

The Authority of Presence: Reading Judith Todd's *Through the Darkness* as Diary

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Summary

Judith Todd's *Through the Darkness* (2007) is an account of her life in Zimbabwe since independence and is constructed from notes and letters written over the years. The article addresses the implications of Todd's narrative method which at times reads like a diary with the disjunctions, passing references, and more considered observations that characterise the diary as a narrative form. The article argues that these disjunctions convey something of the details of the lived life with its often random thoughts, expected and unexpected encounters, setbacks and achievements and that these slowly begin to be set against the growth of totalitarianism in Zimbabwean politics. Todd's narrative allows her to record slowly, becoming aware of how ruthlessly the party will enforce its authority and how totally it will contain and then eliminate everything that it regards as dissidence. Only by using the narrative method that she has used is Todd able to convey not only her slow disillusionment but to speak with authority about what is happening. Her authority derives from her presence, from the fact that she records nothing that she has not directly experienced.

Opsomming

Judith Todd se *Through the Darkness* (2007) is 'n beskrywing van haar lewe in Zimbabwe sedert onafhanklikheid en is uit aantekeninge en briewe saamgestel wat oor die jare heen geskryf is. Die artikel behandel die implikasies van Todd se verhaaltrant wat by tye soos 'n dagboek lees, gegewe die disjunktiewe inskrywings, terloopse verwysings en woorwoë waarnemings wat die dagboek as narratief kenmerk. Die artikel voer aan dat hierdie disjunktiewe iets deurgee oor die besonderhede van die geleefde lewe met sy dikwels lukrake gedagtes, verwagte sowel as onverwagte gebeure, terugslae en prestasies, en dat dit alles stadig begin afspeel teen die groei van totalitarisme in die Zimbabwe-politiek. Todd se verteltrant gee aan haar die ruimte om langsamerhand aan te teken, getrou aan die bewuswording van net hoe genadeloos die party sy gesag sal afdwing en hoe dit alles geheel en al in bedwang sal hou, om uiteindelik dit wat die party as andersdenkend beskou, uit te skakel. Dit is slegs deur die verteltrant wat sy gebruik het in te span, dat Todd dit regkry om nie net haar eie stadige ontnugtering deur te gee nie, maar ook met gesag te praat oor dit wat besig is om te gebeur. Todd se gesag spruit uit haar teenwoordigheid, uit die feit dat sy niks aanteken wat sy nie eerstehands ervaar het nie.

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Can a diary be an autobiography, a recollection of one's own life with all the privileged understanding of hindsight, or does a diary provide only the materials from which autobiographies may one day be constructed? Judith Todd identifies the provenance of her book *Through the Darkness* in "notes and copies of letters" that she has kept over the years and her book she claims is "neither a history nor an analysis of events, but merely charts one person's impressions" of what has happened in Zimbabwe since 1980 (Todd 2007: 2).¹ She avoids the term "diary" and yet as one reads this record of events that has neither the coherence of a historical narrative nor the logic of selection that an analysis demands, it is difficult to escape the impression that among her notes there are manuscripts that look very much like diaries. As with any diary, *Through the Darkness* is characterised by disjunctions: narratives are begun that are not finished and sometimes an anecdote is related in such a way that it possesses the classic beginning, middle and end of a conventionally "well-made" story.

In her account of the truth to life of modernist novels that defy conventional narrative forms, Virginia Woolf famously invites us to "[e]xamine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" during which "[t]he mind receives a myriad of impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel" (Woolf [1925]1951: 189). But she also recognises that, despite their experience of the everyday, readers, whose expectations are shaped by the formal conventions of realism, will find narratives that try to reproduce such incoherence vague and inconclusive and incapable of satisfying their expectations because when the "emphasis is laid upon ... unexpected places ... at first it seems as if there is no emphasis at all" ([1925]1951: 193). Only when we readers put aside our preconceptions of the forms that a narrative should employ do we realise that we are sharing the author's vision – she is talking here of a Chekhov story – and that "[he] has chosen this, that, and the other, and placed them together to compose something new" ([1925]1951: 193). The story will still, however, refuse easy categorisation because such categories derive from conventional forms and not from the multiple ways in which life can be regarded and therefore represented.

Judith Todd's *Through the Darkness* sometimes appears to be the record of the impressions of an ordinary if not an extraordinary day – there was little in Todd's experience of Zimbabwe after independence that can be said to be ordinary – the accumulation of the succession of events over a number of days and years. To show these features of her narrative I have taken, almost at random, a few pages at a time from four different places in her book and I shall try to suggest the ways in which her narrative functions in these pages and, I would argue, throughout much of the book. In my first example Todd is telephoned at midnight on 2 May 1990 by Parirenyatwa

1. All subsequent references to *Through the Darkness* will be indicated by page numbers only.

Hospital to say that Brigadier Maponga, formerly of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), has been admitted with a painful back. Todd is not yet asleep as she has only just returned from "a Danish embassy party (good fish, poor chicken)" (p. 341). Already being treated at Parirenyatwa is Father Michael Lapsley, who two days before had survived a South African parcel bomb attack. Early in the morning Todd visits both men, realises that Maponga is in considerable pain and movingly accounts Lapsley's attempts to hug her unaware that he has lost both his hands. Neither Maponga nor Lapsley has been mentioned before in the book and neither is mentioned again. Todd's early-morning hospital visit resembles a diary entry in that the noting of an event does not guarantee that it will have specific consequences or effects that will subsequently be recorded in the narrative. And this apparent inconsequential noting of encounters and observations continues in the following paragraphs.

Six weeks later (although only a passing reference to the end of June shows that it is not later on the same day), Todd meets the Minister of Justice, Emmerson Mnangagwa, in order to ask when former ZIPRA fighters who were still being detained as Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU (PF)) dissidents would be named as beneficiaries of the 1988 amnesty which had followed the 1987 unity agreement between the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU (PF)), and Nkomo's ZAPU (PF). Mnangagwa tells Todd that the names should have been released on the tenth anniversary of Zimbabwean independence, 18 April 1990. There had, however, been a delay in compiling the list and it was ready only in May. Mnangagwa had drawn up a declaration for the president to make when the names were announced but the president's office had mislaid it and he had departed on a state visit to Malaysia. By the time Mugabe returned, Mnangagwa was in Swaziland and the president was unable to contact him. The paragraph describing these Box and Cox movements ends with "Now Mnangagwa was back, but the president was on leave" (p. 342). Not surprisingly this encounter leaves Todd with the impression that it is not only the declaration that had been lost but the initiative for the amnesty as well.

The account of her meeting with Mnangagwa does not end there, however. Todd cheekily suggests that an appropriate day to announce the amnesty would be when the cock that crowned – and still indeed crowns – ZANU (PF) headquarters be taken down. Todd leaves unexplained the significance of this icon although few Zimbabweans would fail to understand what the cock represents. Since the government-controlled media proposes for itself no other purpose than to further the interests of the dominant faction of the ruling party, the language of its reports seldom represents the ways in which national realities are experienced. The language employed in the public sphere has in consequence been devalued as an analytical and explanatory tool and Zimbabweans are accustomed to

following shifts and initiatives of government policy by reading non-verbal signs. With the opposition *Daily News* closed down and few Zimbabweans having access to online analyses of Zimbabwe events and, with the collapse of university libraries, even fewer being in a position to read the serious academic studies made of their country, we are a nation constantly seeking meanings in signs. These might be anything from who is selected among the dead for burial at Heroes' Acre² or who among the living are given important ministries from the astonishing range available or what is really meant by Operation Murambatsvina that in 2005 destroyed within a month the houses of 700 000 people.³ Shortly before I started revising this article much of Harare had already been without power for ten days but the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe reported that the broadcasting media and government-owned papers "simply pretended the self-evident crisis did not exist" and Harare's *Sunday Mail* even celebrated the cooking fires in the suburbs as newly fashionable bonfires that "rekindled the tradition of story telling" (Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe 2007: 9). The cock was not simply one decorative choice from several possibilities. It was ZANU (PF)'s symbol and if the two parties had truly united, the cock should no longer have had a place on the building. If, on the other hand as many people believed, ZANU (PF) had absorbed the ZAPU (PF) leadership into its ruling structures, indifferent to the wishes of the ZAPU (PF) rank and file, unity was a victory for ZANU (PF) and it was appropriate that the cock should remain triumphantly in place.⁴ Todd does not provide us with this background and she chooses simply to record the curious twists that the

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2. See Kriger's account of the debates about how Heroes' Acre interprets the nature of national heroism (Kriger 1995: 144-160).
 3. These figures are those given in the United Nations report which also describes the extent of devastation. Bratton and Masunungure record various explanations for the May 2005 demolition of houses and shops. These include the government's claim that it was the beginning of a programme of urban renewal, the government's fear of food riots which led "the Joint Operations Command ... to ... recommend a pre-emptive strike to nip protest in the bud and disperse prospective demonstrators to the rural hinterland" and the authorities' determination "to recapture official control over sales taxes and hard currencies" (Bratton & Masunungure 2007: 25). Many of the people affected, however, noted that the destruction targeted areas where people had not voted for the ruling party in 2005. For them it was "an act of retribution by a vituperative ruling party against a non-compliant electorate" (p. 26). Each of these responses is attempting to read meaning into the rubble of destroyed buildings and tens of thousand of homeless people.
 4. Accounts of the mixed responses to the unity accord can be found in Alexander (1998: 151-152, and in Alexander, McGregor & Ranger (2000: 229-231).

conversation takes. She reminds Mnangagwa that the design for the building was made before the unity agreement and this decorative detail has thus lost its symbolism, but the minister's only answer is that although Nkomo has also demanded from him that the cock be removed, he can do nothing without instructions from the ZANU (PF) politburo. Not only has the politburo said nothing about the cock's removal, but asked him to replace the silent cock on the building with a crowing cock sourced from the Soviet Union, and the Soviet ambassador has been approached to see what he can do. The nearest Todd comes to commenting on this odd information is when she asks Mnangagwa whether the new cock "would crow on the hour or just three times now and then". Clearly scriptural cross references were not uppermost in Mnangagwa's mind. "He missed the allusion," Todd records (p. 343).

Todd's narrative moves into a short paragraph that describes the experiences of people whom she refers to as "former dissidents" and the chance that has been afforded them by the unity accord and amnesty to make something of their lives. Blind Rise Cleansing Cooperative Society collects waste plastic, paper and bones in Chitungwiza and they also have a Harare City Council contract to cut grass. The members of Determination have taught themselves bookbinding and Karigamombe sources vegetables and chickens from farms and sell them in the high-density suburbs. Together they put out a pamphlet which begins, "We are experienced in suffering unemployment. We want to share ideas with people throughout Zimbabwe on action for jobs (p. 344)."

The experiences of these men and their co-operatives are succeeded in Todd's narrative with an anecdote apparently unconnected with what has preceded it. Todd is meeting friends at a hotel outside Rusape in Manicaland and one of two blacks arrives late and is told by the receptionist, "a young black man", that his friends have not yet arrived. There is, the young man explains, only a party consisting of "one Indian, one white lady and one black man". Again Todd chooses not to comment and allows the receptionist's racialised perceptions to testify that something is seriously amiss in Zimbabwe. Ten years after independence, the receptionist cannot imagine so racially heterogeneous a group being contained in the phrase "my friends" (p. 345).

One conclusion one could draw from his response is that the legacy of a Rhodesia that knew itself principally through racial categories cannot be easily set aside. That, however, would be to miss the way in which, to use Virginia Woolf's phrase, the emphases are laid in these apparently random recollections. Throughout these pages a white woman narrator has been reacting with friends and acquaintances who are blacks and whites and since Todd learnt of the bomb attack on Michael Lapsley from the South African communist, Phyllis Naidoo, and South Africans of Indian descent as well. But these are my categories, not Todd's, as she seldom identifies anyone by

race. I am able to use these categories partly because I know many of the people mentioned and I impose them on Todd's narrative in order to make present racial preoccupations that, although they are almost entirely absent in what she has written, were becoming more and more important in the nation that ZANU (PF) was in the process of creating. Todd strives for a world with the potential to be without racial consciousness and she and her family demonstrated an indifference to race before Rhodesia was transformed into Zimbabwe; at independence they assumed that the new order would merely confirm their indifference.

Why someone like the young receptionist has received little encouragement to enter into these new ways of perceiving his fellow Zimbabwean is partly explained in the paragraph immediately following the account of his confusion at how the party at his hotel can relate to one another. Didymus Mutasa, Todd recalls, has "sparked a new row" with an announcement that "all civil servants should belong to ZANU (PF)" (p. 345) and at the hotel Todd hears that Mutasa has recently addressed a rally at nearby St Faith's, the mission that had been his home for many years and where he would have been exposed to the Tolstoyan socialism of Guy Clutton Brock. Now that the ZAPU (PF) leadership has been absorbed into ZANU (PF) the only viable opposition to the ruling party is Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM). When Mutasa is booed by sections of the audience several of whom are wearing ZUM T-shirts, he threatens to close down his old school. "Do you want WAR?" he shouts at them (p. 345). Todd does not mention that Mutasa is directing this threat at his home and at the people who once would have constituted his political extended family under the parenthood of the Clutton Brocks whose presence at St Faith's for many years showed the possibilities of new ways of connecting for people of different races, different ethnicities and from different regions.

Such an explanation is not necessary. The accumulated encounters of the book have made it clear that the party for which Mutasa is a spokesperson is practising the old colonial habits of inclusion and exclusion, centring and marginalising. The colonial state looked at racial origins to establish an individual's identity and during the 1960s and 1970s whites who refused to support the Rhodesia Front were vilified and sometimes like Todd and her father detained or like Guy Clutton Brock deported as traitors, joining such famous names as Doris Lessing who in 1954 was declared a prohibited immigrant from the country she then regarded as home. ZANU (PF) was always fissured by regionalism and both before and after the unity accord regional and ethnic origins were meticulously balanced in the party leadership in order to ensure that the party could command pockets of loyalty throughout the country. The ZUM drew its support largely from Manicaland from where Mutasa comes and it is possible to read a speech like this as providing assurance to the centralised leadership of ZANU (PF) that his origins do not compromise his loyalty to Mugabe and the party. Colonial state and nationalist share the habit of regarding an individual's

life to see how far it has confirmed or contradicted whatever account of the past the rulers have authorised and which in turn authorises their power.⁵

None of these events has specific consequences which will subsequently be recorded within Todd's narrative but cumulatively they evidence the casual and pervasive use of violence that has marked Zimbabwe's public life. The cock that the politburo wishes to make an even more triumphalist icon on ZANU (PF)'s building, Mutasa's unwillingness to accommodate civil servants who are not party members and his violent threats to a crowd whose loyalty to ZANU (PF) is clearly suspect constitute items in a narrative that speaks of an increasingly authoritarian party that will brook no dissent and certainly has no interest in the dignity of choice that democracy accords an electorate. Men like Mutasa are eager to show that ZANU (PF) commands the only validating narrative of Zimbabwean public life. Like all such narratives it is literally totalitarian in that it disallows all other private or public discourses. Where then does the mention of the three cooperatives belong since the paragraph describing them and their work seems further to disrupt an already not very coherent narrative? I think that they are central to the emphases of the narrative in the pages that I have discussed, and their presence has a direct bearing on the way in which the entire book functions. The skills that the "former dissidents" have acquired and the services that their cooperatives are providing are necessary everyday tasks without any heroic dimensions and yet their members are veterans of two wars; the liberation war and the hunting down of ZIPRA ex-combatants in Matabeleland during the 1980s. Nevertheless, they express a quiet optimism and can even see their lives and the work of the cooperatives as exemplary: "We are experienced in suffering unemployment," they write. If ZANU (PF) with its control of the media and its record of detentions without trial and other state-sponsored violence is directing the nation in one direction, the men in the cooperative sometimes helped by people like Todd and the organisation she works for are realising other ways in which the nation can recover from the traumas of its past. Their presence in the narrative is a reminder that amidst the excesses of power by the central government ordinary lives are being lived out.

The totalitarian aspirations of ZANU (PF) are indicated early on in the book.⁶ My second set of incidents begins with Todd recording that in 1981 Mugabe, still at that stage the prime minister, is touring the country to garner support for "his belief in the urgent necessity of a one-party state" (p.

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5. Ranger (2004) provides an account of these competing, empowering and disempowering histories, and his account is the more interesting as he was himself someone who helped to establish ZANU (PF)'s dominance in the history of Zimbabwe's liberation.
 6. The increasingly violent language used by ZANU (PF) in its election campaigns from independence to 2000 are recorded in Kriger 2005.

35). For his Bulawayo meetings Mugabe invites Nkomo to join him on the platform. In the first few months of 1981, Nkomo has been demoted from Minister of Home Affairs to Minister of Public Service to Minister without Portfolio, the latter a position that is not as meaningless as it sounds. Any position in the cabinet was at the behest of the prime minister, but an appointment that does not control a portfolio means that the appointee's political activities can be only those that the prime minister initiates or approves. In fact, despite his subservient position, Nkomo refused the prime minister's request, arguing, according to Todd, that his presence had not been required at the prime minister's other rallies and there was no reason why he should be present in Bulawayo especially as his constituency was not in Matabeleland but in the Midlands. Todd does not explain what lies behind these invitations and refusals and once again it is the responsibility of the reader to read these literal presences and absences as non-verbal significations. That Mugabe regarded Nkomo's support as necessary only in Bulawayo was a way of signalling to the old leader that any following that he commanded was regional and that ZAPU (PF), of which he was president, cannot be considered a national organisation. Nkomo's refusal to join the prime minister and his invocation of his Midland's constituency to explain his refusal was similarly intended to rebut what Mugabe had signalled and indicate that he was still a national leader. Todd quotes Nkomo's own remarks on the one-party state which he had made several months before Mugabe's Bulawayo rally. Nkomo had said "that a one-party state was an ideal situation but that it must not be introduced without the unanimous agreement of Zimbabwe's entire population" (p. 35). Nkomo was a witty orator and he was certainly capable of a remark that implies that a one-party state should never be allowed to leave the realm of pure idea. When Todd records this remark, she is not concerned, however, to make a philosophical point. Her entire narrative demonstrates the gradual processes through which since independence Mugabe had concentrated more and more power in his own hands. Nkomo's suggestion that action should only be taken when an entire population has reached unanimity on a political policy was of course offered ironically. Its implausibility serves to remind us that political power in any state should be authorised by the people and that since popular authorisation is often tentative and invariably conditional, leaders must constantly consult the people and take seriously their criticism and recognise in them the source of their power. Leaders who refuse this option are turning instead towards totalitarian politics where there is no room for the tentative and the conditional.

I have so far attempted in this paper to note the apparent disjunctions in the narrative strategies that Todd employs and I have suggested that these are typical of diary entries. As a reader who is familiar with the background to many of the incidents described, I have sometimes chosen to use that background to provide a fuller and more coherent narrative than Todd has chosen to provide. That I feel the need for coherence of this sort is more a

revelation of how conventional I am as a reader than a valid criticism of Todd's narrative methods. Hayden White has observed of historical writing that the "value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary" (White 1981: 23). If White is right in arguing that the image of life that a coherent historical narrative provides is illusory, then my elucidatory commentaries contribute to that illusion, using historical explanations to compensate for the random records of Todd's memoirs. To take one example: I have placed Todd's and Mnangagwa's discussion about the cock on the ZANU (PF) building within an explanatory narrative that recalls divisions within the nationalist parties and argues that the unity of 1987 far from uniting the parties consolidated the dominance of ZANU (PF). I have used footnotes to direct readers to historical analyses to authorise my interpretation. But why should the coherent and academic histories of independent Zimbabwe possess greater authority than Todd's account which is based on her own experience of meeting Mnangagwa? The diligent historian of course accumulates a great deal of archival material and indicates its provenance with accurate footnotes and these together with similarly acknowledged, published sources provide the context of academic debates to which the new book or article contributes. This is of course what any historian does in trying to reconstruct the past from the material that is available to him or her. It is also strikingly different from the way in which a diary records events and can subsequently be read in order to recover the past.

A diary records the encounters of a day whether these are with people, places and situations or perhaps with information which may be sourced from written texts. The diarist may reflect on these diverse encounters or choose simply to record them. What makes the diary different from a historical essay is that the diarist claims the authority of presence for the accuracy of what has been recorded. Todd is exemplary in this respect and where she could not have been present her absence is indicated by some qualifying remark. For example Mugabe's request that Nkomo join him at his Bulawayo rallies is qualified with the phrase: "Mugabe had apparently requested that Nkomo accompany him" (p. 35). On the day that Mugabe addresses his Bulawayo rallies, Todd recalls, "I happened to be in Bulawayo on Saturday 24 October, the prime minister's big day" but does not say whether she went to the rallies or not. Instead she notes that "[a]gainst any reasonable prediction, it rained most of the day" giving "both the prime minister and ... those in Matabeleland who didn't want a one-party state" the opportunity to blame the weather should there be a poor turnout (p. 36). The form of a diary allows her to recall a rainy day in Bulawayo and speculate on how it might have affected attendance at the "big day", and what could be inferred from a small crowd – support for or opposition to the

prime minister's campaign for a one-party state. All that this paragraph claims is that she has observed the weather and recalls how she has responded to it. We are not told the size of the crowd nor their responses to the prime minister's speeches. The diary method allows Todd to appear to be doing nothing more than registering her own experiences so that her narrative is as reliable or as unreliable as a historical record as our defective memories make them.

But that claim is of course disingenuous. Todd has been near to the centre of nationalist politics for nearly forty years. Her record cannot be the ill-informed speculations of someone looking at events that are entirely remote from her. The paragraph that follows the paragraph recollecting Mugabe speaking in a rain-sodden Bulawayo is quite different in tone and intention. It begins, "But I found an all-pervading anxiety about 5 Brigade, which was being set up by the North Koreans, and was told that the brigade had to start off each day with a salute to 'MUGABE!'" (p. 36). "I asked someone who would know the qualifications one had to have" to join 5 Brigade and she is told that they are simply "absolute loyalty to Prime Minister Mugabe and ... absolute loyalty to the ruling party, ZANU (PF)" (p. 37). "I found", "was told", and information derived from "someone who would know" are the authorising phrases that allow Todd to repeat this information. In the tradition of diaries Todd reports what she has experienced, but experience in these sentences includes her awareness of the anxiety surrounding her in Matabeleland and what someone in the know has told her about 5 Brigade. The impressionistic "I found an all-pervading anxiety" and the assumption that she knows people who can speak with authority on the total loyalty of 5 Brigade to Mugabe seem to possess a similar authority because by this time I, and perhaps most readers, will have begun to read her book as the product of a reliable recorder although there is none of the usual paraphernalia of footnotes and quotations from reputable sources which is how trust is conventionally established in a historical document.

How does Todd establish this trust between herself and her readers? Partly it is achieved by making few claims about the importance of what she is doing in the life of the new nation. In so far as she has a public life after independence it is initially through the Zimbabwe Project Trust, which was founded in London in 1977 to help Zimbabwean refugees who had left Rhodesia during the last years of the Smith regime. With independence these same refugees were trying to return to Zimbabwe although most have few expectations in their own country and when they returned many found their homes destroyed and employment impossible to find. That the Zimbabwe Project still had a part to play in helping the displaced is established with an anecdote of twenty-four returning refugees being apprehended by the police for stealing fruit from private gardens. When Todd hears about this she ponders their situation and the many thousands like them: "What else did they have to eat, I wondered? How demoralised

did this make them feel? What did 'independence for Zimbabwe' mean as far as they were concerned?" (p. 18).

It is the scale of this incident that is important for Todd's narrative method. After the ceasefire, two armies had gathered at Assembly Points, supervised by Commonwealth troops and located near the borders of the country, awaiting demobilisation or integration into the new Zimbabwean army. Tens of thousands of refugees were moving back into Zimbabwe from Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique, joining people who had lived abroad, and Todd's attention is drawn to twenty-four civilians arrested for picking fruit because they are hungry. "Maybe", she writes, "I reported back to my colleagues in London there was still a role to play" (p. 18). This is not the recollection of someone who is making large claims for her place within the new nation. We trust her precisely because she is so unassuming and so conscious of the limitations on what she will be able to achieve. That she can contribute only in a small way is confirmed when she resists suggestions by her London colleagues that the Zimbabwe Project should direct its attention to the problems of refugees throughout southern Africa. Todd remembers arguing that "[w]e should remain small and unpretentious We were too small and the problems of southern Africa too large" (p. 21).

Once the Zimbabwe Project has set up its offices in Harare and later in Bulawayo, it responds to needs for which it has the expertise and the funding. The narrative shaped as it is around diary-type entries confirms that this is how Todd and the Project proceed. They become aware of situations not being addressed by other welfare programmes controlled by the government or non-governmental organisations and then they meet to determine whether it is possible to advise on viable structures which will help people to prosper in the new nation. Because the Project is able to command funds and expertise, by the beginning of 1983 it has touched many lives. "We had already", Todd recalls, "assisted more than fifty cooperatives comprising some 2000 people in the fields of agriculture, carpentry, manufacturing, retailing and entertainment throughout the country" (p. 54). Another 2000 people and 17 cooperatives are lining up for assistance. In other words the scale of the Project's work will affect a not inconsiderable number of people but its reach is certainly not large enough to alarm an insecure government.

Despite the fact that the Project is addressing the practical problems that it has become aware of in the new nation, Todd slowly realises that instead of recognising the value of the work it is doing, the government begins to see both Todd and the Project as a threat and the realisation dawns that they are seen as a threat because Todd herself is identified in the mind of the government with ZAPU (PF). Once again her narrative method allows a contrast to be drawn between what in fact she is doing and the grotesque way in which ZANU (PF) interprets, misrepresents and misunderstands her

work and this can be shown in my third set of incidents. Todd remembers being shown various smallholdings owned by Nitram, a company that the ZAPU (PF) leadership had established to help finance projects for the rehabilitation of ZIPRA ex-combatants. At one of them, Nest Egg, Todd notes “huge, strange-looking military trucks brought back from Zambia ... all left-hand drive and look[ing] like surprised dinosaurs” (p. 29). She glances at them with mild amusement before being taken to look at the successful work that is being done at the farm: “hundreds – if not thousands – of battery hens producing eggs for which there was a huge market” (pp. 29-30). Another property is not only less successful but clearly demonstrates how little has been done for the returning men who have been disabled in the war. Living in what had once been the suburban Lido Hotel, these men, some who have lost eyes, arms or legs, are without adequate food or power which has been disconnected, and the men are on the edge of despair. They live together because “not only had they survived the horrors of war together, but their continued comradeship was vital to their well-being and any happiness that might yet come their way” (p. 32). While the Zimbabwe Project has no funds to buy land, Todd is confident that once land is obtained these men, although they suffer various degrees of disablement, can be given the practical skills that will allow them to make use of it. Although this is the beginning of 1981 and ZAPU (PF) is already regarded with mistrust by the ruling party, this mistrust does not yet extend to the Project itself. Men as powerful as Sydney Sekeremayi whose portfolio included Resettlement and Emmerson Mnangagwa, who had the State (Security) ministry, had advised Dumisa Dabengwa to approach the Project for help in demobilisation, a revealing detail that in so basic an exercise as resettling the combatants who had enabled men like this to assume power, the government is dependent on non-governmental organisations to provide for their welfare. Without land nothing can be done and it is only when Senator and Mrs Todd’s family donate 3000 acres of their own land to the men that they are able to begin to develop a cooperative that is suitable for their needs. The new cooperative is named “Vukuzenzele, ‘Wake up and do it yourself’” (p. 37) although this faith in the initiative of the men from Lido is immediately lost when Minister Kumbirai Kangai announces that Senator Todd has “given 300 hectares of land to the government for the disabled” (p. 37) and invites others to follow this laudable example. Seven years later, when the Unity Accord has finally put an end to the murderous activities of the Five Brigade in Matabeleland, Todd recalls how Vukuzenzele had been a site of hope that despite the horrors of the intervening years had fulfilled that hope. In 1981, the men had promised that one day when Todd visited them she would find buildings and electricity. Lookout Masuka, the ZIPRA general who, shortly before he was detained, had toured the farm just after the men had settled on it had said ““One day you will wake in the morning to the cry of a baby. Then you will know that this is indeed your home””. In 1988, Todd remarks, “All these things had come to pass” (p. 261). As part

of Todd's narrative, Vukuzenzele is anticipating the other cooperatives, some of which I have mentioned, whose varying fortunes are mentioned throughout the book.

The story of Vukuzenzele should be read as a story of hope, a narrative tracing recovery from the trauma of war. The dinosaur-like trucks at Nest Egg are relics of a war that is over; the future lies with the hens and their eggs, with men rescued from the Lido Hotel and resettled on rich, well-watered land. That is not, however, how ZANU (PF) chooses to read these particular signs. In February 1982, Mugabe announced that arms caches had been found on various farms and smallholdings owned by ZAPU (PF), and that Nitram was banned under the Unlawful Organisations Act and all its assets and subsidiaries were seized. Vukuzenzele escaped only because the land had been given directly to the men from Lido. The banning of Nitram is part of that other narrative of the slow growth of totalitarianism that runs counter to the narrative of hope and that sometimes seems to have destroyed hope itself. Todd's narrative allows us to treat the government's claims with scepticism. If we believe Todd, then the so-called arms caches are nothing more than the inevitable detritus of war that will certainly not arm a counter-revolutionary movement. Her presence at Nest Egg allows her the authority to show what the arms caches really were. Mugabe's announcement, breaking as it does into Todd's narrative, can be read only as a paranoid fantasy, lacking the credibility that is possessed by her completely unsensational account of the events of a particular day among many other days.

If much of Todd's narrative balances her experiences against the increasingly violent claims of a totalitarian state, her story also reminds us that, in the 1980s at least, few of Zimbabwe's friends abroad would have believed that ZANU (PF) exceeded its own justifiable authority as the democratically elected government of Zimbabwe. In the eyes of such people Mugabe could do no wrong and if Todd interpreted such actions hostilely, then her covert allegiances to ZAPU had prejudiced her towards the ruling party. Todd's experiences include documents that she has seen and are therefore part of her experiences that inform her narrative. The most important events in Zimbabwe that followed on from the declaration of Nitram as an unlawful organisation were the massacres in Matabeleland. Todd does not recount in any detail what happened because she did not experience them directly and her narrative method does not allow the inclusion of what she has not seen or read; she only records what she has heard from eye-witnesses. Instead, and this is my fourth selection of passages from the book, we first become aware that something appalling is happening through "rumours that are like ghastly nightmares from which you struggle but don't quite manage to escape" (p. 49). We all experience rumours and nightmares but only the superstitious would find evidence in them. Authoritative evidence that something is seriously wrong is provided

only when Bishop Karlen, the Catholic Bishop of Matabeleland, telephones Garfield Todd “to tell him that the state was perpetrating atrocities. People were being terrorized, starved and butchered and their property destroyed” (p. 49). Karlen is one of Zimbabwe’s forgotten men of conscience: he was one of the first to document what was happening in Matabeleland and he created a dossier of the reports he was receiving from Catholic institutions throughout the Bulawayo diocese. Todd, who at this early stage of the book, represents herself as a political ingénue is forced to move from the imaginings of nightmare to the realities of the government’s response to what it claimed was an attempt to overthrow the government. Both she and Karlen assume that Mugabe and the army commander do not know the scale of the repression and Todd therefore sees it as her duty to make the dossier available to them. She is soon to be disillusioned about Harare’s ignorance. The day after she tells General Nhongo what she has heard, a senior army officer takes her off in a car and rapes her. A letter to Nhongo goes unanswered although Todd warns in the letter that in hunting dissidents “all we will achieve is the creation of more dissidents forever” and asks whether “the way to deal with dissidents is [not] to establish first why they are dissidents”. The government’s military intransigence “can breed only more violence, bitterness and grief” (pp. 52-53). Todd’s attempt to witness evil is met with silence from army and government alike but some of her colleagues in the Zimbabwe Project are not so hesitant.

A little over a month after her circulation of the dossier, her rape and her letter to Nhongo, Mildred Nevile, one of the original trustees of the Project who is on a flying visit to Zimbabwe, reports to a meeting of the Zimbabwe Project that she has been informed that Todd is seen as opposed to the government and because of “‘Judy’s commitment to ZAPU ...’, ZP is now considered a subversive organization and some of the groups (projects) supported by the ZP will be under close surveillance” (p. 63). The Minister of Education, Dzingai Mutumbuka, has informed Nevile that “[u]nless Judy leaves ... the project would be closed down within the next three months” (p. 64). Not surprisingly Senator Garfield Todd came to his daughter’s defence. He wrote to the Prime Minister pointing out that the Zimbabwe Project could hardly be seen to be favouring ZIPRA ex-combatants over ZANLA since “approximately two thirds of the projects [and the funding] are in ‘Mashonaland’ and one third in ‘Matabeleland’” (p. 66). An additional factor used against Todd was that she was giving evidence in the treason trial of the ZAPU (PF) leaders, Dumisa Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku: and Nevile had reported “that this action is held to show that [Todd] is an enemy of the State!” Senator Todd exasperatedly asks whether “anyone who has significant knowledge [of an issue before a criminal court] is [not] duty bound to give it in evidence if called upon to do so” (p. 66). Garfield Todd was a man of great integrity and as that last sentence shows was willing to appeal to the fundamentals of natural justice. It has to be noted that even he could in the same letter appear to submit to ZANU (PF)’s

politics of exclusion. He would accept “reluctantly,” he writes, “a request from the government to replace the present director, for political reasons, with a person of ZANU (PF) affiliation” (p. 66). If Todd himself believed that ZANU (PF)’s paranoia required this sort of compromise, it was not surprising that Nevile who had invested the energy of many years in promoting ZANU (PF)’s victory was alarmed at the tone of Senator Todd’s letter.

In a letter she sent from London, from where she had returned, she observes that writing as Senator Todd had done “made it harder for government ... to reach a satisfactory arrangement through private negotiation”. The Project’s trustees in Zimbabwe cannot be “unaware of how things are done in delicate matters of this kind”, Nevile notes and accuses them of “ignoring the signs and signals which I made quite clear to you” (p. 69). Nevile’s letter is an example of how readily people accept that transparency is a luxury that should not be indulged in. Delicate matters require private negotiations and like any Zimbabwean who has learnt to mistrust language and prefers instead to interpret non-verbal signs, Nevile rebukes the trustees for ignoring her clarification of the “signs and signals” that she has been given by people in power. This is the politics of the nudge and the wink that assumes that language is used transparently only in the debates of inner coteries. This is probably true of most political processes although in Nevile’s letter there is a suggestion that Zimbabwean decision-making is unique and requires its own interpretative mechanisms which she is able to provide. The chapter of Todd’s book in which these documents appear takes its title from Nevile’s letter. It is called “Signs and Signals” but Todd’s signs and signals are not those that Nevile chooses to register through which privileged understanding is being exchanged; Todd’s signs and signals include the “terrorized, starved and butchered people” of Karlen’s report to Senator Todd and how readily allies of ZANU (PF) will come together to deny their existence. Beyond these signs and signals are the presence of language and its absence in silence: Todd, on being told by Nevile that she must leave the Project, and of the document giving evidence of both what is happening in Matabeleland and the failure of the recipients of the document to reply to it, turns on the bathroom tap so that her weeping is not heard.

The last two chapters of *Through the Darkness* differ as narratives from what has preceded them in that Todd chooses to write in a way that more closely resembles conventional history by recording and analysing events most of which she has not directly experienced. The first of these chapters is entitled “Mugabe’s War on Zimbabwe” and begins with what Todd says are her father’s last comment on Mugabe: ““*What I cannot forgive is how many people he has corrupted*”” (p. 422). Such a statement may seem to anticipate a list of beneficiaries of ZANU (PF)’s patronage system and such people are indeed named, and the way in which they have compromised themselves is spelt out. Some of the people she mentions have as she says seen “the

demolition of their own proud histories by Mugabe” (p. 423). Included in her list are people whom Todd once helped and who subsequently, acting on government instructions, deprived her of her Zimbabwean citizenship. Both this and the final chapter extend the range of corruption to include politicians outside Zimbabwe who see their support for the Zimbabwean government as support for “a reformist black nation ... against unfair criticism and sanction by white Western imperialists”. On the contrary Todd believes that such people are “in fact condoning the actions of a relatively small pack of powerful criminals who, like Ian Smith before them, used state resources to hijack the country” (p. 422.) These ZANU (PF) supporters include South African politicians who declared the 2005 election to have been free and fair. In the final chapter of the book, “Deliver Us from Evil”, Todd records the regional support that ZANU (PF) has received and speculates that it may in the end prove too expensive for South Africa in particular to maintain.

Except for occasional personal details in these last chapters, they are as one might expect from someone of Todd’s journalistic and academic standing professional analyses of the Zimbabwean situation by an experienced political reporter. As such they have as little or as much authority as her argument can command and her illustrations can support, and the evidence in them is qualitatively different from the evidence that creates the narrative within the rest of the book, evidence of a narrator who has been present at the events that she recalls and records. Todd has allowed herself to move from “one person’s impressions” of Zimbabwe to a conclusion that speaks of a national and regional crisis, ponders why international alliances have been put in place that help to empower Mugabe and records public silences and cautious statements from southern African leaders. But this is not a weakness in her book. This movement into public space is the inevitable outcome of her narrative. She has provided an often daily record of the life of a private individual who was often involved in the public sphere. Her narrative has traced a movement from a life that was full of delighted purpose in the work of national reconstruction to bitter disillusionment at national betrayal. Her day-to-day experiences explain how that betrayal was registered in the experiences of one Zimbabwean. But in the end it is the fate of Zimbabwe itself that matters more than the story of Todd herself and the movement of the title is not only her movement through the darkness but the gathering darkness around the nation itself.

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