

Of Nation, Narration and Nehanda: Accounts by Samupindi and Vera

ABSTRACT

This research report uses the “Frozen Image” - a widely circulated photograph taken by the British South Africa Company of Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, the female and male Shona Mhondoros who led Zimbabwe’s first anti-colonial uprising against the settlers, as its point of departure to explore the relationship between settler-colonial, nationalist, patriarchal and feminist versions of Mbuya Nehanda’s role and agency in the First Chimurenga. This paper begins by demonstrating that it is necessary for nationalist discourses to seek to “lock in” the histories embodied in visual moments such as the widely and historically circulated “Frozen Image”, arguing that they are reliant on the “fixedness” of gendered national temporalities. I argue that Charles Samupindi’s *Death Throes: The Trial Against Mbuya Nehanda* demonstrates that when the challenge to settler-colonial projections of an African past go unaccompanied by an interrogation of historical gender relations and a broader challenge to Western modernities, it is necessary to remain faithful to, and narrate the Frozen Image, in a self-conscious, realist, imaginatively constrained narrative project. This is whereas Yvonne Vera’s, *Nehanda* demonstrates that it is possible to “move beyond the image” to create a liberatory, poetic and imaginative narrative project.