling the Zimbabwean economy, causing the current hyper-inflation and making life unbearable not only for the government but also for the general population.<sup>11</sup>

The American politician must have counted on a positive response by her electorate, just as the paper which is intended for readers in Africa must have hoped to strike a positive chord with its African readership. To let Vaughn Bourke, or perhaps Graham Lang (born in Bulawayo, emigrated to Australia in 1990, and lecturing in Fine Art at the University of Newcastle), have the last word: "Only one thing is certain: death and dispossession will be the defining legacy of Mugabe." (p.284)

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<sup>8</sup> courageous fighter for Africa against the old colonial powers (June, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> caption: the tolerance of tyranny, *NS* (August, 2006), 26.

<sup>10</sup> According to Boateng/Gore, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> *New African*, p. 31.

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