

# Long Time Coming, Short Writings From Zimbabwe

Collected writers, amaBooks, Zimbabwe, 160 pages

A MAN TRIES TO FIND Z\$5,000 for his bus ride home. A woman about to get married waits with her fiancé for the results of an HIV test. A defeated president gets ready to vacate his palace, but his wife refuses to leave until she has found her favourite pair of yellow shoes. In a powerful and timely collection of short stories and poems about Zimbabwe by 33 writers, *Long Time Coming* offers snapshots of life in a collapsed country. It is a collection straining with suspended hope; change has taken too long to arrive. "My country is like/ an empty but attractive/ plastic

packet," writes poet Julius Chingono, "being blown by the wind/ along the road that leads to a rubbish dump/ by the cemetery." Zimbabwe's plight is perfectly suited to the short story and offerings come from both celebrated writers like Petina Gappah, Christopher Mlalazi and John Eppel, and a clutch of emerging talents from Zimbabwe and the diaspora. Political frustration, brutal violence and painful loss is met with practical resignation and grim humour. Despite the patient optimism in the book's title, little of this makes its way into the stories. Unpicking the

loneliness she has noticed in everyone lately, in 'Arrested Development' Sandisile Thshuma calls it a "pervasive and virus-like affliction" borne on glimpses of a life and future we can feel "slipping through our fingers". In a country, where Raisedon Baya writes in 'Echoes of Silence', "silence became a way of life", Zimbabwe's writers are trying to incite its people against it. ● **GEMMA WARE**

