Historical realism* in Tiyambe Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal* and Steve Chimombo's *The Wrath of Napolo*

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Introduction

For thirty-one long years, Malawians experienced a regime characterized by terror and repression. Long detentions without trial for those who dared to oppose the unjust system and for those who were so unlucky as to be betrayed by spouses or 'friends' were common. Not to mention the political murders, prominent of which were the Mwanza murders of Aaron Gadama, Dick Matenje, Twaibu Sangala and David Chiwanga - very important personalities in the politics of the time - who were "arrested and murdered by the police in the boarder district of Mwanza" in 1983 (Muluzi et al 1999:132). Signs of totalitarianism, however, showed early in a speech by Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda at a mass rally on May 24, 1964 at Colby Community Centre in Blantyre when he said: "The Malawi system, the Malawi style is that Kamuzu says it's just that, and then it's finished. Whether anyone likes it or not, that is how it is going to be here. No nonsense, no nonsense. You can't have everybody deciding what to do." These words, as John Lwanda observes, "were the culmination of Banda's gradual definition of what his political system was going to be like" (Lwanda 1996/7:38).

Sam Mpasu (1995:2), one of the victims of Dr Banda's notorious detention camps, sums up better what the political atmosphere was like in the first republic when he says:

> It is true that we had what looked like peace. But it was the peace of the cemetery. It was enforced silence which was misunderstood for peace. Our lips were sealed by fear and death. Our pens were silenced by long jail

> terms without trial. It is true that we had what looked like stability. But it was the kind of stability which is caused by overwhelming force. When the thick boot is on the neck of a person who is prone on the ground, there can be no movement. The jails were full and murders were rampant. The murderers were above the law.

It was this awareness which, when friends urged Mpasu to write about his "nasty experiences in Dr Banda's prisons," made him resist the temptation to do so. He knew better. "Most likely, the book would have been banned promptly by the Censorship Board" and he would have considered himself lucky to be thrown into jail again (Mpasu 1995:2). It was such a political situation, such an unpredictable atmosphere, which made Tiyambe Zeleza's *Smouldering Charcoal* (henceforth *SC*), a book "written in exile in 1982, [remain] unpublished until 1992 out of concern for possible repercussions on the author's family" back home (Ross 1998:188). Like Mpasu, Zeleza knew better.[1]

The wind of change which swept across the African continent in the early 1990s - which Anthony Nazombe (1995) attributes to the fall of the Eastern bloc and, particularly in Malawi, the Pastoral Letter of 1992 - made itself felt in Malawi and brought along with it bold compositions and publications which would be unthinkable before. Some such bold compositions and publications are Tiyambe Zeleza's *SC*[2] and Steve Chimombo's *A Referendum of the Forest Creatures* - "a thinly veiled account of the political, social and economic problems that precipitated the Malawi Referendum of 14 June, 1993" (Nazombe 1995:141) - and *The Wrath of Napolo* (henceforth *TWON*). Given the country's political background, it is only natural to expect these authors, Zeleza and Chimombo, to react, in one way or the other, to the country's unpleasant past in their works.

True enough, in *SC* and in *TWON*, Tiyambe Zeleza and Steve Chimombo, exploiting the newly found freedom of expression, review the social, economic and political situation in the country as it was during the Banda era and (especially in *TWON*) as it is now. This essay seeks to demonstrate that history is the motivating factor and the very source of strength for these novels. That is to say Zeleza and Chimombo prove the truth in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1972:xv) observation that "literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society" and in Haskell Block's view that "art cannot be understood and appreciated as an isolated expression but must be seen as part of the totality of human experience" (cited in Nazombe 1983:43). The essay also argues that

through the use of historical realism in their respective novels, Zeleza and Chimombo thoroughly deconstruct the official view of Banda's Malawi as a haven, as a land of unprecedented calm, peace and harmony. In his *SC,* Tiyambe Zeleza uncovers the horrors of Banda's prisons and the poverty and squalor under which the people lived. Chimombo, on the other hand, looks back in *TWON*, at the traumas that characterized Dr Banda's reign of terror. For instance, he tackles the notoriety of the Special Branch which saw many Malawians scuttling across the boarders. The essay also compares Zeleza's and Chimombo's use of historical realism as a literary device and the Marxist ideology in *SC* and *TWON* respectively, and concludes that Zeleza's use of these is much more artistically satisfying than Chimombo's use of the same. Zeleza's handling of history makes the reader emotionally involved in whatever experiences the characters go through in the novel while Steve Chimombo's characteristic reportage in *TWON* makes one feel that he handles history with an element of detachment. Moreover, in *SC* Zeleza paints a vivid picture of the horrors and atrocities of the first republic while Chimombo's *TWON* reads like a stale and dry report of the events of the Banda regime. Consequently, the reader feels neither pity nor fear for the victims. Furthermore, the Marxist protest against oppression and injustice is clearer clear in *SC* than in *TWON*. Zeleza's Chola in *SC* is more revolutionary than Chimombo's Chilungamo Nkhoma in *TWON*.

Critical analysis of *Smouldering Charcoal* and *The Wrath of Napolo*

In *SC*,

> Zeleza sets out in a Ngugi-type fashion to rewrite the history of Banda's Malawi in the 1970s [and, I daresay in the 1980s and early 90s as well]. His characters function within a fully realized socio-political context which includes party cards and avoidable child mortality, censored news reports and political murders, prisons, tortures and rape (Ross 1998:188).

In this novel, like Steve Chimombo in *TWON*, as we shall see later, Zeleza sets out to deconstruct the mistaken view that Malawi under Dr Banda was a land of peace and harmony, a land of milk and honey. Zeleza and Chimombo do this by the use of no any other tool but history, the country's otherwise unpalatable history.

When one begins to read Zeleza's *SC* one is first struck by the poverty and the squalor under which Mchere's family lives. The family lives in a rat-infested hovel

which is evidenced by the fact that when the novel opens it is a rat which awakens Mchere. The wall of the house is cracked, which is yet another mark of poverty. The fact that Mchere's family lives in abject poverty during Banda's reign in Malawi contradicts what the 'life president' and his cohorts used to believe and say. Dr Banda strongly believed that with him in power the people's status had greatly improved. A false consciousness pervaded the whole country at that time as the unenlightened masses were made to believe that Dr Banda was the best and greatest leader in all Africa, if not in the entire world. By painting a picture of a family which can be said to live below the poverty line, Zeleza not only presents a realistic view of Malawi of the past as well as of the present, but also counters Dr Banda's views of his people. In the novel the prospect of having another child is "a source of deep gloom for [Mchere]: it meant an extra mouth to feed, and an additional body to clothe and shelter" (*SC*, pp. 2-3).

Many families found themselves, and still find themselves today, ten years after the advent of multi-party democracy, in a similar predicament. Ironically though, instead of accepting their poverty, many Malawians prided themselves in giving ostentatious gifts in cash and kind to Dr Banda during his yearly crop inspection tours of the country. This ostentation only helped to reinforce the false consciousness.

Zeleza, in a move to clear away this false consciousness about the country and its people, goes on to contradict Dr Banda's "My people now sleep in houses that do not leak" when we hear Nambe shouting: "I put that bucket there to collect the rain from this leaking roof of yours!" (*SC*, p. 5) after Mchere knocks down a bucket of water in his drunken stupor. The strike at the bakery is yet another case in point. It underscores how bad conditions of living have become for the workers. In spite of their sweat and toil, they receive peanuts, and, as they cannot endure this injustice any more and the negotiations between the workers' committee and the workers' union having failed, they resort to a strike. But the committee is reminded that striking is illegal (*SC*, p. 26). Here Zeleza presents the reader with a typical Malawi Congress Party (MCP) Malawi, a country in which no opposition, no protest, no voice above that of the politicians, was allowed. In Banda's Malawi everybody had to pretend that all was well even when the opposite was true. Those who suffered had to do so in silence and were not supposed to voice their sentiments, for to do so would be an act of treason. It is in view of this that Zeleza felt compelled to deconstruct the official view that Malawi was a land of peace and happiness. He tells the reader that the silence that pervaded the country was

enforced silence, the silence that resulted from fear and uncertainty. The author shows great success in doing this especially when he presents the reader with a gruesome account of prison experiences, thereby convincing him/her that it is only human to avoid the horrors that awaited those who 'provoked' the wrath of the powers that be.

When Zeleza portrays Chola in prison, even the most hard-hearted reader cannot help being shocked by the grim reality that confronts him. The author is at his best in the novel in his description of the unhygienic and inhumane conditions which surround the prisoners, and the atrocities perpetrated by prison guards and superintendents. Upon waking up in prison early one morning Chola feels thirsty and he picks up "a rusty and dirty" cup of water only to discover that "there was...a fly in it. He shook it so vigorously some water spilt over the cement floor. The fly however, was still there, in fact it did not seem to move. Upon further inspection he saw that it was dead" (*SC*, p. 118). Such a description cannot fail to awaken revulsion in any individual which in turn would make him/her avoid stepping into Chola's shoes at all costs. But this experience is only the beginning of Chola's initiation into prison life for worse things await him. When time for breakfast comes round and the prisoners are served with badly cooked porridge, "Chola could hardly bring himself to hold his spoon. The porridge was lumpy and smelled of fire smoke. He felt like vomiting" (*SC*, p. 120). This compares favourably with Sam Mpasu's experience at Zomba Central Prison in 1975 in *Political Prisoner 3/75*. But later Chola realizes that he is in a world where he has to eat whatever food is set before him for the sake of his survival.

With the passage of time though, the prisoners discover that they can no longer cope with the nasty conditions they are kept in and they go on a hunger strike - a common occurrence in prisons. Following the prison superintendent's failure to make the prisoners eat, he orders them to undress and proceeds to strike their penises with his baton. "The prisoners tried to cover their manhood but the 'butchers' forced them to stand erect with their hands behind their backs. Irritants were rubbed on their genitals. They shook with pain" (*SC*, p. 154). As if this was not enough, while returning to their cells, the superintendent, in a bid to break Mchere's spirits, bluntly tells him about the death of his son, Mtolo, but this only proves to the prisoners that their hunger strike is justified after all. Back in the cells, they are confronted with blankets which are marked with crosses, an indication that they "had once been used by prisoners who had died from leprosy or tuberculosis" (*SC*, p. 124) nevetherless, they receive them in silence.

The above account, as it is, is already shocking, but Zeleza goes on to uncover even greater horrors, thereby making us doubt the veracity of such a story. One gets the feeling that the author deliberately departs from reality. This feeling grows when Zeleza writes about the prisoners' lone suffering in dark rooms "with icy water up to the knees" (*SC*, p. 154). Moreover, when one hears of snakes being thrown into the water, one immediately concludes that no human being could be so cruel to another. But the reality on the ground dispels such feelings and views. In fact, those who have been to Mikuyu prison, read Sam Mpasu's *Political Prisoner 3/75* or heard/read the accounts of people who once found themselves in Banda's prisons will testify that Tiyambe Zeleza's accounts of prison brutalities and torture in *SC* are by no means exaggerated. Malawi under Dr Banda, as Zeleza shows, was not a land of milk and honey. For instance, a woman office worker at the National Bank in Blantyre (cited in Ngulube-Chinoko 1995:97) had this to say about her torture and suffering at the hands of the police:

> I was interrogated by three men. They started questioning me about the paper. I said I know nothing. They started beating me with both hands clenched. He was beating me beside ears. Ear fluid came out of my right ear. He pulled my hair and made me fall down. He started stamping on my ears with his boots...He pulled my clothes right up. He then took a pair of pliers and pressed into my vagina and pinched it with the pliers about ten minutes. I cried and cried. I started bleeding so I asked to go to the toilet...He told me I was disturbing our President's mama and Tembo... Then I felt pain in my jaw. I did not eat anything. It became septic. For two months I was there in the prison discharging pus. I asked to see a doctor but was refused...

Another woman had a similar experience:

> I was hit by a policeman's first. I was punched under my left breast...Then they ripped the clothes off me. They left me naked. They made me lie down. One pulled my hair. One pulled my legs. One man had p l i e r s. They forced my knees and my legs apart. They started putting the pliers into my anus. I was crying at the top of my voice. They withdrew (Ngulube-Chinoko, p. 97).

All this shows that the police and the prison guards in Banda's many detention camps and prisons were capable of inflicting such torture and even more. To them, human life was of no more value than that of, say, a chicken. They could go to any extreme in their brutalities if that would enable them to get whatever information they needed, real or imaginary, prompting such critics as Peter Ngulube-Chinoko (1995:97) to observe that "the best definition of the phrase 'violation of human

rights' could be found nowhere else apart from the gaols of Malawi, by then, a one party state".

In *TWON*, Chimombo, like Zeleza, turns to historical realism as a tool with which to demolish the view that under Dr Banda's leadership Malawi was a paradise. The novel is nothing but "a thinly veiled account of the political, social and economic problems" (Nazombe 1995:141) that obtained in Malawi during the Banda era and that still obtain in the country after the transition to multiparty democracy. Writing about the notoriety of the Special Branch in the novel, Chimombo says it was the cruelty of members of the Special Branch which forced many Malawians into exile. But the unfortunate ones among these were "lured back to Mandania [Malawi] only to be killed on home territory. Sometimes the neighbouring countries offered no safety. There were cases of atrocious murders of journalists and politicians, with petrol bombs or poison even in friendly countries" (*TWON*, p. 80). Besides Mkwapatira Mhango and many others, Atati Mpakati was also a victim of such inhumanity. After surviving a letter-bomb which destroyed eight of his ten fingers, an act for which Banda claimed responsibility, he was found dead in March 1983 in a storm drain in Harare, Zimbabwe - obviously murdered by Banda's agents (Muluzi et al 1999:118-9). However, not even home was safe. You suspected your domestic servants or even your family of being informants, a fact proved by Chola's house servant, Smart, in *SC*. "Any pretext would do to detain or brutalize you or even throw you into the rivers as meat for crocodiles"(*TWON*, p. 80).

Chimombo becomes even more factual when he observes that "one glaring example of the government at its peak, when it could kill with impunity," without fear of investigation, is the Nguluwe [Mwanza] case (*TWON*, p. 80). The rise of the United Democratic Front (UDF) party to power in 1994 saw the formation of a commission of inquiry in 1995 to look into the circumstances surrounding the death of Aaron Gadama, Dick Matenje, Twaibu Sangala and David Chiwanga who the old republic claimed had died in a car accident in Mwanza while fleeing the country. The commission established that the men had been murdered by police on orders from above. Dr Banda, John Tembo and Cecilia Kadzamira were arrested and tried for murder. During the subsequent hearings, "some members of the Police Force admitted using hammers and other objects to kill the politicians, after which they loaded the corpses in a car and rolled it over a cliff to simulate a car accident" (Muluzi et al 1999:132). The trio was acquitted in 1996 for lack of evidence, whatever that means. In the novel the trial takes place side by side with

Nkhoma's investigations into the *MV Maravi* tragedy, a fact that places the historical setting of the novel between 1945 and 1996.

In spite of the atrocities Banda consciously or unconsciously committed, a unanimous feeling prevails in Malawi that, in the words of Dzikolidaya: "He was a great man. He is still a great man wherever he is. He did great things to this country. He chased the white man from our land. The country was returned to us" (*TWON*, p. 127). That may be so, but the wounds that he caused to many innocent and politically harmless Malawians in an attempt to consolidate his totalitarian powers shall remain in the people's memory for a long time. No wonder, upon hearing his apology in 1996 after the Mwanza case, (so-called Nguluwe case in *TWON*) for evils committed during his reign, many Malawians must have exclaimed like Nkhoma: "The hypocritical double-faced rotter!" (*TWON*, p. 532), for the apology left a lot to be desired.

What has been said in this essay so far should show that the nation's history; the social, political and economic forces of the Malawi society have given birth to the novels under discussion. Although other Malawian writers have used history in their writings before, in *SC* and *TWON*, Zeleza and Chimombo use it with unprecedented richness and strength.[3] By evoking the traumas of the first republic these authors, like Sam Mpasu, teach Malawians and Africans in general the dangers of allowing one man to hold too much power (Mpasu 1995:iv).

In *SC* this is exemplified by the MCP's suppression of dissent, its atrocities such as long detentions without trial and the merciless murders as Dr Banda struggled to consolidate his domination of the country. About the party's suppression of dissent or freedom of expression, we hear that when the Njala women, while chatting at Biti's place, are confronted by Mrs. Gonthi and Mrs. Madimba for not going for dance rehearsals remain silent even after the two have gone. "No one commented on what they had said" for "one could never be sure whether their comment was appropriate or not. The party had eyes and ears everywhere. Safety lay in keeping one's eyes and ears open, but the mouth shut" (*SC*, p. 41). They know, just as Mchere does that "the government's hand is long and brutal" (*SC*, p. 47). Here we are reminded of a warning Hona receives from a woman at Sango bus stop in *The Detainee*. To Hona, who speaks evil of the Youth Brigades (Youth Leaguers) the woman says: "It is not wise to speak all you know...These are difficult times...A wise person never says everything he knows. He keeps his eyes open but he also knows when to let flies settle on his tongue [for] man's greatest enemy is not the

snake in the grass but the tongue in his head."[4] This fear of reprisals reduced many Malawians to dumb puppets and clowns as uncertainty reigned supreme while the watchdogs of the party, the youth leaguers and Malawi Young Pioneers, terrorized the country. The Malawi of the time was like Kenya during the Mau Mau war: It was a Malawi in which "you found a friend betraying a friend, father suspicious of a son, a brother doubting the sincerity or good intentions of a brother...,"[5] a Malawi in which one could not even trust one's shadow. In the novel, Inde Ndatero, a lecturer and author of 'The Great Famine' (a play) is sent to 'high school' (detention), like other lecturers and students, for daring to be decent enough to believe in something (*SC*, p. 85).

In *TWON* Chimombo takes up the same line of argumentation to lay bare the repressive tendencies of the first republic. Nkhoma recollects how it was like to be a journalist during Dr Banda's dictatorial reign:

> It was dangerous to be a journalist in the first republic. With any wrong choice of words you found yourself in detention without trial. To the first president, journalists had to be watched because they distorted the truth for their own gain or for the foreign press. In the face of growing brutalities perpetrated by the youth league and young pioneers, ... the muzzling of all discussion of politics anywhere became the muzzling of the press, and journalists were victims by the dozen till they too fell silent (*TWON*, pp. 78-79).

These words remind us of the fate of Mkwapatira Mhango, a freelance journalist whose house in Zambia was petrol-bombed on 13th October, 1989. His two wives, seven children and Mhango himself died in the terrorist attack (Muluzi et al 1999:125). The editor of a pro-government *Mandania Times* confesses in the novel: "When I look back and read what I wrote under the first president...I can't believe I wrote such terrible things. For years I worked against my conscience for survival. I was forced to work for a thief, a liar and a corrupt president..." (*TWON*, p. 79). And speaking in the same way as many Malawian writers today would do, he says when he is asked what the greatest thing that the new government has given him is, he answers that it is freedom; freedom to say what he wants to say, when and how to say it, "without looking over" his shoulder to check if the Special Branch or the Young Pioneers are within earshot (*TWON*, p. 79).

Sick and tired of the political situation that prevailed in Banda's Malawi, Zeleza's Chola decides to go into exile but it is too late. The party's agents catch up with him. They invade his house in search of so-called subversive material reminding

us of Mpasu's similar experience as he recounts it in *Political Prisoner 3/75*. From the house the agents confiscate every book bearing the word 'politics,' 'military,' and 'revolution' or 'ism.' Ridiculously, they take a book titled *The Green Revolution and its Fruits*, which was about how to grow better maize, leaving behind *The Biography of Che Guevara* which by all standards can be said to be subversive (*SC*, pp. 121-122). Here, Zeleza is clearly poking fun at the party agents. In spite of all their ferocity, they were so ignorant and poorly educated that they are fooled by a book's title.

In going back into the country's history Zeleza and Chimombo lend more weight to Ngugi's (1972:39) words that "the novelist is haunted by a sense of the past. His work is often an attempt to come to terms with" the thing that has been, "a struggle as it were, to sensitively register his account with history, his people's history." They also prove the validity of Wole Soyinka's claim that "the artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experiences of his society and as the voice of vision in his time."[6] A reading of *SC* and *TWON* gives one the conviction that Zeleza and Chimombo register their encounter with the country's history. In these novels the fear and uncertainty, the poverty and immorality that loomed above the country during the first republic are brought to life, the suffering of those who managed to escape detention and the fate of women whose husbands or relatives were imprisoned are laid bare.

Having suffered so much at the hands of the colonialists, Malawians expected a life of liberty and freedom after independence in 1964. But as soon as independence was attained, the people's dreams of the future proved to be an illusion as the future soon turned bleak and the people's hopes receded to the far off horizons. In *SC* the people's disillusionment is expressed in the character of Chola. Chola returns from America to discover that life at home has turned from bad to worse. Passing through a certain part of the city with "rickety structures" for houses, Chola always feels "uneasy and sometimes guilty" (*SC*, p. 16). In this part of the city "young girls prematurely bore children in quick succession" (Ibid.). Worse still, the very leaders who decry immorality are actually the perpetrators of it for "some of them had actually thrown those babies into the virgin bodies of the girls in the first place" (*SC*, p. 82). The MP for Njala (Honourable Chide, Assistant Minister for Health), for example, seduces Lucy by "promising to pay her school fees at one of the famous boarding schools for girls." But when she becomes pregnant at the age of seventeen, he abandons her (*SC*, p. 104). It is this kind of betrayal of the people's hopes that makes Malawians think that, to borrow Ayi Kwei

Armah's words:

> There is no difference... No difference at all between the white men...and...the apes of the apes, our party men. And after their reign is over, there will be no difference ever. All new men will be like the old. Is that then the whole truth? Bungalows, white with a wounding whiteness. Cars, long and heavy, with drivers in white men's uniforms waiting ages in the sun.[7]

Chola's disillusionment deepens when he discovers that many of his militant schoolmates "had become 'big shots' and joined the ranks of the pot-bellied scoundrels they used to denounce so fervently. Their intoxicating words had now fermented into froth and their radical aspirations had degenerated into mere shibboleths from a dead past..." (*SC*, p. 18). He, along with many others, is left to wonder how the promise of the leaders which was so beautiful, the promise about which "even those who were too young to understand it all knew that at last something good was being born," how that promise, had turned so completely into something different.[8]

While many Malawians were languishing in detention, their spouses and relatives outside detention were not exempt from suffering. Being a 'wife' of Chola, a man who had been branded a rebel, Catherine is barred from continuing with her education. Dr Bakha, like many other shameless Malawians used to do, takes advantage of her plight to sexually exploit her with a promise to plead for her case so that she could be allowed to continue with her studies (*SC*, p. 160ff). Nambe, Mchere's wife suffers a similar fate. Besides being harassed, being called a wife of a subversive and being isolated, for it was considered dangerous to associate with the family of a 'rebel,' Gwape, a cousin to Mchere and a local leader of the Youth Militia, rapes her (*SC*, p. 170). The like fate befell many a woman in Malawi when the MCP was in power. In *TWON* Mrs. Mtima, a widow whose husband died in detention, is unable to find work and her relatives shun her family (*TWON*, p. 215). A concrete example of such victims perhaps would be Sam Mpasu's Ethiopian wife, Sofie, who was raped by a Social Welfare Officer in Blantyre where she stayed while her husband was in Mikuyu Prison in 1976 (Mpasu 1995:123-6). So great was Banda's fear of a revolt that to suppress all opposition and protest he brought untold misery to many innocent souls. On top of being victims of rape women were also ordered to dance for their self-appointed Nkhoswe Number One even at their own great inconvenience. They were literally forced to surrender "their maternal hips to the drum beat, and let their waists wriggle with the frenzy of youth" (*SC*, p. 45) prompting Emily Mkamanga

(2000:39) to observe that "Banda will go down [in] history as an African president who never grew tired of watching traditional dances...especially those that were performed by women."

In *TWON*, Steve Chimombo, like Tiyambe Zeleza, also tackles the issue of women's dancing before the president during the one party system of government. But, unlike Zeleza, Chimombo handles the subject with undisguised bitterness. Nkhoma, the protagonist recalls that the only time his "marital boat was really threatened was by politics. The time the first republic was commandeering all females to dance for the president at any official function" (*TWON*, p. 288). At that time "all the women could be called upon to go dancing in the streets, at the airport" and other places (*TWON*, p. 288). Even after democracy has been attained the disturbing question of whether Thoko had been raped in the dancing camps still haunts Nkhoma: "Had [she] succumbed to the party demands to save him?"(*TWON*, p. 463) he wonders. His sense of betrayal grows when he fails to convince himself to believe that Thoko could have been spared. He is sure that beautiful as she is, she could not have come out of the stormy waters unscathed (*TWON*, p. 463).

The position of women in the first republic is aptly described by Susan who says "the first regime made every woman a concubine of the state" (*TWON*, p. 242).[9] She goes further to say the greatest betrayal was when men 'allowed' their wives, girl friends and secretaries to go to the dancing camps knowing very well that they were selling them to the ministers, MP's, Party Chairmen, Youth Leaguers, and Young Pioneers: "all the congress rapists, seducers and abductors" (*TWON*, p. 242). This underlines the moral rottenness of the first republic. Although the system came to an end ten years ago, the damages it caused to many families still persist today. Men are terrified to ask their wives: "Were you raped in the dancing camps?" (*TWON*, p. 243) and are only left to wonder, "Was she raped by the same man each time or by several men at different times and places?" (*TWON*, p. 381). These inevitable questions are also the most difficult to put into words. Suppose the wife answers in the affirmative, that she was indeed raped, what then? One will only be brought face to face with one's impotence. This is surely what Chimombo means in the blurb of the novel when he says: "After suffering decades of dictatorship under the life president Kamtsitsi Muyaya, Mandania, a central African republic discovers that the traumas of the past still hang over the euphoria of its fledgling democracy."

In his *SC*, Zeleza does not hide the fact that the whole country was a prison. Everybody, the youth leaguers and prison guards included, was a victim of the injustices of totalitarianism. About the party's youth militia who caused so much havoc in the country in their sale of party cards, Zeleza writes: "A gang of five young men approached [Chola]. Their supreme confidence betrayed the hollowness in their lives, a hollowness so deep that it could only be covered by the darkness of its abyss" (*SC*, p. 17). Here Zeleza gives us a picture of young men whose lives are empty and have lost all meaning. They are simply pawns on a chessboard which the party manipulates at will. Furthermore, in his description of the prison guards who confront the Njala women, Zeleza says: "One had a closely cropped head.... His colleague looked like an overgrown version of a kwashiorkor child" (*SC*, p. 136). We may rightly say, therefore, that the guards' inhumane treatment of the prisoners is a result of bitterness with the worthlessness and meaninglessness of their own lives. They are rendered impotent by the party and they are condemned to be on guard of people whose crimes, if any, they hardly know. They cannot afford good food as Mpasu makes it clear in *Political Prisoner 3/75* and have to make do with the badly cooked food the prisoners use to bribe them.

Not even the police were exceptions to the evils of the system. The terror they instilled in the minds of the people was a product of impotent and frustrated men and women. The anecdotes the prisoners share in the coolness of their cell at Zomba Central Prison reinforce this view. Mpasu (1995:46) tells us: "It was considered an achievement when one day, one of them [prisoners] told the others that he had made love to a woman police officer in uniform, on the carpet, in her own office."

From the above analysis it is indisputable that Zeleza and Chimombo portray a realistic picture of the Malawi of the old republic. Zeleza realistically portrays life in prison as confirmed by some autobiographical sources while Chimombo brings out the immorality that went on in the dancing camps. Furthermore, by being so much concerned with history, *SC* and *TWON* act as records of the country's history. This is very true of *TWON* which touches on a number of historical events in the country such as the *MV Vipya* foundering (1946), the Mwanza Trial/Case (1995), Operation Bwezani (1993) and the Pastoral Letter (1992), among others. As such the novel, which as Mdika Tembo (2002:90) rightly observes, lacks brilliance of presentation; is replete with dialogue and "gratuitous descriptions of scenes and events, and boring digressions that lead nowhere," reads like a documentary of Malawi's past thereby ensuring that the events, which have since gone

down the annals of history, shall be available to posterity. One suspects that this is because as a writer writing during the post-Banda period, Chimombo, unlike Zeleza, was better placed to explore a wide range of historical events from the colonial period through the Banda dictatorship to the second republic without fear of repercussions from the powers that be.

The historical nature of *TWON* is revealed right in the dedication. Chimombo dedicates the novel:

> To the more than two hundred souls who lost their lives when the *MV Vipya* sank off Florence (now Chitimba) Bay on 31st July, 1946. Except for the memorial plaque at Mangochi Boma, and a few scattered references, they were all but forgotten. They are the ones who inspired [his] earlier long poem 'The Vipya Poem' and this epic novel (*TWON*, p .v).

The novel opens at the banks of Mpasa (Shire) River in Gombe (Mangochi) district where "almost on the sand, was the Hotchkiss gun [with] its yawning muzzle aimed menacingly across the waters at the marshes and reeds opposite" (*TWON*, p. 1). Later, we hear that Gombe had been one of the famous slave trading posts of the last century. "The gun had been on an old warship patrolling the river and the lake beyond, fighting the Arabs, the Swahili and their middlemen" (*TWON*, p .1). In the history of Malawi, one such middleman based in Mangochi was chief Makanjira, and the allusion in the novel is not difficult to notice. Later still, Chimombo draws our attention to the *MV Maravi* (Vipya), which is at the centre of the novel. It was "a cargo and passenger ship following a weekly schedule, port to port, round lake Tamanda [Malawi]. The ship was never salvaged under the explanation that it sank in one of the deepest parts of Tamanda" (*TWON*, p. 2).

While weaving his story around the *MV Vipya*, Chimombo also takes a look at several historical events in the country thereby qualifying as the recorder of the mores and experiences of his society. One such event is colonialism and its injustices prominent of which is racism. We learn from the novel that the only white passenger whose body was found after the *MV Maravi* tragedy attained all burial respects while the blacks were dumped in mass graves (p 165).

Furthermore, in their use of history Zeleza and Chimombo show adherence to Frantz Fanon's (1967:187) view that "the...man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future as an invitation to action and a basis for hope." As such, they serve as examples to would-be Malawian writers by showing them that the country has a rich history which can be exploited fro lit-

erary purposes. From the foregoing analysis it should not be hard then to see that Zeleza's and Chimombo's great strength in *SC* and *TWON* respectively " lies in [their] realization that in the search for social well-being, questions arising from the experience of yesterday must lead to a consideration of here-and-now as a basis of hope for the yet-to-come" (Ikiddeh 1972:xiv).

But the two novels show similarity in as far as they both evoke the country's troubled history. History is everything, the flesh and blood, for *SC* while for *TWON* it is a skeleton to which the bits and pieces of flesh that make up the novel are attached. This shows that the two authors' approach to history is different.

In *SC* the reader is brought face to face with the injustices of the first republic. The novel is set right in the old regime itself and the characters participate in whatever happens there. This enables Zeleza to bring out the traumas of the republic more forcefully, thereby awakening our pity, fear and repulsion as we identify with the characters. This is best exemplified by Chola's prison experiences, especially the different kinds of torture to which he is subjected. For instance, infuriated by Chola's refusal to confess his allegiance to the Movement, the prison superintendent threatens him: "Forget all this nonsense about the so-called Movement. We will crush it" (*SC*, p. 154). The prison superintendent then proceeds to torture Chola in various ways including electrocution and exposure to the homosexual Duli. While he is within Duli's reach: "Chola was about to get up when the man suddenly pulled down Chola's shorts...Chola was gripped by his private parts. He tried to fight but the man was too strong for him. 'You are tight,' the man laughed after he was through. Chola wept like a baby" (*SC*, p. 156).

Homosexuality was and, unfortunately, still is one of the great evils in the prisons of Malawi. Mpasu (1995:56) tells us of a tragedy that was about to occur in Mikuyu Prison one day: "A young boy in his early teens was imprisoned. They threw him in on remand to await trial for whatever crime he had committed. The homosexuals were very excited over him. They eyed him with lust all day. An argument soon broke out on the question of who was going to sleep next to him." This argument led to someone being blackmailed and punished. But, unable to persuade himself to accept the fact that he had lost the boy to another man, he attempted suicide and was only saved just in time.

Chola's brutal torture reaches a climax when he is made to sit on "a stove of hot coals" and his penis is pierced with a hot nail (*SC*, p. 157) before he is thrown into

Bonzo's cell which Zeleza lets us see and feel through his description:

> It was tiny. The air was damp and still. The walls were covered with graffiti written with human faeces. It stank. Another prisoner was there. Chola was filled with revulsion and chocked as if he was going to throw his lungs out. But his fear slowly turned into incredulity: the other man did not even seem to recognize his presence...Then it dawned on him that maybe the man was mad (*SC*, p. 157).

It was this seemingly mad man, however, who was to end Chola's life in the most brutal and ruthless manner as Zeleza writes later: "That morning Bonzo was hanged. The other strikers were brought to the cell and they were horrified by what they saw. Chola's body was dangling from the roof. They saw blood all over the floor and they knew what had happened" (*SC*, p. 158).

Chinua Achebe (cited in Obiechina 1972:32) observed that for the writer to be able to perform his/her function well s/he must have "a proper sense of history." For Tiyambe Zeleza, having "a proper sense of history" means not only being able to explain or report what happened in, or outlining the evils of, the first republic, but also painting a truly realistic picture of life at the time. This is why he paints a shocking picture of life in the gaols of Malawi before 1994. It is true that upon reading Zeleza's novel no sane Malawian would wish for a repeat of the same atrocities.

As it has already been mentioned above, in *TWON*, unlike in *SC*, history acts as a skeleton. The *MV Maravi* (Vipya) tragedy of 1946 is such a skeleton to which the bits and pieces of flesh - the events of the remote and recent past - are attached to make a whole. As a result, *TWON* reads like a documentary of the historical/political events that occurred in the country during the one party system of government and the first few years of multiparty democracy. Chimombo, therefore, gives us a picture of a man who stands at a river bank and looks back at the stormy waters he has just crossed, not of one who is battling with the currents to cross; a picture of the "owl of Minerva that spreads its wings at the fall of dusk" (Avineri 1972:130) when all the jostling, kicking and commotion of day are gone. For instance, writing about the Operation Bwezani (Operation Fufuzani) of November 1993, Chimombo, in a report-style says: "It was a desperate nation faced with rising crime that called in the army to disarm the young pioneers and youth leaguers" (*TWON*, p. 329).[10]

It is no surprise then that the novel awakens neither our fear nor pity. The reader

is not very much affected by dead and dry facts of a report but by facts which ooze with freshness, facts which speak for themselves, facts which paint a vivid account of the thing that has been. Nevertheless, we share Nkhoma's bitterness in his failure to ask Thoko the disturbing question: "Were you raped?"

TWON, however, gains strength from its scope. Unlike *SC* which is exclusively set in the first republic, *TWON* is wider in scope as it oscillates between the old and the new republics. This offers its author the opportunity to review the transition period in the country's politics and the new republic, though not with the same effect, the same dread and repugnance that Zeleza's novel awakens in us. With regard to the transition period, Chimombo becomes factual when he states that political transition in Malawi would not have been possible "without the unprecedented move of the Catholic bishops..." - their Pastoral Letter of Sunday, 8th March 1992 -, the findings of Amnesty International and the IMF's, World Bank's and the European Community's tightening of economic leverage on Malawi (*TWON*, p. 80). He does not, of course, leave out Operation Bwezani which took place in the same period.

More striking in Chimombo's dealings with the second republic is his disillusionment. We might say that in *TWON* the Movement mentioned in *SC* has seized power and we immediately realize that Inde Ndatero's pessimism: "What guarantee is there that if your movement came to power it would not be as tyrannical as the present regime?" in *SC* (p. 151) is justified after all. *TWON* makes it clear that as soon as political change takes place people begin to get disillusioned with the new government as the cost of living becomes very high, crime rate rises, since the party men, the army and the police become interested in their own material gain rather than in the welfare of the people.

In his disillusionment, Chimombo is representative of many Malawians. True to Hona's words, in *The Detainee*, that Sir Zaddock (Dr Banda) was only like a shooting star which at "one moment it's there, large and bright, the next moment it's gone forever,"[11] Dr Banda and his reign of terror fell from power in the general elections of 1994. But, although the elections had been held and won, Nkhoma cannot join politics because the big names behind the new parties are the very ones that sowed the seeds of violence and murder in the old republic when they were loyalists to the MCP. "Imagine working with people you know were signing death warrants for your family and friends and detention notes for your fellow journalists, people who chanted sycophantic songs and eulogies for Kamtsitsi

Muyaya, being your fellow MPs. Wouldn't it make you sick?" (*TWON*, p. 345) he asks. Here Nkhoma speaks like Norman Leys in his book, *Kenya*, who, in reference to the colonialists, said: "I, on the contrary, cannot forget what these same men did and permitted to be done when they had things all their own way, and I mistrust a change of heart that conflicts with people's strongest interests and long cherished and dearest ambitions" (see Thiong'o 1972:xvi).

As a social critic, Chimombo does not condone the materialism of the second republic. Like the Mau Mau fighters in Kenya after the war, many people in the second republic are in a rat race for material possessions. The police and the army who are the supposed guardians of the nation's welfare are no exception. And "when you have a whole generation of police and army bigwigs going into real estate, driving posh cars, lording it over civilians in hotels, you have big problems on your hands (...)They're too busy managing their business to look after the security of this country" (*TWON*, p. 98). The politicians are portrayed in the novel as the worst villains, and that is what they are anyway, as far as the quest for material possessions is concerned. The government's poverty alleviation programme, whose fruits are yet to be seen, also comes under attack in the novel when Moyo laughingly says: "At least [the president] is doing something about it, for himself and his cabinet. See how they've built more mansions, increased their fleet of cars, and bought off businessmen. They are very practical" (*TWON*, p. 547).

As a result of situations like these, many Malawians feel cheated and some of them wish their Muyaya "back to save them from the present chaos" (*TWON*, p. 312) - one of the worst things to wish for, but when one is pushed beyond a certain limit, one can wish for anything including yelling Lear-like: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow! / You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout/ Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!"[12] But suffering is not what Malawians wanted when they opted for political change in 1993 and, when faced with the injustices of the new regime, many are made to wonder, again to borrow Ayi Kwei Armah's words: "So this [is] the real gain. The only real gain. This [is] the thing for which poor men had fought and shouted. This [is] what it [has] come to: not that the whole thing [may] be overturned and ended, but that a few [men] might be pushed closer to their masters, to eat some of the fat into their bellies too."[13]

Chimombo's disillusionment surely lends more power to his novel whose plot leaves a lot to be desired (Tembo 2002:87-92). There is nothing like old ethnic

rivalries erupting and manifesting themselves under the guise of crime with violence as the blurb claims. Not even sabotage and terrorism employed by opportunist politicians as they curve out their own regional empires. We are told in the novel that Chilungamo Nkhoma fears that somebody is after his life for embarking on an investigation into the circumstances leading to the foundering of the *MV Maravi*. But this angle, which would have enlivened the story, is not explored further. This gives one the impression that Nkhoma's fears are unfounded or imaginary.

On the ideological level Marxism is at the heart of the novels under study, especially in *SC*. As Emmanuel Ngara pointed out: "The influences of Marxism on African writing cannot be restricted to those writers who have openly declared their commitment to socialism.[14] There are other writers who to a greater or lesser degree have been influenced by the proliferation of Marxist ideas, whether consciously or unconsciously" (Ngara 1985:50). Marxist influences in *SC* are easily detectable in the character of Chola. Chola who entertains an idea of writing a book decides that the epigram should be Karl Marx's words: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please" (*SC*, p. 106). Zeleza's revolutionary views come out clearly when we hear Chola saying: "Democracy by itself will not remove our underdevelopment. We need a revolutionary movement which is committed to the eradication of poverty and greed" (*SC*. p.151). According to him, "there can be no democracy without development, and no development without a revolutionary movement" (*SC*, p. 151). Again when Ndatero wonders when the atrocities of the regime shall come to an end, Chola answers: "Until the thugs in power have been overthrown" (*SC*, p. 151). Here Marxist overtones cannot escape the notice of any committed reader, more especially when class struggle and class consciousness are revealed through Chola's words: "The Movement is striving to bring together all oppressed people and classes in our society in order to wage a common struggle against poverty, exploitation and oppression" (*SC*, p. 148). It is certain, therefore, that Zeleza is greatly influenced by Marxism, that "protest imbued with faith in man, in his capacity to liberate himself, and to realize his potentialities" (Fromm 1966:vi).

Marxist influences can also be detected in *TWON*. In Chilungamo Nkhoma's views, journalists "should concentrate on ordinary people's plight: their poverty, health and security" (*TWON*, p. 351). This is a clear indication that Chimombo recognizes the plight of the masses, the proletariat, which is also at the heart of Marxism. Again the politicians and civil service workers in the novel are self-

interested which leads to the alienation of the poor. Alienation for Karl Marx means that "man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but the world remains alien to him. The individuals experience the world and themselves passively, receptively, as subjects separated from objects" (Fromm 1966:44). *TWON* makes it clear that many Malawians were alienated in the Banda era and still are in the new political dispensation.

But, though Marxist influences are also traceable in *TWON*, they are not as clearly noticeable as they are in *SC*. When Chimombo writes about "entrepreneurs, mostly MPs, top officials in the army or police" who scramble for every inch of beach to build their own holiday resort (*TWON*, p. 486) we can sense his criticism of the capitalist tendencies of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie of the new republic. However, Chimombo's concern with the proletariat in the novel smacks of hypocrisy - the hypocrisy of the elite of post-independence Africa. Here is a man, Chilungamo Nkhoma, who can afford a trip with his family to the Lake for a birthday picnic for the 'old man,' where "a cluster of boys and girls" stands or plays around them. Here is a man whose wife entertains the naughty idea to "pour some libations and leave some chicken at the foot of one of the trees" at the river bank for the spirits instead of giving it to the poor children. And here is a man who is bold enough to advise his family: "Don't make the mistake of offering them anything... you will be feeding the five hundred in no time" (*TWON*, p. 5).

It is not uncommon to come out of the novel with the feeling that all other things not withstanding, Nkhoma is a bourgeoisie, a capitalist through and through. He owns a car - old fashioned though it is - and can afford to employ people like Chikhwaya, Effie and Dzikolidaya as domestic servants, and to send his two sons, Fats and Titan to "a privileged mixed-race school," amidst all the poverty. His attack on the second republic, therefore, seems to spring from frustrated ambitions, ambitions which the republic has failed to satisfy. Moreover, Nkhoma's quest for justice on the *MV Maravi* tragedy springs from selfish motives. He has self-interest in the story since, as a child, he was in the ship before it foundered. This attachment to the ship propels him to discover the circumstances surrounding its foundering. This falsifies his intention to see justice done. The Maravi Action Group (MAG) officials themselves are there to further their own ambitions - most of them are opportunist politicians who intend to curve their own empires.

When the novel, which promises a lot from the beginning, comes to an end, nothing of any import has been achieved or accomplished, either by Chilungamo

Nkhoma or MAG. In his investigations Nkhoma uncovers nothing of substance and MAG only succeeds in forwarding a petition to the president, a petition whose demands he can either honour or reject.

Nevertheless, in the novel Chimombo does implicitly tell Malawians that the best political system or leadership is not yet here; it is yet to be attained; when or how, nobody knows. And if Lee Nichols were to ask him today, as he did many years ago, if Chimombo has in mind anything in particular that he wants to get across to the audience that he is writing for, he would surely not give the naive reply: "I just want to write because I don't think I want to change the world."[15] We can, therefore, rightly say that Chimombo and Zeleza are in line with Emmanuel Ngara's observation that "committed African writers are extremely sensitive to the social problems of their day and are constantly coming to grips with them hoping to play their part in changing society for the better" (Ngara 1985:vii).

Conclusion

This essay has shown that Tiyambe Zeleza and Steve Chimombo use historical realism as a literary device in their novels. In this regard history is at the centre of these novels as the authors set out to approximate historical reality. The authors manage to integrate historical events within artistic elements to produce a particular type of novel rather than "a confusion between fiction and history" (Robson 1979:51). The use of historical realism enables these authors to show the reader what life in Malawi was like in the past, thereby deconstructing the idolization of Dr Banda and his country.

Nevertheless, a variation is noticeable in the two authors' use of history. In *SC* history is handled with more engagement. It comes alive as Zeleza paints a horrific picture of life in Malawi before democracy, while *TWON* gives one the feeling that history is tackled with an air of detachment. Be that as it may, Chimombo brings forth the disillusionment that prevails in Malawi today, the disillusionment which makes many people conclude, in the words of Armah yet again, that: "There have never been people to save anybody but themselves, never in the past, never now, and there will never be any saviours if each will not save himself. No saviours. Only the hungry and the fed. Deceivers all."[16] Indeed, Chimombo leaves every Malawian with the view that "for those who had come directly against the old power, there [is] much happiness. But for the nation itself there [is] only...a change of embezzlers and a change of the hunters and the hunted."[17]

Ideologically, *SC* is more Marxist than *TWON*. A reading of these books shows that Zeleza's use of historical realism and the Marxist ideology is richer, stronger and more influential than Chimombo's use of the same.

Chinua Achebe, quoting an Igbo proverb, says: "A man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot tell where he dried his body."[18] Zeleza and Chimombo tell their countrymen where the rain began to beat them, where and when their valued independence was perverted and by whom. But have the Malawians dried their bodies yet? This is a question which Chimombo also begins to answer in *TWON*. This also is a question which, hopefully, another author and/or critic who is well aware that "the 'wounds' which people suffer often do not heal, or only heal superficially to be opened at a later date by a chance comment or event,"[19] shall answer in more detail.

Notes

* The term 'historical realism' as used in this paper should be understood as "the willed tendency of art to approximate" historical reality. A historical realist is therefore someone who sets out to artistically portray life as it was lived in the past, recent or remote.

1. To him, Banda's Malawi, a thirty-year contraption of totalitarian power, was a land of pervasive fear where words were constantly monitored, manipulated, and mutilated, a country stalked by silence and suspicion, a nation where only the monotonous story of the Ngwazi's achievements could be told and retold, a state of dull uniformity that criminalized difference, ambiguity, and creativity, an omniscient regime with a divine right to nationalize time and thought, history and the popular will. See *CODESRIA Bulletin*, No.1, 1996, p. 10.
2. All page references to *Smouldering Charcoal* are from Tiyambe Zeleza, *Smouldering Charcoal* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1992) and all those to *The Wrath of Napolo* are from Steve Chimombo, *The Wrath of Napolo* (Zomba: WASI Publications, 2000).
3. Legson Kayira and Dede Kamkondo are some of the Malawian writers who have used history and historical realism in their works. In his *The Detainee* (1974), Legson Kayira writes about the oppression of Banda's totalitarianism while Dede Kamkondo writes about the *MV Vipya* tragedy of 1946 in his *Chil-*

dren of the Lake (1987).

4. Legson Kayira, *The Detainee,* p. 3.
5. "Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Interview with Lewis Nkosi", *African Writers Talking,* Dennis Duerden and Cosmo Pieterse, (eds) p. 121.
6. Quoted by Kathleen B. Fatton in "The Novels of Alex La Guma: The Representation of Political Conflict," PhD Thesis (University of Notre Dame, 1984), p. 1.
7. Ayi Kwei Armah, p. 89.
8. Ayi Kwei Armah, p. 85.
9. See also Emily Mkamanga, *Suffering in Silence* (2000).
10. The truth of the matter is that earlier in September 1993 the government had agreed with the National Consultative Council (NCC) to disarm the military wing of the MYP. But soon it became obvious that "the government did not intend to honour its agreement [and] the army moved in to disarm them forcibly.

    The immediate cause, [however], was the shooting dead by the MYP of two soldiers after some bar-room disagreement in Mzuzu. Middle and junior officers at the army headquarters in Lilongwe mutinied against their commander and senior officers, and went for revenge. They attacked the Ministry of Youth headquarters and the MCP headquarters, as well as other MYP offices and buildings in Lilongwe. Thereafter, the army went to MYP bases throughout the country (Bakili Muluzi et al 1999:172-3).

    According to Ngulube-Chinoko the disarmament was to a large extent "perpetuated by the reaction of the wives of soldiers" of Moyale Barracks who upon hearing that the two soldiers had been killed are said to have admonished the other soldiers thus: "Don't you see that your friends are dying and yet you are doing nothing? Should your work be confined to solely removing our panties?" (Ngulube-Chinoko 1995:98)
11. Legson Kayira, p. 110.
12. William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1972 repr. 1986), III.2.1-3.
13. Ayi Kwei Armah, quoted by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Homecoming,* p. xviii.
14. One such self-confessed Marxist is Ngugi wa Thiong'o of Kenya. In his *Homecoming* (1972) Ngugi says, "What goes for tribalism in Africa is really a form of civil war among the 'have' struggling for crumbs from the master's table." He goes on to say that:

    > It is the height of irony that we, [Africans], who have suffered from exploitation, are now supporting a system that not only continues that

> basic exploitation, but exacerbates destructive rivalries between brothers and sisters, a system that thrives on the survival instincts of dwellers in a Darwinian jungle (p. xvii).

The system in question here is Western capitalism whose "social, political and expansionist needs," in Ngugi's views, have affected all areas of our lives. Yet, sadly enough, "instead of breaking from [this] economic system whose lifeblood is the wholesale exploitation of [Africa] and the murder of [her] people," most of our countries have adopted the same system (pp. xv-xvi).

15. "Steve Chimombo, Interview with Lee Nichols", *Conversation with African Writers: Interview with Twenty-six African Authors*, edited by Lee Nichols,p. 18.
16. Ayi Kwei Armah, p. 90.
17. Ayi Kwei Armah, p. 162.
18. Quoted by E. N. Obiechina in "Cultural Nationalism in Modern African Creative Literature," p. 32.
19. Robson, p. 63.

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