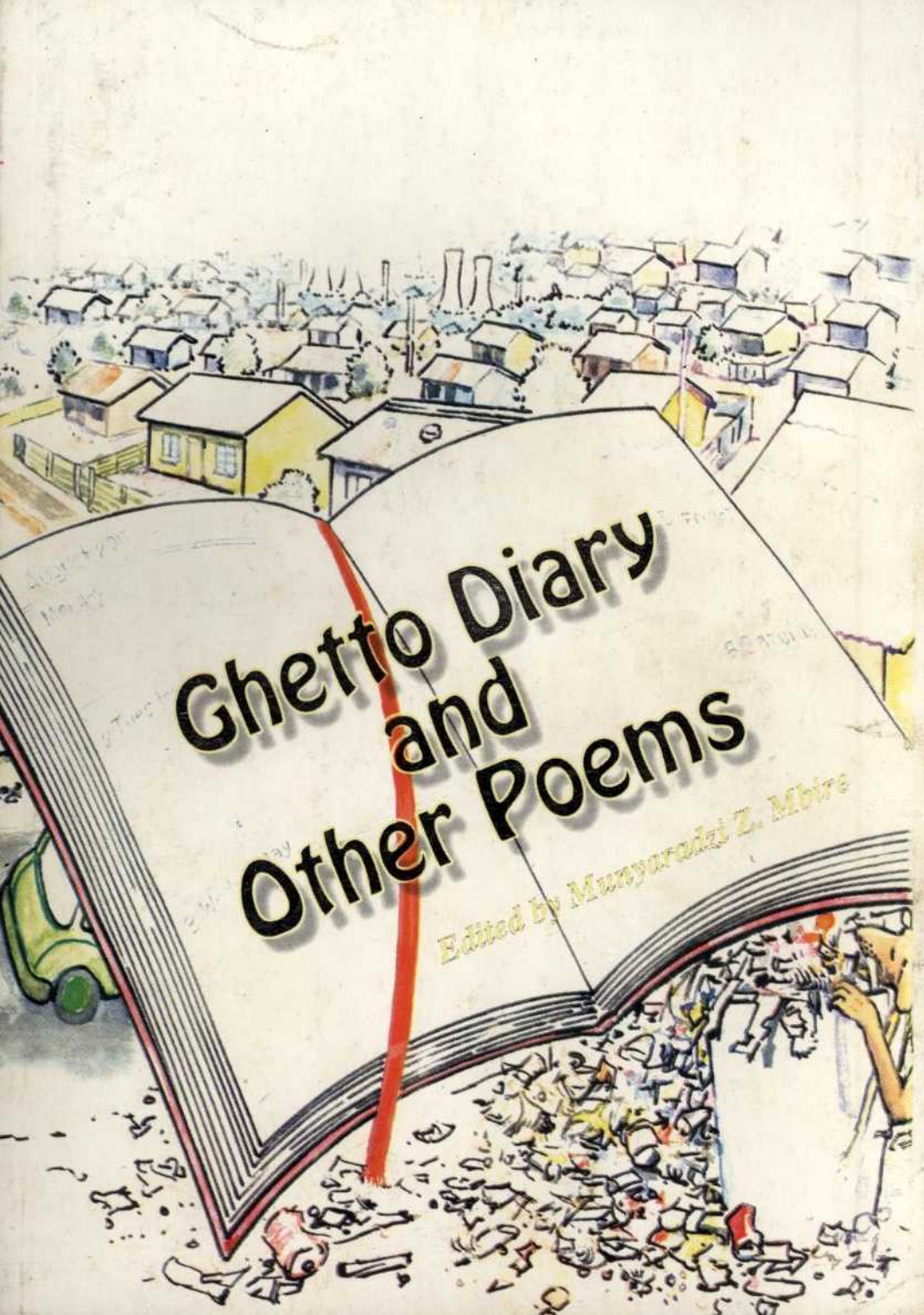
Ghetto Diary
and
Other Poems
Edited by Munyaradzi Z. Mbire

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Ululu

Ululu...!
She is here
The owner of two homes
Uniter of clans
The nurturer
Bringer of wealth to father's home
Wise judge of family disputes
Vatete has arrived
A pillar of our home.
Two rounds of ululation
For the daughter of the clan.

Ulu...lulu
He is here
The owner of the home
One who carries our name to posterity
One who defends the compound
And builds the home
One whose shadow shelters us from the scorching sun
Our father is here
One round of ululation for the son of the clan.

The mother held her babies in her arms
Exhausted but content
She had arrived safely
Congratulations, *Makorokoto, Amhlope.*

Pfumvudza

The kaleidoscope view kept me awake
and the journey shorter
Winter wheat fields
Gum tree fields,
Dry savannah with granite dwalas

Burnt grass vleis.
Msasa tree, brick-red leaves
in a background of dry grass
of a barren landscape and the dry, dull gum trees.
The *munhondochururu* bloomed
where the imported trees looked miserable,
charred by veld fires here
whereas the African landscape rejuvenated itself.

Does the physical landscape
mirror the spiritual landscape?
If I am uprooted from my people
How long will I survive?
Pfumvudza
a reminder
Of the beauty of my land
And my beauty if I were to stray from here and me.

Nothing for free!

It was a mad day
Their eyes were red
lips dry and cracked
Determination written on their faces

The delegation had been mocked
They could still hear "his" laughter
"Nothing for free, nothing for free
Communalism is dead.
Only survival, think survival."

To answer your greeting, present money
To give directions, present money
To receive feedback from "him," present money
Then the women and children caught on!

To be sent to the shops, there must be a "cut"
To cook the daily meal, present money
To clean the house, present money!
No one child did anything without being given money.

Everything came to a halt in the district
Someone passed by, reported to "him"
He came and announced meeting by loudspeaker
No one attended because he had not paid them
He paid a few, including the delegates to attend
He stood on the raised platform and shouted slogans
No one responded, he had not paid them.

They had lived out his advice
It taught him a thing or two
For the first time in years, he apologized
And they all started afresh.

Mama, my insides are screaming!

I want you to rock me in your arms
To wipe my tears away
Pass me to your breast
And tell me, it's going to be okay!

I want you
Oh I want you close to me
To take the pain away
Clear the slate for me to start again.

Mama, you taught me to value myself.
To value my body
And walk with dignity
They have shred me to pieces.

Like beasts of prey, they have pounced on me
To teach me a lesson so they say
They have taken turns to paw me
And invade my insides they have stolen my dream of purity on my wedding night
Not so much to fulfill patriarchal expectations
But for myself.
They have stolen my right to determine who I am,
what I want
when I want
and how I want.

My insides are screaming
A scream that will never go away
And you will never understand
Unless you have been there too!

Sisi!

Son, listen to me
And listen real good
For when a father speaks
A son must listen.

You were created in the image of God
That means, you rule on earth.
And the ruling starts in this house.
You represent me in my absence.

Do not let the womenfolk run all over you.
You must learn to rule,
You must exercise your reign on *sisi*
Show you have authority my son!

Call for food when you want
Lift not a finger to clear dishes.
If anything, make as big a mess as you can
And demand she cleans it immediately.

Practise shooting in the John
If you miss, don't sweat, *sisi* will mop
When you do the big job and the cistern will not flush,
Again, fret not son
Sisi will carry the bucket,
Remember, she represents what women should do for you!

Never, never wash your own clothes.
Don't let her dictate when they should be washed.
You call the shots.
They should be washed as, and when, you so desire.
Morning, midmorning, afternoon, evening, midnight,
You are a prince learning to rule
Sisi is the ruled representing all women.

Accused

I am sitting here
Alone with your cold body
They have refused to mourn you
Until I have confessed and paid my compensation
This is strange, so very strange.

They are coming back tomorrow
And only then will they raise the alarm
They are sure, I will pay them
My eyes already confess, so they say.

They say I have killed you,
To pay for your sins
It is very clear, they say,
that your abuse drove me to insanity
They understand, I only have to confess.

They do not believe,
That I loved you all the same,
Despite the many times you hurt me,
When you plotted against me with them.
Your many wild oats you cast abroad,
The monthly blows you dealt me for asking you to be accountable,
The verbal insults that even the neighbours know by heart,
The numerous humiliations at family gatherings.

Your people say, all saints are dead.
So I cannot be one
You finally drove me to kill you
How could you just die in your sleep?
And why did it take me hours to notice?
But you had a standing rule, not to be disturbed
And you had moved into the guest room not by my side.
But I loved you all the same!

Who am I to kill?

Come
Do not be afraid
I will not hurt you
For you are me
And
I am you!

How can I destroy you.
I, the product of your seed?
How can I ignore your existence.
Son of my mother?
Did we not grow up
feeding from the same plate?
How can you be my enemy today?

How can I erase you,
You, who changed my life completely,
From the day I conceived you,
You made your presence unignored
Did I not carry you everywhere the whole nine months?
Now that you are out, do I not think of you all the time?
Are you not part of the reason I slave in treacherous terrains?

How can I deny you,
King of my heart, father of my children?
You, who colonized my heart, and stole me from my people?
Do I now not belong to you and your people?
When they ask after the health of my people
they mean you
have I not appropriated your name?
When they say, man is the enemy
Who am I to kill,
When all of you are ingrained in my being.